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The Boob Tube: Television, Object Relations, and the Rhetoric of Projective Identification

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The Boob Tube: Television, Object Relations, and the Rhetoric of Projective Identification

by

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Dedication

To Dale, for observing daily the light at the end of the tunnel.

Acknowledgements

A core tenet in the tradition of psychoanalytic object relations holds that the supposedly autonomous "self" is in fact largely the accretion of significant connections to others throughout the life cycle. Having now completed a dissertation about this tradition, I can attest that the scholarly writing process also prompts similar reflection along these lines. I am not at all exaggerating when I affirm that the following pages exist only because of the many wonderful people I am fortunate to know.

I would like to begin here by thanking my supervisor and mentor, Joshua Gunn, for his exceptional guidance and unwavering support throughout the entirety of this project. His feedback during the earliest stages helped me grapple with the difficult task of melding of many different theoretical traditions together as a foundation, and his commentary during the evolution of my argument very much contributed to its final quality. His humor and candor kept me sane when I felt otherwise. Over the last six years I have assumed many of Josh's professional idiosyncrasies, and I am a much better scholar and teacher for it. I look forward to the next step in our lifelong friendship.

I would also like to thank the other members of my committee for perceptive insights that have together elevated the project to a level I would have never achieved on my own. Barry Brummett's deep understanding of Kenneth Burke's work helped me articulate the terms of my own contributions to the rhetorical field, and his eye toward method instilled within me an appreciation for scholarship as a process (and not just a product). Janet Staiger's knowledge of identification in popular media proved incredibly valuable early on, and her suggestion that I revisit the work of Christian Metz at a critical juncture resulted in key elements that finally allowed my central argument to cohere.

The Boob Tube: Television, Object Relations, and the Rhetoric of Projective Identification

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Much of the existing scholarship on the popular appeal of television emphasizes the role of content over any of the medium's other elements. Work within the cultural studies tradition, for example, often centers the importance of specific television programs when discussing the small screen's allure for discerning viewers. Other analyses that proclaim explicit concern for "the rhetoric of television" as a whole nevertheless tend to limit their focus to specific, recognizable elements within broadcast programming. As a result, there exists no strong theoretical perspective that helps account for an attraction to television *as a medium*, despite that fact that many people are familiar with instances of television reception that appear to have nothing to do with the specificity of broadcast content (i.e. collapsing in front of "the box" after a long day and watching whatever happens to be on—sometimes for hours at a time).

The present study remedies this absence by proposing a rhetorical mode for the medium of television based on the psychoanalytic concept of "projective identification." Originating in the object relations work of Melanie Klein, projective identification names a primary mechanism by which individuals manage unconscious anxieties that attend modern subjectivity. This study asserts that specific elements of the televisual apparatus in combination invite unconscious acts of projective identification from viewers. Because

this invitation relieves viewers of primal anxieties and increases their attraction to the medium itself, it is appropriate to interpret projective identification in this context as an inherently rhetorical concern.

This study progresses in three basic sections. The first two chapters review relevant literature in the fields of rhetoric, media, and psychoanalysis in order to propose "the rhetoric of projective identification" as a mode of address inherent to the medium of television through the second half of the 20th century. The middle three chapters then validate and extend this mode by considering three elements of the televisual medium in even greater depth: Intimacy, flow, and instances of audience activism. Finally, the conclusion of the study considers the continued utility of the proposed mode in a contemporary era marked by media convergence and technological implosion.

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Chapter One: Rhetoric and/of Television

…Get buy, my cohorts, and put this thing out;
We'll see if the church can continue to shout.
The holiness people who stand in our way
Will soon hush their crying against show and play.
We'll cover the earth with this devil vision.
Then we'll camouflage it with the name television.
The people will think they are getting a treat
'Till the Antichrist comes and takes over his seat.
He'll rule the world while the viewers behold
The face of the beast, to whom they were sold…

- Rev. John C. Woodward, "The Devil's Vision"[1]

Television is a covetous devil—or, to be more precise, a host to covetous devils. Take, for example, "The Uncle Devil Show," a short featured on the 1980s reboot of *The Twilight Zone*. The story begins with a man purchasing a copy of a cartoon videotape titled *Tim Ferret and Friends* for his son. "It was the last one they had," the man tells the ecstatic little boy as he pulls the tape from his jacket pocket. "It must be very popular."[2] While the man and his wife sit in the kitchen and discuss the importance of child supervision, the boy watches his new tape alone on the den television. A man soon appears onscreen and introduces himself as the lovable Uncle Devil. After a brief promotional aside for "Beelze Bits," a demonic breakfast cereal "chock full of energy-packed sugar," Uncle Devil instructs his viewers to go and retrieve their "Custom Fun Kits," which turn out to be an assortment of mailed-away-for occult items that children use to mimic the satanic rituals Uncle Devil demonstrates on screen. Through imitation the little boy learns to summon up a brood of hissing cockroaches, transform his dog into

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[1] John C. Woodward, "The Devil's Vision," *Call To Worship*, accessed July 9, 2012, http://www.calltoworship.org/calltoworship/articles/d-vision.html.
[2] "The Uncle Devil Show," *The Twilight Zone—Season 1 (1985-1986)*, directed by David Steinberg (1985; Chatsworth, CA: Image Entertainment, 2004), DVD.

a hideous monster, and even bring his toy dinosaur to gargantuan life. Although many of the magical effects disappear when the cartoon eventually returns, a single cockroach still struggles over the lip of a vase on the den table—and, more ominously, the cartoon has been renamed *Tim Ferret in Hell*.

Uncle Devil is surely a demon of the 1980s, coveting young souls *and* the cash of their clueless parents. If the poetic epigraph to this chapter is any indication, however, his example is indicative of more than just the Satanic social panics that famously swept through the United States for almost two decades at the end of the 20th century.[3] In many ways Uncle Devil is the manifestation of a more timeless social logic that equates the medium of television with malevolent or otherworldly possession. Media activist and television critic Jerry Mander supports such an analogy when he reads the technology against an essay on diabolical "influencing machines" in the fantasies of schizophrenic patients. The 1919 essay notes that many schizophrenics complain of mystical devices that can project pictures into their minds or produce and remove thoughts and feelings "by means of waves or rays or mysterious forces which the patient's knowledge of physics is inadequate to explain."[4] Mander provocatively suggests in his *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television* that "this 'influencing machine' sounds an awful lot like television."

> The mystery is how the phenomenon could have existed in 1919 before the apparatus was invented. Dare I suggest that television was invented by people similarly preoccupied, as an outward manifestation of *their minds*? In any event, there is no question that television does what the schizophrenic fantasy says it does. It places in our minds images of realities which are outside our experience.

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[3] For an overview of this phenomenon, see Jeffrey S. Victor, *Satanic Panic: The Creation of a Contemporary Legend* (Chicago: Open Court, 1993).

[4] Victor Tausk, "On the Origin of the 'Influencing Machine' in Schizophrenia," *The Psycho-Analytic Reader: An Anthology of Essential Papers with Critical Introductions*, ed. Robert Fliess (New York: International Universities Press, 1948), 33.

> The picture comes in the form of rays from a box. They cause changes in feeling and…confusion as to what is real and what is not.[5]

Dubious accusations of insanity notwithstanding, Mander's view of television as a maddening infiltrator strongly resonates with the other devilish figures that corrupt and control hapless viewers in the American cultural imagination. His work suggests that the notion of the "demonic" is but one of many avenues for representing the medium's supposedly possessive nature.

One of the more recent beneficiaries of the association between television and mystical arrest is the American television series *Supernatural*, which premiered in 2005 and has recently concluded its tenth season on The CW network. Something of an *X-Files* for the present day, the program follows brothers Sam and Dean Winchester (Jared Padalecki and Jensen Ackles) on their quest to rid the world of monsters, ghosts, and demons.[6] Possession is, naturally, a recurring plot point in these adventures. The demons and angels that comprise the theological backdrop of the series walk the earth only by first inhabiting human "meat suits" or "vessels," respectively, and ghosts tend to possess the bodies of those who wander into haunted locales. As a result, exorcism rituals and banishing spells are as important to the Winchesters as any torch or silver bullet, and the program regularly depicts the comings and goings of these insubstantial creatures as black smoke, divine light, or ethereal mist entering and exiting the body's orifices. Television, then, may not be an actual means of possession within the diegesis of *Supernatural*, but discussions of the program among its dedicated audiences (including

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[5] Jerry Mander, *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1978), 111.

[6] The American television series *The X-Files* (Fox, 1993 – 2002) follows FBI agents Fox Mulder (David Duchovny) and Dana Scully (Gillian Anderson) in their continuing investigations of cases concerning the paranormal, particularly in relation to an evolving conspiracy between members of the federal government and extraterrestrial beings. Many narrative elements in *Supernatural* reference key aspects of this earlier program. The Winchesters, for example, very often gain access to sensitive information about paranormal occurrences by posing as FBI agents and infiltrating local police precincts or interviewing witnesses.

academics) suggest that these televised possession narratives are undeniably fascinating. In addition to housing one of the most active fan bases in modern television studies, the program is the subject of two volume-length essay collections and a special issue of the online journal *Transformative Works and Cultures*.[7]

Given the widespread impression of Lucifer's personal taste for television and the popularity of broadcast struggles with his lesser minions, what accounts for the constant associations between the medium and demonic possession in the cultural imaginary? I stand with Mander in his turn to "fantasy" as a central concept for investigating this link, but we differ somewhat on the nature of the fantasy involved. From my perspective, the critical fantasy to recognize in the case of televisual possession is not the hallucination of devilish or malevolent forces that appear to fuel it. Instead, the most important fantasy operating here is the assumption of an altogether more basic, incorporative relation that exists between viewer and technology—a relation that in many ways comes to function as the precondition for the image of demonic possession. Put another way, if we do not first imagine the possibility of television audiences somehow absorbing or taking broadcast materials into themselves, it is rather difficult to turn around and imagine demons pursuing this technology as a doorway to the soul.

Calling attention to the fundamental fantasy of television as one of *incorporation* rather than *possession* necessarily revises thinking about the particulars of exchange in this context. As a precondition for the fantasy of possession, the fantasy of incorporation suggests that viewers may in fact *take in* broadcast material as much as they allow

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[7] The show logs more than 107,000 original stories written by fans about the Winchesters and other *Supernatural* characters at FanFiction.net (http://www.fanfiction.net/tv/Supernatural/), positioning it as second in quantity only to the Fox television show *Glee*. For academic perspectives, see Lynn Zubernis and Katherine Larsen, *Fandom at the Crossroads: Celebration, Shame, and Fan/Producer Relationships* (Newcastle on Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2012); Leah Wilson and Supernatural.tv, eds., *In the Hunt: Unauthorized Essays on* Supernatural (Dallas, TX: Benbella Books, 2009); Catherine Tosenberger, ed., "Saving People, Hunting Things," special issue, *Transformative Works and Cultures* 4 (2010).

themselves to be *taken* by it. In opposition to a tradition that reads fantasies of influencing machines and otherworldly possession only as evidence of television's unyielding malevolence, then, I suggest instead that malevolence may be a narrative gloss on what is attractive to viewers about television in the first place: the ability to possess, or perhaps more accurately, to *assimilate*.[8] Although at times it may seem that the medium possesses viewers, it is also equally possible that viewers assimilate television, soaking up broadcast material and incorporating it into their senses of self. When *Supernatural* viewers see churning black demon smoke force its way into the mouths of human characters, perhaps this is less a fantasy about television's inherent "evil" than it is a dramatization of a fundamentally incorporative process at the core of television reception.

The present project explores the contours and effects of this incorporative relation specifically as a logic of persuasion or influence. I outline here a theory of television's appeal based on the notion that viewers approach the medium as an especially attractive reservoir to call upon in the management of unconscious desires and anxieties. Drawing on psychoanalytic concepts first advanced by Melanie Klein (hereafter Kleinian psychoanalysis), I argue in this study that before viewers explicitly come to enjoy any particular television program or character, they first find something uniquely compelling about the medium itself: An avenue for engaging in unconscious acts of projection and incorporation that allow for psychical balance. The parameters that mark television as a medium give rise to a mode of presentation that strongly invites such unconscious work from viewers and, as a result, attracts them to the technology over and over—a mode that I will refer to eventually as a "rhetoric of projective identification."

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[8] In his discussion of canned laughter, Slavoj Zizek establishes an analogous relationship between the viewer and television screen, but his emphasis is on technology assuming an aspect of the viewer (mirth) rather than the viewer assuming an aspect of television. The mutuality of the relationship is nevertheless instructive for my own project. See "Will You Laugh For Me, Please?," *In These Times*, July 18, 2003, http://inthesetimes.com/article/88/.

In my mind, a consideration of the unconscious, rhetorical mode of television as a whole is long overdue. Although the cultural studies approach to television has usefully developed a conception of the "active" audience to contend with scholars who see viewers only as the economic or ideological byproducts of media industries, the now popular scholarly championing of audience engagement has largely occluded sustained attention to less active forms of television viewing with which many of us are familiar in our workaday lives.[9] These forms can be seen in the teenaged "couch potato," of course, but also the exhausted adult who mindlessly collapses in front of the television after a long day's work, or the insomniac of any age who switches on the set late at night in lieu of sleep. There are many audiences for whom television viewing is decidedly *not* about actively consuming particular programs or characters, or even very much about broadcast content at all. For these audiences, content is only one aspect of a greater sense of presence sought from the medium itself. This project seeks, in part, to illuminate the nature of this sought after presence.

The remainder of this chapter explores existing scholarly literature that together argues for the necessity of a *rhetoric* of projective identification in television studies. "Rhetoric" here is a vexed term that I will revisit throughout the project, but generally speaking I use the word to denote a repertoire that yields persuasive or influential effects. Appropriately, then, my theoretical frame begins by considering the terms *rhetoric* and *television*, as well as previous scholarly attempts to conceive of a cohesive "rhetoric of television." While such attempts certainly provide some helpful, initial insights on the matter, they more importantly point to the notion of *identification* as a likely starting

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[9] For a discussion of the shortcomings of the cultural studies movement on this very issue, as well as a rare exploration of "continuous" television viewing habits that echo the more passive reception strategies I note in this paragraph, see Ron Lembo, *Thinking Through Television* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

point for an even more robust account of the televisual medium. As a result, in the section that follows I consider the role of identification in the disciplines of both rhetorical and media studies. Comparisons reveal that the connection between identification and related concepts (such as "similarity") in contemporary media studies is not nearly as prescribed as it is in modern rhetorical studies. These different approaches to "identification," in turn, suggest that an account of rhetorical identification in the context of television should begin with an understanding of rhetoric that allows for greater flexibility between different types of viewer engagement. The most vibrant rhetorical work to date that can achieve such an understanding is scholarship surrounding what is often termed "pre-symbolic rhetoric," so the final section in this chapter reviews relevant literature in this area. In particular, Diane Davis's recent work on pre-symbolic "rhetoricity" and response-ability provides the general framework and social stakes for the rhetoric of projective identification I more explicitly outline in Chapter Two.

SETTING PARAMETERS: RHETORIC *AND* TELEVISION

Before exploring the rhetorical appeal of television as previous scholars have conceptualized it, it is important to discuss in more depth what I mean by the term *rhetoric* (and, for that matter, *television*). Rhetoric is a notoriously difficult term to define. At base it refers to a transaction of influence between individuals, but many people disagree on the nature of this transaction. Some suggest, for example, that rhetoric is best thought of as a skill for appealing to a given audience in everyday life. Aristotle's famous definition of rhetoric, as the "faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion," nicely fits within this first tradition of rhetorical understanding.[10]

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[10] Aristotle, *The Rhetoric and Poetics of Aristotle*, trans. W. Rhys Roberts and Ingram Bywater (New York: McGraw Hill, 1984), 24.

Donald C. Bryant's much more recent discussion of rhetoric as the talent for adjusting ideas to people and people to ideas could certainly be located in this vein as well.[11]

In recognizing rhetoric as a faculty or "art" that one can improve upon through careful thought and application, Aristotle also importantly framed rhetoric as a theoretical body of knowledge (after all, teaching the art to the Athenians would have been difficult without some assumptions regarding its nature).[12] This orientation has led many scholars since Aristotle to approach rhetoric not only as the practice of influence (or the product of this practice), but also as a way of *understanding* or *conceiving of* such practice in the first place. When, for example, Kenneth Burke defines rhetoric as "the use of language as a symbolic means of inducing cooperation in beings that by nature respond to symbols," he is doing something more than naming the skill of influence.[13] He is also proposing a theory of how influence predictably occurs within social life. Robert L. Scott's proposal of rhetoric as a social process by which human beings arrive at situational truths to govern actions and judgments similarly demonstrates this dual perspective.[14]

Because rhetoric can refer to both the art and the theory of social influence, the notion of *repertoire* that I introduced in the previous section is especially helpful for the present project. The term encompasses both senses of rhetoric: A repertoire names a practice and its systemization. In exploring the rhetoric of projective identification as a repertoire associated with television in the following pages, I am explicating for the reader the predictable ways in which the medium exerts influence on viewers. Although this certainly entails some concern with rhetoric as a practical means (or the various

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[11] Donald C. Bryant, "Rhetoric: Its Functions and Its Scope," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 39 (1953): 413.

[12] For further discussion of connections between ability, art, and theory in Aristotle's approach to rhetoric, see George Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric & its Christian and Secular Tradition From Ancient to Modern Times* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 78.

[13] Kenneth Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 43.

[14] Robert L. Scott, "On Viewing Rhetoric as Epistemic," *Central States Speech Journal* 18 (1967): 9-17.

specific ways that television manages to influence), more often I use the term here to refer to a broader theory of suasory operation endemic to modern life. In this way, the project draws upon existing understandings of rhetoric while also participating in the well-established tradition of scrutinizing and extending such understandings.

At first *television* may seem like an easy term to define (at least when compared to rhetoric), but in practice this is not really the case. Although many people have a vague sense of what qualifies as television in the contemporary age, the current drift of traditional television content across many untraditional outlets (computers, iPhones, etc.) makes it difficult to pin down precisely what mediated phenomena the word now covers. Put more pointedly, if a local film theatre screens a marathon of *Doctor Who* for fans, is this audience "watching television" or "going to the movies"? If in a single sitting a viewer consumes the first season of *House of Cards* (a program produced by and distributed entirely via the online service Netflix), is he/she actually "watching television" or "accessing the web"?

Clarifying the notion of *medium* is an important first step in determining answers to these questions and arriving at a workable, bounded understanding of television. In summarizing historian Lisa Gitelman's own two-part understanding of the term, Henry Jenkins provides a helpful definition:

> On the first, a medium is a technology that enables communication; on the second, a medium is a set of associated 'protocols' or social and cultural practices that have grown up around that technology. Delivery systems are simply and only technologies; media are also cultural systems. Delivery technologies come and go all the time, but media persist as layers within an ever more complicated information and entertainment stratum.[15]

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[15] Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 14.

Technology is certainly an important component of any medium, but popular media are not reducible—or even largely anchored within—technologies. At the same time, a medium is not only the collection of production and/or reception practices currently governing its use (as past standards often remain present in a medium in one form or another). Cinema, television, and the Internet are not mediums because they come to viewers via specific technological platforms or shaped by static practices; they are mediums precisely because they have evolved along both of these lines over time.

It is this long view of medium that helps retain television as a meaningful interpretive category distinct from other forms of popular media in the present day. As my examples of *Doctor Who* and *House of Cards* make clear, comparing any two mediums in terms of specific technologies or selected social practices can yield confusing areas of overlap, but considering the *totality* of involved technologies and social protocols of a popular medium distinguishes it from all others in the end. Amanda Lotz embraces such a wide understanding of medium when she outlines a number of technological and production/reception realities that together constitute television in what she calls our current, "post-network era": 1) an engagement with multiple delivery technologies—the ubiquitous television set, but also video-on-demand, mobile phones, and portable devices; 2) a variety of financing options for creating television content, as well as the increasing presence of amateur productions; 3) a growing emphasis on audience access to content anywhere at any time; 4) a complex system of advertisement that supplements traditional ad spots with product placement, sponsorship, and branded entertainment; and 5) sophisticated means of recording audience activity, including Portable People Meters and census measures.[16] Cinema, radio, and the Internet may each

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[16] Amanda Lotz, *The Television Will Be Revolutionized* (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 8.

share some of these qualities, but none share *all* of them at once, and it is this difference that finally preserves television's distinctiveness as a medium in today's social landscape.

In taking television as the subject of this project, I am clearly embracing a rather complex phenomenon. Rather than discourage my analysis, however, the ill-defined parameters of television today invite further scrutiny—especially along new avenues of thought that can clarify what makes this medium distinct. Chapter Two explores the concept of the *televisual* in order to provide a bit of further clarification on the nature of this medium, but otherwise I follow Lotz's example throughout the present project and embrace television as a multifaceted and evolving object. The different aspects of television noted above become more or less salient at different points in my argument, and by the end I address the majority of its most defining qualities. I even suggest at the end of the project that a rhetorical perspective on television informed by psychoanalytic object relations explains why, exactly, television remains a coherent category in the minds of its viewers despite the many blurred lines noted above.

A RHETORIC *OF* TELEVISION

Popular concern about the impact of television on viewers (especially in relation to issues of sex and violence) might imply that the study of television's unique influence is a fashionable topic among rhetorical scholars, but in truth, very little work now exists on the explicitly rhetorical dimensions of the overall medium. Some of this lack may be attributed to the fact that rhetorical considerations of the medium often appear under different academic banners. Two disciplines that frequently engage in rhetorical analyses of television without ever saying so are critical/cultural studies and aesthetics.

Social critics often invoke a rhetorical understanding in order to explain the relationship between dominant cultural interests and television. John Fiske, for instance,

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opens his book *Television Culture* with a detailed discussion of how television programming "encodes" the dominant beliefs of a given society through camera work, editing, costume, and dialogue (among other tools).[17] Although he never utilizes the term *rhetoric*, Fiske's analysis of the artful use of symbols to encourage hegemonic interpretations in audience members is unmistakably rhetorical in nature. Dallas Smythe's canonical essay on the television audience as commodity is another case in this area.[18] Contrary to popular belief, Smythe asserts, the television industry is not in the business of producing content for audiences; its primary job is to produce audiences for advertisers and/or sponsors. Particular content always attracts audience members of some demographics over others, and once television producers gauge who is watching their programming, they can effectively "sell" these viewers to companies interested in marketing products and services to them. Like Fiske, Smythe's discussion of tailoring content to a particular audience in order to attract their attention has strong rhetorical overtones.

A second academic area that engages in rhetorical conversations about television without ever explicitly recognizing it as such is aesthetics, or the study of artistic forms. In the introduction to her edited volume on the aesthetics of television, for example, Ruth Lorand suggests that the public perception of the medium's "irresistible" and "uncontrollable" social influence is intimately linked to its unique formal components.[19] After the historical advent of the series format in television programming, the medium

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[17] John Fiske, *Television Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1987).

[18] Dallas Smythe, "The Audience Commodity and Its Work," *Dependency Road: Communications, Capitalism, Consciousness, and Canada* (Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Corporation, 1981), 22-51. In some ways Smythe's point here resonates with John Hartley's own contention that the medium creates its audience in part through discursive intervention. See his article "Invisible Fictions: Television Audiences, Paedocracy, Pleasure," *Textual Practice* 1 (1987): 121-138.

[19] Ruth Lorand, "The Aesthetic Aspects of Television," *Television: Aesthetic Reflections*, ed. Ruth Lorand (New York: Peter Lang, 2002), 5.

virtually demanded that audiences "return to the same channel, same program and same commercials," achieving this effect largely through an endlessly deferred narrative conclusion.[20] The foundations of such a rhetorical sensibility in television aesthetics might be located in Raymond Williams's classic account of the prevalence and popularity of the medium in terms of both its adapted and unique forms (news and drama vs. drama-documentary and discussion), but even the most contemporary artistic explorations of the medium feature it as well.[21] In 2010's *Television Style*, for instance, Jeremy G. Butler reminds readers that the primary purpose of the form most inherent to television—the commercial spot—is simply "to convince us to purchase products and services."[22] It is difficult to deny the rhetorical stakes in discussions like this one.

The fields of critical/cultural studies and aesthetics certainly give some idea of a bounded rhetoric of television, but of the relatively small collection of works that discuss the medium in explicitly rhetorical terms, Bonnie J. Dow's *Prime-Time Feminism* is the most instructive in articulating the general parameters and reasons for such an approach. Dow acknowledges that issues of reception and audience interpretation make television a complex object of rhetorical study, but rather than providing reason for abandoning such an approach, this complexity in fact highlights the significant rhetorical work it performs in society:

> The meanings offered by television are rarely direct, often contradictory, and never final. Certainly, it is the central dynamic of series television to rework the same problematic over and over. Thus, the persuasive function of television is not so much to provide solutions to cultural conflicts but, rather, to negotiate the parameters for the debate.[23]

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[20] Lorand, "Aesthetic Aspects," 18.

[21] See Chapter 3, "The Forms of Television," in Raymond Williams, *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* (New York: Routledge, 2003).

[22] Jeremy G. Butler, *Television Style* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 109.

[23] Bonnie J. Dow, *Prime-Time Feminism: Television, Media Culture, and the Women's Movement Since 1970* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), 8.

Dow convincingly suggests that television programs can be understood from a rhetorical perspective precisely because they are products of and responses to a given time period—effectively making use of the "available means of persuasion" in any given historical moment to influence interpretation on the issues of the day. Most programs do not uniformly tell audiences what to think about these issues, but they necessarily inform the ways in which people think about their lives to some degree. Unfortunately, although the title of Dow's introductory chapter makes use of the phrase "The Rhetoric of Television," when it finally comes to identifying the overarching rhetorical aspects that characterize the actual medium, she waffles and suggests instead that any given program uses any number of typical, textual tools (language/dialogue, intertexuality, personification, etc.) to achieve rhetorical effects.[24] Her project thus argues more for critical attention to television as a rhetorical object than it attempts to typify the rhetorical elements that make the medium distinct.

Ronald Primeau's *The Rhetoric of Television* is a bit more pointed in discussing the medium's unique rhetorical modes, but he too ultimately abandons a consideration of the larger medium for specific strategies tied to particular content.[25] Much of Primeau's volume identifies aspects of television that distinguish it from other popular media, as well as how television producers use rhetorical strategies to account for these aspects. Because television audiences are often more distracted than film audiences, for example, producers design some television content to be especially memorable. Primeau suggests that the volume of catchy jingles and slogans conceived for television is a prime example of this strategy—and also that this practice mirrors Aristotle's own discussion about the

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[24] The full title of the chapter is "Introduction: The Rhetoric of Television, Criticism, and Theory." See Dow 1, 21-22.

[25] Ronald Primeau, *The Rhetoric of Television* (New York: Longman, 1979).

importance of memory in rhetorical practice. Furthermore, because some audiences believe that television is a lowbrow medium when compared to film or live theatre, some programming draws regular and explicit attention to its credibility (or its *ethos* in Aristotle's terminology). Televised news broadcasts often depict a bustling newsroom behind the anchor's desk, and talk show hosts regularly mention their crews to the audience. According to Primeau, these overt strategies draw viewers' attention to the highly competent production practices of these programs and increase the trustworthiness and appeal of the content overall.[26]

Practically the only entry in this body of literature that contemplates the rhetorical components of television as a medium (or that considers rhetorical strategies present in television broadcast and reception independent of any specific content) is David Morley and Roger Silverstone's heuristic model in *Television, Audiences & Cultural Studies*.[27] The authors propose that the medium of television features four, interrelated rhetorical modes. The first is *homology*, or a synching of television structure and normalized use with the rhythms of domestic routines and contexts in which it has historically appeared. The second is *metaphor*, or the ways by which television can "mobilize, extend, reinforce or transform" cultural frames of interpretation on public ideas and issues.[28] The third is the activity of *addition and suppression*, where television invites audiences to negotiate the parameters and meanings of broadcast material even as it installs limits on those activities. The fourth, finally, is *identification*, or a sense of resonance between viewers and the medium that

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[26] Primeau, *Rhetoric of Television*, 40.

[27] See "Domestic Communication: Technologies and Meanings," written with Roger Silverstone, in David Morley, *Television, Audiences & Cultural Studies* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 201-212. I characterize this model as heuristic because the authors propose it as only a possible alternative to the textual "reading" model that dominates typical discussions of television and its audiences.

[28] Morley and Silverstone, "Domestic Communication," 209.

implies not just a one-to-one correspondence between a viewer and some favoured [sic] character, but also a more general identification, at a number of different levels, between what appears on the screen and the lives, understandings, and emotions of those who attend to it. This does not apply only to the realist text. One can hardly imagine any television text having any effect whatsoever without that identification.[29]

While this last mode certainly comes closest to elevating the place of content over other aspects of television in terms of its rhetorical efficacy, the authors' belief that identification occurs with all televised content affirms their focus on the medium overall.

To some degree Morley and Silverstone's final comment here on identification ("One can hardly imagine") implies that this particular rhetorical mode may in fact subsume the other three. Upon reflection this relationship is really not so strange. After all, if viewers do not first experience a sense of resonance with televised material, how would it be possible to recognize the metaphors the medium offers to them, or to engage the terms upon which they negotiate its meanings? Isn't a capacity for resonance the most likely mechanism by which viewers come to fit the medium into the larger rhythms of their daily lives? These questions—reinforced by Dow and Primeau's own passing references to audience identification[30]—suggest that the role of identification in understanding the rhetoric of television is paramount. As I shall demonstrate in the next section, however, exploring the term in relation to both rhetorical and media studies yields only further areas of inquiry.

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[29] Morley and Silverstone, "Domestic Communication," 208-209.

[30] Although their focus is on particular television content, Dow and Primeau tacitly support the role of identification in the rhetoric of television by framing it as strategy that appears quite frequently in popular programming. Dow, for example, discusses identification in relation to the programs *Mary Tyler Moore* and *Designing Women* as a crucial rhetorical means by which television articulated the notion of feminism at different points in the 20th century. Primeau's neo-Aristotalian focus limits explicit considerations of identification, but his discussions of rhetorical strategies found in game shows and soap operas strongly implicate the idea.

IDENTIFICATION IN RHETORICAL AND MEDIA STUDIES

The word *identification* can mean many things in everyday conversation. It can refer to revealing the nature of something, or it can refer to an object that performs this action (such as a driver's license or passport). It can also refer to a feeling of continuity with something beyond oneself or the act of achieving this sensation (as when one *identifies* with another person, an organization, or even an entire country). Both rhetorical and media scholars have utilized the term to describe field-specific phenomena in line with this latter definition (the experience of continuity), but the two disciplines differ somewhat in the scope and texture of this experience. Of these differences, the proposed interaction between identification and notion of similarity is the most pronounced and instructive for the present project.

It would be nearly impossible to investigate the concept of identification in rhetorical theory without returning to the ideas of Kenneth Burke, whose discussion of the term in many ways functions as a touchstone for modern rhetorical studies. For Burke, continuity with other human beings is simultaneously a prerequisite for and an effect of rhetorical activity. Burke proposes continuity as a prerequisite for rhetoric in relation to the notion of consubstantiality, or the philosophical belief that people share some fundamental substance or essence. "In acting together," he writes, "men [sic] have common sensations, concepts, images, ideas, attitudes that make them *consubstantial*."[31] Put another way, consubstantiality is the product of virtually ontological similarities between people; the degree to which people recognize these similarities is simultaneously the degree to which they identify with each other. Burke solidifies the continuum of similarity and identification with a simple example: "A is not identical with his colleague, B. But insofar as their interests are joined, A is *identified* with B. Or he may *identify*

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[31] Burke, *Rhetoric of Motives*, 21.

himself with B even when their interests are not joined, if he assumes that they are, or is persuaded to believe so."[32]

The above example illustrates that, for Burke, symbolism and language are the primary means through which humans come to recognize their similarities and identify with others. As such, the core function of rhetorical practice is to develop a sense of identification (or continuity) between people through the implicit or explicit articulation of similarities. This activity is particularly salient because humans, despite any perceived sameness, always remain fundamentally divided from one another in a biological sense. "Identification is affirmed with earnestness precisely because there is division," Burke argues. "Identification is compensatory to division. If men were not apart from one another, there would be no need for the rhetorician to proclaim their unity."[33] The essential kernel of Burke's highly influential schema is that similarity and identification are virtually synonymous in their shared opposition to a primary division—one overcome through rhetorical intervention. Only rhetoric that induces cooperation by facilitating identification can "lead us through the Scramble, the Wrangle of the Market Place, [and] the flurries and flare-ups of the Human Barnyard."[34]

To some it may appear that Burke's musings on identification and similarity resemble Morley and Silverstone's point regarding resonance between television content and the lives of its viewers. Perhaps because the two are ethnographers by training, however, Morley and Silverstone ultimately downplay philosophical perspectives on identification in favor of a more empirical approach when it comes to explicating the term for the study of television: "How identification is constructed textually…and how it

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[32] Burke, *Rhetoric of Motives*, 20.
[33] Burke, *Rhetoric of Motives*, 22.
[34] Burke, *Rhetoric of Motives*, 23.

is responded to in the inter-textualities of everyday life…are questions for empirical inquiry."[35] This is a significant conceit, for in opposition to Burke's near conflation of similarity and identification, many empirical and qualitative studies of viewer identification with media sharply distinguish between it and similarity as constructs at play in audience reception practices.[36]

Jonathan Cohen, for example, argues that while some existing literature within modern media studies treats identification and similarity interchangeably, there is good reason to distinguish between them. Cohen notes that scholars most often conceive of identification in the context of media as a multifaceted practice where "an audience member imagines him- or herself being [a] character and replaces his or her personal identity and role as audience member with the identity and role of the character within the text."[37] By imaginatively substituting one's own identity with that of a media character, an audience member temporarily eradicates any perceived distance between the self and other. This eradication suggests that viewer perceptions of similarity—most often characterized as cognitive judgments of sameness—are fundamentally at odds with

[35] Morley and Silverstone, "Domestic Communication," 209.

[36] Some, of course, do not. For media scholarship that appears to equate identification and similarity (at least in terms of audience activity), see Byron Reeves and M. Mark Miller, "A Multidimensional Measure of Children's Identification with Television Characters," *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 22 (1978): 71-86; Julie D'Acci, *Defining Women: Television and the Case of* Cagney & Lacey (Durham: University of North Carolina Press, 1994); Michael D. Basil, "Identification as a Mediator of Celebrity Effects," *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 40 (1996): 478-495. Cohen and the others I discuss here make compelling arguments as to why a conflation between terms in studies like these is incorrect.

[37] Jonathan Cohen, "Defining Identification: A Theoretical Look at the Identification of Audiences With Media Characters," *Mass Communication and Society* 4 (2001): 251. This definition narrows Morley and Silverstone's own perspective on identifying with aspects of a media text beyond characters, but a focus on characters represents the general tenor of the empirical work in the field. For others who share Cohen's focus on vicarious experience and perspective taking in defining audience identification with the media, see Eleanor E. Maccoby and William Cody Wilson, "Identification and Observational Learning from Films," *Journal of Abnormal Social Psychology* 55 (1957): 76-87; Fiske, *Television Culture*, 169-173; Cynthia Hoffner and Joanne Cantor, "Perceiving and Responding to Mass Media Characters," *Responding to the Screen: Reception and Reaction Processes*, eds. Jennings Bryant and Dolf Zillman (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., 1991), 63-101; Tony Wilson, *Watching Television* (Cambridge: Polity, 1993).

the act of identification in the consumption of media. "To compare or judge a character," Cohen explains,

> one is required to activate his or her own psychological schemas and, hence, to be self-aware, whereas identification uses one's own psyche to imagine being someone else. To compare one's self, or to feel close to a character, one must be positioned outside the text as a spectator, rather than imagining one's self inside a textual reality….[S]imilarity is associated with a judgment of realism; identification, on the other hand, does not foster any judgments that require treating a character as external to the self.[38]

Because they involve fundamentally different mental processes, argues Cohen, judgments of similarity and acts of identification should be conceptually distinct in the study of media—a division that other media scholars maintain as well.[39]

Careful readers might point out here that Burke—while articulating a plethora of meaningful overlaps between identification and similarity—stops short of ever claiming that identification *is* similarity, which in turn casts doubt on how much Cohen and other media scholars truly depart from him in calling for a clear distinction between the terms. One can interpret Burke's writing to suggest that primordial similarities are made meaningful or recognizable to individuals via language, which then paves the way for increasing symbolic identification with others. Still, even as Burke allows for some theoretical distinctions between identification and similarity, in (rhetorical) practice these differences are negligible: Where there is perceived similarity, there is identification, and always in that order. Despite their apparent resonance, then, the highly specific

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[38] Cohen, "Defining Identification," 254.

[39] For media scholarship that draws fairly explicit distinctions between identification and similarity, see Maccoby and Wilson, "Identification and Observational Learning"; Andrea Press, "Class and Gender in the Hegemonic Process: Class Differences in Women's Perceptions of Television Realism and Identification with Television Characters," *Media, Culture & Society* 11 (1989): 229-251; Hoffner and Cantor, "Perceiving and Responding"; Wilson, *Watching Television*; Keren Eyal and Alan M. Rubin, "Viewer Aggression and Homophily, Identification, and Parasocial Relationships With Television Characters," *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 47 (2003): 77-98.

relationship between the phenomena in rhetorical circles diverges from the findings of many empirical media studies in at least two significant ways.

First, a relationship between identification and similarity is not guaranteed in every instance of media consumption. Audiences may never properly identify with characters that otherwise appear similar to themselves, and they may strongly identify with characters whose lives are (upon reflection) extremely dissimilar from their own. Tamar Liebes and Elihu Katz's discussion of conflicting audience responses to the program *Dallas* helps clarify this apparent contradiction.[40] Though some audience members recognized that they were "like" the dishonest and conniving patriarch J.R. Ewing, they also disclosed a desire to be unlike him (which suggests an impediment to identifying with him). Conversely, some audience members who stated that they were definitely *not* like Ewing nevertheless expressed a wish to be like him. The notion of "wishful identification," where audiences come to identify with a character that demonstrates socially desirable traits like power or beauty, is especially helpful in understanding this second group of viewers.[41] At times audiences identify with a media character precisely because they *differ* so much from it. Cynthia Hoffner and Joanne Cantor provide an illuminating example of this link in the context of superheroes: Though there is little similarity between Superman and audiences, consumers may still imaginatively adopt his identity to experience the difference between them vicariously.[42]

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[40] Tamar Liebes and Elihu Katz, *The Export of Meaning: Cross-Cultural Readings of* Dallas (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 98.

[41] For further discussions of this term, see Robert B. Zajonc, "Some Effects of 'Space' Serials," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 18 (1954/55): 367-374; Celia von Feilizen and Olga Linne, "Identifying with Television Characters," *Journal of Communication* 25 (1975): 51-55; Cynthia Hoffner, "Children's Wishful Identification and Parasocial Interaction with Favorite Television Characters," *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 40 (1996): 389-402; Cynthia Hoffner and Martha Buchanan, "Young Adults' Wishful Identification With Television Characters: The Role of Perceived Similarity and Character Attributes," *Media Psychology* 7 (2005): 325-351.

[42] Hoffner and Cantor, "Perceiving and Responding," 85.

Second, even when experiences of identification and similarity positively correlate in media research (and they frequently do), scholars here cannot realistically claim that one ever *causes* the other—audience perceptions of similarity may either lead to or result from acts of identification. In other words, some audience members may identify with a favorite media character only after discerning their similarities, but it is equally possible that, "over time, viewers come to believe they have incorporated qualities of their favorite characters into their own self-concepts, and thus share a greater degree of similarity."[43] This admission is markedly different from Burke's understanding, where identification is only ever the result of similarity (and never the reverse).

In his volume-length analysis of audience engagement with film characters, Murray Smith clarifies how it is possible for acts of identification to precede perceptions of similarity in media consumption.[44] Although Smith criticizes scholars who support the notion that the phenomenon of "identification" only involves assuming the perspective and/or feelings of a media character, he also establishes a clear distinction between *empathetic* elements of character engagement that reduce the perceived difference between spectator and character ("emotional simulation" and "affective mimicry"), and *sympathetic* elements that rely upon such difference ("recognition," "alignment," and "allegiance"). Because "identification"—at least as it has been operationalized thus far in empirical literature—would fall into Smith's empathic register, and because similarity would fall into his sympathetic register, the broad disagreement between his own work and other studies is really more on the basis of terminology than actual distinction. Where

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[43] Hoffner and Buchanan, "Wishful Identification," 342. This conclusion rings true with considerations of similarity in wider communication research as well. As Eyal and Rubin note in their "Viewer Aggression" essay, homophily, or "the degree to which people who interact are similar in beliefs, education, social status, and the like[,]…can be a communication antecedent or outcome" (80).

[44] Murray Smith, *Engaging Characters: Fiction, Emotion, and the Cinema* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).

Smith crucially reinforces previously reviewed literature is in his appreciation for how "both emotional stimulation and affective mimicry function *within the structure of sympathy*. They are among the mechanisms through which we gain an understanding of the fictional world and the characters who inhabit it."[45] In other words, it is often only by first identifying with a media character that viewers can come to understand the character/text enough to make a comparison on the basis of similarity.

In parsing out the differences between rhetorical and media studies on the issue of identification in this section, I do not mean to imply that the perspective of one field is completely incommensurate with the other. I only mean to suggest that the relationship between identification and similarity within the specific context of media reception is not nearly as synonymous or linear as rhetoricians might be led to believe. Comparing rhetorical musings on the symbolic nature of human subjectivity against localized observations of human behavior with media may be like comparing apples and oranges, but the data collected on film and television audiences should nonetheless give pause to rhetoricians who believe that it is possible or preferable to interpret popular media through traditional understandings of suasory identification.

To be sure, invitations to identify are very likely the central rhetorical strategy of television (as Morley and Silverstone contend). But as the empirical and qualitative literature on identification makes evident, to extrapolate this observation into a faithful rhetorical mode of the medium overall, I need to begin with a rhetorical understanding of identification that harmonizes with an experience of watching television. It is necessary, in other words, for me to begin with a conception of rhetorical exchange that allows for acts of identification with others *before* the recognition or perception of similarity. Burke

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[45] Smith, *Engaging Characters*, 103.

and many other mainstream rhetorical approaches are of limited help in this regard. Instead, a small but growing body of literature on the pre-symbolic dimensions of rhetoric seems to be a useful place to find inspiration.

PRE-SYMBOLIC RHETORIC

In 1970 Karlyn Kohrs Campbell neatly demarcated three perspectives on the ontological foundation of human openness to rhetoric/persuasion.[46] The "traditional" perspective asserts that humans are open to influence by rhetorical processes because they are reasoning, rational creatures. The "behavioristic" perspective argues that humans are vulnerable to rhetoric because they have biological imperatives that can be tapped and manipulated toward a rhetor's own ends. Finally, the "symbolic" perspective maintains that humans are persuadable because they communicate through symbols. Symbolism radically alters human perception of the world and inaugurates a novel set of motivations that the practice of rhetoric is uniquely situated to manage. Of the three perspectives, Campbell found the symbolic approach most satisfying. The traditional school is too narrow in its scope and cannot account for irrational rhetorical practices, and the behaviorist school prioritizes observable phenomena and does not allow for the possibility of human variation or choice. Only the symbolic approach, Campbell claimed, provides a flexible account of human motivation that can grapple with all forms of persuasive practice, especially those that appear irrational or contradictory at first glance.

As a result of Campbell's intervention and the efforts of others like her, the centrality of symbolism to the study of rhetoric became an almost unquestioned fact in rhetorical studies during the second half of the 20th century—at least until 1992, when rhetorical luminary George Kennedy betrayed this compact and controversially suggested

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[46] Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, "The Ontological Foundations of Rhetorical Theory," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 3 (1970): 97-108.

that rhetoric might be better conceptualized as a form of pre-symbolic "energy."[47] Kennedy's goal was to expand scholarly understanding of rhetoric to a more generalized theory, one that could account for persuasive speech among humans *and* the role of influence in the animal kingdom (as well as evolutionary connections between the two). He advocated for scholars to approach rhetoric as "the energy inherent in communication: the emotional energy that impels the speaker to speak, the physical energy expended in the utterance, the energy level coded in the message, and the energy experienced by the recipient in decoding the message."[48] Because both humans and animals have access to this energy, both engage in rhetorical exchange, and linguistic persuasion is only a higher order manifestation of the rhetorical energy implicit in all creatures: "Rhetoric, as energy, has to exist in the speaker before speech can take place….Speech would not have evolved among human beings unless rhetoric already existed."[49] Though many dismissed Kennedy's ideas as ludicrous, he greatly expanded upon them in 1998 for the first chapter in his book *Comparative Rhetoric*, and other enlarged theories of rhetoric and/or communication attempting to account for the extra-symbolic have represented a small, concurrent trickle of research ever since.[50]

Of those accounts that carefully adhere to Kennedy's consideration of rhetoric as a *pre*-symbolic energy in the realm of human affairs, however, Diane Davis's exploration

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[47] George Kennedy, "A Hoot in the Dark," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 25 (1992): 1-25. For an overview of the controversy surrounding this article upon its publication and uptake in the field, see Debra Hawhee, "Toward a Bestial Rhetoric," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 44 (2011): 81-87.

[48] Kennedy, "Hoot," 2.

[49] Kennedy, "Hoot," 4.

[50] George Kennedy, *Comparative Rhetoric: An Historical and Cross Cultural Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998). For representative work that considers or proposes general theories of rhetoric embracing the extra-human, see Sonja K. Foss and Cindy L. Griffin, "A Feminist Perspective on Rhetorical Theory: Toward a Clarification of Boundaries," *Western Journal of Communication* 56 (1992): 330-349; Richard A. Rogers, "Overcoming the Objectification of Nature in Constitutive Theories: Toward a Transhuman, Materialist Theory of Communication," *Western Journal of Communication* 62 (1998): 244-272; Kalevi Kull, "A Note on Biorhetorics," *Sign System Studies* 29 (2001): 693-702.

of an affective rhetorical orientation is perhaps the most robust.[51] Drawing on an amalgam of Freudian psychoanalysis, Continental theory, and brain science that circles Emmanuel Levinas's philosophical notion of "the face," Davis argues that an affective relation *to* the other exists prior to any symbolic exchange *with* the other. This "inessential solidarity" arrests individuals in a position of "response-ability" toward the other that exceeds any symbolic communication (even as it demands that the subject partake in interaction). Rather than continue to concentrate efforts on better understanding the symbolic dimensions of rhetorical influence, Davis suggests, contemporary rhetorical studies would do well to turn attention instead to this pre-symbolic, relational "rhetoricity" that functions as the very condition for symbolic action.

Interestingly enough, Davis's criticism gains footing primarily though the careful reconsideration of a disciplinary totem that I have already addressed in detail: Burkean symbolic identification. She argues that when Burke appropriated Sigmund Freud's ideas regarding identification to bolster his own developing rhetorical theory, he concentrated on the act only in certain developmental contexts. By selectively elevating formative, Oedipal identification as a homologue to the symbolic sociality at the core of his own philosophy, Burke ignored Freud's musings on a developmentally earlier act of identification that precedes the formation of the ego (or a sense of self). Burke's oversight is especially troublesome because this "primary identification" occasions a developmental disassociation from the (m)other that anticipates the Oedipal drama, which implies, for Davis, that *dis*identification may actually be the genesis of social relations. She uses this insight to critique Burkean and Freudian perspectives on

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[51] The full explication of Davis's evolving theory is collected in her book *Inessential Solidarity: Rhetoric and Foreigner Relations* (University of Pittsburg Press, 2010). Davis acknowledges intersections between her work and Kennedy's own in her article "Creaturely Rhetorics," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 44 (2011): 88-94.

identification and instead explore alternative philosophies of human nature that conceive of sociality as an experience of alterity prior to symbolic or linguistic ties.

The stakes of the disciplinary revolution that Davis calls far are overwhelmingly ethical. A sense of ethical ambiguity has haunted the study of rhetoric almost from its inception. Rhetoric is a vehicle for deliberation and civic participation, but it is also a tool of deception and manipulation—an uncertain line that has inspired a few volume-length defenses of rhetorical studies as a scholarly discipline.[52] Attending to questions of a pre-symbolic rhetoricity, Davis argues, opens a notable space for addressing this disciplinary anxiety, for the "the ethical relation *is* the experience of an underivable rhetorical imperative, an obligation to respond to the other[.]"[53] In short, a pre-symbolic position of rhetorical "response-ability" implicates a theory of ethics, and scholarship that attends to this position might finally enervate longstanding criticisms of rhetorical studies.

As the most developed commentary within the small body of work on the pre-symbolic aspects of rhetoric, Davis's ideas situate my exploration of a rhetoric of television in two major ways. First, her basic proposal—of an intersubjective link between individuals that anticipates symbol use—prompts further thought about specific rhetorical processes outside of or beyond symbolic representation. I could ask for no greater precedent in my attempts to formulate a rhetorical mode for television that can account for viewers' affective identifications with characters before symbolic recognition of any similarities they might share. The glaring difference between my and Davis's approach is over the question of identification: While Davis ultimately abandons the concept on the basis of her disagreements with Burke, my disagreements with Burke only

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[52] See, for example, Michael Dues and Mary Brown, *Boxing Plato's Shadow* (New York: McGraw Hill, 2004); Brian Garsten, *Saving Persuasion: A Defense of Rhetoric and Judgment* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009).

[53] Davis, *Inessential Solidarity*, 65.

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lead me to investigate the psychoanalytic roots of the term more judiciously. Freud has no theoretical monopoly on identification in psychoanalytic theory, and other approaches to the term (as we shall soon see) position the act as inaugurating a relation to others before ego solidification and symbol use. As a result, I take encouragement from Davis's scholarly example here without necessarily replicating her philosophical preferences.

Second, Davis's work highlights the potential humanistic benefits of exploring a pre-symbolic rhetorical mode in the specific context of television. In addition to any particular knowledge gained about television reception, Davis gives reason to think about what might be learned here in regard to ethics. The theoretical concept that most informs my own approach to pre-symbolic reality—Melanie Klein's notion of *projective identification*—is a mechanism of an intersubjective, developmental process that psychoanalysts call *object relations*. I will explore the specifics of these terms in more detail in Chapter Two, but one can readily discern here that object "relations" implicate connections to others in ways similar to Davis's "inessential solidarity." Because the inherently relational dimension of pre-symbolic rhetoricity leads Davis to highlight an implicitly ethical quality in rhetorical practice, the pre-symbolic relations I sketch in relation to television also inspires thought about ethical concerns in this context. I will address these concerns more fully in the conclusion to this project.

Symbolism seemed, in 1970, to afford an ontological theory of the human that could account for the widest range of rhetorical practices, but work since then on pre-symbolic realms of human experience suggests that rhetorical scholars at that time might not have pushed far enough.[54] Rather than a strong refutation of this past work, perhaps it

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[54] In addition to Kennedy and Davis, research that considers the relationship between affect and symbolism (especially in popular media texts) represents another branch within this tradition. See, for example, Brian L. Ott, "The Visceral Politics of *V for Vendetta*: On Political Affect in Cinema," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 27 (2010): 39-54; Joshua Gunn, "*Maranatha*," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 98 (2012): 359-385.

is better instead to view recent scholarship on pre-symbolic rhetoric as the heir to this early zeal for clarification and understanding. It is with this mindset, at least, that I approach the present project. The goal here is not to undermine completely Burke or other theories of rhetoric that take symbolism at their center; the goal is only to craft a rhetorical mode for television that maintains fidelity to the qualities of the medium. If this requires an understanding of rhetoric that admits the transaction of influence between individuals before symbolism, then such an exploration can only further enrich our understanding of rhetorical practice.

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

Both this chapter and the next one consider a variety of theoretical elements that in combination provide basis for a "rhetoric of projective identification" in relation to the medium of television. While this chapter has looked at existing rhetorical approaches to television and compared the concept of identification across rhetorical and media studies, the next chapter delves much more deeply into the concept of identification from a psychoanalytic vantage. More specifically, Chapter Two looks at work in the realm of filmic "apparatus theory" in order to justify my turn to psychoanalysis within the project and to provide a historical template for applying Melanie Klein's ideas to the medium of television. After finally articulating the specific parameters of the rhetoric of projective identification as a mode for television toward the end of this second chapter, I conclude with a discussion of the method I used to approach the middle chapters of the study.

Chapters Three, Four, and Five each develop in different ways the basic structure of the rhetoric of projective identification that I address in Chapter Two. Generally speaking, each chapter focuses on a classically identified element of the medium in order to demonstrate the fitness of the proposed rhetorical mode and fix my perspective more

firmly within existing scholarly conversations. Chapter Three, for instance, concentrates on the notion of televisual "intimacy." In this chapter I suggest that the widely circulated belief that television fosters sensations of emotional closeness in viewers should in fact be attributed to the medium's ability to elicit acts of unconscious, projective identification from these individuals. From this reorientation I then sketch one specific facet of the proposed rhetorical mode—the centrality of viewers' concern and scorn to the moment of reception—and explore this quality in relation to the daytime talk genre.

Chapter Four focuses on the concept of televisual "flow," especially as it pertains to the rise of the 24-hour broadcast model. I note here that while television's apparently "endless" quality would seem to constitute part of its recognized appeal as a medium, there is no evident reason why the constant presence of content should be inherently attractive—unless, of course, one allows that the viewer-medium relationship involves unconscious acts of projective identification. Klein's ideas regarding psychical development in early infancy illuminate the powerful appeal of seemingly eternal objects in one's immediate environment, and I suggest that television's ability to fulfill this "fantasy" constitutes another facet of its pre-symbolic, rhetorical mode. I conclude this chapter by applying these thoughts to the specific case of global, 24-hour news channels.

Rather than take up an element of television as a technology or industry, Chapter Five instead considers a behavior historically demonstrated by the medium's *audience*: The tendency to mobilize collectively and petition networks to "save" a program from being cancelled. The behaviors and commentary featured across many of these campaigns over the last few decades reveal a relationship to the medium characterized by viewers' inexplicable need to *protect* it, a quality that is also central to the unconscious relationship established with others through projective identification. As a result, I argue in this chapter that audience attempts to save programs from cancellation should be read

as further evidence of a rhetorical mode of projective identification within the medium overall, and an extended case study of the campaign surrounding the SyFy program *Farscape* (1999-2003) helps to ground this argument in a specific example.

Finally, in Chapter Six (the conclusion to the project), I examine the notion of "media convergence" in order to argue for the continued applicability of the rhetoric of projective identification to the study of television today despite evolutions in the technology and business of the medium over the last decade. After reviewing the contours of the rhetorical mode in light of the ground covered in the previous five chapters, I turn to two contemporary issues that I believe the mode as a theoretical lens helps illuminate. The first is the resilience of "television" as a bounded concept in the popular imagination despite increasingly blurred lines between it and other popular media. The second is the proliferation of electronic screens in daily life (all of which can be read in part, I suggest, as "television" screens) and the possible effects of this multiplication on human openness to non-symbolic modes of rhetorical address.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has considered various scholarly perspectives that together argue for the necessity of a rhetorical theory of projective identification in television studies. Previous approaches to a discreet "rhetoric of television" are either content-specific or undeveloped; there currently exists no robust account of television as a suasory *medium*. The closest that existing approaches come to providing such an account is in their shared fascination with identification as a central rhetorical tool in television broadcast, but comparing identification across both rhetorical and media studies reveals conflicting ideas about its relationship to similarity. While foundational rhetorical theory suggests that identification must always arise from perceptions of similarity, studies of the media

suggest that correlation and causation between the terms as actual audience behaviors are far more plastic. This comparison suggests that any rhetoric of television must be able to account for affective acts of identification that take place *before* symbolic recognition of similarities. Work on the pre-symbolic dimensions of rhetoric, crystallized here in the efforts of Diane Davis, provides a precedent for such a mode in rhetorical studies, although I depart from Davis in my embrace of the psychoanalytic concept of "projective identification" to account for pre-symbolic ties to the other. The nature of these pre-symbolic ties, as well as how they form a rhetoric of television as a medium, will be explored in the next chapter.

Chapter Two: Psychoanalytic Identification in Film and Television

The 2014 horror film *Oculus* revolves around the Russell family and their terrifying encounters with the Lasser Glass, an antique wall mirror that bewilders those around it into committing inexplicably deadly acts.[55] The narrative unfolds in an intriguing style that switches back and forth between the family's past and present. As young children Kaylie and Tim Russell (Karen Gillan and Brenton Thwaites) watch helplessly as the mirror slowly drives their parents to madness, murder, and suicide; as adults the Russell siblings return to the Glass to document its supernatural powers and attempt to destroy it for good. Director Mike Flanagan often blends these two timelines together to accent the illusory powers of the Glass, but throughout this blur an even more unsettling representation emerges: Kaylie's unshakable need to understand and outwit the mirror. It is Kaylie who, as an adult, secures a position at an auction house to relocate the Glass, digs through various crime reports to uncover its macabre history, and sets up an elaborate network of cameras and sensors to record its influence. Somewhat to the dismay of Tim, who recovered in a mental institution after the shared traumas of their childhood, it is almost as though Kaylie's entire adult life has become consumed with (or perhaps even *by*) the mirror.

"The symbolism of mirrors," notes Michael Ferber, "depends not only on what things cause the reflection—nature, God, a book, drama—but also on what one sees in them—oneself, the truth, the ideal, illusion."[56] Compared to nature and drama, the Lasser Glass is a rather conventional mirror (at least in appearance). What the Russell siblings

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[55]Audiences learn, for example, that one of the Glass's previous owners died of dehydration after sitting in a bathtub for days.

[56] Michael Ferber, *A Dictionary of Literary Symbols*, 2nd ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 126.

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see in the Glass, however, prompts some thought on how this mirror might function as a particularly apt symbol for film—a different kind of optical device. Like the Glass, film is popularly thought to beguile audiences with fantastic illusions, so much so that films are often compared to dreams.[57] *Oculus* audiences might, as the Russell siblings do, consciously disavow what they see as fiction, but any palpable anxiety or fear produced while watching the film testifies to the confusion of reality that the medium can inspire in viewers. Moreover, as the Glass corrupts or kills everyone who comes into contact with it, film in popular consciousness is often linked to issues of perversion and destruction. These connections range from mainstream worries over the ill social effects of film to sophisticated scholarly analyses of how the medium—though genre or technology—is intimately concerned with questions of death.[58]

Of these overlaps, perhaps the most important is on the issue of identification. As the mechanisms of the Lasser Glass inspire Kaylie to obsess over the mirror's glittering surface, the medium of film classically encourages audiences to fixate on the theatre screen, primarily through an identification of viewers' perception with the look of the camera/projector. Such alignment must occur before any other engagement with the medium. "Without this identification with the camera," argues Christian Metz,

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[57] Christian Metz explores the connection between the two thusly: "In ordinary screening conditions, as everyone has had the opportunity to observe, the subject who has fallen prey to the filmic state (most of all when the grip of the fiction on his phantasy is sufficiently strong) feels he is in a kind of daze, and spectators at the exit, brutally rejected by the black belly of the cinema into the bright, unkind light of the foyer, sometimes have the bewildered expression (happy and unhappy) of people waking up" (117). Given that film viewing necessarily occurs during a wakeful state, however, Metz ultimately suggests that the majority of viewers likely experience film as a *daydream* (129-137). See *The Imaginary Signifer: Psychoanalysis and the Cinema*, trans. Celia Britton, Annwyl Williams, Ben Brewster, and Alfred Guzzetti (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977).

[58] Two such analyses are Sontag's "The Imagination of Disaster" and Virilio's *War and Cinema*. While Sontag explores how science fiction films help viewers contemplate mortality and the end of humanity, Virilio considers overlapping historical connections between cinema and war technologies. See Susan Sontag, "The Imagination of Disaster," *Against Interpretation* (New York: Picador, 1966), 209-225; Paul Virilio, *War and Cinema: The Logistics of Perception*, trans. Patrick Camiller (New York: Verso, 1984).

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certain facts could not be understood, though they are constant ones: the fact, for example, that the spectator is not amazed when the image 'rotates' (= a pan) and yet he knows he has not turned his head. The explanation is that he has no need to turn it really, he has turned it in his all seeing capacity, his identification with the movement of the camera being that of a transcendental, not an empirical subject.[59]

In short, the medium of film effectively captivates viewers because they quickly come to understand the projected field of vision on the screen as their own—a point amusingly underscored by the promotional tagline for *Oculus*: "You see what it wants you to see."[60]

Determining differences between this identification with film and identification as it occurs in relation to television is a vital concern for the present chapter. The previous chapter discussed identification as a key suasory mechanism for television but suggested that traditional rhetorical approaches to the term fail to illuminate actual practices of television reception. This chapter, consequently, arrives at a new rhetorical understanding of the term more fit for the medium through a comparison of identification in television and film studies. Such a comparison is in many ways inevitable and valuable. The comparison is inevitable because I am approaching my study of rhetorical identification in television through the lens of psychoanalysis.[61] Much of the existing literature on identification with media from a psychoanalytic vantage concentrates on the object of film, so it would be nearly impossible to propose a psychoanalytic understanding of identification in television without first looking to this work.

The comparison is valuable because it helps clarify the differences between these two mediums on the issue of identification, which in turn helps carve out a space for a rhetoric of projective identification in relation to television. As epitomized in *Oculus*, canonical psychoanalytic approaches to film position viewer identification with the look

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[59] Metz, *Imaginary Signifier*, 50.

[60] The tagline is noted on *Oculus*'s entry at the Internet Movie Database: http://www.imdb.com/title/tt2388715/?ref_=nv_sr_1.

[61] As I noted in Chapter One, the historical debt that rhetorical studies owes to psychoanalysis on the issue of identification encourages this approach.

of the camera as primary in the pleasurable experience of spectatorship; any identification with characters comes after this engagement. This proposal rests upon a very specific overlap between the context of the public movie theatre and Freudian/Lacanian approaches to identificatory ego development. Because television historically involves different viewing spaces and practices than film, however, there is no theoretical reason to maintain identification with look of the camera as the primary form in this case. In fact, certain qualities of television as a medium give good reason to think about how identification with *characters*—not the camera—may be primary here. While such a formulation would be strange from a classical Freudian/Lacanian vantage, it is very much in line with the Kleinian notion of projective identification. As a result, Klein's ideas provide an alternative foundation to theorize appealing viewer identification with television and, by extension, a legitimate rhetorical mode for the medium.

This chapter begins with an overview of Freudian and Lacanian approaches to identification. It considers how media scholars have utilized these ideas to theorize the appeal of film through the notion of the "apparatus," as well as why specific insights about the filmic apparatus cannot be applied to television (despite historical examples to the contrary). The next section explores the features of a provisional televisual apparatus as parameters for a more fitting account of viewer identification within this medium. Because these features imply that a relational or object-centric account of identification would resonate best with the medium, the chapter then turns attention to the object relations work of Melanie Klein and suggests three ways in which the parameters of the televisual apparatus encourages the Kleinian notion of projective identification in viewers. The final sections explain why this solicitation should be viewed in rhetorical terms, provide an overview of projective identification as a rhetorical mode, and address the methodology for its application in the next three chapters.

PSYCHOANALYTIC IDENTIFICATION AND APPARATUS THEORY

Sigmund Freud posits identification as one of the many tools that the developing human being uses to manage the existence of the motivating drives, or "somatic demands upon the mind."[62] Although early in his career Freud speculated on the existence of many different drives, later he suggested that two essential drives motivate the individual: libido (the drive which pushes a person toward copulation and, more broadly, unions and continuations) and death drive (the drive which pushes a person toward self-destruction and, more broadly, separations and endings).[63] These drives in turn organize around objects, which early on Freud characterizes as anything "in regard to which or through which the [drive] is able to achieve its aim. It is what is most variable about [a drive] and is not originally connected with it, but becomes assigned to it only in consequence of being peculiarly fitted to make satisfaction possible."[64] Put another way, all human motivation may be traced back to the two drives, but the objects or people that can satisfy these impulses are often quite unique to the individual.

Of these two primary drives, libido plays a more central role in Freud's work, especially on the question of identification. He lays foundation for the interplay of identification and libido when, in 1914, he proposes the existence of a primary, narcissistic love of oneself (ego-libido) that is later disrupted by and redirected to a person in the environment (object-libido)—something of a self-identification that gives way to identification with another person.[65] The developmental and relational dimensions

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[62] Sigmund Freud, *Outline of Psycho-Analysis*, ed. and trans. James Strachey (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1949), 17. Following disciplinary conventions, I substitute *drive* for the word "instinct" here.

[63] Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, trans. James Strachey (New York: W.W. Norton, 1961). For discussion of Freud's earlier thoughts regarding "partial drives" organized around specific orifices, see Part 1 of *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, trans. James Strachey (New York: Basic Books, 1962).

[64] Sigmund Freud, "Instincts and Their Vicissitudes," *General Psychological Theory: Papers on Metapsychology*, ed. Philip Rieff (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991), 76.

[65] Sigmund Freud, "On Narcissism," *General Psychological Theory: Papers on Metapsychology*, ed. Philip Rieff (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991), 41-69.

of the term, however, do not become truly explicit until the publication of Freud's second topography in 1921 (familiar to most as the structural triad of id, ego, and superego).[66] Here the successful navigation of the Oedipus complex relies in part on the child transmuting the parents from objects-of-the-libido to objects-of-identification, repressing sexual desire for the parents by incorporating representations of them into the developing psyche as basis for the admonishing superego. This essentially incorporative function of identification remains with the child on into adulthood, and Freud uses the term to explain a variety of behaviors in daily life, from mourning loss (though an installation of a representation of the lost object within the ego) to forming groups (though a temporary substitution of the ego with the incorporated image of an object-leader).[67]

Jacques Lacan maintains the essentially incorporative element of identification in his own developmental theory, but here the most crucial identification is the one the individual makes with a distorted representation of him/herself in the *mirror stage*.[68] Lacan posits human ego formation as the result of a fundamental misrecognition that occurs when the infant first encounters its own reflection. As the (m)other holds the child in front of a mirror, the child identifies with its reflection and mistakenly interprets the apparent wholeness of its image as evidence of a whole subjectivity as well. The child incorporates this *imago* as a psychical blueprint for future development. Although the subject can never realistically control its impulses as perfectly as the imago initially suggested, the notion of a completely controllable self—or "ideal ego"—nevertheless

[66] Sigmund Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, trans. Joan Riviere and James Strachey (New York: W.W. Norton, 1960).

[67] See Sigmund Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia," *General Psychological Theory: Papers on Metapsychology*, ed. Philip Rieff (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991), 161-178; *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, trans. and ed. James Strachey (New York: W.W. Norton, 1959).

[68] Jacques Lacan, "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the *I* Function as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience," *Ècrits*, trans. Bruce Fink (New York: W.W. Norton, 2006), 75-81.

haunts the subject for the remainder of its life. For Lacan, human motivation stems not only from the direct experience of the drives, but also from a higher-level desire to achieve an ideal self instantiated in this early stage of development.

Freud and Lacan's insights on identification and the evolution of subjectivity find greatest expression in media studies through *apparatus theory*, or an approach from the 1970s based in psychoanalysis and semiotics that "inquires into the impact of the technical and physical specificity of watching films on the processing methods used by their watchers."[69] In other words, apparatus scholars attempted to explain the enigmatic appeal of film as a medium by considering how aspects of its normative viewing context at the time—the movie theatre—engaged psychical structures within spectators, as well as how spectators unconsciously responded to these engagements (most notably through acts of identification). This final component, the psyche of the audience, distinguishes the notion of "apparatus" from the mere machinery and space of film. The apparatus refers specifically to the amalgam generated when the technologies of movie theatres meet the transpersonal, psychical resources that audience members bring to this technology.[70]

Jean-Louis Baudry inaugurated this body of thought when, in 1974, he noted a structural similarity between the theatrical projection of film and Lacan's mirror stage:

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[69] Toby Miller, "Apparatus Theory: Introduction," *Film and Theory: An Anthology*, ed. Robert Stam and Toby Miller (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2000), 403. Much work here stemmed from the film journal *Screen*.

[70] In truth, the notion of a generalized spectator presents a point of disagreement for some over the utility of apparatus theory. Although psychoanalysis provided apparatus scholars with a much needed theory of film's imaginary pleasures in the 1970s, ethnographic analyses of actual media audiences since that time have provided more localized understandings of pleasure and identity in the context of media consumption that can make psychoanalytic perspectives look essentialist or overdetermined by comparison. This newer scholarship, however, often falters precisely where psychoanalytic considerations succeed: It at times overestimates the agency of the autonomous individual and ignores the subtle (or unconscious) mechanisms that influence individual decisions. "The political significance of psychoanalysis," writes Anthony Elliot, "…lies precisely in tracing the imprint of the social, cultural network upon unconscious passions" (176). The continued value of a generalized spectator for media studies is in its commitment to privileging neither the individual nor the social in understanding media consumption—a commitment aptly demonstrated in the notion of the apparatus. See Anthony Elliot, *Psychoanalytic Theory: An Introduction*, 2nd ed. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002).

the arrangement of different elements—projector, darkened hall, screen—…reconstructs the situation necessary to the release of the 'mirror stage' discovered by Lacan….For this imaginary constitution of the self to be possible, there must be—Lacan strongly emphasizes this point—two complementary conditions: immature powers of mobility and a precocious maturation of visual organization (apparent in the first few days of life). If one considers that these two conditions are repeated during cinematographic projection—suspension of mobility and predominance of the visual function—perhaps one could suppose that this is more than a simple analogy. And possibly this very point explains the 'impression of reality' so often invoked in connection with the cinema.[71]

Two types of spectator identification within the apparatus are critical for instantiating and sustaining this appealing reconstruction.[72] The primary type involves spectators identifying with characters on screen in the same way that they learned to identify with the imago in the mirror stage. The secondary type involves spectators identifying with the all-encompassing eye of the movie camera itself, which, Baudry claims, affords them an illusory, transcendental perspective on the events in the film—a perspective that recalls the unifying effects of the primordial mirror.[73] Only through both of these identifications, Baudry claims, do filmgoers experience the unique pleasures of the cinema.

Writing in Baudry's immediate wake, Christian Metz agrees with the notion that the filmic apparatus pleasurably replicates the conditions of the mirror stage (there are simply too many similarities between the two to disregard this insight), but he disagrees with his predecessor on the order of spectator identifications that result from such mimicry. Metz asserts that there are a number of problems with figuring characters as the primary site of identification for film viewers.[74] Most basically, some films do not feature

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[71] Jean Louis Baudry, "Ideological Effects of the Cinematographic Apparatus," *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, 5th ed., eds. Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974/1999), 353. My comparison of the theatre screen to the mirror in *Oculus* is, then, perhaps no accident.
[72] Baudry, "Ideological Effects," 353-354.
[73] Naturally, this point departs from the empirical approaches to media identification I addressed in Chapter One, where viewer identification across all media is largely conceived of in relation to characters (and not some abstract "view" or screen). This departure indexes a core difference between critical/psychoanalytic and empirical approaches to the term—one I will reference but cannot resolve in this project.
[74] Metz, *Imaginary Signifer*, 42-51.

characters, and even those that do can have long segments without any characters on screen. In these instances there is no possibility for spectators to identify with characters, so characters cannot stand as sites of sustained identification within the apparatus overall. Even more problematically, as much as the theatre might exhibit qualities of the mirror stage, the screen will never actually reflect the image of the spectator. The absence of viewers' own (unconsciously) anticipated reflections in this field of vision would suggest some impediment to identifying with the individuals who *are* within this "mirror."

As a result of these issues, Metz revisits Lacan's discussion of the mirror stage to theorize how primary viewer identification with film might occur on same developmental basis but with something other than the image presented on screen. In the end, he reasons that the primal quality the filmic apparatus actually recalls is the very act of *looking*, the act inaugurated in the mirror stage and most central to its function. In gazing up at the theatre screen the spectator chiefly "*identifies with himself*, with himself as a pure act of perception (as wakefulness, as alertness): as the condition of possibility of the perceived and hence as a kind of transcendental subject, which comes before every *there is*."[75] Primary cinematic identification is thus with oneself as a perceiver. As I noted at the beginning of this chapter, however, in practical terms this means that spectators primarily identify with the eye of the camera. As the apparatus reconstructs the mirror stage and the spectator comes to identify "with himself as look, the spectator can do no other than identify with the camera, too, which has looked before him at what he is now looking at and whose stationing (= framing) determines the vanishing point."[76] Only after this primary identification with the camera can viewers then come to identify with individual characters as (or if) they appear on screen.

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[75] Metz, *Imaginary Signifier*, 49.
[76] Metz, *Imaginary Signifier*, 49.

Metz's specific ordering of identifications has become an accepted standard in modern film studies, so much so that psychoanalytic considerations of appeal in other screen media—most notably television—utilize it as well.[77] After reviewing Metz's thoughts on primary identification, for example, Robert Stam suggests that "the televisual apparatus, quite apart from its 'programming,' affords pleasures even more multiform and varied than those afforded by the cinema, for the viewer identifies an even wider array of cameras and looks."[78] The logic here is that if cinema spectators find something appealing about primarily identifying with one camera, television spectators should find increased appeal by primarily identifying with this medium's many different cameras.[79] Along the same lines, Sandy Flitterman-Lewis suggests that television enacts Metz's essential understanding of primary identification but "modifies [it] in ways that support its more casual forms of looking."[80] Television ostensibly involves a more distracted spectator than that of film, and this "fractured viewing situation explodes the singular vision of the camera, offering instead numerous partial identifications, not with characters but with 'views.'"[81] It is unclear what Flitterman-Lewis means by the term "views" here, but one gets the sense that they are some modification of Metz's primary identification thesis (for these views are decidedly "not with characters").

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[77] Metz's is certainly not the *only* standard for understanding identification in film, but as Anne Friedberg argues, his *Imaginary Signifer* "remains a key text for its outline of the registers of cinematic identification" (40). See "A Denial of Difference: Theories of Cinematic Identification" *Psychoanalysis & Cinema*, ed. E. Ann Kaplan (New York: Routledge, 1990), 36-45.

[78] Robert Stam, "Television News and Its Spectator," *Film and Theory: An Anthology*, ed. Robert Stam and Toby Miller (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2000), 362. For similar thoughts, see Jonathan Bignell's discussion of identification in his *An Introduction to Television Studies*, 3rd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2013), 104.

[79] Stam's primary example here is the evening news. Unlike the cohesive "look" of a distinct film, he asserts, news programming offers many different points of primary identification: global stock footage, local taped footage, and live broadcast images. The frenetic blend of these various assumed cameras and perspectives supposedly "extends human perception, granting an exhilarating sense of visual power to its virtually 'all-perceiving' spectator" (362). See Stam, "Television News."

[80] Sandy Flitterman-Lewis, "Psychoanalysis, Film, and Television," *Channels of Discourse: Reassembled*, 2nd ed., ed. Robert C. Allen (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 219.

[81] Flitterman-Lewis, "Psychoanalysis," 219.

The problem with these movements from film to television is that they overlook the very foundation of Metz's ideas about primary identification: the cinematic.[82] Early in *The Imaginary Signifer* Metz identifies the cinematic as his primary object of concern, defining it as an elusive but irreducible characteristic of the filmic apparatus:

> The cinematic does not consist of some static list of themes or subjects which are supposed to be especially apt for the cinema and for which the other arts have a lesser 'vocation' (a truly metaphysical conception, proceeding by *essences*)[;] it can only be defined, or rather foreseen as a special way of saying anything (or nothing), i.e. as a *signifer effect*: a special coefficient of signification (and not a signified) linked to the intrinsic workings of the cinema and to its very adoption rather than that of another machine, another apparatus.[83]

While the term specifically refers to means of articulation, it also broadly denotes the otherwise ineffable characteristics that uniquely distinguish this apparatus from others.

The notion of the cinematic is intimately linked to Metz's final account of identification, and in some ways this mode almost prefigures his thoughts on the subject. Because the cinematic appears to invoke the developmental reality of the mirror stage, Metz seizes upon Lacan in his interpretation of the apparatus. This somewhat sensible turn, however, involves a theoretical Trojan horse. Lacan's theory of the mirror stage carries within it a very particular understanding of human ego formation inherited from Freud—namely, that the ego forms at an early age though a process of identification. In adopting Lacan's account of the mirror stage for its resonance with the cinematic, then, Metz also adopts a very specific understanding of identification that necessarily influences his resulting perspective on spectatorship.

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[82] To be fair, Flitterman-Lewis at least partially acknowledges this problem: "The conditions that produce visual/auditory images and that shape our viewing experience in the cinema are simply not the same when we watch TV. For this reason, where psychoanalysis is concerned, there can be no simple exchange of method from one medium to the other" (203-204). She modifies Metz's understanding of primary and secondary identification to account for this transition, but she still accepts without question their ordering. Flieerman-Lewis misses the possibility that this ordering is a product of the filmic apparatus itself, in which case no amount of modification can make Metz's ideas fit for television.

[83] Metz, *Imaginary Signifer*, 37.

It is Lacan's specific theory of *identifactory* ego formation—not simply the larger analogy between theatre screen and mirror—that eventually leads Metz to posit spectator identification with the camera as prior to identification with characters. Recall that the Lacanian mirror founds the ego (or, in Lacan's words, that it "situates the agency known as the ego, prior to its social determination, in a fictional direction"[84]). The infant has no inkling of itself as a self before facing the mirror. Because Metz contends that the cinematic works on the basis of the mirror stage, he must also tacitly maintain that an important link exists in the filmic apparatus between the screen and the spectator on the issue of egoic identification. This notion, purposefully maintained or not, leads him to eliminate identification with characters as the most sustained type with film. "Identification with [characters] appearing on screen," Metz writes, "even when it occurs, still tells us nothing about the *place of the spectator's ego* in the inauguration of the signifer….When I 'recognise' [sic] my like on the screen, and even more when I do not recognise it, where am I?"[85] Given the Lacanian perspective that fuels this musing (the ego stems from identifying with one's *own* reflection in the mirror stage, not another's), Metz's answer to his own question here—that the spectator's ego is identifying with *itself* as perceiver and, by extension, the camera—is not at all surprising.

My explication here does not imply that Metz is wrong for framing primary identification in the way he does, but it does give good reason to suspect that identification with the camera may be the primary form only *in relation to the cinematic*. Metz's ideas are almost entirely a product of his concentration on this specific mode, so there is little reason to maintain his perspective when analyzing identification to explain the unconscious appeal of other mediums—a point that some previous psychoanalytic

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[84] Lacan, "Mirror Stage," 76.
[85] Metz, *Imaginary Signifer*, 47.

approaches to television overlook. In fact, because the cinematic necessarily implies the unique machinery and space of the public theatre, any uncritical transference of Metz's ideas to television should invite skepticism. Even a passing comparison of the mediums yields substantial differences linked to their traditional viewing contexts:

> Watching TV is a casual, everyday routine. We are guests in the cinema, but we are at home, in most cases, when we watch TV, and on this occasion the movie actors are guests in our living rooms. We do not control the film, but we do operate the TV. Although we can leave the cinema hall whenever we wish, the psychological effect is different. The images on the big screen are projected by an unknown hand; they do not depend on the viewer to appear or disappear. Watching TV is an entirely profane act, we can switch between channels and control the medium—there are no precepts![86]

For these reasons, rather than draw upon Metz directly in arriving at a psychoanalytic understanding of identification and appeal in the context of television, it is better to utilize him instead as a source of inspiration for approaching this topic. His discussion of the filmic apparatus and its attendant cinematic mode provides a solid model for building a similar theory attuned to the particularities of the broadcast medium. Put another way, if tasked with explaining the appeal of television rather than that of film, Metz would most likely ask: What historical realities constitute the televisual apparatus, and what notions of identification resonate with *its* particular mode?

THE TELEVISUAL APPARATUS

Admittedly, exploring the televisual apparatus for what it can tell us about viewer identification assumes that the broader notion of the apparatus productively illuminates the object of media at all—a view not everyone in contemporary media studies shares.[87] In particular, apparatus theory seems ill equipped to address those evolutions in media

[86] Ruth Lorand, "The Aesthetic Aspects of Television," *Television: Aesthetic Reflections*, ed. Ruth Lorand (New York: Peter Lang, 2002), 14.

[87] For common criticisms of apparatus theory, see Richard Allen, "Psychoanalytic Film Theory," *A Companion to Film Theory*, ed. Toby Miller and Robert Stam (New York: Blackwell, 2004), 131.

that I addressed in Chapter One. The notion of the apparatus supposes a stable and normalized reception context for audiences. When apparatus scholars composed their thoughts about film in the 1970s, they could safely assume that the vast majority of spectators viewed films in pubic theatres. Their insights rest upon the particularities of this context for coherence. Since film and many other popular media are no longer constrained to specific locations or technologies, these insights can now appear moot, which in turn casts doubt on the utility of the approach for film and other media today.

I believe, however, that there is still some conceptual use to be wrung from the notion of the apparatus. The specific material conditions that Baudry and Metz discuss may no longer singularly characterize the reception of film, but the apparatus they discuss nevertheless endures today as a constellation of accepted locations and behaviors that remain central to contemporary film viewing habits. "One does not have to be a card-carrying cinephilic snob," writes Charles Acland, "to hold the big screen experience as the situational ideal for [film] spectatorship."[88] Despite the migration of filmic content to different delivery platforms, the movie theatre remains the privileged space for film in the cultural imagination. Most feature films continue to debut in public theatres before moving on to ancillary markets (DVD/Blu-Ray, Video OnDemand, etc.), and audiences continue to patron movie theatres as a result. In addition, the protocols for proper viewing that stem from this specific environment are well understood and replicated. Film festivals and awards ceremonies continue to promote postures of reverence before the screen, and film viewers at home regularly dim the lights or demand complete silence of their fellow watchers.[89]

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[88] Charles Acland, "Theatrical Exhibition: Accelerated Cinema," *The Contemporary Hollywood Film Industry*, eds. Paul Macdonald and Janet Wasko (New York: Blackwell, 2008), 94.
[89] Francesco Casetti, "Back to the Motherland: The Film Theatre in the Postmedia Age," *Screen* 52 (2011): 1-12.

To consider any medium today from the perspective of apparatus theory is to acknowledge that technological and social changes within a medium do not obliterate or even always largely supplant those norms that characterize its widespread social adoption. Perhaps it is best now to conceive of the apparatus as a historically normalized matrix of technologies, spaces, content standards, and reception behaviors that characterizes a given medium and continues to engage contemporary users, either in actuality or as a set of conventions against which changes in the medium are measured. The apparatus gives rise to the oblique but mainstream "sense" of a medium that we carry with us and invoke when we encounter some new technological or social development—especially in the case of television. As Horace Newcomb notes, discussions over changes in television "are deeply reliant on the comfortable, generalized familiarity with 'TV' as experienced in the past. It is a past within easy memory of many viewer-users of the medium."[90] I believe that the concept of the apparatus gives some much needed form to this "generalized familiarity," and the prevalence of this familiarity in turn suggests that investigating the parameters of such a historical, televisual apparatus can tell us something important about viewer relationships with the medium overall.

Unfortunately, conceiving of the apparatus in this way does not make the task of outlining the aspects televisual apparatus any easier. Little scholarship on this notion now exists, and even less is helpful in outlining comprehensive parameters.[91] More common in existing literature—though not by much—is what might be called "apparatic" thinking, or attempting to understand the psychical dimensions of television through the lens of

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[90] Horace Newcomb, "This is Not Al Dente: *The Sopranos* and the New Meaning of 'Television'," *Television: The Critical View*, 7th ed., ed. Horace Newcomb (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 562.
[91] See Stam for a notable exception, as well as Michele Hilmes, "The Television Apparatus: Direct Address," *Journal of Film and Video* 37 (1985): 27-36.

assumed viewing context and behavior. Caroline Bainbridge enacts this kind of thinking in her analysis of viewer fantasies elicited by the HBO series *In Treatment*, a drama about a psychoanalyst and his patients:

> The structure and format of the show, as well as its media reception, are significant in understanding the powerful fantasies it generates because these aspects of the programme work in tandem with its narrative content to engender fantasies particular to the distinct, culturally-specific television flow in which any given broadcast takes place. There are a number of fantasies at play here….The first [season] comprised half-hour episodes screened at the same time on each night of the week, simulating the regularity of the therapeutic contract and yet simultaneously repackaging it into shorter, more bearable half-hour slots….This scheduling helps to construct an obvious fantasy for viewers: they are witnessing what it would be like for them to be in therapy themselves. By committing to viewing the series for half an hour each weeknight, viewers are entering into a kind of therapeutic contract of their own.[92]

Bainbridge never speaks of an apparatus in the essay, but her general point—that there is an appealing alignment here between televised content, viewing context, socio-technological norms of the medium ("flow"), and the psychical needs of viewers—resembles a general perspective of apparatus theory applied to television.[93]

In light of this lack, perhaps the best way to arrive at a fully developed account of the apparatus here is through a deeper consideration of the *televisual* as a parallel to Metz's *cinematic*, or as a mode of expression that uniquely characterizes television. In academic discussion the term "televisual" most often refers to the aesthetic dimensions of television, but stylistic considerations of content alone (even with recourse to production

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[92] Caroline Bainbridge, "Psychotherapy on the Couch: Exploring the Fantasies of *In Treatment*," *Psychoanalysis, Culture & Society* 17 (2012): 157.

[93] Of course, in the next breath Bainbridge notes that some viewers did not watch the program in this intended daily fashion (choosing instead to watch only select episodes or all episodes at once via DVD or DVR technologies). This fact could imply that if there is such a thing as the televisual apparatus, actual viewer practices render its insights theoretically suspect. I contend, however, that this discrepancy has more to do with applying "apparatic" thinking to a specific television program (where viewer data is available) than with an apparatus approach to television overall (where specific content is often meaningless). The ability to control content is, in fact, central to the apparatus of television—as I shall soon discuss.

and/or technology) often downplay reflections on viewing context and behavior that are just as central to any apparatus.[94] A more useful approach on the question of reception is Tony Fry's assertion that "the televisual names…the end of the medium, in a context, and the arrival of television as the context. What is clear is that television has to be recognized as an organic part of the social fabric."[95] The televisual in this case refers to the ways in which television functions as an environment, shaping viewer thought and behavior as much as they shape it as a technology. Fry's Heideggerian approach to this interplay quickly departs from the psychoanalytic focus of the apparatus, but his point nonetheless prompts thought about the televisual as a distinct viewing context.

In her extensive literature review on the televisual, however, Caren Deming most fully realizes the term for an apparatus approach by acknowledging that it at once involves aesthetic and environmental dimensions. Defining the televisual as "a complex of formal tendencies that shape television works and their reception," she groups existing perspectives on the topic into five defining and overlapping qualities.[96] The first and most prominent of these is *temporality*, or television's emphasis on time. Historically this quality manifests in television's technological capacity for liveness and the immediate presentation of remote events, but it is even more apparent today in the paradoxical management of the medium's bountiful "flow" (or the seemingly endless procession of visual content). On the one hand, the ability for users to surf freely between channels magnifies the sensation of continuity that flow engenders. On the other hand, industry

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[94] See, for example, John Thornton Caldwell, *Televisuality: Style, Crisis, and Authority in American Television* (New Brunswisk, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1995); Jeremy G. Butler, *Television Style* (New York: Routledge, 2010).

[95] Tony Fry, "Introduction," *R/U/A/TV? Heidegger and the Televisual*, ed. Tony Fry (Sydney: Power Institute of Fine Arts, 1993), 13.

[96] Caren Deming, "Locating the Televisual in Golden Age Television," *A Companion to Television*, ed. Janet Wasko (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), 127.

norms organize flow into highly regimented segments. Commercials predictably punctuate individual television programs, and programs as a whole appear in weekly episodes that comprise yearly seasons. The value placed on narrative repetition and redundancy within this programming only further speaks to the importance of time here.

The other qualities are slightly less prominent in existing literature, but they are no less important to characterizing the televisual overall. The second is *spatiality*, and in particular the prominence of two-dimensional space in television. While film often attempts to stress the depth of its visual field, Deming notes that television regularly draws attention to its absence of depth. A constant barrage of graphics (the opening credits of a program, a chart that accompanies a news report, etc.) disrupts viewers' chances of becoming absorbed in the image like they might with film. The third quality is *aurality*, or the importance of acoustics. This characteristic is apparent in both television content (via aesthetic qualities like voice-overs or personalities that address viewers directly) and reception (in the ways that television has been taken up as a primary vehicle of social commentary and a source of "endless chatter" on issues of the day). The fourth quality is *femininity*, or cultural associations between television, domesticity, and women. This quality is most discernable in historical connections between the medium and the home viewing context, but it also materializes in social worries over the influence of television on children and the family. When combined with classical understandings of women as consumer heads of families, television's overwhelmingly commercial focus takes on a decidedly feminine aura. Finally, the fifth quality is *hybrity*, or television's tendency to blend categories. Scripted programming often participates in genre-splicing (perhaps best witnessed in the rise of the "dramady"), and reality TV playfully disregards the line between truth and fiction.

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Deming's abstract discussion of these five qualities—temporality, spatiality, aurality, femininity, and hybridity—features a number of references to modern television, but her primary purpose in exploring them is to illuminate the specifically historical basis of the televisual. Utilizing the program *The Goldbergs* as a case study, she spends the second half of her essay tracing each quality to the mid-20th century and the so-called "Golden Age" of American television, a move that contradicts scholars who situate the rise of television's distinct character later in the same century. Deming stops short of saying that the televisual actually originated in the Golden Age, but her analysis reveals that its most significant components were already at least somewhat present "when television was just coming into its own."[97]

As a result, Deming's commentary provides an especially helpful foundation for thinking through the televisual apparatus. Like Metz and the cinematic, Deming offers the televisual as a cluster of characteristics that contribute to a fairly distinct mode of expression for this medium.[98] Her location of these characteristics both in the Golden Age and in contemporary television provides good reason to consider them among the most salient and enduring components of the medium overall—the components that the vast majority of users would recognize as central to "television." Because I have suggested that an apparatus implicates the material and social norms that have most characterized a medium through history, and because Deming's work indexes these types of norms for television precisely, it is possible to utilize her observations to begin generating some specific parameters of the televisual apparatus.

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[97] Deming, "Locating the Televisual," 134

[98] This point is a final impression of Deming's work more than the intended purpose of the author herself. In fact, part of her project is focused on understanding connections between cinematic and televisual styles. Deming concludes the essay by noting that "the cross-currents of visual style present in *The Goldbergs…* suggest that the convergence of cinematic and televisual styles needs to be understood in evolutionary terms and contextualized accordingly" (139). Regardless, by the end of her essay one also gets the sense that the *summation* of the five televisual qualities constitutes a unique, expressive mode for television.

With a closer look at Deming's work, the parameters of the televisual apparatus begin to emerge. Historically, the normative viewing context for television is the home, and as a result television spectatorship is one strand in a larger tapestry of domestic events.[99] This context in turn positions the technology of the commercial television "set" as the most typical screen that viewers encounter. Home television screens have certainly varied in size through time, but as a whole they are comparably smaller than theatre screens and feature surface presentations rather than immersive depths. While the overall content displayed on these television screens is fragmented (in addition to commercial breaks, programs often do not exceed 30 minutes before another one begins), it is also highly predictable (programs rarely begin at times outside of the hour or half hour). Within this quasi-frenetic structure, television viewers have a marked degree of autonomy in terms of reception behaviors. They can surf between channels until they find something they want to watch, and they also have the power to alter visual and aural presentation within the liberal bounds set by the display technology.

One, final quality is missing from Deming's otherwise impressive characterization of the medium. In addition to television's temporality, spatiality, aurality, femininity, and hybridity, the medium is also fairly distinct in its *relationality*.[100] Part of what distinguishes television from other media is the special tendency of its viewers to interact and establish affective ties with the individuals they see on screen. In

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[99] For further commentary on domestic space as the normative viewing context for television, see David Morely (with Roger Silverstone), "Domestic Communication: Technologies and Meanings," *Television, Audiences & Cultural Studies* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 201-212; Lynn Spigel, *Make Room For TV: Television and the Family Ideal in Postwar America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Cecelia Tichi, *Electronic Hearth: Creating an American Television Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

[100] In truth, Deming somewhat grazes the notion of television's relationality in discussing the prominence of direct address in the medium (under the umbrella of aurality), but she does not explore it explicitly to any significant degree here. Perhaps it is also possible to glean an element of relationality from her discussion of television's femininity, albeit in a very indirect fashion. As a result, my discussion here may be viewed as either an amplification or supplement to her work.

media studies the term *parasocial interaction* refers to "the psychological processes through which media users treat media figures as if they were real people," and *parasocial relationships* concern "longer lasting psychological constructs through which [users] come to feel as if [they] 'know' media figures as members of a virtual social network."[101] Put another way, the study of parasocial interaction looks at how audiences engage with media figures during the instant of program reception, paying special attention to viewers' moment-by-moment thoughts and feelings about these figures. The study of parasocial relationships considers how the accretion of these interactions over time can create the perception of an enduring—if one-way—link with a figure. Scholars characterize the relationship as one-way because the figure has no knowledge of the television viewer, but the viewer comes to believe that he/she knows a great deal about the figure. This imbalance qualifies the relationship as "parasocial" because it mimics the sociality of real world relationships without any actual interaction between partners.[102]

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[101] David Giles, *Psychology of the Media* (New York: Palgrave Macmillian, 2010), 93.

[102] While a parasocial relationship lacks some key qualities of more typical interpersonal relations (most notably the equal role of partners in controlling the evolution of the interaction), the fact that viewers feel like they genuinely know televised figures means that the link can provide many of the classic benefits of actual interaction for the viewer: companionship, belonging, etc. The potential for these benefits arises from the fact that parasocial relationships occasion and develop in a fashion similar to real relationships according to the interpersonal tenets of uncertainty reduction, attribution habits, perceived similarity in attitude, and attachment style. Research in this areas even suggests that the end of a parasocial relationship can elicit remorse similar to what the viewer would feel at the end of a relationship in the real world, although scholars here disagree as to why and to what degree. See Rebecca B. Rubin and Michael P. McHugh, "Development of Parasocial Interaction Relationships," *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 31 (1987): 279-292; Elizabeth M. Perse and Rebecca B. Rubin, "Attribution in Social and Parasocial Relationships," *Communication Research* 16 (1989): 59-77; John R. Turner, "Interpersonal and Psychological Predictors of Parasocial Interaction with Different Television Performers," *Communication Quarterly* 41 (1993): 443-453; Tim Cole and Laura Leets, "Attachment Styles and Intimate Television Viewing: Insecurely Forming Relationships in a Parasocial Way," *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* 16 (1999): 495-511. For discussions of parasocial breakup, see Keren Eyal and Jonathan Cohen, "When Good *Friends* Say Goodbye: A Parasocial Breakup Study," *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 50 (2006): 502-523; Johnathan Cohen, "Parasocial Breakups: Measuring Individual Differences in Responses to the Dissolution of Parasocial Relationships," *Mass Communication & Society* 6 (2003): 191-202; Julie Lather and Emily Moyer-Guse, "How Do We React When Our Favorite Characters Are Taken Away? An Examination of a Temporary Parasocial Breakup," *Mass Communication & Society* 14 (2011): 196-215.

Since the 1950s scholars have regularly suggested that television and radio are equipped to facilitate parasocial relationships beyond the capabilities of other media, with television becoming the more dominant of the two as the popular appeal of radio diminished.[103] Part of this fact arises from the relative length of television texts compared to film or novels. Because a popular television program can run for a decade or more during its original broadcast (and even longer in syndication), there is simply a much greater opportunity for viewers to establish enduring relationships with figures on television programs than with figures in a single film or book. In addition, television is an effective venue for parasocial activity because of the relatively high numbers of relatable figures present on television in comparison to other mediums. While a film or novel typically offers users a bounded set of fictional characters as points of relation, television offers fictional characters in addition to a variety of other quasi-real "personae" intrinsic to the medium (newscasters, game show hosts, etc). The round the clock presentation of these characters and personae provides television viewers with virtually countless points of relation. For both of these reasons, I contend that parasocial "relationality" should be included with the other distinguishing characteristics of television and stand as a final, vital content/reception component of the televisual apparatus.

Rounding out these qualities returns us to the question that inspired this section: Given its specific parameters, what type of primary viewer identification is the televisual apparatus most likely to feature as the source of its appeal? We can now say with greater confidence that it is certainly *not* the one Metz outlines for the filmic apparatus. The technological and social norms that characterize the televisual apparatus would seem to

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[103] Donald Horton and W. Richard Whol, "Mass Communication and Parasocial Interaction: Observations on Intimacy at a Distance," *Psychiatry* 19 (1956): 215-229. For an excellent (if now slightly dated) overview of major developments in this longstanding research tradition, see David Giles, "Parasocial Interaction: A Review of the Literature and a Model for Future Research," *Media Psychology* 4 (2002): 279-305.

cultivate an especially unfocused spectator that has little opportunity or reason to establish prolonged identification with the singular look of the camera. The comparably small size and depthless presentation of the screen, the regular shifts in televised content and between channels, and the interweaving of television viewing with other domestic activities (chatting with others, making or eating meals, etc.) would all suggest that spectators primarily identify with something else in this specific context.

In fact, based on the prominence of parasocial activity in relation to television, one might intuit that only a complete reversal of Metz's own understanding provides a plausible, affirmative answer to the question posed above. More than 50 years of research on parasocial interaction indicates the presence of an immediate, affective link between viewers and televised personae, an ephemeral connection that can nevertheless develop into the sensation of a more persistent and rewarding relationship. In light of the many casual/fragmented reception practices that cohere around television, these parasocial ties might actually exist as the most enduring, pleasurable connections that viewers maintain with the medium. It takes only an intuitive leap to think about these connections as identifications, which would in turn forward the idea that identification with *characters* (not with the look of the camera) is the primary form and source of appeal for viewers of television. Perhaps it is only after viewers first identify with televised personae that they care enough to establish a sustained identification with the view on their screen.

Intuition alone, of course, is not an ample basis for answering scholarly questions; developing this reversal into anything more than pure speculation requires some theoretical scaffolding akin to Metz's original project. Toward this end, in the same way that Metz aligns Lacan's developmental notion of the mirror stage with the particularities of the cinematic to arrive at a theory of primary identification with the camera in relation to film, I now turn to Melanie Klein's developmental theory of object relations to

consider how it resonates with the particularities of the televisual and might serve as the basis for an account of primary identification with characters in relation to television.

KLEINIAN OBJECT RELATIONS AND PROJECTIVE IDENTIFICATION

Melanie Klein enjoys great popularity in British clinical circles but is largely unknown outside of this context (especially in the realm of media studies), so some intellectual biography is appropriate before delving into her work and its application to television.[104] Klein was born in Vienna in 1882 and first encountered psychoanalysis through a reading of Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams* in 1914 while living in Budapest.[105] A fascination with Freud's ideas led her to undergo analysis with the Hungarian psychoanalyst Sandor Ferenczi, and, upon the completion of her tutelage, it was Ferenczi who encouraged Klein to pursue her (at the time controversial) desires to apply psychoanalytic understandings in the analysis of young children.[106] Klein took up this line of thought and practice after moving to Berlin in 1921 to work with the psychoanalyst Karl Abraham, a student and frequent collaborator of Freud's. Juliet Mitchell suggests that the perspectives these two men took in relation to Freud's ideas

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[104] This is not to suggest that Melanie Klein is completely unknown in media studies; some works do use her ideas as a foundation for textual analyses or to interpret audience behaviors. For some examples of this work across different media, see Gillian Skirrow, "Hellivision: An Analysis of Video Games," *High Theory/Low Culture: Analyzing Popular Television and Film*, ed. Colin MacCabe (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1986), 115-142; Jackie Stacey, *Star Gazing: Hollywood Cinema and Female Spectatorship* (New York: Routledge, 1994); Glen O. Gabbard and Krin Gabbard, "Alien and Melanie Klein's Night Music," *Psychiatry and the Cinema*, 2nd ed. (Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Press, 1999), 277-291; Beth Braun, "*The X-Files* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*: The Ambiguity of Evil in Supernatural Representations," *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 28 (2000): 88-94; Andrew M. Gordon, *Empire of Dreams: The Science Fiction and Fantasy Films of Steven Spielberg* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008), 127-132. In addition, at the end of this section I will address some further Kleinian work in media studies closer in spirit to my own project.

[105] Phyllis Grosskurth, *Melanie Klein: Her World and Her Work* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987).

[106] Klein spearheaded the movement to psychoanalyze children in the early 20th century, and much of her developmental theory arises from observations of these patients. For an overview of her clinical career and technique, see Melanie Klein, "The Psycho-Analytic Play Technique: Its History and Significance," *Envy and Gratitude and Other Works: 1946-1963* (New York: Free Press, 1975), 122-140.

prophesied Klein as something of a contradiction for the growing psychoanalytic establishment of the time:

> Where Ferenczi loves, quarrels, and bursts with ideas, Karl Abraham respects, smoothes things over and binds his new insights in a strait-jacket of dubious loyalty. Intellectually, consciously, there is no doubt that Melanie Klein owed most to Karl Abraham's encouragement and his ideas. Spiritually, something of the freedom of Ferenczi and the excitement of Budapest seems to have found its unconscious echo in her.[107]

Klein largely fulfilled the terms of this ominous prophesy upon her move to Britain in 1926. Here she quickly became (in)famous for her willingness to publicly contradict some of Freud's foundational insights regarding childhood.

Although Klein herself never wavered in identifying as a Freudian (in the sense that she never abandoned his theory of the drives), by 1935 it was clear to most that "her contribution to psychoanalysis…was growing into an autonomous unit, a growing independent body."[108] There are a number of differences between her ideas and Freud's own, but it is possible to reduce these to two central discrepancies on the question of subjectivity. The first is on <mark>the importance of the mother in early human development.</mark> For Freud, the experience of "primary plenitude" in the early infant-mother dyad is important for developing subjectivity only to the degree that it functions as a precondition to the father's intervention and threat of castration in the Oedipus complex.[109] Klein's own clinical work with children, however, led her to conclude that much more occurs during this stage than either Freud or his adherents would ever imagine.

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[107] Juliet Mitchell, "Introduction," *The Selected Melanie Klein*, ed. Juliet Mitchell, (New York: The Free Press, 1986), 10.

[108] Mitchell, "Introduction," 9.

[109] Alluding to castration, Freud writes that "the breach and turning-point in sexual life lies in its becoming subordinate to the processes of reproduction. Everything that happens before this turn of events and equally everything that…aims solely at obtaining pleasure is…proscribed" (392). See Sigmund Freud, "The Sexual Life of Human Beings," *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*, ed. and trans. James Strachey (New York: W.W. Norton, 1966), 375-396.

Second, while Freud devotes a great deal of time to investigating the role of the pleasure-seeking libido in his work, Klein is primarily concerned with the death drive in her own corpus. Freud initially argued that much of the death drive is redirected away from the self and accounts for the existence of human aggression, a point with which Klein agreed based on the ubiquity and severity of aggressive impulses she observed in her very young patients. In the end, however, no matter how much of the drive is redirected or transformed into outward aggression, she notes "that the destructive instinct is directed against the organism itself and must therefore be regarded by the ego as a danger."[110] Unlike Freud, whose work concentrates largely on anxieties that result from the frustrations of sexual impulses, Klein asserts that the threat of self-annihilation constitutes the most important psychical anxiety.[111]

Both the mother and the death drive represent key nodes for Klein in a complex process of developmental *object relations*. Generally speaking, in psychoanalysis the concept of object relations references "the relationship between real, external people and internal images and residues of relations with them, [as well as] the significance of these residues for psychic functioning."[112] The term refers to a dynamic but often unconscious process by which human beings internalize mental representations of other people ("objects") and incorporate these representations as aspects of the self. There are many different strains of object relations theory within the larger umbrella of psychoanalytic thought, but within these Klein's perspective is fairly distinct because she occupied a transitional space in the history of psychoanalytic thought. In opposition to Freud and

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[110] Melanie Klein, *The Psychoanalysis of Children*, trans. Alix Strachey (New York: Free Press, 1975), 126.

[111] Freud suggests that most anxieties stem from the threat of castration in the Oedipus complex, which means that they do not appear until after the first few years of life (rather than, as Klein suggests, at birth).

[112] Jay R. Greenberg and Stephen A. Mitchell, *Object Relations in Psychoanalytic Theory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), 12. O*bjects* in this context refer almost always to people.

others before her who maintained that object relations merely facilitate key developmental processes like repression, Klein insists that they represent the fundamental mechanism of subjectivity formation.[113] She was the earliest renowned psychoanalyst to adopt the process as the core element of her metapsychology (or a comprehensive account of psychical structures and functions). In contrast to W. R. D. Fairbairn, D. W. Winnicott, and many of the object relations theorists that came after her, however, Klein also maintains that the unconscious internalization of others is intrinsically tied to the operation of the motivating drives.[114] This means that Klein was also the last renowned psychoanalyst in the British object relations tradition to preserve the Freudian insights which largely distinguish psychoanalysis from other branches of psychology.

Kleinian developmental theory positions object relations as the central mechanism by which infants mitigate the primal anxiety stemming from the death drive. Oddly, the first activity here is not one of incorporation, but projection—the imaginative projection of the infant's drives into an object/other in the infant's environment (most often its mother or primary caretaker). "The young infant," Klein writes,

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[113] Recall that Freud's earliest significant discussion of objects concerns only their fitness as real points of organization and discharge for the motivational drives. Only after the growing interest in object relations proper did Freud adopt this parlance in his later discussions of the Oedipus complex. Even here, however, the operation of object relations is secondary to the mechanism of repression in the sense that the first only helps explain one aspect of the much more complex second (the internalization of the parents as the basis for the developing super ego). The psychoanalyst that most seriously pursued the notion of internalizing objects before Klein was her mentor Karl Abraham, whose proscribed thoughts on "introjection" in the clinical context laid the foundation for her expanded view. See Chapter Two ("Introjection and Projection") in R. D. Hinshelwood's *Clinical Klein: From Theory to Practice* (New York: Basic Books, 1994).

[114] Issues of space preclude a developed discussion of Fairbairn and Winnicott's own approaches to object relations, but in brief they each abandon Freud's theory of the drives and substitute relationship-seeking and reality-seeking functions (respectively) as core motivations. This abandonment of drive theory allows for other developments that render strains of British object relations bizarre from a Kleinian perspective. Winnicott in particular departs from Klein's own understanding of objects by noting that the developing human's object relations are largely realistic and pragmatic (with blankets, toys, bottles, etc.) rather than entirely phantasmic or unconscious. To be sure, a number of psychoanalysts after Klein preserved her concentration on the death drive and its aggression in their own work to greater or lesser degrees (Susan Issacs, Hanna Segal, Wilfred Bion and other so-called "Kleinians"), but none have achieved the fame or notoriety of their predecessor—particularly outside of psychoanalytic circles.

would be in danger of being flooded by his self destructive impulses if the mechanism of projection could not operate. It is partly in order to perform this function that the ego is called into action at birth by the [libido]. The primal process of projection is the means of deflecting the death instinct outwards. Projection also imbues the first object with libido. The other primal process is introjection, again largely in the service of the life instinct; it combats the death instinct because it leads to the ego taking in something life-giving (first of all food) and thus binding the death instinct working within.[115]

In essence, the formation of the ego (and therefore subjectivity) is a response to the diffuse anxiety over annihilation; the ego materializes in order to expel the source of this threat. After projection the infant comes to experience the threat largely as an emanation from the object/other rather than from itself, which temporarily relieves its anxiety. In imaginatively ridding itself of the death drive, however, the novice and clumsy ego also manages to evacuate the libido into the same object/other. This means that the primary object/other contains at once the death drive's threat of annihilation *and* the libido's life-affirming energies, a paradox that effectively splits the other into "good" and "bad" objects in the eyes of the infant. Because the ego continues to experience the threat of annihilation from the now "bad" object, it attempts to incorporate (or *introject*) the now "good" object as a mental representation and a sustaining bulwark against the threat. Unfortunately, because both objects are in fact one in the same, the ego indiscriminately absorbs both good and bad objects, and the cycle of projection and introjection repeats.

With each cycle, the developing infant incorporates additional representations of others and begins to populate a vibrant, private reality of inner objects (bad and good).[116]

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[115] Melanie Klein, "On the Development of Mental Functioning," *Envy and Gratitude and Other Works, 1946-1963* (New York: Free Press, 1975), 238. Klein's assertion that the ego exists from birth as a servant of the drives is in contrast to Freud and Lacan's conceptions of ego formation as a response to castration threat and introduction to the Law of the Father, respectively.

[116] It is important to note here that, for Klein, all object relations and the psychical reality that results from them take place on the plane of unconscious phantasy. For Freud, phantasy functions 1) as a path akin to dreams upon which frustrated wishes find fulfillment, and 2) as the substance of an unconscious psychical reality that, while unreal, nevertheless informs the manifestation of actual psychical symptoms. Klein's own definition hovers closest to this second notion. Although she never clearly defines her understanding

These objects in turn inspire a series of developmental positions and defense mechanisms that I will address at length in later chapters. More important for my argument now, however, is Klein's central belief that this process constitutes a special form of identification she calls *projective identification*.[117] Although this term aligns with the Freudian understanding of identification addressed at the beginning of this chapter (in their common emphasis on the psychical incorporation of another), Klein's conception is somewhat unique in that a projective element must always precede the introjective one. In other words, while Freud suggests that the infant incorporates a representation of the other simply because that person is present, Klein suggests that the incorporation of the other (and thus identification with that person) is in fact highly *motivated* by the desire to retrieve the drives that the infant had previously projected into that person.

Despite this difference, Klein agrees with Freud that the mechanism of identification continues to operate well into adulthood. The process of dividing people into good and bad receptacles of the opposing drives certainly "changes in form and content as development goes on, but in some ways it is never entirely given up."[118] The targets of projection spread from family members to a wider range of others as the individual grows, and as a result Klein argues that all sorts of social functions (empathy,

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of the term, Elizabeth Spillius suggests that Klein "regards phantasy as a basic mental activity present in rudimentary form from birth onwards and essential for mental growth, though it can be used defensively" (167). She further ventures that Klein substitutes "phantasy" for what others might simply call unconscious thought because of the imaginative nature of her young patients' ideas (168). See Elizabeth Spillius, *Encounters with Melanie Klein: Selected Papers of Elizabeth Spillius*, eds. Priscilla Roth and Richard Rusbridger (New York: Routledge, 2007). For Freud's perspectives of phantasy, see Sigmund Freud, "Formulations on the Two Principles of Mental Functioning," *General Psychological Theory: Papers on Metapsychology*, ed. Philip Rieff (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991), 1-10; Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, trans. Joyce Crick (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 320-326; Sigmund Freud, "The Paths to the Formation of Symptoms," *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, trans. and ed. James Strachey (New York: W.W. Norton, 1966), 445-468.

[117] Melanie Klein, "Notes on Some Schizoid Mechanisms," *Envy and Gratitude and Other Works, 1946-1963* (New York: Free Press, 1975), 1-24.

[118] Melanie Klein, "Our Adult World and Its Roots in Infancy," *Envy and Gratitude and Other Works, 1946-1963* (New York; Free Press, 1975), 253.

guilt, blame, greed, etc.) and behaviors (tolerating frustration, making reparation, taking up causes, etc.) can be traced back to this central mechanism. In general, then, Klein's notion of projective identification refers to the continuous interplay of unconscious projection and introjection that allows the individual to manage internal anxieties through affirming identifications with other people in every stage of life.

The persistence of projective identification throughout the life cycle and the links that Klein draws between this mechanism and adult behaviors warrants thought on how her ideas might relate to other social contexts and activities as well. Klein herself never applied her thoughts very explicitly to popular media, but the communicative dimensions of these media present ample grounds in which her especially interactive understanding of human subjectivity might find root.[119] More specifically, just as the particular aspects of the traditional filmic apparatus may be said to reconstruct Lacan's mirror stage, the collected parameters of the classic televisual apparatus strike me as distinctly equipped to elicit the types of object relations that Klein describes. As I see it, there are three aspects of the televisual apparatus that lend support to this claim.

First, Kleinian object relations necessitate other people in the environment as targets of one's unconscious projections, and in many ways the televisual apparatus supplies viewers with people. Part of this supply is a result of the social reception behaviors inherent to the apparatus. Television historically gathers viewers together: Family members at the end of a long day, neighbors who do not all have access to the

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[119] Only two of Klein's officially collected papers apply her work in the context of media, and these concern literature and opera—art forms with a traditionally higher status than the popular focus of my own project. See Melanie Klein, "Infantile Anxiety-Situations Reflected in a Work of Art and in the Creative Impulse," *Love, Guilt and Reparation and Other Works, 1921-1945* (New York: Free Press, 1975), 210-218; Melanie Klein, "On Identification," *Envy and Gratitude and Other Works* (New York: Free Press, 1975), 141-175. In unpublished materials unearthed from London's Wellcome medical archive in 1995, however, Klein appears to have sketched some of her ideas onto the film *Citizen Kane*, although her personal belief in the fidelity of this analogy remains unclear. See Albert Mason, "Melanie Klein's Notes on *Citizen Kane* with Commentary," *Psychoanalytic Inquiry* 18 (1998): 147-153.

same premium channels, and friends who enjoy congregating weekly to watch a favorite program. Many more people, however, appear to viewers as a result of other qualities that uniquely mark the medium. As the literature on parasocial activity makes clear, even solitary viewers of television rarely feel utterly "alone." Seemingly familiar characters and personae greet them every time they turn on the set, and these individuals provide reliable companionship (or at least a transient sense of being with another). There are experimental films without characters and radio stations devoted to playing music without voices, but it is virtually impossible to find television without personae—and the availability of these quasi-realistic people at all hours of the day and night makes up for any presence they might like when compared to one's fellow viewers. By providing a parade of real and especially spectral others, then, the apparatus is an apt space for viewers to engage in many unconscious acts of projection and introjection.

Second, Kleinian object relations develop first and most powerfully in relation to one's immediate family members (especially parents), and the classic televisual apparatus very much implicates the notion of the immediate family. The domestic context of the apparatus means that television historically functions as an expression of home life more than any other popular medium. Lynn Spigel traces this link to America's emergence from WWII and the subsequent ideological demands for family security and togetherness; the medium achieved a pervasive reach in a comparably short time precisely because it appeared as the tool that could convert existing domestic ideals and perspectives on family leisure into new forms that would meet these needs.[120] Conventional wisdom and practices since this point have only solidified the link between television and the family, at times even positioning the television as *part* of one's family.

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[120] See Chapter One ("Domestic Ideals and Family Amusements") in Spigel, *Make Room*.

Writing about the meanings that American families attribute to their televisions as physical objects, Alison Alexander acknowledges this oddity:

> What are the differences between thinking about television in our lives, as compared to our parents or siblings? It would be hard to argue that we ever devote the time or strategic planning to television that we devote to our interpersonal relationships within the family….Alternatively, television really is different from our coffee table. And the differences echo, even if faintly, the distinctions between thinking about others and thinking about objects. Television, conceived as both medium and message, as both an object and an event, is seen as causal, mutable, and—in the larger sense of the industry—capable of receiving feedback. Its consumption implicates the self and its content is extensively variable, perhaps more variable even than interaction with other people.[121]

The common criticism that television "parents" children otherwise neglected by their real caretakers only further suggests that the transition of the technology from family mediator to family member can be seamless. Given the extent of these ideological and personal associations with family, the televisual apparatus is primed to invite powerful object relations from its viewers.

Third, Kleinian object relations help individuals manage unconscious fears and anxieties by imaginatively projecting them outside of oneself, and the parameters of the televisual apparatus position it as suitable environment for engaging in cathartic behavior. The ability for television to purge viewers' negative emotional states through vicarious experience is highly debated in media studies, but this controversy is more a result of unclear understandings of "catharsis" in experiments than an essential lack of soundness in the theory.[122] In fact, T. J. Scheff argues that mass media are well situated to create the

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[121] Alison Alexander, "The Meaning of Television in the American Family," *Television and the American Family*, 2nd ed., eds. Jennings Bryant and J. Alison Bryant (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2001), 277-278. For further evidence that viewers respond to television technology in line with the tenets of interpersonal communication theory, see Chapters 12 ("Specialists"), 19 ("Synchrony"), and 20 ("Motion") in Byron Reeves and Clifford Nass, *The Media Equation: How People Treat Computers, Television, and New Media Like Real People and Places* (Stanford, CA: CSLI Publications, 2002).

[122] Gary A Copeland and Dan Slater, "Television, Fantasy and Vicarious Catharsis," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 2 (1985): 352-362.

kind of "aesthetic distance" required in any vicarious, cathartic experience.[123] Encountered phenomena that are too immediate can stage repressed emotional tensions without providing individuals any perspective on the matter, and phenomena that are too removed do not cultivate enough emotional tension for release in the first place. Film and television balance these concerns by staging viewers' emotional tensions while also providing them with enough distance to allow for cognitive introspection and working through. With television in particular, some of the longest standing programming genres in the medium (daytime serials, game shows, sporting events) commonly elicit core emotional tensions (grief and/or humiliation), but the comparably small size of the television screen constantly reminds viewers that they are not suffering the same fates as the televised personae.[124] The affective troubles that Klein identifies are certainly more primal and unconscious than most of the tensions that Scheff discusses, but his work nonetheless forwards the televisual apparatus as a fitting tool for exorcising the full spectrum of negative emotional material.

Because the intellectual history of apparatus theory suggests that normative contexts and behaviors of a given medium can activate unconscious mechanisms in

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[123] See Chapter 5 ("The Distancing of Emotion in Ritual and Mass Entertainment)" in T. J. Scheff, *Catharsis in Healing, Ritual, and Drama* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1979).

[124] Scheff, *Catharsis*, 125-128, 137. To be fair, Scheff also directly contradicts his point about television's cathartic potential in his discussion of "social facilitation," or the degree to which a form of entertainment evokes repressed emotions through collective catharsis. "Repressed emotion which is evoked in a group setting," he writes, "is ordinarily more distanced than when the same process occurs in isolate individuals. The mere presence of others serves to keep at least part of the individual's attention in the present, focused on other persons. Furthermore, the collective catharsis is facilitative: the laughter of the others signals to the individual that permission is given to laugh; the normal rules which serve to repress emotional discharge are relaxed….It is in respect to social facilitation that television is the least advantageous form of mass entertainment for the purposes of catharsis. The laugh track on situation comedies is an attempt to remedy this situation, but it is unclear whether it has any effect. Compared to theatre, sports contests, or even films, viewers of television are relatively isolated and, therefore, less likely to experience the balanced laughing, crying, or other forms of discharge that occur at aesthetic distance" (136). Scheff, however, provides no evidence here to support the assertion that television viewers are often isolated, and the conventional practices I have previously mentioned in relation to television's (para)sociality resoundingly contradict this point.

audiences, and because many of the specific parameters of the televisual apparatus align with the needs and mechanisms of Kleinian object relations, I contend that the process of watching television actually elicits this specific, unconscious behavior from viewers. The medium provides an outlet for viewers to engage in regular object relations vital to the formation and maintenance of their subjectivity. If this is indeed the case, then just as Lacan's understanding of identification within the mirror stage productively illuminates spectator identification with film, Klein's understanding of *projective* identification within her larger theory of object relations should have equal bearing on how we think about spectator identification in relation to television. More pointedly, Klein's work provides support for understanding how identification with characters—and not the look of the camera—is the primary form that operates in the televisual context. If people watch television because the medium classically provides them with an encouraging space for object relations and an endless supply of personae for the containment of their psychical anxieties and bulwarks, and if the twin processes of projection and introjection that make up these relations constitute a form of identification, then viewer identification with "characters" on the screen is very likely the most basic form here.

A theory of projective identification with television personae provides a number of scholarly contributions. It provides a psychoanalytic understanding of identification in the context of television that pays homage to Metz's own work without indefensibly grafting his findings onto a new medium. It also provides a psychoanalytic account of viewer identification with media that more clearly resonates with approaches to the same term in most empirical studies (which, as I mentioned in Chapter One, largely conceive of identification in terms of imaginative relations with characters, not screens). Finally, to return to the basic impetus for Metz and Baudry's original treatises on the filmic apparatus, a theory of projective identification in television positions identification with

personae as a primary source of *pleasure* within the medium overall. The object relations that television encourages are not without valence; the evacuation of anxiety is by nature pleasurable. The issue of pleasure suggests that the concept of projective identification not only provides a solid basis for an account of psychoanalytic spectatorship within the medium, but also how this basis may in turn be interpreted as an essentially *rhetorical* mode that characterizes television overall.

THE RHETORIC OF PROJECTIVE IDENTIFICATION

Rhetoric, as I noted in Chapter One, is the art of bringing about changes to different levels of social organization through intentional or unintentional communicative appeals. The study of rhetoric chiefly concerns the analysis of particular communicative strategies/mechanisms and how they generate a sense of appeal in individuals who are exposed to them. Within this study, a rhetorical mode refers to an especially persistent or predictable repertoire of such mechanisms that characterizes the appeal of a specific person or object.

Comparing this understanding of rhetoric with the ideas I addressed in the previous sections, we can define *the rhetoric of projective identification* as a rhetorical mode for television that generates appeal on the basis of the medium's ability to mitigate viewer anxiety. Television appeals to viewers in part because its normalized, mainstream mechanisms (technology, viewing context, content features, and reception behaviors— what I have collectively called its apparatus) constitute an effective location for the management of unconscious anxieties that mark individuals as human subjects. The domestic, familial nature of the medium and its cathartic potential strongly align with viewers' pre-existing capacity for unconscious object relations, and through the imaginative act of projective identification, televised personae function both as containers

for viewer anxieties and as incorporated materials for psychical repair. Both of these functions help relieve unconscious anxiety and are pleasurable as a result. Because the elements that constitute the medium of television strongly *invite* these acts and their resulting pleasures, the presence of these elements comprises an essentially rhetorical bid that contributes the appeal of the medium overall.

Key to understanding the rhetoric of projective identification is the pre-symbolic territory in which it operates. While much contemporary rhetorical theory follows the wisdom of Kenneth Burke and locates the foundations of suasory appeal in symbolic identification (as I noted in Chapter One), the rhetorical mode of projective identification originates instead in the developmental space of the infant and engages the unconscious, pre-symbolic capacities for projection and introjection within adults. This basis may strike some rhetoricians as bizarre, but the uniquely Kleinian understanding of symbol use as the product of projective identification helps shore up the notion that pre-symbolic dimensions of human experience can very effectively ground suasory appeal before the intervention of symbolic practices.

In her essay "Notes on Symbol Formation," the Kleinian psychoanalyst Hanna Segal distinguishes between unconscious symbols and what she calls "symbolic equations."[125] An unconscious *symbol* is a phantasized representation of a desire or fear especially common in dreams. The symbol of a footstool in a dream, for example, may actually represent the dreamer's repressed, infantile curiosity with feces. Symbols allow for the significant expression of the drives outside of consciousness, but it is sometimes possible to recall them consciously and ponder their associated meanings. An unconscious *symbolic equation*, conversely, is a mental link where an individual makes

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[125] Hanna Segal, "Notes on Symbol Formation," *The Work of Hanna Segal: A Kleinian Approach to Clinical Practice* (New York: Jason Aronson, 1981), 49-65.

no distinction between a symbol and the object it represents, an association that Segal notes is common in schizophrenic patients. She mentions a patient toward the beginning of her essay who, during analysis, could not bear talking to her about the footstool he had previously built in his occupational therapy class. She soon discovered that the patient's trouble stemmed from the fact that, unconsciously, he made no distinction between feces, the stool he had constructed earlier in the day, and the word "stool" (a word he absolutely wanted to keep out of his mouth!).

Segal locates the origin of symbolic equations in infantile object relations, where acts of projective identification can lead to confusion between the ego and the environmental objects incorporated as psychical representations. Only individuals who successfully navigate this developmental stage can come to recognize a difference between themselves and their internalized objects—a distinction that lays the foundation for the formation of unconscious symbols. Beyond providing an avenue for satisfying the drives, this newfound "capacity to communicate with oneself by using symbols is [also] the basis of verbal thinking. This is the capacity to communicate with oneself by means of words."[126] For Segal such conscious, verbal/symbolic thinking quickly and naturally gives way to symbolic communication with others as the individual grows. Of course, the opposite of this entire progression is also possible. Individuals who do not successfully navigate infantile object relations for either constitutive or environmental reasons do not fully develop the use of unconscious symbols, and they consequently become adults who at times rely upon logic of symbolic equations in their communication with others.

In juxtaposing Segal's discussion of symbolic equations with my own claim that the rhetorical mode of television hinges upon the pre-symbolic capacity for object

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[126] Segal, "Notes," 58.

relations inherent in all humans, I am not suggesting that all television viewers are mildly schizophrenic.[127] Rather, I turn to Segal here for an account of representations that are significant without being symbolic, as well as how such representations precede and exceed symbolic thinking and communication in human development. The idiom of Kleinian object relations posits that all internalized representations are first experienced on an unconscious level *as* the very objects they otherwise represent. The formation of such symbolic equations is the unavoidable product of projective identification executed by an immature ego. These internalized representations carry no "meaning" (at least in the traditional/rhetorical sense of the term); they simply have affective bearing immediately and *as such* within psychical reality. Equations can persist on into adulthood, but even for individuals who transcend their use and consciously come to embrace symbolism proper, the unconscious conflation of representation and object nevertheless remains the logic of projective identification. It is precisely the persistence of this unconscious confusion, Kleinians argue, that gives rise to the full range of psychological issues that humans experience throughout the life cycle.[128]

When viewers engage in projective identification with televised personae at the prompting of the larger televisual apparatus, they do not do so from a place essentially rooted in symbolism. Instead, they unconsciously and imaginatively interact with these personae as they would with any other encountered objects—as the basis of "real" representations integral to psychical functioning but without any overlay of semantic

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[127] Although admittedly, this is a provocative prospect to pursue in some future project.

[128] On the endurance of unconscious but nevertheless "real" objects, Klein writes: "Even under… favorable conditions [of development], terrifying figures in the deep layers of the unconscious make themselves felt when internal or external pressure is extreme. People who are on the whole stable—and that means that they have firmly established their good object and have therefore are closely identified with it— can overcome this intrusion of the deeper unconscious into their ego and regain their stability. In neurotic, and still more in psychotic individuals, the struggle against such dangers threatening from the deep layers of the unconscious is to some extent constant and part of their instability or their illness." ("Development," 243.)

meaning. The rhetoric of projective identification is a pre-symbolic mode in the sense that appeal stems not from the recognizable meanings associated with televised personae, but from the suitable opportunity these personae present to relieve oneself unconsciously of primordial, extra-symbolic anxieties. This means that while televised content is an integral aspect of the apparatus that constitutes this rhetorical mode, it is valuable more for its presence than its signifying properties. All televised content is interchangeable from this perspective because all of it presents viewers with the endless procession of personae as the fitting complement to viewers' need for projective identification.

In suggesting that the primary rhetorical mode of television is one of pre-symbolic projective identification, however, I am not claiming that this mode entirely explains the appeal of the medium. Television is far too complex an object to attribute its widespread popularity to a single mechanism, and the symbolic dimensions of television irrefutably contribute to the pleasures it grants. The rhetoric of projective identification is merely one theory that can complement other understandings of television's appeal (especially those based in other psychological foundations).[129] Furthermore, in claiming that the elements of television as a medium invite extra-symbolic activity from viewers, I am not implying that either the design of these elements or their resulting rhetorical mode are intentional. As I noted in Chapter One, the issue of intent is a central question in rhetorical studies, and sometimes discussions here assume that the presence of appeal signals a more fundamental intent to appeal. In the case of television, I am only arguing that the most mainstream and accepted elements of the medium historically cohered in such a way that they happen to evoke a powerful and unconscious process from viewers. This cohesion

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[129] For an overview of cognitive and behavioral accounts of television, see John Conroy, *The Psychology of Television* (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1989); Nikos Metallinos, *Television Aesthetics: Perceptual, Cognitive, and Compositional Bases* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1996); Robert F. Potter and Paul D. Bolls, *Psychophysiological Measurement and Meaning: Cognitive and Emotional Processing of Media* (New York: Routledge, 2012)

may not entirely be an accident, but it is also certainly not the result of explicit designs on the part of television manufactures or industry insiders.[130]

In truth, framing Kleinian projective identification as a rhetorical concern helps distinguish the present project from the small body of scholarship that already utilizes object relations to study popular media. Specific recourse to Kleinian theory, for example, differentiates my work from the "psycho-cultural" perspective of the Media and the Inner World research network, a collective founded in 2009 "with the aim of exploring the place of emotion and therapy in popular culture."[131] The group has thus far published a handful of essays on television based on object relations, but their therapeutic focus largely predisposes these analyses to the clinical approaches of Winnicott and Fairbairn.[132] A casual glance over the group's output on this topic also reveals a great intellectual debt to Roger Silverstone's own Winnicott-inspired analysis in *Television and Everyday Life*.[133] All of this suggests that existing object relations approaches to television almost unilaterally conceive of the actual, physical technology as the quasi-realistic object of psychical concern. My alternative, Kleinian focus on televised personae as central objects in this same context can provide a new direction for research here.

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[130] Indeed, the notion of projective identification may provide one explanation as to why this particular collection of technology, content, viewing context, and reception behaviors cemented in television through the second half of the 20th century over any other possible combination. Such conjecture is akin to Baudry's assertion that the historical invention of film was driven by some primal and unconscious need for the medium first articulated in Plato's allegory of the cave. See Jean-Louis Baudry, "The Apparatus: Metapsychological Approaches to the Impression of Reality in Cinema," *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, 5th ed., eds. Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 760-777.

[131] "About Media and the Inner World," *Media and the Inner World*, accessed July 13, 2014, http://www.miwnet.org/Website/about/.

[132] The greatest collection of such work can be found in *Television and Psychoanalysis: Psycho-Cultural Perspectives*, eds. Caroline Bainbridge, Ivan Ward, and Candida Yates (London: Karnac Books, 2014).

[133] Roger Silverstone, *Television and Everyday Life* (New York: Routledge, 1994). Candida Yates recognizes the debt of the psycho-cultural project to Silverstone in "Psychoanalysis and Television: Notes Towards a Psycho-Cultural Approach," *Television and Psychoanalysis: Psycho-Cultural Perspectives*, eds. Caroline Bainbridge, Ivan Ward, and Candida Yates (London: Karnac Books, 2014), 1-28.

Furthermore, the rhetorical basis of the present project helps differentiate it from existing scholarship that already utilizes Klein to understand media audiences, most often in relation to film spectatorship. Opposing historical models based in Freudian and Lacanian theories of sexual and linguistic development, for instance, Lisa Cartwright advances an affective model of film spectatorship based instead on an intersubjective reading of Klein's work.[134] She considers how the mechanical film projector interacts the viewers' capacity for projective identification in empathic terms before visual identification with the cinema is even possible. Suzy Gordon also relies on Klein in generating a theory of film spectatorship across three different projects, but her own concern is with postulating the place of female viewers in a medium that has traditionally ignored their presence.[135] For Gordon, Klein's psychoanalytic paradigm of annihilation as the condition for subjectivity provides a springboard for understanding erasure as the condition for female film spectatorship. My project certainly overlaps Cartwright and Gordon in sprirt, but in addition to my application of Klein's ideas to television rather than film, my rhetorical perspective means that I interpret the medium-audience relationship from a somewhat different vantage than spectatorship. This approach should complement these previous applications of Klein's ideas to the media and open up space for fresh insight on the matter of viewing television.

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[134] Lisa Cartwright, *Moral Spectatorship: Technologies of Voice and Affect in Postwar Representations of the Child* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008).

[135] Suzy Gordon, "*Breaking the Waves* and the Negativity of Melanie Klein: Rethinking the Female Spectator," *Screen* 45 (2004): 206-225; Suzy Gordon, "Female Friendship, Idealization, and the 'Need' for Violence in *Crush*: Running the Risk of Melanie Klein," *Feminist Media Studies* 7 (2007): 171-187; Suzy Gordon, "Film, Feminism, and Melanie Klein: 'Weird Lullabies,'" *Culture and the Unconscious*, ed. Caroline Bainbridge, Susannah Radstone, Michael Rustin, and Candida Yates (New York: Palgrave MacMillian, 2007), 154-168.

METHODOLOGY

The next three chapters consider the rhetoric of projective identification in relation to the medium of television in order to trace the particulars of this mode and explore the explanatory value of this new concept. Before proceeding on to these chapters, it is important to acknowledge the framework that guided my approach within each of them. A few options exist when it comes to analyzing the entirety of a medium (as opposed to its individual components). The first is an experimental or observational track, where researchers orient volunteers in relation to a medium and record their reactions. Byron Reeves and Cliford Nass's work on "the media equation" is a well-known example of this track.[136] In more than 30 experiments the researchers discovered that individuals tend to treat a medium as if it were a "real," upholding all sorts of findings from research in interpersonal communication. The second option for analysis is a historical or humanistic track, where scholars consider a medium from its inception and evolution in society throughout time. Lynn Spigel's social history of the adoption of television in the American home is one of the most famous examples of this track.[137]

My own project does not involve experiments, although it should be evident by now that I am deeply concerned with understanding how the individual might respond to the technological parameters of television. Similarly, my project does not write a history of the medium, though its focus on the apparatus certainly concerns historical realities as parameters of analysis. Perhaps the best way to characterize my analysis here is to say that it engages in something of a psychosocial consideration of television's effects guided by Marshal McLuhan's four laws of media. "Our laws of media," McLuhan writes with his son Eric (who published his father's work posthumously in *Laws of Media*),

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[136] Reeves and Nass, *The Media Equation.*
[137] Spigel, *Make Room for TV.*

are intended to provide a ready means of identifying the properties of and actions exerted upon ourselves by our technologies and media and artefacts [sic]. They do not rest on any concept or theory, but are empirical, and form a practical means of perceiving the action and effects of ordinary human tools and services. They apply to all human artefacts, whether hardware or software, whether bulldozers or buttons.[138]

In essence, rather than import some outside theoretical perspective to the question of how a given medium affects human beings, McLuhan derives a method for such analysis from the concept of "medium" itself. His laws are empirical to the degree that they arise from collective observation of many different types of media, and any medium may be said to uphold the laws in one way or another.

McLuhan's schema provided an apt framework for the present project because it considers equally the technological and social qualities that constitute a medium—a factor typically overlooked in approaches derived from alternate theoretical grounds. While experimental/observational studies of media tend to privilege knowledge about the influence of technology on individuals, historical/humanistic accounts tend to emphasize the social integration or use of technologies. My concern is with the apparatus, or the balanced interplay between context and psyche in the moment of television reception, and neither of these more established methods help me visualize technological and social aspects as well as McLuhan's laws. My concern with the apparatus is also the reason I (generally) eschewed pursuing actual audience perspectives within the bounds of the study. I aim to investigate the unconscious work that attends television reception in this project, so viewers' conscious interpretations and reports of experiences with the medium are really not of much use.[139]

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[138] Marshall McLuhan and Eric McLuhan, *Laws of Media: The New Science* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 98. Although both father and son are authors of this work, it is convention to credit the thrust of these ideas only to the elder, so I have followed that convention here.
[139] I did, however, occasionally use audience reports to supplement my law-based approach when it seemed especially illuminating or appropriate (mostly in Chapter Five).

McLuhan's four laws, phrased as questions, serve as methodological guides for understanding the techno-social relations implicated in any medium. The first is the law of *enhancement*: As the individual or society adopts the medium into the rhythms of daily life, what does it "enhance or intensify or make possible or accelerate?"[140] The second is the law of *obsolescence*: As use of the medium enhances some aspect of the individual or society, what aspects of this body are necessarily displaced or made useless? The third is the law of *retrieval*: As increased medium usage obsolesces some current form or mode, what previous forms put out of fashion by other media does it recall or revive? Finally, the fourth (and perhaps most difficult to comprehend) is the law of *reversal*: Pushed to the extremes of enhancement or intensification, how does the medium come to "reverse what had been its original characteristics" in social use?[141] Taken together, the four laws form a tetrad; the effect in one area simultaneously influences effects in the others.

An example will help clarify the four laws and their interrelationship. In *Laws of Media* McLuhan provides the running case of money. The adoption of money *enhances* our ability to conduct financial transactions and gives rise to a vast but comprehensive system of value though uniform pricing. At the same time, it largely *obsolesces* systems of bartering and/or haggling that arguably provide a more human dimension to the economy. As money becomes a more commonplace medium, it *retrieves* the ancient, competitive "gift economy" (or potlatch) studied by anthropologists, where exchange indexes participants' status and prestige—and one readily thinks here of the more modern notion of "conspicuous consumption." Finally, as the technology of money becomes even more engrained within a culture, it eventually hits a saturation point and *reverses* into credit. An abundance of physical money gives way to a lack of physical money.

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[140] McLuhan and McLuhan, *Laws of Media*, 98.
[141] McLuhan and McLuhan, *Laws of Media*, 99.

McLuhan contends that his laws can scale to analyze the effect of a medium at any social level, from individual users to society at large. At every level, however, the application of the laws "in tetrad form reveal some of the subliminal and previously inaccessible aspects of technology."[142] As I noted before, it is the subliminal aspects of medium on the individual level that most interested me in my approach to the present project. I approached the medium of television in the following chapters with a modified version of McLuhan's tetrad because my interest is not only with the effects of the medium as a whole, but more specifically with the psychological and/or unconscious processes that the medium evokes as basis for its appeal.[143] In other words, I utilized McLuhan's questions as general guides for considering the televisual apparatus in relation to those unconscious object relations that Klein identifies—the individual's imaginative acts of projective identification and the positions/defense mechanisms that result. Reformulating McLuhan's four laws according to my specific interests resulted in the following four questions:

> 1. What unconscious object relation(s) does television enhance, intensify, or extend? What present psychical mechanisms might television tap into and encourage?
>
> 2. What unconscious object relation(s) does television obsolesce? Or, which psychical mechanisms may be rendered dormant during television consumption?
>
> 3. What unconscious object relation(s) does television retrieve? Which dormant psychical mechanisms might television reactivate?
>
> 4. What unconscious object relation(s) does television reverse? In other words, which unconscious mechanisms might television intensify to the point of their transformation?

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[142] McLuhan and McLuhan 109.

[143] By unconscious processes, I do not mean psychical material fundamentally beyond reach. Instead, the unconscious should be understood as that which is not readily available to consciousness but which can be rendered somewhat intelligible though interaction and investigation—in clinical contexts and beyond.

This adapted version of tetrad gave me a basic set of questions to ask when reflecting on which elements of the televisual apparatus might merit focused attention in the project.

The overarching subjects of the following three chapters are the products of this reflection. Intimacy, flow, and program cancellation are all elementary components of the televisual apparatus in the sense that a robust understanding of each phenomenon requires contemplation of both the technological and social elements that contribute to it. Early thought about these three topics in light of the four laws yielded many fruitful (if initial) insights. A cursory overview of work on televisual intimacy, for example, seemed to position it as a fitting topic for exploring how engagement with television might in fact *enhance* the individual's predisposition for projective identification along new avenues. Existing work on audience campaigns to rescue a television program from cancellation prompted similar reflection about how engagement with the medium may involve *reactivating* the individual's earliest defense mechanisms organized around object loss. Throughout the project I simply followed insights like these across many different studies and down many blind alleys, discovering and discarding ideas along the way, until I arrived at what I felt were durable thoughts about the ways in which the televisual apparatus functions as a space for the expression of unconscious object relations.

To the degree that the work of this project involves placing many (and sometimes disparate) bodies of scholarship in conversation with one another in order to arrive at the possibility of a pre-symbolic rhetoric for television, the chapters can at times be quite abstract in their discussion. As a result, I have made every attempt to ground more general explorations with examples, especially though detailed illustrations at the beginning of each chapter and extended case studies toward the end of each chapter. Here again the adapted tetrad was instructive in gathering material. I selected the genre of daytime talk for the case study in Chapter Three, for example, in part because it appears

to *intensify* for studio audiences the rapid revolution between unconscious orientations of attack and defense that Kleinians see at the core of all interpersonal relations. I only suggest in the case study that the genre may invite similar responses from those who watch from home, and that this response may in turn tell us something more fundamental about the apparatus itself. Analogous questioning guided my selection of the film *Poltergeist* for its depiction of television as the introductory illustration in Chapter Three. The film's dramatization of "bad objects" that invade viewer space only at the termination of the broadcast day seemed like a wonderful way to introduce the notion that the historical rise of the 24-hour broadcast norm effectively *obsolesces* infantile fantasies of the menacing "bad breast" characterized largely through absence.

Although I do not very explicitly reference the tetrad in the following three chapters, readers can rest assured that McLuhan's laws of media very much shaped my selection of topics and examples throughout the project. The laws functioned here as guides for general reflection more than rigid, methodological considerations—an approach, to be honest, that seemed very much in line with McLuhan's own perspective on scholarship.[144] I encourage readers keen on knowing more about the influence of the laws on this project to see what connections they can draw between the ideas I discuss in the following pages and the operations of enhancement, obsolescence, retrieval, and reversal. There is a good chance that I found similar links while composing the work.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has compared different psychoanalytic perspectives on identification in order to arrive at the one best situated to explain viewer identification with television and, by extension, the rhetorical appeal of the medium overall. In addition to providing a

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[144] McLuhan is famous for characterizing his published ideas as "probes," seeking in their dissemination to spark conversations about popular media rather than correctly approximate the truths that define them.

workable approach to psychoanalytic identification in the context of popular media, the theoretical legacy of apparatus theory functions here as a lens for sharpening the differences between normative technologies, contents, viewing contexts, and reception behaviors of both film and television. The prevalence of parasocial interaction (among other televisual elements) suggests that Melanie Klein's work provides the most suitable account of identification for television. Her "projective identification" should be viewed as a rhetorical mode in this context not only because it implicates the greater concern with suasory identification in rhetorical studies, but more basically because it functions as an enduring source of pleasure/appeal in the televisual apparatus. The following chapters will demonstrate the interpretive value of this "rhetoric of projective identification" by looking at Klein's ideas in relation to three qualities that have historically marked television as a medium: intimacy, flow, and audience behaviors surrounding program cancellation.

Chapter Three: Televisual Intimacy and Object Relations

> The rules of The Hunger Games are simple. In punishment for the uprising, each of the twelve districts must provide one girl and one boy, called tributes, to participate. The twenty-four tributes will be imprisoned in a vast outdoor arena that could hold anything from a burning desert to a frozen wasteland. Over a period of several weeks, the competitors must fight to the death. The last tribute standing wins.
>
> Taking kids from our districts, forcing them to kill one another while we watch—this is the Capitol's way of reminding us how totally we are at their mercy. How little chance we would stand of surviving another rebellion. Whatever words they use, the real message is clear. "Look how we take your children and sacrifice them and there's nothing you can do. If you lift a finger, we will destroy every last one of you. Just as we did District Thirteen."[145]

Suzanne Collins's "Hunger Games" book trilogy—*The Hunger Games* (2008), *Catching Fire* (2009), and *Mockingjay* (2010)—has spawned one of the most notable American media franchises in recent memory. The novels' evolving narrative, set in the dystopian society of Panem, follows adolescent protagonist Katniss Everdeen as she competes in the titular, state-sponsored death match and sows the seeds of its eventual downfall. Although the novels were already popular among young adult readers from initial publication, Lionsgate's release of a filmic adaptation of *The Hunger Games* in early 2012 introduced the world of Panem to audiences of all ages (and greatly bolstered book sales for the trilogy's publisher, Scholastic).[146] The wild success of this first film predictably led to the adaptation of the other books in the series, and ticket sales for each new film have neatly surpassed the previous entry. *The Hunger Games: Mockingjay, Part One*, the most recent installation, was even the second highest grossing film of 2014.[147]

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[145] Suzanne Collins, *The Hunger Games* (New York: Scholastic, 2008), 18-19.

[146] Brooks Barnes and Julie Bosman, "'Hunger Games' Book Sales Bode Well for the Film," *The New York Times*, January 23, 2012, B6 (Late Edition).

[147] "2014 Domestic Grosses," *Box Office Mojo*, accessed May 14, 2015, http://www.boxofficemojo.com/yearly/chart/?yr=2014.

Because discussions of media and the trilogy often revolve around book and movie ticket sales, it is easy to forget that the medium of television actually plays the most significant role within the novels' unfolding narrative. As the epigraph to this chapter makes clear, the Games function as a tool of political suppression in Collins's story in part because they are *broadcast*. Viewing the lethal Olympics is mandatory for all citizens of Panem. The wealthy Capitol maintains a hegemonic grip on the country's poor, outlying districts not only by culling their youth for the Games each year, but also by forcing residents to watch their children fight to the death on live TV. Even the media frenzy leading up to the main event (including interviews with the tributes, spectacular opening ceremonies, etc.) is televised, underscoring the normalcy of the horrors in store and further implicating the competition in a twisted sense of national pride.

Of course, readers of the series know that television only becomes explicitly important to the narrative once Katniss takes shelter with an elusive rebel group at the beginning of *Mockingjay*. This third novel opens with Katniss in the mysterious District 13, a seditious section of Panem's population supposedly destroyed by the Capitol decades before but, in reality, only driven underground. Hoping to spread their rebellious spirit to other districts, the leaders of District 13 enlist Katniss in the production of slick propaganda films designed to reveal the evils of the Capitol. They air these pieces illegally during regular Capitol TV broadcasts with great success. Katniss's resolve for the brewing revolution is tested, however, when she discovers that Capitol forces have kidnapped her fellow Games tribute (and occasional lover) Peeta Mellark, coercing him into starring in a parallel series of official propaganda spots meant to quell uprising in the districts. The ideological conflict of the Games present in the first two novels thus overtly moves to the airwaves in the third, as each side attempts to jam and thwart the other's electronic appeals to the oppressed populations of Panem.

Given these various narrative elements, it is easy to interpret the "Hunger Games" series as, in part, a damning critique of television as sensational and manipulative. Collins has admitted as much in interviews about the trilogy.[148] Concentrating only on this role of television in the series, however, overlooks other, perhaps subtler functions that it serves within the story—functions central to my own interests in the medium. The events of *Mockingjay* in particular suggest that beyond fanning or extinguishing the flames of rebellion, television also functions as an emotional anchor for Katniss. The medium is her only connection to her kidnapped love. Collins's portrayal in the book of Katniss's shock upon seeing Peeta for the first time on Capitol TV captures this significance plainly:

> A sound escapes me. The same combination of gasp and groan that comes from being submerged in water, deprived of oxygen to the point of pain. I push people aside until I am right in front of him, my hand resting on the screen. I search his eyes for any sign of hurt, any reflection of the agony of torture. There is nothing. Peeta looks healthy to the point of robustness. His skin is glowing, flawless, in that full-body-polish way. His manner's composed, serious. I can't reconcile this image with the battered, bleeding boy who haunts my dreams.[149]

This scene in the 2014 filmic adaptation plays out in a similarly emotional manner. Upon seeing Peeta (Josh Hutcherson) for the first time on screen, a stunned Katniss (Jennifer Lawrence) struggles to rise from her underground bunker seat. Dazed, mouth slightly agape, eyes unblinking, she stumbles toward the television and stares as Peeta urges the rebels to put down their arms. "You're alive," she breathes in a strained whisper, barely able to make sense of what she is seeing.[150]

In both the book and film versions of the story, then, the substance of Peeta's disinformation campaign matters little to Katniss in the actual moment of seeing him on

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[148] See, for example, "A Conversation: Suzanne Collins, Author of The Hunger Games Trilogy," *Scholastic*, accessed January 5, 2015, http://www.scholastic.com/thehungergames/about-the-author.htm.
[149] Suzanne Collins, *Mockingjay* (New York: Scholastic, 2010), 21.
[150] *The Hunger Games: Mockingjay, Part One*, directed by Francis Lawrence (2014; Santa Monica, CA: Lionsgate), Film.

screen. Even as the fellow rebels denounce Peeta as a traitor, it is only his manifest presence that draws her near. The moving impact of his appearance temporarily overrides any understanding of his words. This scene—as well as future broadcasts of a more haggard Peeta that bring Katniss to tears—complicates the supposed scorn for television in the trilogy, suggesting that the medium also grants an opportunity for emotional experiences that far exceed its more evident, propagandistic function.

As such, *Mockingjay* vividly illustrates a central concern of the present chapter: The difference between an ineffable, compelling link to the televised human image and the symbolic appeal of this image in the larger context of television consumption. Both of these relations are implicated to varying degrees in scholarship addressing the medium's inherent and attractive *intimacy*, often cast as an especially private or personal viewing experience. While early work here catalogs how broadcast norms and common viewing practices invite viewers into symbolic, simulated, and satisfying relations with on-screen personae, more recent analysis looks to the extra-symbolic notion of *affect* in order to understand how gratifying intimacies between viewers and personae may at times exceed recognizable or conventional understandings. My own concern is with this more contemporary venture and its strong resemblance to psychoanalytic thought. Previous chapters have laid the theoretical groundwork for a rhetoric of projective identification in relation to television, but this chapter begins to outline parameters of this proposed mode by interpreting the medium's recognized, ineffable allure through the lens of Kleinian object relations. Because Klein's ideas can provide a framework for understanding a widely discussed, fundamental draw of television, there is good reason to turn to unconscious object relations as a basis for the medium's overall rhetorical appeal.

This chapter begins with an overview of literature on television and intimacy, paying particular attention to work that links intimacy to viewer appeal and the concept

of affect. It then more fully develops the overview of object relations introduced in the previous chapter by discussing central developmental nodes in Kleinian thought: The *paranoid-schizoid* and *depressive* positions. Finally, the chapter explores a historically intimate genre of television—the daytime talk show—in order to ground the proposed, evolving "rhetoric of projective identification" here in familiar broadcast circumstances.

Televisual Intimacy

Literature on intimacy and television can be sorted into roughly two research traditions. The first body of work looks at broadcast images of intimacy, largely conceived of as depictions of implied or explicit romantic and sexual acts between on-screen personae. Early research here most often concentrated on studying such images in relation to particular times of day, channels, or specific television genres.[151] More recently, scholarship on televised images of intimacy has looked at romance and sex as they relate to constructs of difference like race, age, or sexual orientation.[152] In all cases, work in this tradition is concerned with the potential effects of these images on viewers, or how changes in depictions across time mirror evolving social norms and anxieties.

The second body of work on intimacy and television—and the one more in line with the present chapter—looks at intimacy as an inherent or fundamental aspect of the broadcast medium. Rather than concentrate solely on images of intimacy between personae, this tradition considers how television might itself strike viewers as an intimate

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[151] See Bradley S. Greenberg, David Graef, Carlos Fernandez-Collado, Felipe Korzenny, and Charles K. Atkin, "Sexual Intimacy on Commercial TV During Prime Time," *Journalism Quarterly* 57 (1980): 211-215; Dennis T. Lowry, "Sex on the Soap Operas: Patterns of Intimacy," *Journal of Communication* 31 (1981): 90-96.

[152] Myra Washington, "Interracial Intimacy: Hegemonic Construction of Asian American and Black Relationships on TV Medical Dramas," *The Howard Journal of Communication* 23 (2012): 253-271; Chris Richards, "What Are We? Adolescence, Sex and Intimacy in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*," *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies* 18 (2004): 121-137; Alfred R. Martin, "It's (Not) in His Kiss: Gay Kisses and Camera Angles in Contemporary US Network Television Comedy," *Popular Communication* 12 (2014): 153-165.

technology. Research in this area can be further subdivided into three strains. The first or "discursive" strain within this second tradition positions intimacy as a social construct circulated in both the television industry and in academic studies of the medium.[153] This approach, perhaps best characterized as historiographic in nature, charts the use of the term in industry dialog, marketing, and social discussion of television as it was coming into its own in the mid-20th century (as well as in academic criticism of the medium since this same time period). Because work in this strain interprets intimacy as a plastic discourse utilized by different social groups, it is largely unconcerned with either the potential reality of the medium's intimacy or exploring in detail the forms this intimacy might take. As a result, the discursive strain is less useful than the others in terms of arriving at a developed understanding of televisual intimacy, though it certainly stands as a worthy reminder of the socially negotiated and relegated aspects of the term.

The next strain of scholarship here suggests that a wide variety of televisual conventions duplicate lived experiences of intimacy (we might call this the "parasocial" strain of research, in line with the ideas I addressed in Chapter Two). Work here contends that the medium regularly encourages viewers to experience televised personae as intimate companions, and that these solicitations in turn contribute to the perception of television as an intimate, inviting medium overall. Part of this enticement arises from depictions of individuals in popular television programming. As Horace Newcomb notes in a reflection on his highly influential volume in the field, *TV: The Most Popular Art*,

> [T]elevision fiction, news, documentary, and recent versions of programming known as "reality" continue to be fascinated with and reliant on narratives recounting intimate matters in intimate ways. In some instances intimacy has been

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[153] See, for example, Jason Jacobs, *The Intimate Screen: Early British Television Drama* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Rhonda J. Berenstein, "Acting Live: TV Performance, Intimacy, and Immediacy," *Reality Squared: Televisual Discourse on the Real*, ed. James Friedman (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 25-49.

extraordinarily intensified [since the initial publication of *The Most Popular Art*]. We have been made privy to decisions regarding "marriage," "birth," and "death," that could alter lives. We have observed as individuals are ridiculed and embarrassed. We have been allowed to witness alterations of the body, procedures that in many cultures might be considered sacred. We have been afforded a voyeur's perspective.[154]

Although images of sex and romance tracked in the first research tradition may constitute a *type* of televisual intimacy, it is important to recognize that such images are only one of a wide variety of supposedly "private" matters regularly exposed. This tendency to disclose the private lives of others to viewers, Newcomb suggests, points to a much more complex, inviting mode of intimacy inherent to the medium itself.

Other televisual conventions contribute to pleasurable sensations of intimacy between viewers, personae, and the medium as well. Martin McLoone suggests, for example, that a special sense of intimacy stems from television's historical place in the home, as well as from "the continuity of the television series or serial, the recurring characters, locales and situations that become part of the habituated viewer's domestic experience."[155] As television soaks up the cozy, personal connotations of the home, its regularly broadcast characters and personalities can become something of an extended network of cherished "family" members. John Ellis agrees with this characterization and goes a step further: The ways in which these characters and personalities appear to interact with viewers via the television screen also contributes to a fundamental sense of attractive intimacy in the medium.[156] While close-up shots in projected film accentuate the differences between personae and viewers as a matter of scale (the film viewer must

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[154] Horace Newcomb, "Reflections on *TV: The Most Popular Art*," *Thinking Outside the Box: A Contemporary Television Genre Reader*, eds. Gary R. Edgerton and Brian G. Rose (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2005), 30.

[155] Martin McLoone, "Boxed In? The Aesthetics of Film and Television," *Big Picture, Small Screen: The Relations Between Film and Television*, eds. John Hill and Martin McLoone (Bedfordshire, UK: John Libbey Media, 1996), 89.

[156] John Ellis, *Visible Fictions: Cinema, Television, Video* (Boston: Routledge, 1982), 131-134.

recognize that individuals on screen are gargantuan), television close-ups bring personae to a much more equitable and inviting size. Personae also very often utilize a mode of "direct address," or looking into the camera and speaking as if carrying on a personal conversation with viewers. "These factors," writes Ellis, "contribute to an overall impression, that the broadcast TV image is providing an intimacy with events between couples and within families, an intimacy that gives the impression that these events are somehow co-present with the viewer, shared rather than witnessed from outside."[157]

Although the parasocial strain provides a more concrete exploration of televisual intimacy than the discursive (and, importantly for my own purposes, links intimacy to viewer appeal), it also yields an unsatisfying interpretation of the topic in the end. The final impression here is a diverse repertoire of enticing simulations of interpersonal intimacy without any sense of how these might be synthesized into a defining essence for the medium itself. I believe that much of this fragmentation stems from scholars' reliance here on unstated understandings of lived intimacy as the basis of their thinking. None of these forays seriously discusses or clarifies the notion of intimacy before delving into its role in television's allure; each assumes that everyone already recognizes the topics and behaviors signified by the term. The undertaking in these cases merely involves charting connections between accepted understandings of intimacy and televisual conventions, with the natural result being, unfortunately, a mass of associations between medium and lived experience whose only common trait is that they are readily discernable.

Even more problematically, this tendency to privilege what is most discernable in the moment of television reception ignores the ways in which *televisual* intimacy in particular might exceed common, symbolic, or even conscious experience. The various

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[157] Ellis, *Visible Fictions*, 136-137. Again, much work on parasocial interaction that I addressed in Chapter Two is also within this sub-strain, especially because this research tends to catalog intimate solicitations from personae (i.e. direct address) and casts parasocial feelings as simulations of "true" intimacy/sociality.

connections that scholars draw here between interpersonal intimacy and television viewing may strike the reader as sound on some level, but there is no reason to believe that televisual intimacy—or its resulting appeal—is exhausted by this scattershot list of comparisons. The parasocial strain ignores the possibility that there may be more to televisual intimacy than an observable set of triggers and behaviors borrowed whole cloth from the realm of familiar, interpersonal interaction.

The third, "revisionist" strain of work here remedies this oversight by maintaining a concern with appeal but exploring far more nuanced notions of intimacy, resulting in an approach that provides the richest accounts of television as an alluring, intimate medium. Rather than assuming intimate behaviors and topics as a critical starting point, scholarship here interrogates deeper structures of intimacy in everyday life before considering how television invisibly taps these formations to great appeal. In some ways Margaret Morse's ideas in *Virtualities* represent a good example of this approach. A key assumption of her work here is that "there is a human need for and pleasure in being recognized as a partner in discourse," one increasingly met in the modern age by television and other forms of media.[158] Her perspective is not that machines cleverly imitate true sociality, but that "socially constructed reality is already fictional[,] and that virtuality is an aspect of that fictionality that has come to be more and more supported by machines."[159] Virtuality names those "fictions of presence" subtly propagated by popular media that are nevertheless as capable of meeting demands for intimate exchange as lived interaction. In this way, Morse reconfigures received understandings of intimacy in order to understand why interactive media have become such a pervasive part of daily life.

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[158] Margaret Morse, *Virtualities: Television, Media Art, and Cyberculture* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1998), 14.

[159] Morse, *Virtualities*, 10-11.

Perhaps the most developed and influential account in this last strain, however, is Misha Kavka's volume *Reality Television, Affect and Intimacy: Reality Matters*.[160] Kavka begins by discussing the medium in terms similar to those in the parasocial strain; television appears as an intimate and attractive medium because it is in the service of "bringing things spatially, temporally, and emotionally close."[161] Television brings things—objects, events, people, etc.—spatially close to audiences by affording them views and perspectives that would be impossible were they actually present in the scene on screen (consider how a television camera may zoom in on aspects of a musical performance in ways that are simply not possible while seated in an actual performance space). The medium also brings things temporally close to viewers in the apparent liveness, immediacy, and spontaneity of its presentation—its focus on the perpetual now. Kavka acknowledges that the majority of televised material is not actually broadcast live, but the endless "flow" of the televisual text means that the medium appears to privilege the constant unfurling of material in the present rather than what has happened in the past (see also Chapter Four in this project for further discussion of televisual flow).

It is only in the final "closeness" that Kavka departs from the mechanistic focus of the parasocial strain. By bringing far off things close to audience members' visual field, and by creating the impression that viewers are watching things on screen as they occur, television also encourages an "imagined sense of belonging to a group who are all watching the same thing in the same period."[162] The result of this sensation of belonging

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[160] Misha Kavka, *Reality Television, Affect and Intimacy: Reality Matters* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008). For further work directly influenced by Kavka's perspective in this strain, see Kelly Smit, "Visual Effects and Visceral Affect: 'Tele-affectivity' and the Intensified Intimacy of Contemporary Televsion," *Critical Studies in Television* 8 (2013): 92-107; Kelly Smit, "Care, Shame, and Intimacy: Reconsidering the Pleasures of Plastic Surgury Reality Television," *Camera Obscura* 86 (2014): 59-83.
[161] Kavka, *Reality Television*, 7.
[162] Kavka, *Reality Television*, 18.

is an equally pleasurable experience of emotional closeness with other assumed viewers and televised personae:

> [T]he effect of liveness forecloses any preceding period in which [performers on screen] would have been able to practice a performance. 'Live' TV, whether taped or not, is performance which has no prequel. They are there, doing what they would do, the cameras are on, and we are watching. The actuality strengthens the effect of immediacy; immediacy strengthens the effect of social community; and the community creates a sense of intimacy amongst viewers as well as with performers.[163]

Television is thus an intimate and alluring medium not only because its observable elements can invite particular viewer responses, but because the technology also activates *within* viewers an expansive, emotional link with people assumed and broadcast—or, as Kavka succinctly puts it, "[t]elevision…is all about seeing other people."[164]

This calculus means that *televisual intimacy* for Kavka is basically a synonym for the ways that the medium comes to manage *emotional intensity* within and between viewers and televised personae, a gratifying relation she captures via the notion of *affect*. She defines affect as "the zone of potential emotions which have not yet been differentiated as such, or have yet to be aligned with objects."[165] Affect is thus the human capacity for more palpable or intelligible emotional experiences like fear or excitement, which emerge only around particular objects or persons in the environment. Its transcendent, primordial nature means that affect also displays material, intersubjective components critical to its function. Affect is material because it is "real" somatic experience in the same way that dreaming is "real" (even when the contents of any individual dream are not), and this very materiality means that affect can be transported

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[163] Kavka, *Reality Television*, 19.

[164] Kavka, *Reality Television*, 13. One also thinks here of the ways in which viewers now activate/intensify the assumption of community here though the use of various social media platforms during reception. The actual ability to communicate with distant viewers while watching likely deepens collective intimacy.

[165] Kavka, *Reality Television*, 31.

to and through others. From Kavka's perspective, in fact, it is only because individuals can trade in the material of affect that they can experience more pointed emotions at all. "We *feel* in some sense," she writes, "because affect moves through and across us, in palpably material form, resonating across divides that may otherwise be blocked by cognition or representation."[166]

Affect's existence as a mediator, or as a conductor in the liminal space between individuals, suggests to Kavka that popular media are highly appropriate places for the management of affect in contemporary life; "virtual technologies replay, and further relay, affective circuits which function as a hard-wire link between psyches, bodies and the world."[167] This circulation is in turn a central component in television's mysterious draw for contemporary viewers, as the small screen provides one of the most readily available outlets for affective negotiation with others. Although Kavka takes the dramas and viewings of reality television as her major example in teasing out the parameters of such facilitation, she also readily admits that the conventions of the genre merely intensify the affective potential present in the medium in the first place.[168] Her occasional examinations of televised personae beyond reality television participants—including Princess Diana in the news coverage of her death in 1997—lend credence to her notion that television overall is an intimately "affecting" technology for viewers.

Kavka provides the most developed understanding of televisual intimacy as a fundamentally appealing quality of the medium, one that builds upon earlier work by tracing how noticeable experiences of closeness to televised personae surrender to

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[166] Kavka, *Reality Television*, 33.
[167] Kavka, *Reality Television*, 36.
[168] Kavka writes: "[R]eality television has turned out to be a sustainable trend because it is fully *appropriate to the medium as a technology of intimacy*….In my view, reality television is less a perversion of than a logical extension of the televisual medium" (*Reality Television*, 20).

affective negotiations with these individuals that transcend meaningful awareness. In doing so, she also unknowingly begins to circle some of the psychoanalytic ideas I outlined in Chapter Two.[169] Her specific discussions of the material and migratory aspects of affect, for example, very much resemble Kleinian object relations:

> [O]bjects of emotion are materially sensible in our feelings, and…they are the material in which our feeling adheres, thereby giving them import. Further, because an object is the object of others' feelings, too, we are always responding not just to a sensate object but also to others feelings lodged in it….I understand affect in terms of the mattering of matter, a doubling which involves the evacuation and refilling of a material object with the 'material' of feeling that is and is not my own.[170]

It is difficult to ignore here how Kavka's focus on the saturation of environmental objects with affect to grant them significance, as well as on objects as vessels to be filled/emptied with emotional matter, strongly resonates with the alternating projection and introjection of the drives that Klein views as central mechanisms of projective identification.

As a result, it is possible to utilize Kavka's revised understanding of televisual intimacy as an inspiration for imagining how unconscious object relations might come to bear on television reception. I contend that Klein's specific ideas regarding projective identification provide an alternative framework for tracing the enduring, ineffable, and appealing link between viewer and personae that Kavka proposes here. This movement suggests that parasocial accounts of televisual intimacy are not wrong for focusing on interpersonal relationships as the basis for appeal; they merely pay attention to the *conscious* elements of these relationships without contemplating other, perhaps less obvious avenues of interaction. Understanding specifically *unconscious* connections between viewer and television personae, however, requires a working familiarity with the

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[169] While Kavka does review some of Freud's work on drive (which she reads as synonymous with affect), she refrains from ever delving into the tradition of object relations proper (*Reality Television*, 31-32).
[170] Kavka, *Reality Television*, 33-34.

two developmental "positions" in Kleinian psychoanalysis that are deeply intertwined with acts of projective identification: The *paranoid-schizoid* and the *depressive* positions.

Before delving into the particulars of these positions, some cautionary remarks are in order. To readers unfamiliar with Kleinian psychoanalysis, words like "paranoid-schizoid" and "depressive" can appear negative, unsettling, or at least a bit dramatic in the end. These reactions are reasonable. Even as he praises Klein's positional jargon for its clinical utility, Winnicott admits that both terms are "bad" in the sense that they carry unfortunate connotations outside of the therapeutic context.[171] Throughout the following discussion and on into other chapters, then, it is especially important to keep the clinical overlay in mind when weighing Klein's ideas. In selecting terminology Klein sought diagnostic precision over moral judgment; for her, there was nothing inherently pathological about the positions (as negative as they may seem). Each simply describes a different set of primal anxieties and unconscious thoughts that everyone experiences in the normal process of growth. This means that the "paranoid-schizoid" position is not the same thing as "schizophrenia," and the "depressive" position is not the same thing as "depression." These mental ailments share only cursory similarities with the unconscious experiences of infancy that Klein witnessed at the core of all human development.

THE PARANOID-SCHIZOID AND DEPRESSIVE POSITIONS

As I addressed in Chapter Two, the rhetorical mode for television that I am developing in this project revolves around the notion that the medium provides a constant source of personae for viewers to take up into a complex web of unconscious object relations. Viewers establish these relations with personae in order to manage and quell

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[171] See D.W. Winnicott, "A Personal View of the Kleinian Contribution," *The Maturational Processes and the Facilitating Environment: Studies in the Theory of Emotional Development* (London: Hogarth Press, 1965), 171-178.

psychical anxieties, and they do so primarily via a mechanism that Melanie Klein calls projective identification. Discussions of televisual intimacy I have covered thus far in the present chapter provide reason not only to support the existence such extra-symbolic relations between viewers and on-screen personae, but also to understand this link as a central component of the medium's widespread appeal. What is still needed, then, is a greater understanding of the particular shape that this appealing, ineffable object relation assumes—a quality I would like to develop now through Klein's ideas regarding the primary positions.

In Kleinian theory, infantile acts of projective identification carried out with the primary object/caretaker inaugurate a series of psychical defense mechanisms critical to healthy development.[172] Chief among these is the mechanism of *splitting*. The primary object, as receptacle of both libido and death drive, performs opposing functions for the young infant—it simultaneously threatens and affirms the infant's existence. The infant in turn resolves this paradox with a strategy keyed to its limited mental capabilities. It interprets and experiences the primary object as two distinct "part objects:" A life-affirming, ego-organizing object and an annihilating, ego-threatening object. Taking the mother's breast as the most common primary object, Klein refers to this defense as a "splitting" of the object into a "good breast" and a "bad breast."[173] The psychical correlate of the primary object within the infant's unconscious (incorporated as a function of projective identification) is likewise split into good and bad versions at this point as well.

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[172] Recall from Chapter Two that the earliest acts of projective identification involve the imaginative evacuation of the infant's drives into a "primary object" in the environment, most often a caretaker. This projection temporarily relieves the anxiety of self-annihilation associated with the death drive. However, because the object also contains the libido, it is soon also introjected (or imaginatively reincorporated into the infant's psyche) as a bulwark against itself. Splitting is, as I note here, a response to this paradox.

[173] Melanie Klein, "Notes on Some Schizoid Mechanisms," *Envy and Gratitude and Other Works, 1946-1963* (New York: Free Press, 1975).

Splitting is a particularly important defense mechanism because it indexes the advent of one of two central positions in Klein's developmental schema: The paranoid-schizoid position.[174] In this position, the infant splits all encountered objects into good and bad part-object versions, indiscriminately introjecting both halves as aspects of the developing self just as it did with the primary object. The benefit of this hallucination is mixed. Although internalized good part-objects join with the good aspect of the primary object in forming a node around which the early ego can harden, splitting also prevents satisfactory evolution of the ego after a certain point. "I believe," writes Klein, "that the ego is incapable of splitting the object—internal and external—without a corresponding splitting taking place within the ego."[175] Excessive splitting eclipses the possibility of a fully integrated ego in the long term, which means that inhabiting the paranoid-schizoid position for too long resigns the infant to a psychically weakened state.

Much of this psychical fracture is undoubtedly the result of emotional stress that is the hallmark of this position; Klein portrays the unconscious, polarizing phantasies that accompany the introjection of part-objects here as highly tumultuous in nature.[176] The infant experiences all internalized bad objects as persecutors, or as raiders attempting to attack the immature ego and spoil the highly idealized, good objects held within it. This

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[174] Although in her early work Klein attempts to meld her insights with Frued's own developmental stages (oral, anal, phallic, etc.), she eventually abandons this line of thinking for her own notion of "positions"—a more useful formulation for her that implies one can *return* to the behaviors the positions feature at any point in life. The notion of positions, moreover, effectively captures her thoughts regarding a development marked by normative constellations of psychical defense mechanisms (rather than experiences). For her initial attempts at melding with Freud's developmental stages, see "Early Stages of the Oedipus Conflict," *Love, Guilt and Reparation and Other Works, 1921-1945* (New York: Free Press, 1975), 186-198.

[175] Klein, "Notes on Some Schizoid Mechanisms," 6.

[176] Klein scatters these thoughts across a wide variety of essays throughout her career, and none succinctly captures the variety very well. For the most cohesive overview of phantasies/experiences in the paranoid-schizoid position, see its corresponding entry in *The New Dictionary of Kleinian Thought* compiled by Elizabeth Bott Spillius, Jane Milton, Penelope Garvey, Cyril Couve, and Deborah Steiner (New York: Routledge, 2011), 63-83. Recall from my notational discussion in Chapter Two that "phantasy" for Klein refers to unconscious thought which serves both as the substance of internal objects and the imaginative means through which people negotiate object relations—primarily through acts of projective identification.

threat causes nearly constant anxiety and fear in the infant over the possibility of losing its good objects, and it responds the only way it knows how: By wishing or imagining the bad objects destroyed in a wide variety of sadistic phantasies. Because these bad objects are distorted mental correlates of real people and/or things that exist in the infant's environment, Klein believes that highest levels of unconscious aggression here manifest in certain conscious behaviors—especially biting, slapping, or otherwise attacking people and objects. She locates the source of all of this negativity in a constitutive *envy*, or an "oral-sadistic and anal-sadistic expression of destructive impulses, operative from the beginning of life"—an inherent manifestation of the death drive.[177]

Luckily for the infant, a capacity for phantasy plays an equally vital role in the second and altogether more benign depressive position. Whereas the essential feature of the paranoid-schizoid position is the imagined splitting and introjection of opposing part-objects, the depressive position involves the infant's realization that good and bad are one in the same. "This implies important changes in the relation to objects," writes Klein.

> The loved and hated aspects of the mother [or primary object] are no longer felt to be so widely separated, and the result is an increased fear of loss, states akin to mourning and a strong feeling of guilt, because the aggressive impulses are felt to be directed against the loved object. The depressive position has come to the fore.[178]

In other words, when the infant introjects the primary object as a whole for the first time in the depressive position, it realizes what a terrible mistake it made in once wishing this beloved object destroyed (at least in part). The work of unconscious phantasy changes here from sadism to reparation as the infant attempts to atone for its prior, misdirected hatred. This means that the depressive position features an almost ethical imperative to

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[177] Melanie Klein, "Envy and Gratitude," *Envy and Gratitude and Other Works: 1946-1963* (New York: Free Press, 1975), 176.

[178] Klein, "Notes on Some Schizoid Mechanisms," 14.

make amends toward the primary object, as well as to shelter this object from any lingering invaders thought to be lurking in the psyche. In addition, as the infant realizes and extends this protective stance to a wider menagerie of objects, its phantasized concern spills over into consciousness and positively influences its behaviors toward others in the environment. Klein calls the essential impulse behind these activities *gratitude*, the complement to envy and a "major derivative of the capacity for love."[179] In the same way that envy innately springs from the death drive to fuel phantasies of object destruction and thwart positive relations to others, gratitude flows from the libido to counteract aggression and secure the possibility of an affirming network of relationships.

While the depressive position is in no way a haven from anxiety (as the infant still experiences guilt and a fear of potential loss in relation to its whole objects—points I take up in Chapter Five), Klein consistently suggests that the pains here are preferable to the omnipotent, aggressive, and antisocial phantasies of the paranoid-schizoid position. "Healthy" development consequently involves achieving the depressive position in early childhood and ideally adopting it as the default stance toward the world on into adulthood. Unfortunately, the unique experiences of any particular childhood influence the strength and degree to which the forces of envy and gratitude manifest within the adult personality, and even the most well adjusted adult will occasionally find the guilt and fear of the depressive position too great to withstand.[180] In such circumstances the individual may very easily fall back into the paranoid-schizoid position and allow its characteristic misanthropies and hatreds to filter into conscious thought and behavior.

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[179] Klein, "Envy and Gratitude," 187.

[180] Toward the end of her career Klein began to draw explicit connections between infantile development and adulthood, suggesting that certain behaviors in adults indicated an individual arrested in the paranoid-schizoid position. Perhaps even more interestingly, she acknowledges that even normal, daily stresses can cause some adults to fall back into aggressive phantasy in order to bolster feelings of independence or revalorize the self. See "Our Adult World and Its Roots in Infancy," *Envy and Gratitude and Other Works, 1946-1963* (New York; Free Press, 1975), 247-263.

The two positions, then, name constellations of anxieties and common defenses that—while certainly central to early development—essentially remain with individuals throughout the life cycle as unconscious mindsets.[181]

Given this perpetual influence, Klein's paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions may help give texture to the unconscious object relations that viewers enact with *mediated* personae as well. If viewers engage in acts of projective identification with characters and personae on their television screens in order to evacuate unconscious anxieties, then the positions—as the natural products of projective identification—should illuminate the features of the subsequent, ineffable relations established through such acts.[182] This illumination, in turn, helps flesh out the pre-symbolic rhetorical mode that I am suggesting marks the medium as a whole. Taken together, the widely discussed allure of televisual intimacy and Kavka's particular formulation of this intimacy as an extra-symbolic relation suggest that this specific aspect of the medium remains among the most suitable areas for exploring the above ideas, and so it is to intimacy that I return for the remainder of the chapter. As I have already gone to great lengths to suggest, however, intimacy can be a notoriously difficult quality to locate explicitly within the medium, so I will limit my exploration of the developmental positions here to a genre of television programming already widely deemed to be among the most intimate: The daytime talk format.

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[181] Klein's ideas here regarding the role of early object relations in human growth and personality formation may seem bizarre to some readers, but her thought was nevertheless highly influential in the development of more contemporary (and perhaps familiar) discourses in the fields of therapy and communication. For example, in addition to Winnicott's aforementioned concept of the "transitional object," John Bowlby's "attachment theory"—central to the modern study of interpersonal communication—has explicit roots in Klein's ideas. See John Bowlby, *Attachment*, 2nd ed. (New York: Basic Books, 1982), 17.

[182] In some ways the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions are even superior to Kavka's own affective approach to the extra-symbolic link between viewer and personae. Unlike the relatively undifferentiated zone of potential emotion that Kavka formulates, Klein's positions provide a vocabulary for the valences that can characterize this relation.

A CASE STUDY: THE DAYTIME TALK FORMAT

In this section I begin to develop the rhetorical mode of projective identification proposed in Chapter Two through the example of daytime talk shows. Daytime talk provides a solid case study here not only because it came to prominence near the end of the 20th century (the time period in which the televisual apparatus—the cultural and technological formation at the center of this mode—crystallized most evidently), but also because the format is often said to register with its viewers in highly emotional ways. As a result of this junction, I believe the format is particularly well suited to demonstrate the work of unconscious object relations that marks viewers' relation to the medium more diffusely. Quite a bit of exposition is needed in order to unpack this thesis, so this section explores the various contours and pleasures of the format in detail before finally returning to the Kleinian developmental positions introduced in the previous section.

Bernard M. Timberg suggests that there are three major subgenres within the broader category commonly called the "television talk show."[183] The first is the morning news talk magazine show, which came to prominence in the early 1950s with NBC's *The Today Show* and has since proliferated with programs like ABC's *Good Morning America*, CBS's *The Early Show*, and a wide variety of shows produced by network affiliates for local markets. The second subgenre is the late night entertainment program, which coalesced in the 1960s around NBC's *The Tonight Show* and finds modern variants in CBS's *Late Show* and, more recently, TBS's *Conan*. The final subgenre here is the daytime audience-participation show, inaugurated with the Dayton, Ohio-based *Phil Donahue Show* in 1967 and popularized by the nationally broadcast *Oprah Winfrey Show* throughout the 1980s. The tendency within this subgenre to name the program after a

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[183] Bernard M. Timberg, *Television Talk: A History of the TV Talk Show* (Austin: The University of Texas Press, 2002), 6-9.

specific individual is clear in the many, many entries that have aired since these initial offerings over the last three decades: *The Sally Jessy Raphael Show*, *The Rikki Lake Show*, *The Jerry Springer Show*, *Jenny Jones*, *Montel, Geraldo*, and *Maury* (to name just a few of the most popular in the U.S. American context).

All three of these subgenres certainly share significant features, but daytime talk programs can be differentiated from their morning and evening counterparts in a few key ways. Louann Haarman identifies four components that together distinguish the modern daytime format: a host, a central issue for discussion, a special guest or panel of guests, and a live studio audience.[184] The host in daytime talk is the major organizing node of the program, exemplified in his/her ability to frame the discussion in opening/closing monologues, call on guests and audience members to voice their opinion, and even move about the studio in ways denied to other participants. This structure differs markedly from morning and evening programs, which feature either a variety of hosts who share control over the flow of the program or a single host who largely remains seated behind a desk. Another distinguishing facet of daytime talk is a single issue or point of controversy that organizes discussion; topics can range from social concerns of the day (interracial marriage, domestic abuse, etc.) to overtly provocative displays of social taboos (the lives of sex workers, public revelation of infidelity/affairs, etc.). This focus again departs from morning and evening shows that tend to cover a variety of news or entertainment items over the course of the program. Furthermore, while celebrities may appear as guests within all three subgenres, daytime talk shows also regularly feature as guests either "ordinary" people somehow linked to the day's subject or experts (psychologists, social workers, etc.) who can give special insight into this topic. Finally, all varieties of talk

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[184] Louann Haarman, "Performing Talk," *Television Talk Shows: Discourse, Performance, Spectacle*, ed. Andrew Tolson (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2001), 32-35.

feature a live audience of some size that witnesses events as they unfold, but audiences of daytime talk typically have the most freedom to voice their own opinions during the broadcast (as well as entertain greater interaction with guests and the host).[185]

Perhaps the most remarkable feature of daytime talk programming, however, is how it flaunts various features that have come to define the broadcast medium itself. Hanne Bruun identifies a number of ways that daytime talk functions synecdochically for television.[186] Unlike many other forms of television production, daytime talk draws attention to its artificiality by regularly reminding viewers at home that displayed events are unfolding within the confines of a television studio. This tendency flies in the face of both dramatic programming that attempts to present the illusion of complete, fictional worlds and news programming that attempts to bring foreign or exotic aspects of the real world closer to viewers. The daytime talk show does not transmit elsewhere to viewers; it transmits to them the "domain" of television itself. The talk show format also fundamentally thrives on the notion of uncertainty. Even as some elements of the show are necessarily planned, others at least appear unscripted (the pointed comment of an audience member, the eruption of an emotional breakdown or a physical altercation between guests, etc.).[187] More than most other television programs, Bruun notes, daytime talk indexes the element of "liveness" that has attended the medium since its inception.

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[185] For further discussion of "ordinary" guests and audience interaction as distinct markers of the daytime format, see Julie Engel Manga, *Talking Trash: The Cultural Politics of Daytime TV Talk Shows* (New York: New York University Press, 2003), 3.

[186] Hanne Bruun, "The Aesthetics of the Television Talk Show," *The Aesthetics of Television*, eds. Gunhild Agger and Jens F. Jensen (Aalborg, Denmark: Aalborg University Press, 2001), 229-255.

[187] For readers who might cynically claim here that the regular outbursts and fights that constitute much daytime talk are in fact carefully orchestrated choreographies meant to dupe viewers into accepting the emotional reality of the presentation, allow me to recount a now commonly circulated story within the industry. In 1988 *Geraldo* taped a program that brought together white supremacists and minority activists on the same stage. At one point the ideological tension exploded into a physical altercation between the guests. Various audience members and the show's host, journalist Geraldo Rivera, stormed the stage to intervene but ended up throwing a number of punches themselves. In the midst of this ruckus an errantly swung chair struck Rivera in the face and broke his nose. Even if this particular fight was arranged, then, its

Of course, the inherently televisual element most on display in the daytime talk format is likely the notion of intimacy. As Patricia Joyner Priest points out in her lengthy analysis of daytime talk, *Public Intimacies*, nearly everyone involved in the subgenre divulges private information for general consumption.[188] Most evidently, guests who have undergone tragic or bizarre experiences recount the most excruciating and salacious details of these trials, but hosts too regularly reveal details about their own hardships on air. Oprah Winfrey has recounted her impoverished and abusive childhood, Sally Jessy Raphael has discussed the death of her daughter, Rikki Lake has opened up about her struggles with weight loss and gain, and Jerry Springer has been frank about his experiences with prostitutes. On some programs viewers "at home" can even "call in" during the taping and admit their own relevant secrets for all to hear. At the level of show production, moreover, a number of elements can increase a sensation of intimate closeness between the program and its viewers. Foremost among these is the simulation of interactive conversation created when hosts directly address viewers at home, but even the occasional, warm mention of the show's production crew can create the sense that the show is an intimate, hospitable space.[189] In both content and form, then, the genre is often said to exemplify the intimate mode that marks the wider broadcast medium.

The wide range of forms that intimacy can assume within the format has led some scholars to call for finer distinctions within the subgenre itself. Jane Shattuc, for example, sees good reason to distinguish between early pioneers like *Geraldo*, *The Oprah Winfrey Show*, *The Phil Donahue Show*, and *Sally Jessy Raphael* and later programs like *The*

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escalation certainly was not—and it is *this* element of uncertainty that is central to the daytime talk format. For further discussion of the uncertainties surrounding guest behavior from an individual who worked for years within daytime talk production, see Laura Grindstaff, *The Money Shot: Trash, Class, and the Making of TV Talk Shows* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002).

[188] Patricia Joyner Priest, *Public Intimacies: Talk Show Participants and Tell-All TV* (Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, 1995), 1-9.

[189] Haarman, "Performing Talk," 33; Bruun, "Aesthetics," 245.

Rikki Lake Show, *The Jerry Springer Show*, and *Jenny Jones*.[190] She argues that while the earlier shows here often concentrated on issues of some social importance and regularly featured experts who could help individuals navigate these issues effectively, the more recent offerings tended to provide "only the sheer pleasure of breaking social taboos":

> With this shift, topics moved from personal issues connected with social injustice to interpersonal conflicts that emphasized the visceral nature of confrontation, emotion and sexual titillation. The expert disappeared as the number of guests proliferated, each programme staging a whirlwind succession of five-minute sound bites of conflict, crisis and resolution. Topics were more baldly about conflict: 'They're out of control…sex,' 'Sister, stop stealing my man,' 'Women confront ex who cheated and warn new girlfriend' and 'Now that I slept with him, he treats me like dirt.' Fights between the guests, the guests and audience members and audience members became a staple.[191]

As this newer approach gained in popularity, in fact, more episodes of the previously resolute *Donahue*, *Geraldo*, and *Sally* began emphasizing conflict as well in order to keep up in ratings. The general turn in the 1990s toward open conflict and taboo on all of these programs is largely responsible for the well-known and abundant criticism that the format has received ever since.[192]

Other scholars who study daytime talk, however, suggest that there really is little difference between programs that emphasize positive messages gleaned from emotional confessions of difficulty and those that thrive only on open conflict and sexual interest. Overall both formats actively seek, in the words of Laura Grindstaff, an emotional

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[190] Jane Shattuc, "The Confessional Talk Show," *The Television Genre Book*, *2nd ed.*, ed. Glen Creeber (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), 167-170. For further discussion of differences, see also Chapter One in Shattuc's *The Talking Cure: TV Talk Shows and Women* (New York: Routledge, 1997).

[191] Shattuc, "The Confessional Talk Show," 169.

[192] For an excellent overview of this criticism (both academic and popular), see Chapter One in Joshua Gamson's *Freaks Talk Back: Tabloid Talk Shows and Sexual Nonconformity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998). For academic criticism in particular, see Vicki Abt and Leonard Mustazza, *Coming After Oprah: Cultural Fallout in the Age of the TV Talk Show* (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1997); Christine M. Quail, Kathalene A Razzano, and Loubna H. Skalli, *Vulture Culture: The Politics and Pedagogy of Daytime Television Talk Shows* (New York: Peter Lang, 2005).

"money shot" of "joy, sorrow, rage, or remorse expressed in visible, bodily terms," including streaming tears, dropped jaws, or anguished hand-wringing.[193] Producers on both sides of the genre are quite candid about structuring entire programs around capturing these climactic moments on camera: They select topics most likely to elicit such moments, book guests most prone to offering them, and coach members of the live studio audience to play along when the moment of rupture finally arrives. For Grindstaff, the only significant difference between "affirming" shows like *Oprah* and "trash" shows like *Jerry Springer* is "the *kind* of money shot that people deliver (hard-core or soft-core, tasteful or vulgar), what it's in response to, and who delivers it."[194]

I would only add to Grindstaff's typology here the visceral response that any particular money shot is intended to arouse in the viewing audience at home. Literature on daytime talk suggests that viewers predominantly respond to programs in postures of either ridicule or empathy. In her 2003 ethnographic account of daytime talk viewers, for instance, Julie Engel Manga discovered that many of her subjects tuned in to the more scandalous offerings in the subgenre in order to laugh at the antics and troubles of the (typically outrageous) guests featured for the day. "I watch [*Jerry Springer*]," confesses her respondent Olivia, "because I just like to see people get on there and make fools of themselves."[195] Olivia's sought-after superiority here strongly resonates with the findings of many other viewer-based and critical studies of the subgenre.[196] Andrea Stulman

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[193] Grindstaff, *Money Shot*, 19. Grindstaff acknowledges that borrowing terminology from the realm of pornography production to describe talk shows is a controversial decision, but pornography nevertheless provides an apt vocabulary for assessing the "precise moment of letting go, of losing control, of surrendering the body to its 'animal' emotions" that is so highly sought and repeated in the format (20).
[194] Grindstaff, *Money Shot*, 20.
[195] Quoted in Manga, *Talking Trash*, 60.
[196] See, for example, Jason Mittell, "Television Talk Shows and Cultural Hierarchies," *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 31 (2003): 36-46; Laurie Ouellette and Carolyn Anderson, "Reading the Talk Show: The Politics of Talk Soup," *In the Eye of the Beholder: Critical Perspectives on Popular Film and Television*, eds. Gary R. Edgerton, Machael T. Marsden, and Jack Nachbar (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1997), 149-165; Elizabeth Birmingham, "Fearing the Freak: How Talk TV

Dennett has even gone so far as to suggest that the majority of daytime talk represents the closest, contemporary correlate to the "dime museum freak show" that thrived in American popular culture at the end of the 19th century—a venue whose primary pleasures included satisfying "an innate desire to behold the misfortunes of others."[197]

At the same time, some daytime talk shows can invite from viewers a strong feeling of empathy (or at least pity) for guests. As Manga's respondent Sandi explains,

> I know what my struggles are in life. It's interesting for me to see what other people go through. And like, you know how you have those bad days or those bad moments? You know what I mean? And so, like for me, I wonder, I wonder, do they, do other people go through this, or do other women have these problems?... Because everyone has their own struggles. And they may be different in the manner in which they're happening, you know. But, in reality, everybody, the struggle is sort of similar.[198]

From this vantage, viewers may tune in to daytime talk in order to feel connected to people rather than disparage them. Hal Himmelstein suggests the term *new talk* for programming that focuses on eliciting this type of audience response. "What most clearly distinguishes new television talk," he writes,

> …is that, while not infrequently slipping into a "trial like" atmosphere [of viewer judgment], new talk nevertheless encourages its audience to engage in a more "civil" form of conversation and to examine their own behavior and positions on the problems under examination. Rather than heaping abuse on the shows' guests, the studio audience and the viewers at home are often asked to tell their own related stories.[199]

The empathic motivation evidenced here may be somewhat less represented in the wider literature on talk shows, but it remains a clear undercurrent.

Articulates Women and Class," *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 28 (2000): 133-139; Robert H. Wicks, "The Radio and Television Talk Show Audience," *Understanding Audiences: Learning to Use the Media Constructively* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2001), 142-162.

[197] Andrea Stulman Dennett, "The Dime Museum Freak Show Reconfigured as Talk Show," *Freakery: Cultural Spectacles of the Extraordinary Body* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 317-318.

[198] Quoted in Manga, *Talking Trash*, 109.

[199] Hal Himmelstein, *Television Myth and the American Mind*, 2nd ed. (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1994), 356.

Himmilstein's observation that even the new talk format can at times slip into a frame of guest ridicule offers up an important caveat to my overview of the two, solicited responses: In practice they are almost never entirely distinct. In other words, any individual daytime talk program may primarily attempt to elicit either feelings of ridicule or empathy (Grindstaff's hard-core and soft-core money shots, respectively), but none will likely abandon the alternative strategy completely. Kathleen S. Lowney's exploration of the religious undertones in the genre demonstrates the ways that many shows in fact rely on a symbiotic blend of the two.[200] Akin to Dennett's own comparison of these shows to freak museums, Lowney suggests that daytime talk formally borrows from religious revivals popular in America in the early 19th century. Because the showy, emotional performances that characterized these revivals were designed to inspire religious conversion among witnesses, they often involved a two-part process of exhorting participants to confess sins publicly before being welcomed back into the community of the faithful. Similarly, Lowney argues, contemporary talk shows press guests into divulging their most shameful secrets before they—and viewers—can find a sense of resolution about the topic. The daytime talk form thus simultaneously involves the condemnation and sheltering of the guest by the wider community of audience members, and it is often difficult to tell where one posture ends and the other begins.

To simplify: The fundamental appeal of the daytime talk format is the emotional matter it conjures out of guests and subsequently inspires in viewers. At the same time, the emotional response from viewers is somewhat paradoxical, involving revolving feelings of ridicule and empathy toward guests. These two factors alone give good reason to think about the role that Klein's developmental positions might play in the reception of

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[200] Kathleen S. Lowney, *Baring Our Souls: TV Talk Shows and the Religion of Recovery* (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1999), 1-21.

this televised content. Klein's theory of object relations involves a complex, unconscious, but motivated exchange of emotional matters (the drives) between the individual and others/objects encountered in the environment. As mindsets or filters, the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions influence the quality of these exchanges, alternatively inspiring the individual to denigrate and valorize objects. The two positions seamlessly blend into one another—maintaining one for too long can bring about psychical anguish that forces the individual into the complementary position.[201] Finally, Klein herself noted that the unconscious envy and gratitude that fuel the positions can reach such intensity that they manifest in conscious thought as fluctuating sensations of hatred, omnipotence, jealousy, concern, guilt, and love. All of these factors suggest that the contradictory, emotional reception of the talk show format may rely fundamentally on the capacity for unconscious object relations within viewers. From another vantage, part of the initial attraction and enduring popularity of the format can be explained by its highly suitable form in helping viewers negotiate unconscious anxieties through projective identification.

A brief example from *The Dr. Phil Show* can further illustrate how the talk format more generally elicits alternating emotional sensations from audiences in line with the developmental positions. The program is hosted by the eponymous Dr. Phil McGraw, a psychologist who came to popular attention in America in the late 1990s for dispensing folksy advice to people in need during regular appearances on *Oprah*. In 2002 "Dr. Phil" (as he is known colloquially) began hosting his own standalone program but continued to capitalize on this same basic approach to guest difficulties. Each episode of the hour long *Dr. Phil Show* tends to focus on the problems of one individual, couple, family, or group of friends, especially on matters of fidelity, addiction, and/or other behavioral issues.

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[201] Contemporary Kleinians have developed her ideas regarding the positions further, and it is common now to "think of a moment-to-moment fluctuation between paranoid and depressive states of mind" (Spillius et al, *The New Dictionary*, 78).

In April 2015 the series aired an episode titled "Is Our Son a Kleptomaniac?"[202] The episode centers on the emotional trails of parents Mark and Nancy and their 18-year-old son Chris, who for a decade has stolen money and various items from family, peers, neighbors, and local businesses.[203] The title of the episode is the first clue that points to the conflicting emotions that viewers will likely feel toward Chris over the hour's presentation. Especially posed as a question, the title suggests that the teen may deserve audience scorn for making off with others' personal property, or he may deserve their sympathy as a hapless youth compelled to steal. Such ambivalence becomes even clearer during an opening montage that previews highlights of the episode for viewers. As a flurry of video clips details the teen's methods and reveals Mark and Nancy making anguished confessions before the camera, a voiceover provocatively asks "Is he a bad boy? Or a good kid…with a really bad habit?"

Throughout the episode these competing senses often rub against each other, so much so that the audience (both in the studio and at home) likely changes their feelings toward Chris from moment to moment. In an early exchange, for example, Dr. Phil turns to the studio audience and asks how many of them as children took something that did not belong to them. When the camera cuts to these viewers and reveals that only a few have actually raised their hands, the host challenges them by saying "You are such a liar." Many more audience members then raise their hands amid sheepish grins and giggles. The demonstration works to drive home a point for Dr. Phil: All children engage in some form of stealing as an element of testing social boundaries, and by extension, Chris is simply doing what we have all done. This realization elicits from the audience a

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[202] "Is Our Son a Kleptomaniac?," *The Dr. Phil Show*, first broadcast April 7, 2015, by CBS. Directed by Lynn Creagan Hermstad and written by Jacklyn Pratt. All quotations included here come from this episode.
[203] As is typical for the daytime talk format, identifying information about the family (such as their last name or the town where they live) is not revealed over the course of the episode.

sense of sympathy rather than contempt (or, in Kleinian terms, protective concern rather than smug superiority). In the very next breathe, however, Dr. Phil turns from the studio audience back to Mark and Nancy and counters "But we're talking about a lot here." He then reviews all of the items that Chris has pilfered over the last decade of his life, a massive horde underscored by a long, scrolling list of entries on a screen at the side of the stage.[204] With this sudden shift in emotional tone, Chris is no longer a normal adolescent with whom the audience should empathize. He is an extreme case, an oddity that deserves their disdain for the extent of his crimes.

Of course, not all emotional conflicts materialize in the episode through clear, verbal presentations; at times the show allows Chris's actions to "speak for themselves." In the second half of the episode, for instance, Dr. Phil almost gleefully announces that his team secretly put Chris up to a test before taping began. He tells viewers that his staff intentionally set attractive pens on tables backstage and recorded Chris to see if he would swipe them before coming out to chat with his parents and the host. After the studio audience murmurs and hoots at the revelation, and after the camera cuts to the teen looking rather embarrassed, the episode airs the "secret footage" from the waiting area that (predictably) reveals Chris pocketing the pens. Viewers at home witness the teen's moment-by-moment "reactions" to this footage through a small inset at the bottom of the larger video display. After the footage ends, the camera cuts to a humiliated Chris and then to Nancy, who appears similarly embarrassed and chastises her son as the laughing audience cheers her on. Upon greater reflection the entire lead up to this stunt seems

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[204] Indeed, the enormity of items that Chris has stolen during his teen years appears in different formats throughout the show. At one point a timeline showing items stolen by Chris's age takes up the video screen that runs along the entire back portion of the stage. At another an eclectic menagerie of video games, credit cards, DVDs, sunglasses and other ephemera (all supposedly representative of Chris's typical exploits) materializes on a table for Dr. Phil to inspect. These strategies regularly mark Chris as an extreme thief and work against other elements of the program that elicit sympathy for the young man.

highly staged, but in the unfolding and unreflexive moment of viewing the events, the experience of witnessing is quite excruciating.[205] I can attest that one feels a confusing sensation of concern for and superiority over this boy as he "unexpectedly" finds himself in uncomfortable circumstances before an insatiable crowd. I can only imagine that most other viewers would react in a similar manner, revolving back and forth between aligning themselves with the admonishing studio audience and feeling deep compassion for Chris during this very public flailing.

However, the truly visceral, emotional "money shot" does not come until the conclusion of the episode. Dr. Phil spends the last few minutes here introducing the owner of a consulting company called Onsite, which specializes in treating "emotional trauma and mental health issues." Dr. Phil then tells Chris and his family that the show will pay for a full cycle of treatment with Onsite—at which point Mark bursts into tears for the first time. Chris gets misty-eyed almost immediately at his father's display, and Nancy chokes up as she thanks Dr. Phil profusely for his help in healing her family. The sense of relief here is palpable. After almost an hour of conflicting emotional experiences keyed to those two original questions (Is he bad? Is he good?), this final outpouring of feeling affirms that Chris is, indeed, a good kid in need of viewer pity, and that this troubled family is on its way to recovery.

As a result, Chris is likely not the only individual who gets a rush from trading in objects on *The Dr. Phil Show*. I believe that the program's often simultaneous evocation of scorn and sympathy for the teen here indexes a much more fundamental mechanism of

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[205] Dr. Phil sets up the revelation of the test by asking Chris for a pen in the midst of conversation. When the teen dutifully hands one over, the host asks him where it came from—at which point Chris says "From the…a…hotel." If the host's request of a pen from a teenage guest does not already strain credibility, the teen's stilted delivery of the supposed source of the pen certainly does. Again, as I explain in the paragraph, this realization does not necessarily mitigate the actual *emotional* experience of witnessing the events for the first time, but it is worth noting.

emotional exchange in both the studio and home audience, a predilection for unconscious object relations charged with envy and gratitude. Viewers revolve back and forth between ridicule and concern for Chris just as they would with any other individual they encouner. If *The Dr. Phil Show* adds anything to this process, it is the presentation of an individual especially suited to eliciting such unconscious relations from viewers. As one instance of a much more general pattern, the program reveals that the genre of daytime talk has somehow evolved a sophisticated formula—equal parts symbolic and extra-symbolic—for drawing on psychical "positions" inherent to every viewer. This exploitation is a key element in the genre's endurance in American television.

It is also important to remember here that daytime talk strongly magnifies those qualities said to constitute television more broadly as a medium, including its studio location, its emphasis on liveness, and especially its overwhelming sense of intimacy. While the format may be particularly well-suited to evoke unconscious object relations and provide an outlet for the intensities of the developmental positions, the qualities that render it fitting may also be sensibly extrapolated in a wider sense to the medium overall. Put another way, the synecdochal relationship between daytime talk and television suggests that viewers' unconscious negotiations with the daytime talk format operate only as a microcosm or particularly obvious example of a more diffuse relation to television itself.

If all of the alignments in this speculative work prove valid, then the nature of the daytime talk show format helps illuminate further the contours of a greater rhetoric of projective identification I am outlining for the medium of television in this project. The extra-symbolic appeal of the medium involves not only regularly providing viewers with an endless supply of objects as receptacles for psychical anxiety, but also with a means of unconsciously and continuously relating to these objects after the moment of projection.

Televised persona function as ever-present, environment nodes that attract the intensities of the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions, mindsets or constellations of defense mechanisms that necessarily haunt all viewers from birth. Viewers are attracted to television before and beyond sensible meaning because the medium consistently invites both an initial and continuous stream of unconscious object relations.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has looked at the notion of televisual intimacy in order to develop the rhetorical mode of projective identification proposed in the first two chapters. It began by tracing three of the most common ways that media scholars have interpreted intimacy as an inherent and appealing quality of the medium. It concluded this exploration by suggesting that the third way—what might be called the *affective* approach—provides the most cohesive and compelling account. The chapter then delved into Klein's notion of the developmental positions as an alternative to affect for understanding how viewers can trade in emotional, non-symbolic intensities with persona on screen. The resonance between these two approaches provides reason to view Kleinian object relations as a basis for the medium's extra-symbolic appeal, a basis reinforced in the case study of the daytime talk format at the end of the chapter. Moving forward, the next two chapters will develop this foundation with further conceptions of appeal and case study material.

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Chapter Four: Televisual Flow as a (Permanent) Good Object

In easily the most iconic scene from Tobe Hooper's 1982 film *Poltergeist*, young Carol Ann Freeling (Heather O'Rourke) awakens late at night to discover otherworldly phenomena radiating from the television set accidentally left on in her parents' bedroom. The phenomena appear almost immediately after the official televised broadcast signs off for the evening, with the notes of "The Star-Spangled Banner" and images of American monuments giving way to the hollow hiss and pop of an endless static snowstorm. As Carol Ann approaches the television and watches the swirling display of lights on its screen, mysterious and almost inaudible whispers begin to emanate from the set. Very soon the uniform static begins to shimmer with spectral flashes. Carol Ann reaches out to touch the screen, but before she can make contact with it a ghostly hand stretches out from the glass to block her advance. The hand then rapidly moves through a series of different ethereal forms, first transforming into an encroaching mist that hovers menacingly above Carol Ann's sleeping parents and brother, and then into a bolt of phantom lightning that strikes the bedroom wall and shakes the house. As the rest of the Freeling family wakes up in amazement to the rumbling, the precocious Carol Ann turns to them and eerily croons the signature line of the film: "They're heeeerrrreeee."

In *Haunted Media*, Jeffrey Sconce offers up this scene as only one example of a much larger cultural obsession with electronic "presence" that has manifested in different ways over the last 150 years of technological advance.[206] Far from an inherent quality, Sconce argues, the persistent sensation of a ghostly/alien presence alongside or inside electronic media is a powerful ideological construct, one often shaped in history by the

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[206] Jeffrey Sconce, *Haunted Media: Electronic Presence From Telegraphy to Television* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000), 163-166.

circumstances that surrounded the social adoption of each major medium (telegraph/telephone, radio, television, and computer). Sconce's project is primarily an exploration of the cultural values and anxieties that explain the differing sensations of presence in each medium, but he also admits from the outset that the connections he makes in each case between history and technology are somehow facilitated by a more fundamental, imaginative overlap of three "flows" implicated in the consumption of any electronic medium: the "current" of electricity that powers the device, the apparent "outpouring" of information from the device, and the "stream" of consciousness housed within the device's listener/viewer.[207] In the case of television, Sconce argues that the construction of static as a threatening presence in *Poltergeist* dramatizes specific, contemporaneous worries about the enervating influence of the medium upon domestic life, but this tidy historical connection also relies on an altogether more mysterious and enduring faith in the intertwining flows of electronic media and the human mind.

This chapter is similarly concerned with the notion televisual presence, but rather than look to ideological formations surrounding the historical adoption of the medium, I am compelled instead by Sconce's undeveloped discussion of the flows always already at play in television's reception. The persistence of this fantasy in all cases of technological adoption suggests that there is perhaps something more fundamental to it than Sconce's ideological approach can illuminate. Put bluntly, my own interest here rests in speculating on how a sense of televisual presence may materialize not through discursive negotiation, but in the interplay between the flow of content from the television set and the unconscious psyche of its viewers—an approach best understood by looking again at the *Poltergeist* scene and reconsidering the viewer experiences it might dramatize.

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[207] Sconce, *Haunted Media*, 8.

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Why is it that the dead in Hooper's film do not appear until the televised broadcast ends? Sconce's ideological reading of the static in this case is fascinating, but upon further reflection, there are many ways for static to appear on a television screen.[208] As such, rather than symbolizing viewers' lingering social anxieties about the medium, perhaps the appearance of the dead at the moment the flow of televised content ceases more directly dramatizes the unconscious formation of viewers' own internalized "bad objects." In the realm of Kleinian psychoanalysis, bad objects dwelling in the psyche are not always direct correlates of threatening objects/persons encountered in daily life. A bad object can also be a phantasy (or unconscious image) generated to account for a good object that has gone missing. Klein suggests that this process occurs first in relation to feeding: When the infant is hungry and the "good breast" is not present to meet this need, the infant can hallucinate a "bad breast" primarily defined by its tendency to frustrate and withhold sustenance.[209] Similarly, when the Freeling's television broadcast effectively goes dark for the evening, the absence of content immediately gives way to a malevolent and insubstantial presence. What makes the haunting truly menacing in *Poltergeist* is its unnerving origin; the bad forces are suddenly "heeeerrrreeee" from nothing.

Of course, if the interpretation of the haunting as a kind of "bad breast" has any traction, then it also implies an important correlate: The Freeling's television broadcast functions as some sort of "good breast" whose continued presence effectively keeps the bad at bay. While the family—who peacefully slumbered beneath the protective glow of the scheduled broadcast—would perhaps agree with such a view, it is the goal of the

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[208] In fact, the chapter in which this example appears provides many examples of static as a medium for threatening or menacing forces, especially as a narrative/aesthetic element in science fiction programming (most notably *The Twilight Zone* and *The Outer Limits*). For Sconce, then, the actual end of the televised broadcast in *Poltergeist* is less important than the static in inaugurates. See "Static and Stasis," 124-166.

[209] For a detailed discussion of this point, see Melanie Klein, "Weaning," *Love, Guilt and Reparation and Other Works, 1921-1945* (New York: Free Press, 1975), 290-305.

present chapter to explore this connection more literally. Thus far I have argued in this project that television appeals because it provides viewers with a virtually endless supply of characters or personae as sites of intimate, unconscious object relations. The present chapter builds upon this initial claim by exploring further the importance of television's "endless" quality to its rhetorical operation. Here I argue that in supplying objects for viewers at all hours of the day and night, the medium itself also comes to function as an object—perhaps one eventually more attractive to viewers than any particular character or persona. Indeed, rather than position the medium as one object among many in the viewer's environment, the gradual lengthening of broadcast hours in the U.S. and around the world has specifically aligned television with the primal "good breast," an object phantasy that persists in the unconscious of every individual from infancy. Because the good breast concretizes the individual's first experience of gratifying constancy, it also functions as an unconscious standard against which all other objects are assessed for their pleasure-ability, and in this chapter I explore how television fares especially well in this comparison. The medium's pre-symbolic rhetorical mode thus relies not only on the presentation of characters and personae, but also on its constant flow of content and how this flow indexes our earliest sense of the pleasurable—a link so solid that, as dramatized in *Poltergeist*, the termination of this flow can only be imagined as a terrible torment.

This chapter begins with an overview of the notion of *flow* in television studies, with particular attention to how the term helps characterize a modern televisual apparatus that is "always on" and, by extension, always present to modern viewers. The chapter then engages in a more detailed discussion of internal object formation and the persistence of the good breast in order to provide an interpretive schema for the appeal of endless presence in television. Finally, it looks at the appeal of 24-hour televised news as a case study to illustrate this point.

TELEVISUAL FLOW AND THE 24-HOUR BROADCAST CYCLE

Raymond Williams has famously proposed the notion of "flow" as the quintessential structural form of television.[210] Writing in the mid-1970s, Williams argues that the tendency among cultural critics to concentrate on a single program or a sequence of discrete programs when discussing television is misguided. Instead, the evolution of the medium through the 20th century reveals a "replacement of a programme series of timed sequential units by a flow series of differently related units in which the timing, though real, is undeclared, and in which the real internal organization is something other than the declared organization."[211] In other words, rather than interpret television as a series of programs with clear beginnings and endings (as the familiar layout of printed programming guides might suggest), critics should instead try to see television for what it "really" is: A veritable flow of disparate textual pieces that nevertheless meld together to form the appearance of a unique totality.

Williams makes a number of observations in support of this characterization. His first set concerns broadcast content. Unlike presentations in film or on stage, he notes, television is in a constant state of interruption. No more than a few minutes of a program can pass before the channel cuts to a commercial break, parading a series of products and personalities that typically have nothing whatsoever to do with the program. Even programs themselves can involve the assembly of various "pieces" with little evident relationship to one another (one thinks here of the various packaged stories that make up a single news broadcast, or even the various acts that play out in succession on variety programming). And yet, Williams observes, despite this cacophony, there remains a sensation of wholeness about any given broadcast—often a result of the various elements

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[210] Raymond Williams, *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* (New York: Routledge, 1974).
[211] Williams, *Television*, 93.

within the content connecting in less than evident ways. A commercial aired during the day might preview the storyline of a drama to be broadcast later that evening. News stories on different topics may nevertheless resonate on similar emotional tones (or on the point of bringing order and interpretation to chaos). The order of evening programs on a channel may be plotted in such a way that early shows whet viewer appetite for all entertainments to come, no matter how unrelated these later programs might be.

This final example overlaps with the other set of Williams's observations regarding the social practices that reveal the centrality of endless content flow to the experience of the medium. "Most of us say," he notes, "in describing the experience [of watching broadcast programming], that we have been 'watching television,' rather than that we have watched 'the news' or 'a play' or 'the football' 'on television.' Certainly sometimes we say both, but the fact that we say the former at all is already significant."[212] Viewers, he argues very frequently interpret television less in terms of bounded programs and more as a source of roughly interchangeable entertainments consumed across a given (and at times lengthy) time period. Even for those viewers who have come to the medium with the intent to watch a specific program, it is not uncommon to linger and watch whatever is on next as well. And if the next offering is not to their liking, viewers will often only switch to another channel rather than actually turn off the television set.

For these reasons Williams argues that the basic unit of organization for television is the sequence of images and sounds that flow forth from the medium as a single entity. Since the publication of his initial thoughts on the matter, a number of media scholars have utilized the term "flow" to refer to phenomena associated with this type of textual organization (albeit some more distantly than others). The term "audience flow," for

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[212] Williams, *Television*, 94.

example, refers to the ways in which elements within a given television broadcast can discourage viewers from changing channels between programs.[213] These strategies include sandwiching a less popular program between two popular ones, rushing end credits to begin the next program before viewers have truly disengaged from the viewing experience, and others. In each case the crucial strategies most often reside in the interstices between the programs (and are therefore elements of an overall flow structure rather than any individual program). Even more commonly, media scholars have also adopted the notion of flow to discuss the shift of television content outside of its original cultural context—an increasingly common event in a global media marketplace.[214] This use of the term is less beholden to the structural analysis at the heart of Williams's own study, but it certainly upholds his fascination with the unending movement of content.

Of those scholars who limit themselves to Williams's original discussion of flow, some naturally offer significant points of criticism. Gregory A. Waller points out in his own review of the term that many other organizational elements of television seem far more fundamental than the fragmented union of Williams's flow.[215] Of these, *seriality* is

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[213] For a representative sample of research in this area, see Roland T. Rust and Mark I. Alpert, "An Audience Flow Model of Television Viewing Choice," *Marketing Science* 3 (1984): 113-124; William J. Adams, "Scheduling Practices Based on Audience Flow: What Are the Effects on New Program Success?" *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 74 (1998): 839-858; James G. Webster, "Audience Flow Past and Present: Television Inheritance Effects Reconsidered," *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 50 (2006): 323-337.

[214] See, for example, Myles P. Breen, "The Flow of Television Programs from America to Australia," *Journalism Quarterly* 58 (1981): 388-394; Maria C. Wert and Robert Stevenson, "Global Television Flow to Latin American Countries," *Journalism Quarterly* 65 (1988): 182-185; Yoshinko Nakano, "Who Initiates a Global Flow? Japanese Popular Culture in Asia," *Visual Commuication* 1 (2002): 229-253; William M. Kunz, "Prime-Time Island: Television Program and Format Important into the United States," *Television & New Media* 11 (2010): 308-324; Faye Woods, "Teen TV Meets T4: Assimilating *The O.C.* into British Youth Television," *Critical Studies in Television* 8 (2013): 14-35. Beyond the issue of culture, this deployment of the term inspires some thought about how flow structure may have migrated to different *technological* contexts as well, especially in recent years. The constant updating of information on a user's Facebook wall, for example, or even the endless supply of messages on a Twitter feed both suggest that the notion of flow may no longer apply only to the medium of television. I return to this idea in the conclusion.

[215] Gregory A. Waller, "Flow, Genre, and the Television Text," *Journal of Popular Film & Television* 16 (1988): 6-11.

probably the greatest conceptual challenger. Interpreting television as an unpacking of content over the course of a program's single season or through multiple seasons (or, in the case of soap operas and news programs, many multiple seasons) would appear to more closely embody viewers' actual experiences with the medium. Furthermore, even if flow does represent the best approximation of what it means to "watch television," certain changes in television technology over the last few decades give us reason to think about it as a historically situated concept rather than a defining quality of the medium. Jeremy G. Butler suggests that the rise of technology giving viewers greater control over television reception practices (remote control and especially DVR) means that the experience of consuming an endless televisual flow is likely eroding, replaced by experiences of choice and precision.[216] Derek Kompare and Matt Hills's twin analyses of television programs on DVD arrive at similar conclusions, suggesting that the past flow of television content has been disrupted by delivery systems that encourage more selective viewing practices.[217] Television on DVD in particular seems to reinforce seriality as the primary organizational element of television and perhaps even promotes the kind of program-specific analyses with which Williams originally found fault.

Despite these criticisms, many scholars still argue for the continued value of flow in critical discussions of television. Linkages between diverse textual elements throughout a given broadcast period remain a significant means by which the medium finds structure. In his analysis of the satirical *Onion News Network*, for example, Ethan Thompson finds that the increasingly common integration of commercial sponsors'

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[216] Jeremy G Butler, *Television: Critical Methods & Application, 3rd ed*. (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2009), 11-14.

[217] Derek Kompare, "Publishing Flow: DVD Box Sets and the Reconception of Television," *Television & New Media* 7 (2006): 335-360; Matt Hills, "From the Box in the Corner to the Box Set on the Shelf: 'TVIII' and the Cultural/Textual Valorisations of DVD," *New Review of Film and Television Studies* 5 (2007): 41-60.

products into actual television programming is a powerful way to smooth differences between content and the "interruptions" of advertising spots.[218] Other modern television production strategies also appear to validate the concept of flow, either by building upon established methods for directing audiences to stay tuned (as is the case with novel "hot start" transitions between programs that eschew a commercial buffer) or by utilizing new broadcast elements (such as popular music in primetime) to elicit audience affinity with the medium as a whole.[219] As for the displacement of flow structure by technological innovations within the medium, William Uricchio argues that technologies designed to increase viewers' control over content very much end up reinforcing the centrality of flow within that content.[220] Remote control and DVR technologies, for instance, have giving way to "metadata programmers" like Tivo that can proactively select programs for users to watch. Viewer control is partially giving way to new means for arranging flows of content, and Uricchio suggests that a future world of user-tailored television flows is not far outside of the realm of possibility.

What scholars on both sides of the debate over flow seem to ignore, however, is a defining element of the structure that Williams notes a number of times throughout his original discussion. Beyond the fusion of disparate textual pieces, what also marks

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[218] Ethan Thompson, "*Onion News Network*: Flow," *How to Watch Television*, eds. Ethan Thompson and Jason Mitell (New York: New York University Press, 2013): 281-289.

[219] For novel methods of audience flow like the "hot start," see William Uricchio, "Television's Next Generation: Technology/Interface Culture/Flow," *Television After TV: Essays on a Medium in Transition*, eds. Lynn Spigel and Jan Olsson (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 163-182. For a discussion of the link between flow and popular music in primetime, see Charles Fairchild, "Flow amid Flux: The Evolving Uses of Music in Evening Television Drama," *Television and New Media* 12 (2011): 491-512.

[220] Uricchio, "Television's Next," 174-180. Beyond Uricchio's own points here, there are a number of other viewer practices surrounding DVR technology that actually appear to magnify the centrality of flow to television reception. The common practice of "binge watching" the entirely of one's saved recordings in a single sitting, for instance, very closely resembles the continuous reception of content that Williams discusses. In addition, the tendency for viewers to watch the commercials on a recorded program *even though they have the option to fast forward through them* suggests that the medium still invites individuals to lose themselves in flow of content during the actual moment of reception. I will take up some of these issues in greater detail in the concluding chapter.

televisual flow is the seemingly endless *presence* of broadcast content. This characteristic arose in part from the historical eradication of notable breaks between programming. "In earlier phases of broadcasting service," Williams reminds readers, "both in sound and television, there were *intervals* between programme units: true intervals, usually marked by some conventional sound or picture to show that the general service was still active."[221] It is easy to forget that the earliest historical television programs were scheduled to appear at certain times of the day, and if nothing was programmed for broadcast at a particular moment, then nothing did (beyond some sort of conventional filler material). When modern commercial advertising spots came to supplant most of these intervals, they also more importantly ushered in a transformation of the regimented series of bounded presentations and breaks into a *continuous* parade of assorted materials.

Perhaps even more integral to flow's endless quality is the gradual lengthening of television's actual broadcast hours throughout the 20th century. Although early television stations only aired programming for a few hours each day, Williams notes that the typical broadcast schedule had extended drastically by his time in the 1970s:

> In the United States it is already possible to begin watching [television] at six o'clock in the morning, see one's first movie at eight-thirty, and so on in a continuous flow, with the screen never blank, until the late movie begins at one o'clock the following morning. It is scarcely possible that many people watch a flow of that length, over more than twenty hours of the day. But the flow is always accessible, in several alternative sequences, at the flick of a switch.[222]

Not every television station could sustain such a lengthy broadcast, for sure, but those that could (predominantly the national networks) gave the impression that content poured uninterrupted from the television set for almost an entire day, every day. As James Lull notes, the sense of ceaseless content meant that television in the 1970s largely served "to

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[221] Willaims, *Television*, 90.
[222] Williams, *Television*, 95.

create a flow of constant background noise" that in turn fulfilled a variety of social functions for the home: providing a sense of companionship, serving as an anchor of family conversation, or contributing to the general atmosphere of domestic activity.[223]

Of course, it was not long before the impression of endless content on television ceded to the *reality* of endless content. The lengthy broadcast schedule that Williams describes remained standard in the United States until the mid 1980s, when deregulatory measures on the part of the Federal Communication Commission extended the schedule even further by encouraging the widespread viability of 24-hour broadcasts for the first time in the medium's history. Although acquiring a license to broadcast from the FCC theoretically granted station owners the right to program content at any hour of the day, for much of the 20th century the early morning hours remained dark. These hours held little value for a medium principally concerned with attracting audiences, and most stations (like the one featured in *Poltergeist*) opted to go off the air during this time rather than produce or acquire content that would reach few viewers and net little advertising revenue. In the summer of 1984, however, the FCC abolished a number of its previous regulations for the medium, repealing both its cap on the amount of commercial minutes allowed per broadcast hour and its ban on program length commercials.[224] With these changes it suddenly became possible and even desirable for television stations to sell the entirety of their unused early morning slots to companies interested in advertising their products though the newly possible "infomercial" format.[225] This format was especially

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[223] James Lull, "The Social Uses of Television," *Human Communication Research* 6 (1980): 201-202.

[224] The FCC formally noted these changes in the August 1984 "Report and Order in the Matter of the Revision of Programming and Commercialization Policies, Ascertainment Requirements, and Program Log Requirements for Commercial Television Stations." A detailed discussion of this report and its impact on television programming can be found in Heidi R. Young's article "The Deregulation of Commercial Television," *Fordham Urban Law Journal* 13 (1984): 373-394.

[225] Timothy R. Hawthorne, *The Complete Guide to Informercial Marketing* (Lincolnwood, IL: NTC Business Books, 1997), 15. Although Hawthorne notes here that program length advertising spots were part of the earliest television landscape, the contemporary infomercial as we know it was not actually born until

attractive to broadcasters because they did not need to supply any additional content to lure viewers—the program and advertising were one in the same. Infomercials began to fill the early morning airwaves. The 24-hour television broadcast cycle had begun.

Given these facts, it is fair to say that a defining element of the televisual apparatus in the 20th century was either the appearance or the actuality of an endless flow of broadcast content. The multiplication of channels and delivery technologies within the medium in the last decade has only increased the sensation that access to television is never more than a moment away—a major source, as Lull observes, of users' attraction to the medium overall.[226] Although it makes some intuitive sense to suggest that the medium appeals to viewers because it is omnipresent, there is in fact no clear reason as to *why* this would be the case. Under scrutiny the statement amounts to a tautology (television is popular because it is popular). What is needed, then, is an explanation that can account for the appeal specifically derived from a sensation of continuous presence. Melanie Klein's work on object relations provides precisely this kind of discussion.

INTERNAL OBJECT FORMATION

Recall that the notion of the "object" in Melanie Klein's object relations theory may refer to either actual people with whom the individual interacts (*external* objects) or mental correlates of these people that dwell within the individual's unconscious (*internal* objects). Some of the first objects in this sense are the individual's parents or primary caretakers. Much of Klein's clinical work concerns the relationship between internal and external objects, especially on how distortions of the former can come to impact an

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1984 upon the FCC deregulation. For additional information about the centrality of the infomercial in the rise of the 24-hour television broadcast schedule, see "Useful Notes: ANSI Standard Broadcast TV Schedule," *Television Tropes and Idioms*, accessed October 10, 2014, http://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/ pmwiki.php/UsefulNotes/ANSIStandardBroadcastTVSchedule.

[226] Lull, "Social Uses," 201-202. As I noted in Chapter 1, Ron Lembo's consideration of the factors that inform the very common and "continuous" use of television by viewers also speaks to this point.

individual's behaviors toward the latter. As noted in the previous chapters, however, Klein's theories of subjectivity delve much more deeply into the formation of internal objects specifically, as well as how these phantasies can come to assume particular valances. Before we can examine any further the influence of internal objects on the individual's relation to the external world (and thus to television), it is first important to understand more precisely their fundamental influence on the individual.

In their overview of psychoanalytic object relations work, Jay R. Greenberg and Stephen A. Mitchell note that Klein advances three different and occasionally contradictory mechanisms of internal object formation over the course of her career, providing no sense of which one is preferable or correct.[227] The first and perhaps most controversial involves a phylogenic/innate knowledge of certain primal objects (breast, penis, baby, womb, poison, etc.) that function from birth as sites of drive satisfaction and as templates for later object formations. The second mechanism is one I have already addressed in detail throughout the first half of this project: The early management of the death drive via acts of projective identification. In externalizing the locus of its destructive and constructive impulses into objects in its environment, the infant also manages to internalize these external objects as divided, unconscious phantasies. From this vantage, no internal objects are truly innate, but external object incorporation (*introjection*) begins almost immediately after birth and functions to build up a rich, unconscious reality of both affirming and threatening phantasized object-representations.

The third mechanism by which internal objects form in Klein's schema, and the one that is of most concern to the present chapter, involves the infant's fundamental misinterpretation of the external and internal phenomena it encounters. Instead of

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[227] Jay R. Greenberg and Stephen A. Mitchell, *Object Relations in Psychoanalytic Theory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), 130-136.

internalizing environmental objects and splitting them into good and bad versions, here "the nature of the child's experience leads him [sic] to construe the existence of objects."[228] Put differently, the infant accounts for some positive and negative experiences at the beginning of life by hallucinating (or generating in unconscious phantasy) internal objects that function as the assumed *sources* of those experiences. The limited mental facilities of the infant mean that it interprets everything in highly concrete terms at the beginning of life. The sensation of security that may accompany the act of nursing, for example, is felt by the infant to be a distinctly "good" object separate from the milk that, once consumed, radiates satisfaction. Hunger pains may be similarly concretized via phantasy into "bad" objects dwelling within infant, ones that attack its insides to cause distress.[229] From this third perspective, in essence, internal objects are psychical inventions of the infant that help it account for all sorts of experiences.

All three of these perspectives play important roles at different points in Klein's thought, but the third significantly suggests that one way internal objects gain their psychical valance—good and bad—is on the issue of presence and absence. This much is clear in Klein's aforementioned ideas regarding the first or primary object for most developing infants: The feeding object or "breast."[230] "Frustration and gratification from the outset," she writes, "mould the infant's relation to a loved good breast and to a hated bad breast."[231] Although there is only ever one external or "real" feeding object in the

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[228] Greenberg and Mitchell, *Object Relations*, 133.

[229] For further discussion of this mechanism of internal object formation, see "Earliest Object Relations" in R.D. Hinshelwood's *Clinical Klein: From Theory to Practice* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), 32-34.

[230] In Kleinian theory the primary external object is whatever regularly feeds the infant (breast, bottle, or other device) and inspires the formation of primary inner correlates. The feeding object is primary because it is the first one that the young infant will likely register within its environment; the process of feeding also mimics the psychical practice of introjection so critical to this developmental stage. Klein uses the term "breast" to signify the primary object independent of the actual object, explicitly admitting that it could just as well be a bottle. See "Weaning," 302-303.

[231] Melanie Klein, "The Oedipus Complex in the Light of Early Anxieties," *Love, Guilt and Reparation and Other Works, 1921-1945* (New York: Free Press, 1975), 408.

infant's environment, Klein suggests that the infant comes to hallucinate two internal correlates of this object based on different feeding experiences. When the young infant is hungry and the mother or primary caretaker is actually present to provide it with the breast, the infant comes to phantasize the existence of a "good" breast responsible for gratifying its needs. When the child is hungry and the primary caretaker is not present, however, rather than assume that the good breast has gone missing, the infant follows its typical method of concrete thinking and phantasizes the existence of a "bad" breast actively responsible for frustrating its needs by purposefully withholding sustenance.

As the first internal objects, the good and bad breasts provide a number of important psychical functions for the developing infant. They can initially act as points of attribution for the wide variety of positive and negative stimuli that the infant encounters.[232] Even more critically, as the infant grows and begins to register more external objects in its lived environment, the good and bad breasts also function as templates for the formation of future internalized representations. "What one might call the 'good' breasts," Klein explains, "become the prototype of what is felt throughout life to be good and beneficent, while the 'bad' breasts stand for everything evil and persecuting."[233] In essence, through the notion of the good/bad breast, Klein suggests that the infant's early experiences of presence and absence remain powerful, unconscious points of reference that interpret and organize a vast majority of future experiences. This fundamental, structuring function explains why many Kleinians today use "the breast" as a metaphor or shorthand for any core objects in an individual's experience.

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[232] "At the earliest stage of mental development, every unpleasant stimulus is apparently related in the baby's phantasy to the 'hostile' or denying breasts, every pleasant stimulus on the other hand to the 'good,' gratifying breasts." Klein, "Weaning," 292.

[233] Klein, "Weaning," 291. Klein is not always consistent in her writing identifying the primary good and bad objects as single breasts or as pairs of breasts.

One future experience that I believe uniquely resonates with the presence/absence dynamic of the primal breasts is the modern viewer's encounter with televisual flow. Some existing psychoanalytic work on television already alludes to such a connection. Without any specific recourse to Klein, for example, Beverle Houston provocatively proposes that "in its endless flow of text, [television] suggests the first flow of nourishment in and from the mother's body."[234] Developing Houston's musing here a bit more carefully, I contend that the modern flow of televisual content specifically appears to viewers under the aegis of the internalized *good* breast because it is one of the few objects that people encounter in their lived environment that never truly "disappears" (or, in Kleinian terms, disappoints). In the same way that the primal good breast is always present when the infant demands it, the unique flow structure of television means that it is always available for modern viewers—it somehow continues to exist even when the set itself is turned off.[235] Referring to television as "the boob tube" thus affords a rather precise characterization of the medium's draw: Flow directly indexes the constancy and security attributed to the primal good breast in the unconscious mind of every viewer.

Given this overlap, the sensation of "presence" in television that has so fascinated users throughout the history of the medium may not be (as Sconce's work implies) entirely the result of ideological or discursive negotiation. Television may instead *feel* mysteriously present to viewers in part because they have unconsciously registered its flow structure as a good object—an object that more directly references the archetypal good object than almost anything else encountered in lived experience. I further believe

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[234] Beverle Houston, "Viewing Television: The Metapsychology of Endless Consumption," *Quarterly Review of Film Studies* 9 (1984): 184.

[235] As Roger Silverstone notes in his own discussion of televisual object relations derived from Winnicott, "switching [television] off (in anger, in frustration, or in boredom) does not destroy it. We can switch it on again and it demonstrates its invulnerability and dependability….Television is, as many observers have noted, constantly present. It is eternal." *Television and Everyday Life* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 15.

that this internalization is a significant source of the medium's widespread appeal. Throughout the 20th century the televisual apparatus has increasingly provided a sensation of omnipresence to beings psychically primed to respond positively to such an experience on an unconscious level. As a result, television's pre-symbolic rhetorical mode involves an unconscious attraction not only to the various characters and personae it presents, but to the very *constancy* of the presentation as well—a development especially evident in the rise and vexing appeal of 24-hour televised news.

A CASE STUDY: 24-HOUR TELEVISED NEWS

Televised news provides an appropriate case study for contemplating the unconscious appeal of flow in part because it was among the first types of programming to adopt the 24-hour broadcast model. In America, Ted Turner's Cable News Network—more commonly known as CNN—began broadcasting programming 24 hours a day in June 1980, approximately four years before the aforementioned deregulation on the part of the FCC encouraged the model more broadly across the industry (and the globe). Even more fundamentally, however, so-called "rolling" news channels like CNN, Fox News, MSNBC, BBC World, Sky News, and Al Jazeera help illuminate the unconscious appeal of television as a *medium* because their allure seems to stem much more from their relative availability than any particular content they feature.[236]

Rolling news channels present modern media studies with something of a paradox. On the one hand, many scholars and journalists have few positive things to say about these channels. CNN and its contemporaries are very often derided for heralding (or at least participating in) the "tabloidization" of mainstream news, or the transition

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[236] Stephen Cushion and Justin Lewis utilize the term "rolling news stations" in "What is 24-Hour News Television?," the introductory chapter to their edited volume *The Rise of 24-Hour News Television: Global Perspectives* (New York: Peter Lang, 2010), 1-11.

from a supposedly objective coverage of the most significant social and political events of the day to a more sensationalist coverage of scandals, entertainment, and other emotionally charged material.[237] Critics here suggest that in their quest to fill the demands of a full 24-hour broadcast cycle, rolling news executives increasingly privilege alluring "infotainment" over useful information. This claim dovetails nicely with another major criticism of the format: Rolling news channels tend to relax or abandon rigorous standards for reporting in favor of being the first outlet to report information.[238] The channels' shared concern with "breaking news" and with live presentation of events means that they often are said to sacrifice accuracy and thoughtful reflection for immediacy and speculative commentary. This can be a dangerous substitution, especially because the ubiquitous news coverage of rolling channels may have some unique influence over public opinion (and by extension national policy).[239]

On the other hand, the rolling news format has greatly proliferated on both the national and international stage over the last three decades. From CNN's domination of the rolling market in 1980, there are now approximately 20 news stations around the globe that broadcast continuously and to large sections of the world's population.[240] The

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[237] Bob Franklin, *Newszak & News Media* (New York: Saint Martin's Press, 1997); Daya Kishan Thussu, "Live TV and Bloodless Deaths: War, Infotainment and 24/7 News," *War and the Media: Reporting Conflict 24/7*, eds. Daya Kishan Thussu and Des Freedman (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2003), 117-132; Daya Kishan Thussu, *News as Entertainment: The Rise of Global Infotainment* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2007); W. Lance Bennett, *News: The Politics of Illusion*, 9th ed. (New York: Pearson, 2011); Matt Bai, *All the Truth is Out: The Week Politics Went Tabloid* (New York: Knopf, 2014).

[238] Lawrence K. Grossman, "A Television Plan for the Next War," *Neiman Reports* 45 (1991): 27-31, 52; Lewis A. Friedland, "The World News Order," *Covering the World: International Television News Services* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 1993), 1-12; Dave Kansas and Todd Gitlin, "What's the Rush? An E-epistolary Debate on the 24-Hour News Clock," *Media Studies Journal* 13 (1999): 72-76; Justin Lewis and Stephen Cushion, "The Thirst to be First," *Journalism Practice* 3 (2009): 304-318.

[239] For a helpful overview of work on this controversial idea (often referred to as "The CNN Effect"), see Eytan Gilboa, "The CNN Effect: The Search for a Communication Theory of International Relations," *Political Communication* 22 (2005): 27-44.

[240] Stephen Cushion, "Three Phases of 24-Hour News Television," *The Rise of 24-Hour News Television: Global Perspectives*, eds. Stephen Cushion and Justin Lewis (New York: Peter Lang, 2010), 23.

major American networks have all developed their own 24-hour news services so that local affiliates can access national material for both planned and breaking broadcasts.[241] The format has translated to local markets as well, with 24-hour news channels in the United States dedicated to covering specific states and many metropolitan cities.[242] India alone boasted more than 70 local, round the clock news networks in 2010.[243] This means that even as the format supposedly provides viewers with less quality information and acts as a blight on the field of journalism overall, its relevance around the world continues to grow.

The question that remains is *why*: Why has the format grown in popularity despite the fact that it seems to invite sustained criticism from those "in the know"? This is a difficult question to answer. Media conglomerates with vested economic interests in the format certainly play some role in ensuring its continuation, but these channels and services would not survive a minute without significant audience shares. From the vantage of the audience, part of the format's appeal is likely the result of infotainment's calculated pleasures. Part is also undoubtedly the access that the format provides to up to the minute information, especially in times of national celebration and turmoil. But the main draw of rolling news on a quotidian level is likely the sensation of constant presence that it grants to audiences independent of actual content. Such presence is, after all, what initially distinguished rolling news channels from other news broadcasts—often to audience delight. "While nightly news bulletins had often gone live before the arrival of 24-hour television news," observes Stephen Cushion in explaining the early

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[241] Kim McAvoy, "The News Junkies: Local Stations are Looking for News Services that Operate 24/7," *Broadcasting and Cable* 129 (1999): 24-28.
[242] David Lieberman, "The Rise and Rise of Local 24 Hour News," *Columbia Journalism Review* 37 (1998): 54-57.
[243] Cushion, "Three Phases," 23.

fascination with rolling news, "what CNN delivered [for the first time] was a sustained period of immediate 'liveness.'"[244]

Scholars have fairly criticized television's "live" capabilities as an ideological construct of the industry (especially in relation to news), but this criticism somewhat misses the mark when it comes to determining the most significant dimensions of presence and appeal in 24-hour news.[245] Rolling television news channels are not only "live" when viewers are convinced that what they see is being broadcast in real time; rolling news is also experienced as more holistically "live" because it is *always there.* This kind of liveness seems more fundamental to the format than any specific use of on location reporting or breaking news frames because, as Paul Farhi points out, rolling news channels often do not convey much novel information (or, in a sense, much actual news). "All-news channels maximize and sustain their relatively small audience," he argues, "not by covering many subjects throughout the day, but by focusing intently on one story."[246] The majority of rolling news channels mostly rehash and reinterpret the same top story throughout the day's broadcast. More than actually reporting unfolding events to viewers, then, these channels *present* in the strictest sense of the term. They very often merely *exist* for their audiences. The Project for Excellence in Journalism's 2006 report on the "State of the News Media" in America underscores this point:

> Up close, the striking thing about much cable news, the first 24-hour medium, is a fixation with whatever is happening at the moment. The result is a good deal of repetition and a good deal that is ephemeral. The reporting, perhaps because of

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[244] Cushion, "Three Phases," 17.

[245] See, for example, Jane Feuer, "The Concept of Live Television: Ontology as Ideology," *Regarding Television: Critical Approaches*, ed. Ann Kaplan (Los Angeles: American Film Institute, 1983), 12-22; C. A. Tuggle and Suzanne Huffman, "Live Reporting in Television News: Breaking News or Black Holes," *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 45 (2001): 335-344; Peter A. Casella, "Breaking News or Broken News?," *Journalism Practice* 7 (2013): 362-376.

[246] Paul Farhi, "Cable's Clout," *American Journalism Review* 30 (August/September 2008): 21.

the time to fill rather than despite it, was shallowest by our indicators of any national media studied.[247]

In part because of this fixation on the present, the Project reminds readers in the end that "consuming the news continuously does not mean being better informed. There is too much repetition, and too much confusion."[248]

Such criticism paints a rather dour picture of rolling televised news until one realizes that it assumes that information gathering is the only possible motivation for consuming this kind of programming. But there is another (and perhaps more optimistic) possibility here: Viewers are principally attracted to continuous news not to be better informed, but because the format provides them with a gratifying type of sustained presence. Klaus Bruhn Jensen's detailed study of news reception certainly grazes this idea in his discussion of the "self-legitimation" function of the genre, or the ability for daily news broadcasts to confirm the reality of viewers as social subjects.[249] One interview respondent in Jensen's study powerfully captures this function by acknowledging the anxiety he experiences when away from televised news for too long:

> I find it very disquieting to be away from the news. I'm an astronomer so there are times when I'm, I'm, for long periods of time I'll be away on a mountain […] and working nights so that you don't, you don't have the news on. You're sleeping during the days and so, you know, it'll be, 5, 6 nights will go by, and it's very bothersome. *I, I don't, I can't say why, I just sort of feel detached from*, now maybe this is, now I sort of feel detached from the rest of the, the populace, […] the, the rest of the species.[250] (emphasis added)

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[247] The Project for Excellence in Journalism, "The State of the News Media, 2006: A Day in the Life of the News Media," *The News and Its Future*, The Reference Shelf 82, ed. Paul McCaffrey (New York: H. W. Wilson Company, 2010), 140.

[248] Project for Excellence in Journalism, "State of News," 147.

[249] Klaus Bruhn Jensen, *Making Sense of the News* (Denmark: Aarhus University Press, 1986). Jensen's focus is on daily/nightly news bulletins, but there is no reason to doubt that the self-legitimating function he identifies extends to rolling news outlets as well.

[250] As recorded in Jensen, *Making Sense*, 265.

Jensen is quick to agree with the respondent's own attempts to explain his feelings, suggesting that the news primarily facilitates viewers' subjectivity by helping them keep up with current events. While this interpretation is likely accurate on some level, the reality of the respondent's disquiet coupled with his hesitation as to its actual source also gestures toward the possibility that the news programming *itself* somehow maintains an ineffably satisfying presence in his life. Independent of current events, televised news may legitimate viewers' existence simply because it is so reliably *there*. If this is true, then rolling outlets in particular should provide a great sense of constancy to viewers.

Perhaps the gratifying presence of the news is brought into starkest relief during so-called "disaster marathons," or rolling news coverage of national and international strife: Industrial accidents, natural disasters, terrorist attacks, and similar phenomena.[251] In these cases the rolling format's predilection for addressing one story ad nauseam becomes a template for all televised news outlets; regular broadcasts are suspended and planned stories swept aside in favor of providing endless coverage of a crisis. As Adam Jaworski, Richard Fitzgerald, and Odysseas Constantinou observe in relation to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, however, because there is usually not much new information to report during such marathon coverage, journalists often resort to the kind of circular and speculative talk that typically attends the format of rolling news.[252] Far beyond merely filling time, the authors conclude, these gaps between updates in the news fulfill a critical affective function for viewers:

> Despite the commonplace understanding of news broadcasts as oriented primarily towards the presentation of facts, most of our [analytic] examples seem to offer instead reassurances to the viewers that they are not alone in their shock and grief

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[251] Tamar Liebes coins this phrase in "Television's Disaster Marathons: A Danger for Democratic Processes?," *Media, Ritual, and Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 71-84.

[252] Adam Jaworski, Richard Fitzgerald, and Odysseas Constantinou, "Busy Saying Nothing New: Live Silence in TV Reporting of 9/11," *Multilingua* 24 (2005): 121-144.

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and this is it acceptable to be confused and traumatised [sic]. This is achieved by the reports concentrating on the typical features of small talk: discussing the present time and the immediate environment of the participants[…], discussing *shared* emotions and avoiding inevitable silence.[253] (emphasis in original)

These results lead the authors to suggest that news broadcasts during disaster marathons may be best understood as a form of phatic communication, or "small talk" where the primary goal is the affirmation of social and emotional bonds between participants.

Importantly, although viewers' emotional needs are certainly heightened during moments of crisis, Jaworski, Fitzgerald, and Constantinou argue that the phatic elements at play in continuous disaster coverage across the news spectrum remain especially relevant to 24-hour news channels even during normal broadcasts. In the end they believe that their analysis points

to a certain shift in the function of [continuous] broadcast news: from referential to interpersonal. Paradoxically, 24-hour news channels aiming at 'breaking news' seem to find it difficult to fulfil [sic] this mission as there are not enough newsworthy news items to be broken *all the time*, especially when there is only one story deemed to be newsworthy to be reported. What else can be done while waiting for new news but do small talk?[254] (emphasis in original)

Rolling televised news is inviting to viewers because its stated commitment to endless reporting in actuality presents viewers with a constant point of interpersonal relation—one that is largely extra-symbolic in nature. Phatic communication is less about the actual content of a conversation and more about how the very act of communicating can affirm an emotional link between participants. This is why insignificant topics like the weather can nevertheless hold great affective value in a given exchange. In the case of rolling televised news, what viewers find emotionally attractive is not the particularity of the current events reported or even a specific reporter who provides the news, but simply that these channels as entities unto themselves are always present and willing to "chat."

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[253] Jaworski, Fitzgerald, and Constantinou, "Busy Saying Nothing," 139.
[254] Jaworski, Fitzgerald, and Constantinou, "Busy Saying Nothing," 139.

Overall, the appeal of rolling televised news appears to stem much more from its constancy than the information it imparts. News content may certainly attract viewers on some level to these channels, but it is the format of endless presentation—their continuous "liveness" or presence—that provides audiences with a more significantly satisfying and ineffable engagement in the end. Previous research gives reason to interpret this engagement in terms of self-legitimation or phatic communication, but I believe that Klein's work on object relations provides an equally illuminating mechanism in this case. Unlike the majority of objects that come and go in a viewer's daily environment, continuous news broadcasts are by nature never absent. They are available whenever viewers desire them. This unwavering presence results in audience members internalizing the broadcasts as good objects on the plane of unconscious phantasy, objects that resonate particularly with the archetypal "good breast" buried deep within the psyche of every individual. Because the specific format of the genre happens to mimic the subject's first psychical experiences of gratifying presence, rolling news demonstrates an inexplicably satisfying draw for contemporary viewers.

As one of the earliest genres of programming to broadcast continuously, rolling news services also provide an excellent case study for examining the unconscious appeal of the more generalized flow that characterizes the modern televisual apparatus. Beverle Houston argues that a 24-hour flow cycle can induce in viewers a phantasmic sense that broadcast content "issues from an endless supply that is sourceless, natural, inexhaustible, and coextensive with psychological reality itself."[255] As in the case of rolling news, I contend that this sensation is the particular result of an ever-present flow structure overlapping with viewers' primal good object. Television appeals as a medium in part

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[255] Houston, "Metapsychology," 184.

because it is the environmental object that most closely resembles the early, gratifying good breast. This resemblance extends the findings of the previous chapter by suggesting that the pre-symbolic rhetorical mode of the medium involves more than just its ability to provide viewers with particular targets of projective identification at all hours of the day and night. On a much broader level, the apparatus also invites viewers to take the flow structure itself as a gratifying good object—a major source of the medium's enduring appeal.[256]

CONCLUSION

This chapter has looked at the specific role of televisual flow in assessing the medium's pre-symbolic rhetoric of projective identification. Raymond Williams's definition of flow as a disjointed unity that characterizes the textual existence of television is not without critics, but the concept is an especially apt means for capturing the apparently endless quality of modern, 24-hour television broadcasts. Melanie Klein's ideas regarding internal object formation on the basis of early experiences of presence and absence help clarify why individuals would be particularly attracted to a medium that displays constant availability. Finally, the historical rise of around the clock or "rolling"

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[256] I hesitate to suggest here which element of appeal grounds the other, if only because unconscious object relations rarely proceed in such a linear or causal fashion. On the one hand, it is possible that acts of projective identification with characters and personae on television only occur once the viewer has first instantiated the larger flow structure of the medium as an internalized good object; here a general relation to the presentation of content would prefigures relations to more specific sites of projection. On the other hand, it is also possible that acts of projective identification carried out with various people on the screen over time bring about a more general sensation of television's constancy, which in turn encourages the viewer to materialize the flow structure as an internal, good object. Future applications of the theory I am building in this project may eventually help me resolve this question, but until that point, I only assert that the contours of television's pre-symbolic rhetorical mode involve an object relation with both specific characters/personae *and* with the flow structure of the medium itself. Regardless, it is important to note that the object relation established with the medium of television as I discuss it here remains distinct from the identification that apparatus scholars suggest occurs with the cinema screen (which I address in Chapter Two). Primary cinematic identification occurs specifically with the look of the film camera (its field of vision), while the object relation inaugurated with television on the basis of its flow structure is with the medium overall (an internalized phantasy or sense of its constituent technological and cultural elements).

news channels provides a specific vantage for assessing this proposed, unconscious attraction. Previous attempts to characterize the special presence that 24-hour news assumes for viewers may be productively reassessed in light of Klein's ideas. This case study suggests that part of television's pre-symbolic appeal involves not only a constant presentation of characters and personae as sites unconscious object relations, but a relation to (or an internalization of) the very constancy of the presentation itself. The next chapter, consequently, looks at what happens when this constant availability of objects ceases—when a favorite television show ends. It asks: How do viewer behaviors specifically surrounding various endings on television index Kleinian object relations and further point to the existence of a rhetoric of projective identification within the medium?

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Chapter Five: Viewer Activism and the Lost (Good) Object

Along with opposable thumbs, the use of tools, and access to symbolic systems of language, a foreknowledge of death is an attribute often thought to distinguish human beings from other species. Humans are perhaps the only animals that know, deeply and fully, that they will die long before the actual event occurs, and this understanding has inspired more than a few anxious philosophers to ponder questions regarding the purpose of life, the possibility of an afterlife, and the ethical obligations that we might maintain toward other humans in the face of such a shared, unavoidable fate. In an era marked especially by increasing levels of media saturation, however, I am struck by the ways in which this collective awareness of mortality has extended to areas of life that are not, at least by the measure of all previous ages, "real." More specifically, anyone who allows themselves to become sincerely lost in the world of a particular television program knows that its eventual cancellation—the termination of its narrative storyline, the development of its characters, and the continued existence of its environments—can feel very similar to the passing of a close companion. And, despite the fact that news of these terminations is typically telegraphed well in advance by entertainment press, foreknowledge of a favorite program's impending "death," far from assuaging the concerns of devoted viewers, often inspires only a looming sense of dread, melancholy, and wistful nostalgia.

To be perfectly transparent, associations between television and loss are fresh in my mind right now because, as I write this, I know that the NBC network is pulling the plug tonight on its long-running program *Parks and Recreation.* After six years, *Park*'s writers, actors, and producers announced that the series had run its creative course.[257] The

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[257] For an overview of the factors leading up to this decision, see Dan Snierson, "'Parks and Recreation': Inside the Futuristic Farewell Season—and Final Days on Set," *Entertainment Weekly*, January 17, 2015, http://www.ew.com/article/2015/01/13/parks-and-recreation-season-7-final.

seventh season would be its last. Throughout the broadcast of this final season, as a regular viewer I have experienced a tremendous range of emotions regarding the residents of Pawnee, Indiana—the fictional small town setting of the show that has nevertheless come to feel very real to me. Sitting down to watch each week's installment has evoked in me both the sensation of checking in with good friends and an anxiety over the fact that this opportunity will soon be impossible. I find myself worrying about Leslie, Ben, Ron, Tom, Andy, April, and the substantially developed cast of secondary characters in the program as if they were actual individuals departing from my life. NBC's decision to broadcast two new episodes of the series each week during this final season has only managed to intensify these conflicting feelings. While this structure has allowed me to spend more time each week with "people" I have truly come to adore, I cannot shake the feeling that our time together has also been cut short with this decision.

Perhaps the only circumstance more troubling here is the *unexpected* cancellation of a beloved television program, where comparably stronger feelings of loss can inspire responses beyond simple resignation. In 2012, for example, every indication suggested that The CW network would renew its freshman series *The Secret Circle* for a second season. The show, about a coven of teen witches in the fictitious community of Chance Harbor, WA, fit squarely within the network's brand of paranormal youth programming (a theme clear in CW mainstays like *Supernatural*, *The Vampire Diaries*, and others). *Circle* also concluded its first season as the network's third most-watched program, outpacing even proven performers like *Gossip Girl* and *One Tree Hill*.[258] When the network announced that it would not be renewing the series shortly after the first season finale, then, *Circle*'s producers, actors, and fans were all understandably shocked.

[258] "CW 2011-2012 Ratings Report Card," *TV Series Finale*, accessed February 26, 2015, http://tvseriesfinale.com/tv-show/cw-2011-2012-ratings/.

For at least the viewers, however, this shock fueled only a sense of indignation and an impulse toward collective action. Upon receiving word that The CW declined to renew the series, a core constituency of *Circle* fans immediately organized an online campaign called "Save The Secret Circle" that encouraged fellow viewers to sign its petitions or contact the network on their own in hopes of convincing executives to reverse their decision.[259] The campaign also appealed to other networks like ABC Family and SyFy to see if they might pick up *Circle*, especially given the commonalities between the program and these networks' branding strategies. In a somewhat audacious display that referenced an unresolved plot point from *Circle*'s first season, some members of the campaign even financed and organized the mass drop of 300 pounds of plastic gold coins at the ABC Family headquarters in Burbank, CA. Unfortunately, despite these efforts and others like them, nothing convinced The CW to change its mind about the program's renewal, and the campaign eventually subsided in the summer of 2012 as *Circle* viewers came to acknowledge the reality of their shared loss.

Experiencing the cancellation of a cherished television show in the same emotional terms as the death of a loved one would likely not surprise the psychoanalyst Melanie Klein, who suggests that the perceived loss of any significant object in adult life is intimately linked to infantile anxieties regarding absence and the primal fear of annihilation. For Klein, certain unconscious patterns of "early mourning" central to infantile development are necessarily "revived whenever grief is experienced in later life."[260] Beyond illuminating the emotional experiences of individual audience members, however, Klein's understanding here is also quite helpful in interpreting the lengths to

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[259] For a chronological overview of campaign events updated in real time, consult the official "Save The Circle" tumblr page at http://savethecircle.tumblr.com/.

[260] Melanie Klein, "Mourning and its Relation to Manic-Depressive States," *Love, Guilt and Reparation and Other Works, 1921-1945* (New York: Free Press, 1975), 344.

which some viewerships will go in attempts to save a beloved program when its fate is in doubt (or when its "death" is not yet certain). Audience campaigns like "Save The Secret Circle" that very often materialize in such moments of uncertainty follow a fairly predicable pattern of behavior that closely mirrors Klein's own thoughts regarding the idiosyncrasies of mourning established in the earliest stages of life.

Thus far in this project I have argued that a Kleinian approach to object relations provides useful, theoretical scaffolding for understanding affective links between individual viewers and the medium of television. These ties arise primarily through a rhetorical mode inherent to the medium that I have referred to as the rhetoric of projective identification. In the present chapter I extend this perspective by looking at how Klein's particular ideas regarding object loss and mourning shed additional light on the collective behaviors of television viewers. More specifically, I argue here that the depressive position and its unconscious defenses and impulses help account for the highly visible audience behaviors that often coalesce around the impeding termination of a television program. If previous chapters have outlined the contours of the rhetoric of projective identification largely through formal aspects of the medium itself, analysis in this chapter contemplates this phenomenon from the vantage of the audience—a different perspective that clarifies the tangible "effect" of this rhetorical mode and, as a result, more soundly argues for its existence.

This chapter begins with an overview of literature on audience activism organized around saving television programs from cancellation. It then provides a more detailed exploration of the Kleinian depressive position that I introduced in Chapter Three as a means of accounting for the common behaviors exhibited in these campaigns. Finally, the chapter concludes with a case study—the "Save *Farscape*" campaign from 2002—that helps ground these more general ideas in an extended, historical example.

TELEVISION VIEWER ACTIVISM

"Activism" initiated by television viewers or fans typically takes the form of coordinated attempts among audience members to influence the production of a mutually beloved program, especially attempts aimed at ensuring a program's *continued* production in the face of possible cancellation.[261] These latter attempts most often cohere in physical or online petitions. The logic here is straightforward: Signatures and other similarly affirmative displays demonstrate to executives and advertisers that the audience for a program under siege is in fact vast in size, dedication, and continued profitability.

From one vantage, petition efforts aimed at convincing privately owned networks to continue or revive a cherished program might appear bizarre. Until quite recently in human history, petitioning served only overtly political ends, functioning as the expression of a people to a sovereign/governing body in relation to specific grievances regarding matters of state. The adoption of this form in relation to purely cultural matters is a far more contemporary development, one that Jennifer Earl and Alan Schussman link to the simultaneous rise of "movement societies" and digital technologies.[262] Because corporations and other private bodies have lately assumed greater influence over the lives of most people, Earl and Schussman contend, the transference of a political "movement" ethos and its methods to non-political spheres is understandable. This evolution in social governance and its consequent advances in citizen response—fueled especially by easy access to online petitioning platforms—leads the authors to conclude that cultural petitioning is a valid and prevalent form of civic engagement in the contemporary age.

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[261] For different conceptions of fan activism, especially in the realm of politics and philanthropy, see Henry Jenkins and Sangita Shresthova, eds., "Transformative Works and Fan Activism," special issue, *Transformative Works and Cultures* 10 (2012).

[262] Jennifer Earl and Alan Schussman, "Contesting Cultural Control: Youth Culture and Online Petitioning," *Civic Life Online: Learning How Digital Media Can Engage Youth*, ed. W. Lance Bennett (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008), 71-96.

Of course, a social structure that encourages petitioning in relation to cultural matters is not enough on its own to inspire a television audience to campaign against pending cancellation; many television programs go off the air each season with little more than a brief acknowledgement in entertainment journalism. There are a number of additional parameters, then, that must be met for such a campaign to emerge. Perhaps too obviously, a program must cultivate a sizable audience during its original broadcast, one large enough to appeal to the economic sensibilities of network executives and advertisers in an eventual attempt to save the series. This audience must also be especially dedicated to the program under fire. If too many viewers tune in only casually, they are unlikely to mobilize to save it. It likely also helps if the core audience for a program is youthful; Earl and Schussman suggest that young people with access to technology are most likely to engage in online petitioning aimed at entertainment corporations. Finally, as Simone D. Becque notes, this young and attentive audience must agree fairly uniformly on the artistic merit of the program they share. If a fandom is split in terms of a program's most recent narrative choices or production decisions, this division will likely impede the emergence of any organized effort to save it.[263]

Audience/fan campaigns that manage to emerge from the above circumstances have historically enacted three different petitioning strategies in order to keep their much-loved programs afloat. The oldest and most established approach here is the classic "letter-writing" or verbal support campaign. Drafting endorsements was a central strategy in viewer attempts to save *Star Trek* in the 1960s, an effort widely credited as the very first of such movements in the United States.[264] When NBC announced that it would not

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[263] Simone D. Becque, "Big Damn Fans: Fan Campaigns of *Firefly* and *Veronica Mars*" [MA Thesis, Mount Holyoke College, 2007], 4.
[264] John Tulloch and Henry Jenkins, *Science Fiction Audiences: Watching* Dr. Who *and* Star Trek (New York: Routledge, 1995), 8-10.

be renewing Gene Roddenberry's science fiction series for a third season in 1967, audience members (led by a viewer named Betty Jo "Bjo" Trimble and her husband) organized almost immediately to express their dismay. Over the next few months *Star Trek* viewers inundated NBC with more than 114,000 written letters pleading with executives to keep the program on the air, a demand to which the network finally caved when it renewed the series for a final season. The highly publicized success of viewers "saving" *Star Trek* this way inspired many similar campaigns in the following decades, most noticeably in relation to soap operas and the CBS program *Cagney & Lacey*.[265]

The rise of the Internet in the late 20th century had a large impact on coordinating verbal support campaigns but did not change their essential nature. Pen and paper simply increasingly gave way to chat rooms and email. One of the first television audiences to make significant use of web technology in organizing a petition movement were the viewers of ABC's *My So-Called Life*. When it became apparent that the network was not going to allow the underperforming program to finish the full run of its first season in 1995, many *MSCL* viewers—who already had established a strong virtual community through an interconnected series of websites—naturally turned to these same outlets to convince ABC to reverse its decision.[266] Dubbing their campaign "Operation Life Support," fans coordinated online to draft messages in favor of the program and even initiated fundraising attempts in the hopes of offsetting the network's financial losses. Although these viewers were unsuccessful in their ultimate goal of returning *MSCL* to television, their online networking efforts have become standard for almost all

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[265] See Melissa C. Scardaville, "Accidental Activists: Fan Activism in the Soap Opera Community," *American Behavioral Scientist* 48 (2005): 881-901; Julie D'Acci, *Defining Women: Television and the Case of Cagney & Lacey* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 91-101.
[266] See Caryn Murphy, "'It Only Got Teenage Girls': Narrative Strategies and the Teenage Perspective of *My So-Called Life*," *Dear Angela: Remembering My So-Called Life*, eds. Michele Byers and David Lavery (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2007), 173-177.

contemporary petition campaigns. Audience efforts to express support in the wake of the cancellation of *Firefly* in 2002, for example, which Fox similarly axed before the satisfactory conclusion of its first season, were coordinated almost entirely via online message boards previously dedicated to discussion of the show's narrative and characters.

A second approach often present in television viewer campaigns (and something of a higher order than written statements) involves the mass mailing of particular objects to networks' headquarters that hold some symbolic significance to the program overall. An early attempt to enact this strategy appeared in relation to the UPN alien teen drama *Roswell*. When ratings appeared sluggish at the conclusion of the program's first season in 2000, some dedicated viewers—fearing imminent cancellation—coordinated the "*Roswell* is Hot!" campaign and mailed thousands of bottles of Tabasco sauce to UPN executives (the condiment happened to be a favorite among the alien characters within the show's narrative).[267] UPN responded to the novel ploy by carrying *Roswell* for an additional two seasons, a decision that undoubtedly helped solidify the strategy as a viable one for many future campaigns.

Although she recognizes that many more exist, Kristin M. Barton catalogs at least eight additional television viewer initiatives that historically involved the mass mailing of objects to network executives.[268] *Veronica Mars* viewers inundated the offices of The CW with upwards of 10,000 Mars bars when the network voiced its disinterest in renewing the program in 2007. After Fox cancelled *Arrested Development* in 2006, dedicated fans of the show swamped executives with fake bananas in a reference to the "frozen banana stand" run by the dysfunctional Bluth family at the heart of the program.

[267] Robyn Burnett, *Crash Into Me: The World of Roswell* (Toronto: ECW Press, 2002), 79-83.
[268] Kristin M. Barton, "Chuck Versus the Advertiser: How Fan Activism and Footlong Subway Sandwiches Saved a Television Series," *Fan CULTure: Essays on Participatory Fandom in the 21st Century*, eds. Kristin M. Barton & Jonathan Lampley (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 2014), 165-166.

Notably, some of the campaigns on this list focus on objects especially keyed to the cancellation rather than the program more generally. When CBS announced that it would not bankroll the production of a second season of *Jehrico* in 2007, for example, viewers responded by flooding CBS studios with 20 pounds of peanuts—an oblique reference to a character exclaiming "Nuts!" during the finale of the first season.

A third strategy employed in a much smaller number of viewer campaigns involves targeting non-network entities with the hopes of attracting network attention. Easily the best example of this effort appeared in 2009 in relation to the NBC program *Chuck*. Given comparably low ratings during the second season, the network telegraphed its disinterest in renewing the show for a third. Passionate *Chuck* fans responded to this perceived threat by organizing the "Finale & Footlong" campaign, a coordinated attempt to patron Subway restaurants on the night of the second season finale in order to let the company know that they appreciated its sponsorship of their favorite show. "The idea was simple[,]" Barton writes. "[G]et a message to the show's sponsors that their advertising was working."[269] Fans recruited participants for the campaign online and stormed Subway restaurants on the specified evening, dropping copious comment cards into local suggestion boxes that requested the company's continued support of the show. The campaign turned out to be one of the most successful in the history of viewer activism. Because Subway reached out to NBC and expressed interest in increased sponsorship after the stunt, *Chuck* managed to remain on the air for three more seasons.

In reviewing these three petitioning strategies, I do not mean to romanticize viewers' attempts to save their favorite television programs. Digging deeper into the history of many of these campaigns reveals that they are often anything but grassroots

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[269] Barton, "Chuck," 167

efforts organized by energetic and savvy audiences. For one thing, show runners and producers are often centrally involved in mobilizing a program's base to participate in these campaigns. Gene Roddenberry carefully managed much of the letter-writing campaign central to the continued broadcast of *Star Trek*; Bjo Trimble and her husband were merely the public faces of a crusade secretly organized by the program's creator.[270] *Cagney & Lacey* executive producer Barney Rosenzweig similarly guided fans to write directly to *The New York Times* and *The Los Angeles Times* in order to make CBS sympathetic to his series' renewal.[271] Even more, a common discourse in these campaigns urges individuals to recruit otherwise disinterested friends and family members to send in letters of support or participate in campaign activities, which means that gauging the actual participation of truly dedicated viewers here is hazy at best.

What is undeniable about these campaigns, however, is that they *do* occur with fascinating regularity. I am far less concerned here with the "authentic" constitution of these initiatives than I am with the basic impetus behind them. What essentially drives audience members to participate in a campaign to save a television program from cancellation, even if this involves responding to a producer's request that they do so? What impulse inspires them to reach out to other viewers, friends, and family in order to keep a show they enjoy on the air? In particular, I am intrigued by the regular attempts by television viewers to overwhelm network executives with a deluge of symbolic objects. Although, as Barton implies, these mass mailings are typically less successful than other strategies in rescuing a program from cancellation, campaigns nevertheless continue to engage in audacious launches with each passing season.[272] To be perfectly frank, I am

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[270] Tulloch and Jenkins, *Science Fiction Audiences*, 10.

[271] D'Acci, *Designing Women*, 93.

[272] Barton, "Chuck," 165-166. The example of 2012's *The Secret Circle*, addressed at the beginning of this chapter, suggests that mailing objects continues to be a relevant strategy in viewer campaigns.

also not aware of consumers in any other popular medium (films, books, music, video games, etc.) utilizing this same petitioning strategy with such regularity.

This repetitive unleashing of significant objects by television audiences strikes me as a key point of entry for considering how activism surrounding the loss of a program may in fact be motivated in part by viewers' unconscious object relations with the medium overall. In each case we can interpret viewers as individuals who perceive the impending loss of a cherished object in their everyday reality and who reach out to try to rescue it from annihilation as a result. Campaigns that coordinate the mass mailing of condiments or plastic trinkets merely concretize the act of projective identification I have sketched as central to television reception throughout this project: Having incorporated a broadcast television show or character as a significant aspect of their psychical reality, viewers come to project a charged version of the object back into the environment in order to confirm its continued existence. These behaviors very much resonate with Melanie Klein's ideas of the unconscious defense mechanisms that specifically attend the depressive position, so it is to this theoretical backdrop that I now turn.

ANXIETIES AND DEFENSE MECHANISMS OF THE DEPRESSIVE POSITION

Recall from Chapter Three that, for Klein, assuming the depressive position in infancy represents a major developmental achievement for the individual.[273] Moving

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[273] As I noted previously, the earliest acts of projective identification lead the infant through a succession of developmental positions (or unconscious "mindsets") that remain accessible and influential on in to adult life. The first of these—the "paranoid-schizoid position"—is assumed when the infant perceives its environment to be full of both good and bad "part objects," which are indiscriminately "introjected" or internalized as phantasized representations in the infant's growing psychical reality. The infant responds to the perceived invasion of bad objects here with hostility and phantasized acts of destruction, all the while attempting to valorize the incorporated good objects and protect them from this internal war. As the maturing infant comes to view these part objects as different aspects of the same environmental features, however, it slowly comes to inhabit the "depressive position" instead. This shift involves incorporating whole objects as essential nodes of psychical structure, as well as imperatives to make reparation to loved objects it once attempted to destroy via phantasy. For Kleinians, a somewhat weaker version of the infantile depressive position represents the ethical (and thus ideal) subject position assumed by a healthy adult.

away from the psychical stress and hostility of the paranoid-schizoid position is essential for the establishment of positive intra- and interpersonal object relations that in turn form the basis of normal adult subjectivity. The onset of the depressive position, however, does not come without its own unique pains. Instead, the "change in relation to the object" inaugurated by assuming this position really only means that "new anxiety-contents make their appearance and a change takes place in the mechanisms of defense."[274]

Allow me to unpack this idea in greater detail. The change in relation to the "object" or other in the depressive position involves the arrival of a powerful, restorative impulse. "It seems to be," Klein writes, "that only when the ego has introjected the object as a whole, and has established a better relationship to the external world and to real people, is it able fully to realize the disaster created through its sadism and especially its cannibalism, and to feel distressed about it."[275] As it slowly dawns upon the infant that the "bad objects" it wished destroyed in the paranoid-schizoid position are actually only parts of whole, real, loved objects in its environment (namely, its caregivers), the infant experiences terrible anxiety and attempts to undo all of its prior, aggressive phantasies. In much of her work Klein refers to this impulse as the individual's desire to "make reparation" to the primary/good object(s).[276] Importantly, this imperative allows for increasingly sophisticated object relations and functions centrally in conscious feelings of love later on, but these developments are only achievable if the infant can navigate the particular anxieties that contribute to the distress of the epiphany in the first place.

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[274] Melanie Klein, "A Contribution to the Psychogenesis of Manic-Depressive States," *Love, Guilt and Reparation and Other Works, 1921-1945* (New York: Free Press, 1975), 264.

[275] Klein, "A Contribution," 269.

[276] Klein first explores the notion of reparation in her essay "Infantile Anxiety Situations Reflected in a Work of Art and the Creative Impulse," and she explores the concept extensively in relation to the capacity to love in "Love, Guilt, and Reparation." See both essays in *Love, Guilt and Reparation and Other Works, 1921-1945* (New York: Free Press, 1975), 210-218; 306-343.

One source of anxiety that the infant experiences upon assuming the depressive position is an overwhelming sense of remorse. "The feeling that the harm done to the loved object is caused by the subject's aggressive impulses," Klein notes, "I take to be the essence of guilt."[277] The infant feels acute culpability in this new position for previously directing hatred and aggression at its primary objects. Another source of anxiety here is apprehension over the possibility of losing the objects that the infant has come to rely upon in many ways (externally for sustenance, and internally as phantasized elements of the hardening ego). The infant in the depressive position frets over its own ability to deflect all of its remaining aggression away from its primary objects, and it agonizes over the possibility that these objects may have suffered too much damage in the paranoid-schizoid relation to repair (and thus to sustain the growing ego adequately). Klein conceptualizes the infant's worry for its primary objects here, or its "fears of losing them and the longing to regain them," as a constant and anxious sensation of "pining."[278]

If the anxieties of the depressive position are too extreme for the infant to withstand, Klein proposes that a variety of unconscious, "manic" defense mechanisms will trigger to suppress the reparative impulse and protect the infant's fragile psyche from fracturing. These mechanisms are actually quite common when the infant assumes the depressive position for the first time, and normal development may in fact involve the infant moving back and forth between manic defenses and true reparation until it can better accept the pangs of guilt and loss as it grows older and matures. One common defense here is a sense of *omnipotence* or *control* over the primary objects.[279] In this case

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[277] Melanie Klein, "On the Theory of Anxiety and Guilt," *Envy and Gratitude and Other Works: 1946-1963* (New York: Free Press, 1975), 36.

[278] Melanie Klein, "Mourning and its Relation to Manic-Depressive States," *Love, Guilt and Reparation and Other Works, 1921-1945* (New York: Free Press, 1975), 348.

[279] Klein, "A Contribution," 277-278; "Mourning," 349.

the infant simply phantasizes that it possesses the twin abilities to render damaged objects whole again and protect them from future aggression. Fears of primary object loss greatly diminish as the infant comes to believe in its god-like ability to shelter them from harm. Closely related to this first defense is the *idealization* of the primary objects, or willfully understanding them as having never been damaged in the first place and exaggerating their present perfections in order to ward off any doubts to the contrary.[280] Finally, a slightly less common manic defense mechanism is a sensation of *triumph* over the primary objects, or the stubborn denial that they hold any significance to the infant at all.[281] Here the infant releases itself from the pains of guilt and pining by imaginatively cutting the ties that position it as beholden to the objects in the first place.

As the infant eventually learns to endure the pains of the depressive position, or if it can tap into fortifying constitutive and environmental factors from the start, the manic defenses eventually give way to genuine acts of reparation. Given the infant's limited physical capabilities, the earliest acts of this kind involve an imaginative restoration of primary objects via phantasy very similar to the manic defenses, but Klein draws a sharp distinction here: *True* reparation is motivated by genuine love and primarily performed for the sake of the object, not for the sake of the infant's own wellbeing.[282] Any psychical benefit the infant garners from such an act must be incidental. Additionally, as the individual grows into a child and then on into an adult, imagined reparation gives way to far more observable acts in the same register. Klein relates the story of a woman suffering

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[280] Klein, "A Contribution," 270. This mechanism is closely related to the idealization of good part objects in the paranoid-schizoid position; Klein suggests that many of the manic defenses are in fact holdovers from the polarizing phantasies that mark early development.

[281] Klein, "Mourning," 351-352. For further discussion of the manic defenses I have addressed here, see the corresponding entries in *The New Dictionary of Kleinian Thought* compiled by Elizabeth Bott Spillius, Jane Milton, Penelope Garvey, Cyril Couve, and Deborah Steiner (New York: Routledge, 2011), 398-400.

[282] Klein, "Love, Guilt," 311-313.

from terrible depression who, upon encountering a blank wall in her house, suddenly felt consumed with the need to fill the space with a painting. Although the woman had never demonstrated any skill with paints before, she approached the project with fervor and went on to paint many more pictures, during which her depression happened to subside miraculously.[283] Klein argues that the woman's perplexing act of (re)creation and recovery—and any creative activity by extension—is evidence of the earlier imperative to make reparation to one's cherished objects.[284]

In normal development the earliest acts of reparation directed toward caregivers in the depressive position inspire additional, affirming object relations with other people in the environment so that, over time, the growing individual builds up a rich, unconscious, inner world of phantasized doubles. "From the very beginning of psychic development," Klein emphasizes, "there is a constant correlation of real objects with those installed within the ego."[285] These inner objects psychically sustain the individual and encourage positive relations with their real world counterparts. It is important to note, however, how this link between inner and outer objects also implies vulnerabilities for even the most well adjusted adult. If the psychical work of infancy involves building up one's inner reality with materials borrowed from outside, then the real effort of adulthood

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[283] Klein, "Infantile Anxiety," 215-218.

[284] Some of Klein's examples of observable acts of adult reparation are not as easy to digest as the story of the female painter, especially because they can reflect the problematic ideological beliefs of her time. She suggests, for example, that certain indigenous tribes who resist giving up harsh living circumstances do so because "the struggle with nature is…partly felt to be a struggle to *preserve nature*, because it expresses also the wish to make reparation to her (mother). People who strive with the severity of nature thus not only take care of themselves, but also serve nature herself" ("Love, Guilt," 337-338). Perhaps even more egregiously, Klein proposes that colonizers suffering from the unconscious guilt of their own aggression make reparation to displaced indigenous peoples by repopulating the area with their own offspring and "nationality" ("Love, Guilt," 334). While I certainly do not condone the sentiments of these examples, Klein provided very few concrete manifestations of reparative acts throughout her long career. Some of her ideas are certainly deplorable by contemporary standards, but they nevertheless encourage thought about how reparation and creativity might manifest in experiential realms other than the classical arts.

[285] Klein, "A Contribution," 266.

involves maintaining the stability of this crucial inner menagerie when external correlates inevitably begin to disappear.

The difficulty of such maintenance becomes especially clear when a family member or friend dies. "The poignancy of the actual loss of the loved person," Klein proposes, "is, in my view, greatly increased by the mourner's unconscious phantasies of having lost his *internal* 'good' objects as well."[286] She argues that phantasies of a crumbling inner world naturally attend any external loss and, as a result, reactivate the infantile depressive position—the unconscious mindset by which people first learn to grapple with the experience of absence. Because this return thrusts the adult again into experiencing the variety of depressive anxieties and defenses, the normal process of mourning in adulthood restages many elements of infantile development addressed thus far. To different degrees individuals must again learn to resist manic defenses, face the full pains of guilt and/or absence, and finally realize that their inner world of good objects is not, in fact, in ruins. This realization consequently allows the reparative impulse to come again to the fore and renews the mourner's relationships to the wider world.

Interestingly, Klein suggests that the "death" of a beloved external object need not even be certain to trigger a return to the depressive position, for "every experience which suggests the loss of the real loved object stimulates the dread of losing the internalized one too."[287] Even the *perception* of a significant loss is often enough to renew some level of depressive anxieties and defenses within many individuals, and in situations where the loss of an external object is not yet assured, these specific anxieties and defenses may even inspire extreme behaviors aimed at rescuing the object from oblivion:

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[286] Klein, "Mourning," 353.
[287] Klein, "A Contribution," 267.

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> The irrevocable fact that none of us is ever entirely free from guilt has very valuable aspects because it implies the never fully exhausted wish to make reparation and to create in whatever way we can. All forms of social service benefit from this urge. In extreme cases, feelings of guilt drive people towards sacrificing themselves completely to a cause or to their fellow beings, and may lead to fanaticism.[288]

In some ways this struggle for the fate of an object here indexes the earliest experiences of weaning, where the child fears that the breast is lost forever but desperately wishes for its return.[289] More generally, however, all of the varying and indeterminate degrees of loss that accompany adult experience together point to the fact that "depressive…anxieties are never entirely overcome," and that there is always the opportunity for them to "temporarily recur under internal or external pressure."[290]

Perceptions of loss and a consequent reactivation of the infantile depressive position are, I believe, highly relevant to the many cases where television viewers face the cancellation of a beloved program. The initial reactions of so many viewers in these cases—tremendous mobilization, extreme veneration for the television program under siege, a sureness of purpose and belief in inevitable success—seem to resonate strongly with the manic defenses of omnipotence and idealization that unconsciously attend any threatened object. Occasionally these defenses provide basis for an effective petitioning campaign, and the beloved object returns to viewers' external reality. For those many more campaigns that do not succeed, however, the slow passage of time and gradual reconciliation with the reality of an object's absence together give way to a variety of creative, reparative acts on the part of viewers that together affirm the constancy of the program's inner correlates and help the audience work through the terrible loss.

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[288] Melanie Klein, "Our Adult World and Its Roots in Infancy," *Envy and Gratitude and Other Works: 1946-1963* (New York: Free Press, 1975), 259.

[289] Melanie Klein, "Weaning," *Love, Guilt and Reparation and Other Works, 1921-1945* (New York: Free Press, 1975), 290-305.

[290] Melanie Klein, "Our Adult World," 256.

Before moving on to a specific case study that helps illustrate these points in greater detail, it is worth noting that I am not the first scholar to turn to psychoanalytic object relations in order to make sense of television audience behavior specifically in the wake of program cancellation. In the very recently published *Post-Object Fandom: Television, Identity, and Self-Narrative*, Rebecca Williams argues that D. W. Winnicott's work on "transitional objects" (e.g. stuffed animals) illuminates how television audiences may continue to relate to a program once it has ceased broadcasting new episodes.[291] She interprets Winnicott's notion in light of sociologist Anthony Giddons's thoughts on "pure relationships" to explore how television programs can assume an enduring emotional valence for many viewers, providing individuals with a sense of self-identify and "ontological security" long after they go off the air.

My exploration in this chapter naturally overlaps with Williams' own efforts, although I am perhaps more concerned than she is with understanding the object-based motivations behind viewer attempts to *save* a program (rather than merely process its demise).[292] In addition, drawing upon Klein rather than Winnicott suggests that one does not require sociological accounts to square object relations with motivating needs for security. The precise relationship between internal and external objects that Klein posits, as well as a strong need for equilibrium in regard to one's inner world, provides a sufficient account of desires for security from a wholly psychoanalytic perspective.

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[291] Rebecca Williams, *Post-Object Fandom: Television, Identity, and Self-Narrative* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2015). As I noted in Chapter One, Winnicott was a student of Klein's who famously broke with her over specific conceptual issues but who nevertheless owes a great intellectual debt to her thought. The "transitional object"—perhaps Winnicott's most notable contribution to the idiom of psychoanalysis—refers to an actual object in the child's immediate environment (a blanket, toy, etc.) that is partially realistic but also partially phantastic in the eyes of that child. The liminality of this object is crucial in helping the child turn away from the realm of pure phantasy and reconcile its developing subjectivity with the demands of the real world. See D. W. Winnicott, *Playing and Reality* (New York: Routledge, 1971).

[292] Williams devotes only Chapter Three in her project to considering how audiences react to and account for character exits. The remainder of the volume looks at various ways that viewers continue to valorize and integrate a program into their daily lives after the series ends.

A CASE STUDY: "SAVE *FARSCAPE*"

In this section I explore a specific example of audience activism from the history

of American broadcasting in order to illustrate more clearly how viewer attempts to

rescue a beloved television show from cancellation may align with Klein's thoughts

regarding depressive anxieties and defenses. The program I have selected for this

exercise is *Farscape*, a science fiction series that broadcast on the cable network SyFy

(then the Sci-Fi Channel) from 1999 until its unexpected cancellation in 2003. Because it

would be impossible to offer up any single program as truly "representative" of the

medium overall, my only justification for selecting *Farscape* here is that its audience

manifestly fits within the tradition of televisual activism—and that perhaps this fit has

something to do with defining elements of the medium itself. As Jes Battis observes,

> There is reason…why *Farscape* fans are so enormously dedicated. Like fans of
> other prematurely cancelled series, such as Joss Whedon's *Firefly*, or Winnie
> Holzman's *My So Called Life*, they recognize when a show achieves a level of
> narrative complexity and emotional resonance that makes it 'special.' They know
> what was taken from them, and want it back. And they question the financial
> justifications, operating within a universe of marketing pragmatism rather than
> imaginative possibility and creative merit, that necessitate such a cancellation.[293]

Farscape may not be entirely representative of the medium overall, but I believe that its

example can shed some light, however partial, on the special "emotional resonance" cited

time and again as a central element of much television reception.

The overarching narrative of *Farscape* focuses on astronaut John Crichton (Ben

Browder) and his attempts to return to Earth after a wormhole accident transports him to

an unknown part of the universe. Stranded many light years away from home, Crichton

reluctantly joins the diverse crew of a living spaceship called Moya and assists them in an

escape from a corrupt, militaristic organization known as the Peacekeepers. Crichton

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[293] Jes Battis, *Investigating Farscape: Uncharted Territories of Sex and Science Fiction* (New York: I.B.
Taurus, 2007), 2.

slowly learns to trust and rely on the crew of Moya, and much of the dramatic backdrop of the program's four seasons concerns the Peacekeepers' relentless pursuit of the now fate bound "fugitives" across many strange parts of the galaxy.

Two qualities render *Farscape* as especially memorable in the history of American television. The first is a predominant use of puppetry on the show. Two of the major characters on *Farscape* are in fact animatronic "Muppets" designed and operated by members of The Jim Henson Company: Rygel, the deposed ruler of an alien kingdom known as the Hynerian Empire, and Pilot, a multi-armed creature whose central nervous system is fused with Moya. The presence of puppets on an evening series aimed at adult audiences is certainly something of an anomaly within American television. The second factor that prevents *Farscape* from falling into obscurity is the aforementioned dedication of its audience, a relatively small group who to this day refer to themselves as "Scapers." When the news hit in 2002 that the Sci-Fi Channel had decided not to renew the program for a fifth season, Scapers quickly "formulated and implemented a strategy they did not invent but one for which they would become renowned, a strategy meant to keep their beloved series on the air."[294] This strategy was the "Save *Farscape*" campaign.

In her historical overview of the campaign, Tanya R. Cochran suggests that the Sci-Fi Channel's specific mismanagement of the series helped in part to inspire Scapers' efforts to save it from cancellation.[295] In October 2001 the president of the network, Bonnie Hammer, publicly praised *Farscape* for its originality during its first three seasons and announced a two-year renewal that should have safely carried it through a fifth. *Farscape*'s producers seized upon this unprecedented security to draft a lengthier

[294] Tanya R. Cochran, "A Legendary Tale: Scapers and the Myth of Fan Power," *The Worlds of Farscape: Essays on the Groundbreaking Television Series*, ed. Shery Ginn (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2013), 168.
[295] Cochran, "Legendary Tale," 172-173.

storyline than the self-contained narrative arcs that had marked the first three seasons. As a result, the show's writers plotted a major cliffhanger in the finale of season four that would function as a narrative hinge with the premiere of the guaranteed fifth season. When Sci-Fi reneged on its commitment and cancelled the program within 11 months of Hammer's announcement, then, producers and Scapers alike were left with only an unresolved cliffhanger and a tremendous sense of betrayal.

Sci-Fi defended its decision to cancel *Farscape* on the grounds that the program's ratings by the end of 2002 were simply too low to justify its relatively high production costs. The network exercised an "out clause" option in the renewal contract that allowed them to cut support for the promised fifth season near the conclusion of the fourth. *Farscape* executive producer David Kemper publicly confirmed the news of cancellation in September 2002 during a weekly online chat session with Scapers, empathizing with their grief over the unexpected loss. "[The production crew] are as helpless as anyone," he wrote during the session. "And we are sad. And we are shattered. And we are sorry."[296] Between similar expressions of anger and dismay during this session, Scapers also began asking Kemper what they could possibly do to convince Sci-Fi to change its mind. He suggested offhand that writing letters to the network might help. From this innocuous suggestion, the "Save *Farscape*" campaign was born.

Cochran notes that within 30 minutes of the chat session, websites specifically dedicated to saving *Farscape* from cancellation had appeared online, and within six days,

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[296] "Cancellation Chat with David Kemper, Ben Browder, and Richard Manning," *Farscape World*, accessed March 20, 2015, http://www.farscapeworld.com/interviews/int/cancel.shtml. As I will note more explicitly later on, "Save *Farscape*" occurred more than a decade ago, and many of the websites that helped coordinate and archive audience efforts during the actual campaign are now defunct (they show only error messages when entered into a web browser bar). The above page that contains the transcript of this chat session at *Farscape World* is one example. Through the use of the "Wayback Machine" at www.internetarchive.com, however, researchers can retrieve material located at virtually any "dead" website via screenshots captured and stored before it went offline, which is precisely how I recovered the transcript for quotation here.

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approximately 30,000 people had signed an online petition voicing their support for the show.[297] *Farscape World*, a popular website dedicated to general discussion of the program, unveiled a new section of their interface that functioned as a clearinghouse for information regarding cancellation and updates about audience efforts to fight it.[298] Many fans composed individual missives to Sci-Fi as the news spread, of course, but massive online coordination between Scapers also led to some very creative and remarkable efforts to demonstrate large-scale support as well. According to Cochran, some audience members pooled funds and purchased the cover of *Variety* magazine in order to bring awareness to the growing campaign. Others located investors and raised nearly $20 million to be donated to The Jim Henson Company on the condition that it would pick up production of the show. In a somewhat smaller display dubbed "BraScape," approximately 200 female Scapers even decorated their undergarments with *Farscape* images and messages and mailed them directly to Hammer in April 2003—a rejoinder to the president's claim, circulating through popular presses at the time, that the network was interested in pursuing programming that had greater appeal to women.[299]

In the end, *Farscape* audiences were unsuccessful in their goal of getting the series renewed for a fifth season. Their many creative initiatives throughout 2003, however, impressed Sci-Fi executives enough that the network agreed to bankroll a *Farscape* miniseries event subtitled "The Peacekeeper Wars," which began production by the end of that same year. The four hour miniseries, which eventually broadcast on Sci-Fi between October 17 and 18, 2004, finally allowed Kemper and the rest of the production

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[297] Cochran, "Legendary Tale," 174-175.

[298] "Help Save Farscape," *Farscape World*, accessed March 20, 2015, http://www.farscapeworld.com/helpfarscape.php.

[299] Cochran, "Legendary Tale," 175-177. For additional information about BraScape, as well as pictures of the decorated bras, see "Women Support Farscape!," *Farscaped*, accessed March 20, 2015, http://www.farscaped.com/women-watch-farscape-brascape.htm.

team to resolve the season four cliffhanger and provide a much needed sense of narrative closure for the series overall.

Although many of the websites that originally helped coordinate "Save *Farscape*" have disappeared in the decade since the campaign concluded, critically analyzing what remains of this online initiative reveals commentary and activities that align very closely with some of Klein's own thoughts regarding the reactivation of the depressive position in adult moments of significant loss. Put another way, the particularities of the *Farscape* campaign over time provide some reason to believe that audience efforts to return a beloved television show to the air are in fact partially motivated by the specific, unconscious anxieties and defenses surrounding infantile development. Over the next few pages I explore this idea by tracing online Scaper conversations from initial rumors about the demise of the program in August 2002 to audience commiseration in the wake of cancellation well into 2005. The majority of these conversations come from archived discussions in the user forum at *Farscape World*.[300] As one of the few online nodes that operated during "Save *Farscape*" and continues to host Scaper interaction today, the forum at *Farscape World* provides crucial access to the evolving feelings of the program's audience members during and after the crisis of cancellation.

Klein, again, suggests that because individuals faced with the disappearance of a significant object from their external reality often cannot withstand the pain of loss, the

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[300] A further note on my methodology here for those interested in such matters: After entering the "General *Farscape*" sub-forum at *Farscape World*, I systematically worked my way in reverse chronological order through all 43 pages and 1051 discussion threads there (at least as of March 2015). I did not read through every single conversation here, but I did explore each thread whose subject line signaled the possibility of audience discussion over the show's cancellation (as opposed to plot points, qualities of certain characters, etc.). I was especially careful to examine discussions inaugurated during the latter half of 2002 or the first half of 2003, as this time period featured both the official announcement of *Farscape*'s cancellation and the bulk of efforts in the "Save *Farscape*" campaign. This means that my analysis of Scaper conversation relies on an intuitive sampling of the available dialogue rather than a comprehensive account of every sentence. Some may find such an approach objectionable, but I feel that it is appropriate for formulating tentative claims that often mark a case study undertaking.

manic defenses first experienced during infantile development resurface in order to blunt or temper one's raw, emotional bonds to the now absent object. Primary among these is the unconscious phantasy of idealization, or the imaginative investment of the object with an aura of perfection and wholeness that diminishes its realism. When mourners are overly reverent of a recently departed loved one, Klein suggests, it helps deny the reality of the absence by denying the person from reality at all.

Identifiable elements of idealization were present in Scaper discussion from the very first threats of cancellation. In a thread titled "Farscape getting cancelled?" and opened just weeks before Kemper's official confirmation, for example, user Shen questioned if rumors circulating about the program getting only half the number of regular episodes for its fifth season were true.[301] Various other Scapers quickly responded by jumping to the program's defense, suggesting that such rumors were ridiculous given that *Farscape* was the network's "cash cow." When other users countered this point by suggesting that *Farscape* had been toppled by *Stargate SG-1* (which had been recently imported to the network from Showtime for its sixth and final season), user Dani Moure dismissed this thought in part by centering *Farscape* as truly outstanding:

> [T]he show is NOT doing bad. Sci Fi simply got hold of SG-1, which, whethere [sic] people want to admit it or not, is a FAR more popular show than Farscape anyway, so it's quite natural (and indeed was predictable) that it would come tops in the ratings. As Cyn said above, this is supposed to be SG-1's last season, so after the final 11 episodes next year there will be no more. On the other hand, there will be more Farscape. Until you hear it from Sci Fi, Henson, or some other official source, please take these cancellation rumours with a grain of salt. There WILL be a fifth season. And despite what some people are saying, Farscape is still Sci Fi's flagship, critically acclaimed original production.[302]

[301] Shen, "Farscape getting cancelled?," *Farscape World*, August 25, 2002, http://www.farscapeworld.com/ forum/viewtopic.php?f=1&t=649.

[302] Dani Moure, "RE: Farscape getting cancelled?," *Farscape World*, August 26, 2002, http://www.farscapeworld.com/forum/ viewtopic .php?f=1&t=649.

Even the perceived threat of losing their shared, loved object was apparently enough here to activate vehement feelings regarding *Farscape*'s perfection in some Scapers's minds.

Once word of the show's cancellation became official in September 2002, the idealization of *Farscape* as a singular artistic accomplishment became more common in the discussion threads at *Farscape World*. Again and again, many discussion participants lamented the impending loss of an utterly "unique" program. "FarScape IS GOOD tv," wrote user SunKrux. "Regardless of how bizarre it gets. IT is well written, directed and acted. The cast and crew HONESTLY care for the fans, which is way more than can be said about Sci-Fi and most other networks."[303] "Farscape is the best Scifi show ever and usually slanted toward *thinking* people," agreed TINemo.[304] Of course, such superlative characterizations only increased once the season four finale actually broadcast in March 2003. OrkneyEarl's thoughts regarding the program upon viewing this last episode (aptly titled "Bad Timing") are representative of this trend:

> Farscape, in my mind, can be considered one of the (if not the) seminal science fiction series in the history of television. Their mixture of character development, (usually) first notch scriptwriting (there were a few stinkers in there, but who's perfect?), and some of the best whizz-bang SFX on TV made FS the space opera above all space operas. Farscape did to the Star Trek TV franchise what Star Wars did to the Star Trek movie franchise (i.e. took a bland implementation of sub-optimal concepts and built it into a rich universe of interesting characters, alien species that don't just look like humans with assorted bumpy prostheses glued to their heads, and stories that are both engaging and engrossing; oh yeah, and they fed them a great big ol' can of whoop-ass).[305]

Overly favorable characterizations like these may seem silly to those unfamiliar with *Farscape*, but for viewers who had spent years with the program as a significant part of

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[303] SunKrux, "That's not the problem," *Farscape World*, September 19, 2002, http://www.farscapeworld.com/forum/viewtopic.php?f=1&t=668.

[304] TINemo, "RE: Lack of promo," *Farscape World*, September 20, 2002, http://www.farscapeworld.com/forum/viewtopic.php?f=1&t=668.

[305] OrkneyEarl, "Just saw 'Bad Timing' PLUS thought on FS in general," *Farscape World*, July 6, 2003, http://www.farscapeworld.com/forum/viewtopic.php?f=1&t=865.

their everyday reality, asserting its untarnished perfection was perhaps one method for coping with and denying its untimely demise.

Another manic defense that Klein associates with object loss and the reactivation of the depressive position in adult life is the sensation of omnipotence and control, or the hallucination that one has an unfettered power to restore the lost object and protect it from future harm. The pain of object loss diminishes as the individual comes to believe in the (often delusional) possibility of its return. Although the infant enacts this reconstitution entirely on the plane of unconscious phantasy, Klein suggests that the adult mourner often allows this imaginary activity to filter into conscious thought and behavior as well. She relates the case of a woman whose son had died while at school and who, in the days immediately following his death, began sorting through letters at home. The woman kept only the son's letters and threw the rest away. In this activity "she was thus unconsciously attempting to restore him," Klein argues, "and keep him safe inside herself, and throwing out what she felt to be indifferent, or rather hostile—that is to say, the 'bad' objects…and bad feelings" within her that threatened to halt his restoration.[306]

Desires to restore *Farscape* to the air naturally surfaced in Scaper conversations during the "Save *Farscape*" campaign in 2003, but some of the discussants on *Farscape World* asserted further that their coordinated attempts to rescue their beloved program could not possibly fail. After noting that the airing of the season four finale marked "the day original science fiction died on network TV," for example, forum user CB2001 urged fellow Scapers to take heart in the growing momentum for a fifth season:

> [T]his is not an ending. This will NOT be an exit. There will be no exit stage left for "Farscape" as long as we still have a piece of it with us. The only exit there will ever be is when it is written by the writers of the show, acted out by Ben, Claudia, Anthony, Gigi and everyone else, and a final print edited and aired. That

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[306] Klein, "Mourning," 356.

will be the only time an exit will be in our presence. Until that day, we should not back down. Today should be the first day we show the networks that it[']s not about the ratings... It's about the audience. And let us not EVER let off that pressure.[307]

Chianalover agreed down thread, providing a similar—if fairly muddled—vision of *Farscape*'s inevitable return to the airwaves at the behest of audience members:

I have all idea's [sic] if this show is continued to be shown the reverence it deserves, that much like Star Trek once did, rising from the ashes like the great bird of the galaxy wanted, to bite the ass of NBC, then Farscape will do the same... And the Sci-fi Channel will feel it's [sic] full power for doing something as dumb as cancelling [sic] the show that really got them noticed.[308]

Especially in light of the astounding fundraising initiatives and media stunts designed to draw attention to their cause throughout 2003, some Scapers certainly demonstrated an almost omnipotent faith in their power to restore their shared, lost object.

Klein warns that unconscious, manic phantasies of omnipotence can be especially harmful to the mourner because they always risk concurrent phantanties of triumph over the lost object. The delusion that one can control the object in question may quickly lead to the thought that one does not really require the object at all, or the sense that one's psychical wellbeing is not dependent on reestablishing a healthy relation to it. Fortunately, the primary mechanism that can offset these ultimately harmful phantasies, or at least that signals the individual has begun to work through them in the normal process of mourning, is an increased tendency toward various acts of projection. "It seems that the process of projecting and ejecting," observes Klein,

which are closely connected with giving vent to feelings, are held up in certain stages of grief by an excessive manic control, and can again operate more freely when that control relaxes. Through tears, the mourner not only expresses his

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[307] CB2001, "It's Official…," *Farscape World*, March 22, 2003, http://www.farscapeworld.com/forum/ viewtopic.php?f=1&t=807.
[308] Chianalover, "RE: It's Official…," *Farscape World*, March 28, 2003, http://www.farscapeworld.com/ forum/ viewtopic.php?f=1&t=807.

feelings and thus eases tension, but, since in the unconscious they are equated with excrements, he also expels his 'bad' feelings and his 'bad' objects, and this adds to the relief obtained through crying. This greater freedom in the inner world implies that the internalized [good] objects, being less controlled by the ego, are also allowed more freedom.[309]

In essence, phantasies of projection during mourning importantly reignite the otherwise frozen mechanism of projective identification, which in turn helps the mourner overcome loss by again building up a vibrant world of internal objects.

From this perspective the demonstration of "BraScape" in the midst of the larger "Save *Farscape*" campaign certainly takes on some additional significance. I suggested earlier in this chapter that the fairly unique tendency among television audiences to mail objects to networks in order to show support for a program somehow resonates with acts of projective identification central to the reception of this medium. I believe BraScape is a solid example; the act of viewer "projection" here indexed the manic defenses of the *Farscape* audience at the time. As Cochran points out, while viewers typically send an object that references a character or plot element from a threatened program, BraScape marked a fairly unique moment when a television audience projected a volley of objects that represented *themselves*.[310] Occurring many months into the larger campaign to save *Farscape*, the act may have signified not only a statement about the demographics of the show's audience, but also a tendency within the viewership to wrest free of omnipotent defenses. If, as Klein suggests, the release of objects from the self is a signal that the individual is ready to relinquish manic control and renew relations to the world, then perhaps BraScape indexed a similar change within the larger *Farscape* audience.

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[309] Klein, "Mourning," 359.

[310] Cochran, "Legendary Tale," 176. It seems pertinent to point out here that the object chosen to represent the self in this case (the bra) is *highly* suggestive of the original primary object and target of projective identification in Kleinian psychoanalysis (the breast). Because female *Farscape* viewers could have sent in almost any personal object that signified "femininity" to get the same point across (a hairbrush, a skirt, etc.), perhaps the bra in particular signals additional, unconscious motivations bubbling beneath the surface of the manifest statement.

Indeed, as it became more apparent that the Sci-Fi Channel would not budge on its decision through the second half of 2003, conversations between Scapers about the program slowly began to alter in tone. Demonstrations of extreme veneration and assurances of their campaign's success eventually gave way to more somber, reflective dialogues over the next few years (both leading up to "The Peacekeeper Wars" miniseries and after). From the vantage of Kleinian psychoanalysis, we might say of this transformation that Scapers were finally able to withstand the pain of loss that attended the program's sudden cancellation. Their conversations about *Farscape*, consequently, were motivated less by manic defenses and more by impulses toward true reparation and recovery of the program as a good object in their psychical realities.

Scapers' creative desire to restore *Farscape* personally manifested in a number of different ways on the discussion boards at *Farscape World*. One significant act involved viewers variously "reliving" their reception of the program, either by discussing their habits of rewatching the series on DVD or sharing how they came to encounter the show for the first time.[311] Another method involved conversations about how users might grow the Scaper community—not to recruit additional bodies for the rescue campaign, but to ensure that *Farscape* maintained a posthumous audience in American popular culture that they felt would befit its caliber.[312] Occasionally, Scapers' creative acts even aligned with more apparently "psychoanalytic" understandings of object restoration, as when a handful of viewers confessed the many ways that aspects of the program continued to appear in their dreams more than a year and a half after cancellation.[313]

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[311] For a discussion in line with the latter, see Rygelfan, "How and when did you get into Farscape?," *Farscape World*, August 9, 2004, http://www.farscapeworld.com/forum/viewtopic.php?f=1&t=2415.

[312] See, for example, Avalon, "Convert the Ignorant," *Farscape World*, October 9, 2003, http://www.farscapeworld.com/forum/viewtopic.php?f=1&t=895.

[313] JohnsBride, "Anyone dreaming Farscape lately?," *Farscape World*, July 15, 2004, http://www.farscapeworld.com/forum/viewtopic.php?f=1&t=2326.

No matter the particular strategy, Scapers' attempts to "recreate" *Farscape* in the absence of the program's actual return suggest that in time they communally faced the pain of external object loss, worked through the mourning process, and discovered on the other side that the program continued to exist as a significant node in their inner worlds. Nowhere was this confirmation more apparent than in an August 2004 discussion thread on *Farscape World* where user Skchwojko referenced a feature included on the season four DVD set: A mini-documentary about the "Save *Farscape*" campaign.[314] The feature displayed many different Scapers who were involved with the campaign stating their occupation followed by the clause "…and I am *Farscape*." Skchwojko suggested that the exercise might make for an "interesting thread to continue" and added her own statement to start: "I am a neonatal intensive care nurse, and I am Farscape!" A dozen or so other Scapers chimed in over the next two days with their own statements: "I am a software engineer, and I am Farscape;" "I am an apprentice pastrycook, cake decorator, baker and I am farscape;" "I am a Medical Consultant and I am Farscape." What I believe is important to note here is the different purpose that the statement likely serves in each context. When those involved with the "Save *Farscape*" campaign verbally claimed the show for the camera, they probably did it as something of a rallying cry. When Scapers continued to claim the show 20 months after its cancellation, however, perhaps they did it instead to affirm the place of a beloved object securely "inside" themselves.

Overall, the "Save *Farscape*" campaign illustrates how regular audience attempts to save a beloved television program from cancellation may in fact involve a return to the infantile, depressive position. I do not mean to suggest here that *all* audience campaigns feature precisely the same characteristics as those explored in this section; each

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[314] Skchwojko, "and I am Farscape," *Farscape World*, August 26, 2004, http://www.farscapeworld.com/ forum/viewtopic.php?f=1&t=2506.

individual campaign is always going to be unique and may emphasize different defense mechanisms and/or reparative gestures to different degrees. "Save *Farscape*" simply helps focus thought on how these very common audience initiatives are perhaps partially motivated by anxieties and defenses that Klein suggests are present in *any* moment of adult mourning. The cancellation of a television program may not be as heart-wrenching to viewers as the death of a family member or close friend, but this case study certainly gives good reason to view both types of loss as points along the same continuum of grief.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has considered the tendency among television audiences to mobilize and rescue a program from cancellation as further evidence of a rhetoric of projective identification inherent to the medium. The chapter began with an overview of audience "activism" and highlighted both the frequency with which such campaigns occur and the strategies commonly utilized across them. After developing the Kleinian concept of the depressive position as a framework for interpreting these behaviors, the chapter provided a sample application of this framework via the "Save *Farscape*" campaign from 2002. Whereas previous chapters have contemplated defining aspects of the medium—namely, intimacy and an endless "flow" of content—in order to trace the contours of television's pre-symbolic rhetorical mode, this chapter has looked instead to the *audience* to see how lived interactions with the medium might also help to clarify its appeal. Because television invites unconscious acts of projective identification from viewers, who in turn come to establish an affective tie or "object relation" to it, any disruptions here naturally trigger depressive defenses that help the individual renegotiate the relation. In the next chapter—the final one in the project—I couple this new insight with previous points to provide a final, developed overview of the rhetoric of projective identification.

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Conclusion: Television and Media Convergence

From January 29 to February 5, 2015, IMAX movie theatres across the United States and Canada screened the final two episodes from season four of *Game of Thrones*, HBO's critically acclaimed adaptation of George R. R. Martin's epic "Song of Ice and Fire" book series. Focusing on the siege at Castle Black and the fallout of this battle, the dual episodes functioned in many ways as the culmination of plot points threaded throughout the previous four seasons. Their screening also marked the first time that a television program had ever appeared in the IMAX format.[315] As a result, the company advertised the limited engagement event as an opportunity for true fans to relive one of the most significant narrative moments in the series and prepare for the program's fifth season premiere in April. *Game of Thrones* devotees went predictably rabid at the news. Initial response to the announcement of the event was so pronounced, in fact, that IMAX delayed the screenings one week from the original start of January 22 in order to free space in an additional 200 theatres across North America.

Despite the hype leading up to these showings, some *Game of Thrones* fans found themselves conflicted in the actual moment of watching the familiar episodes on the IMAX screen. As *Time* writer Eliana Dockterman observes, attendees at her own screening in New York City did not quite know how to react to the graphic narrative events unfolding before them: "Music swelled, bodies fell lifeless and people did not know whether they should cheer."[316] For Dockterman, transferring the program to the movie theatre resulted in a confusing conflation of viewing demands for the audience.

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[315] "Game of Thrones in IMAX: Participating Theatres," *IMAX*, January 21, 2015, http://www.imax.com/ community/blog/game-of-thrones-in-imax-participating-theatres/.

[316] Eliana Dockterman, "*Game of Thrones* is actually too big for IMAX," *Time*, January 30, 2015, http://time.com/3689046/game-of-thrones-imax/.

Although the first four seasons of *Game of Thrones* had spent countless hours developing details about the multifaceted characters and nuanced political machinations that finally culminated in the bloody standoff, the environment of the film theatre encouraged audiences to forget this narrative depth and read the battle at Castle Black as nothing more than visceral, spectacular fluff—something in line with the easy morality of a summer superhero blockbuster. When a sympathetic but duplicitous assassin died, for example, a strange mixture of audience clapping and shushing suggested that viewers did not know whether to reflect on the established intricacies of her motives or simply cheer on her death as a typical big screen villain. Given disconnects like this one and others, Dockterman ultimately opines that the contextual complexity of *Game of Thrones* may have rendered it "too big" for even the grandeur of an IMAX screen.

In some ways the screening of *Game of Thones* in IMAX theatres embodies a central tension of our time. On the one hand, it illustrates a point very much in line with a core argument of the present project: Television creates a distinctive but difficult-to-articulate experience for its audiences—one qualitatively different from the experience of the cinema. In Chapter Two I noted that contrasting psychoanalytic approaches to the concept of identification help explain this discrepancy. While the physical specifications of the public movie theatre recall the Lacanian mirror stage and prompt identification with oneself as "all perceiving," the more intimate viewing norms of television elicit Kleinian acts of projective identification with others in the immediate environment. From this vantage *Game of Thrones* fans experienced conflicting feelings because the presence of televisual material in the filmic context encouraged inconsistent forms of unconscious identification from them.

On the other hand, the screening also provides conspicuous evidence for those who claim that we now live within a "convergence culture," or a social milieu marked by

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an increasing implosion of popular technologies and media forms. The migration of Martin's epic narrative from book to television to movie theatre in this instance strongly resonates with Henry Jenkins's observation that "in a world of media convergence, every important story gets told, every brand gets sold, every consumer gets courted across multiple media platforms."[317] Although work here is varied, the tradition fairly consistently promotes the notion that that distinctions between books, television, film, and computers today are not as meaningful as they once were. The proliferation of technologies that appear to blend previously separate media—including e-readers, movies on demand, and smart phones that have the capacity to stream television shows—lends support to this sense as well.

In sum, then, the screening of *Game of Thrones* in IMAX suggests that television today is a distinct medium, and also that it is not. How can one account for or explain this apparent contradiction? Given the intersections I have already noted between this tension and my own work, I believe that the perspective I have developed within these pages may provide further clarification along these lines. Previous chapters have together developed a pre-symbolic, rhetorical mode for television as a medium based on Kleinian psychoanalysis. This final chapter now looks at what "the rhetoric of projective identification" can contribute to our understanding about media convergence and life within a convergence culture—as well as what larger questions this exploration poses for scholars in both media and rhetorical studies.

I begin this chapter with a summary of the rhetoric of projective identification. I then argue that this mode helps explain why television remains a coherent object in the minds of its users despite the fact that it no longer enjoys a strong demarcation from other

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[317] Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 3.

media. People continue to understand television as a bounded medium today in part because the unconscious relation facilitated by its apparatus is entrenched in the collective psyche. Finally, I suggest that as more of life in a convergence culture comes to be dominated by electronic screens, and to the degree that these screens look and feel like television screens, the rhetoric of projective identification poses a challenge to established understandings of rhetorical exchange and appeal based solely on conscious, meaningful symbolism. Although I have limited my analysis thus far to the ways that projective identification marks the rhetorical appeal of television uniquely, toward the end of this chapter I consider how the social saturation of this mode through the proliferation of screens in daily experience may in fact be pulling human rhetorical practice—as well as our understanding of ethics—into the realm of the extra-symbolic.

THE RHETORIC OF PROJECTIVE IDENTIFICATION: A REVIEW

In order to ground my discussion of television and convergence culture, in this section I review major elements of the rhetoric of projective identification that I have addressed over the previous five chapters. Rather than a perfectly straightforward or baldy sequential review of the chapters, I present this section as a synthesis of the ideas found across the project in order to increase clarity and understanding for the reader.

The rhetoric of projective identification characterizes a mode of non-symbolic appeal situated in the medium of television that exists prior to and along with appeals based in symbolic representation. A foundational assumption of this mode is the notion that people are attracted to television to some extent because it provides them with an avenue for negotiating unconscious desires and anxieties. Part of this assumption, in turn, stems from a specific understanding of the psychical mechanism by which people manage unconscious motivations from birth: Melanie Klein's notion of projective

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identification. In projective identification individuals rid themselves of the primal pressures of the death drive and the libido by imaginatively relocating both into "objects" (or other people) in their environment. Individuals also come to incorporate these targets of projection into the psyche as unconscious images or "phantasies" through a mechanism known as introjection. The process overall is thus an *identificatory* one because the individual builds up a sense of self largely through the unconscious internalization of others.

Part of the foundational assumption of the rhetoric of projective identification also stems from a particular understanding of television as a medium. The televisual "apparatus" names those normalized aspects of the medium that crystallized over the second half of the 20th century and continue to inform experience with the medium today: the domestic viewing context, the technology of the television set/screen, the degree of viewer agency in selecting content, and especially the "parasocial" or one-way relationships that the medium tends to foster between viewers and individuals on screen. This final quality is especially important in characterizing the unconscious appeal of the medium overall. Television reliably presents viewers with an endless supply of people: News reporters, game show hosts, infomercial personalities, reality TV competitors, and (of course) beloved characters in drama and comedy. Any and all of these personae, as objects in the viewers' environment, may function as apt targets for projective identification. At its most general, then, the rhetoric of projective identification names an immensely appealing, extra-linguistic invitation that the medium of television presents to viewers, an invitation to engage in acts of projective identification with televised personae in order to relieve themselves of primal anxieties.

Tracing the specific contours of the overall mode involves further elaboration on this central idea. The "object relations" inaugurated between viewers and televised

personae through projective identification are specifically characterized by unconscious phantasies of love and hate, which can manifest consciously in viewers as alternating feelings of concern and scorn for the individuals who appear on their screens. This fluctuation is necessary if viewers are to manage the pressures of both the libido *and* the death drive, and it further suggests that the rhetorical appeal of the mode does not rest entirely on conventionally pleasant emotions or sensations. Existing literature on televisual "intimacy" (or affect) somewhat supports the reality of this dynamic, and it is possible to witness an especially concentrated instance of it in the design and audience of the daytime talk genre.

Additionally, the relative strength of television's extra-symbolic invitation to viewers relies on the remarkable constancy of its presentation. Closely aligned with historical discussions of televisual "flow" and first witnessed in the rise of 24-hour broadcast news, the fact that television *endlessly* presents viewers with objects for projection means that they also view the medium as an object in its own right—one that resonates very strongly with the earliest experiences of security and pleasure in human development. Klein argues that the primal phantasy of the "good breast" names a fundamental attraction in human beings to invariable and everlasting objects; the norms of television position it as one of the few objects in contemporary life that even comes close to embodying these qualities. The overlay between psyche and apparatus on this specific point means that the rhetoric of projective identification relies not only on the medium *actually* providing objects to viewers, but also to some degree on viewers' unconscious impression of television *as an all-providing object*.

Of course, the unconscious character of television's invitation to viewers does not preclude it from observation. Just as a therapist may gain access to the unconscious of a patient through moments of rupture in the analytic session, it is possible to witness the

unconscious appeal of the medium's constancy in those moments that appear to halt it: When a program concludes its initial broadcast run, for example. Existing literature suggests that such endings result in highly emotional moments for many viewers, often to the point that they organize collective efforts and petition networks to "save" or "bring back" a show from cancellation. The historical methods these groups employ and the feelings that members confess to one another all strongly index specific elements of projective identification, and the repetition of these elements through the decades can be interpreted in part as visible evidence for this mechanism as a mode of appeal for television overall. In addition to affirming the existence of psychical ties between viewers and televised personae, then, instances of viewer activism suggest that the rhetoric of projective identification is strictly *non-symbolic* rather than fundamentally inaccessible.

Because the specific contours of the rhetoric of projective identification I have outlined here rely quite heavily on the televisual apparatus for coherence, the blurring of the medium's norms in an age of media convergence can cast some doubt on the scholarly utility of the term overall. At best it may seem that the rhetoric of projective identification is useful for interpreting what television once *was*, rather than what it *is* in the present or what it may *become*. I argue, however, that the concept remains quite useful in light of many specific elements we witness within contemporary convergence culture, and in the remainder of this final chapter I explore two specific areas where I see the mode continuing to function. It is important to note that, from my perspective, these two explorations neither exhaust the applicability of the term to contemporary television studies nor stand as definitive accounts of the phenomena in question. They are simply provocations to inspire the reader's own thoughts, or gestures upon which future research may build.

THE RESILIENCE OF TELEVISION IN AN AGE OF MEDIA CONVERGENCE

James Hay and Nick Couldry suggest that the concept of media convergence characterizes at least four different but related phenomena unfolding in the contemporary era: "As a description of new synergy (a 'horizontal' realignment) among media companies and industries, as the multiplication of 'platforms' for news and information, as a technological hybridity that has folded the uses of separate media into one another (e.g. watching a television broadcast on a cell phone), and as a new media aesthetic involving the mixing of documentary and non-documentary forms."[318] Although each of these phenomena may encourage some reflection on the present-day scope of a televisual rhetoric of projective identification, the third element—technological hybridity—seems especially pertinent given the mode's foundation in the historically demarcated parameters of television. As a result, this section focuses heavily on the technological hybridization of television with computers and telephony, with only passing reference to these other facets of media convergence.

From one vantage television has never really enjoyed a discreet existence from other popular media. Broadcast networks have screened Hollywood films for television audiences since at least the 1950s, and the advent of the VCR in the 1980s (as well as DVD and Blu-Ray technologies soon after) muddled distinctions between the two mediums even further.[319] In addition, as Sharon Marie Ross argues, the spread of a "cult" sensibility to mainstream television in the 1990s (exemplified in programs like *The X-Files* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*) amplified the importance of Internet activity to the practice of television reception. Rather than consuming a program only in the moment of

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[318] James Hay and Nick Couldry, "Rethinking Convergence/Culture: An Introduction," *Cultural Studies* 25 (2011): 473.

[319] The practice of screening feature films on television in the 1950s also attracted heavy criticism from professionals in both industries. See "Early Film Programming in Television" in William Boddy's *Fifties Television: The Industry and its Critics* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 65-79.

broadcast, viewers in the late 20ᵗʰ century increasingly responded to various "calls to tele-participation—invitations to interact with TV shows beyond the moment of viewing and 'outside' of the TV show itself" via online venues like discussion forums and fan-made websites.[320] This movement of the television audience online suggests that interpreting the medium at the turn of the century requires some readiness to look "beyond the box."

From another vantage, however, technological changes over the last decade have prompted an unprecedented conflation of television and other media, ushering in a new era variously labeled by scholars as one of "flexible microcasting" or "matrix media."[321] John Ellis even feels it necessary to begin his 2007 introduction to the medium by addressing the query "What is Television?" acknowledging that

> [i]n 1980, this would have seemed a pointless question. Even in 1990, the answer was pretty obvious. Television was what you got from your TV set at home: [A] number of channels that scheduled programmes, events and films at particular times, some for free and some for a subscription. Now the question is becoming more difficult to answer….TV comes over the Internet, over mobile phones, over screens in public spaces. TV can come when you want it, on demand rather than as a scheduled stream.[322]

The outlets that most clearly demonstrate the above qualities in television today are subscription-based "streaming" services like Netflix and Hulu, which collectively have made it possible to consume entire television series though one's personal computer or tablet since 2007. As of this writing Netflix alone boasts more than 57 million subscribers worldwide, and there is little wonder as to its appeal.[323] Streaming television via the web

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[320] Sharon Marie Ross, *Beyond the Box: Television and the Internet* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2008), 4.

[321] See, respectively, Lisa Parks, "Flexible Micro-Casting: Gender, Generation, and Television-Internet Convergence," *Television After TV: Essays on a Medium in Transition*, eds. Lynn Spigel and Jan Olsson (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 133-156; Michael Curtin, "Matrix Media," *Television Studies After TV: Understanding Television in the Post-Broadcast Era*, eds. Graeme Turner and Jinna Tay (New York: Routledge, 2009), 9-19.

[322] John Ellis, *TV FAQ: Uncommon Answers to Common Questions* (New York: I.B. Taurus, 2007), 7.

[323] Lauren Gensler, "Netflix Soars on Subscriber's Growth," *Forbes*, January 20, 2015, http://www.forbes.com/sites/laurengensler/2015/01/20/netflix-soars-on-subscriber-growth/.

often eliminates commercial interruptions and allows subscribers to watch episodes according to their own needs rather than network schedules. These changes have in turn inspired novel reception practices, especially the noticeable interest among young people in "media marathoning" (or the consumption of entire seasons or series in a short amount of time).[324] As Ellis recognizes, however, with each enthusiastic embrace of digital platforms it becomes harder to discern the differences between television and online media. Are Netflix original series like *Daredevil* or *House of Cards*—born digital and released in seasonal installments from inception—even *television* in the end?[325]

Television accessed via mobile phone occasions similarly confounding questions. While watching television on this platform has taken longer to penetrate social consciousness than web streaming in part because of the limitations of early cellular technology and infrastructure, with the rise of smart phones (and especially 4G networks), it represents a growing option for viewers today.[326] A casual search of the App Store on the iPhone reveals upward of a dozen applications for watching content from television networks like CBS, The CW, and Lifetime, and this is on top of offerings that grant mobile access to one's Netflix or Hulu accounts. Since at least 2005 networks have also experimented with developing original "mobisodes" (or mobile episodes) that extend the narrative worlds of popular broadcast programs while remaining especially mindful of the small screen format.[327] Some tech aficionados even suggest that inherent elements

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[324] Lisa Glebatis Perks prefers "media marathoning" to the more common (but pejorative) "binge watching" because the term better captures "viewers' and readers' engrossment, effort, and sense of accomplishment surrounding their media interaction" (p. ix). Regardless, it is certainly a practiced seen among young people more than old. See *Media Marathoning: Immersions in Morality* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2015).

[325] Indeed, there is an argument to be made that these programs have more in common with so-called "books on tape" than they do with broadcast television.

[326] For a discussion of the technical difficulties that battery life and early 3G networks posed to mobile television access, see Gerard Goggin, *Cell Phone Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 172-176.

[327] Goggin, *Cell Phone Culture*, 180.

of smartphone technology—notably, the tracking of user habits and the presence of powerful search capabilities—mean that mobile television may soon significantly alter the typical viewing experience by making desired programming much easier to locate.[328]

With the rapid breakdown of historical norms surrounding television production, delivery, and reception in the last few years, it can appear that "television" itself is quickly becoming an obsolete designation. As Wheeler Winston Dixon remarks, in an age where streaming has become a dominant form of media engagement for many, an insatiable demand for relatively undifferentiated *content* seems to matter much more than where this content originates or where it is physically consumed.[329] At the same time, both common sense and quotidian experience suggest to us that a bounded thing called "television" continues to exist. I would wager that the word still conjures in the minds of many an image of the domestic television set. What is the source of this endurance?

Perhaps part of the medium's resilience can be attributed to the relative immaturity of new media forays. In the end, the contemporary broadcasting industry remains the only venue today that can actually develop and produce television content in any significant amount, and the home set remains the viewing norm for the majority of audiences—especially in less developed nations and among older populations globally.[330] Even when presented with the option of watching television by other means, many individuals still prefer the classic set because of its deeply established connections to leisure. New media are always in some way linked to the notion of "work" (checking

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[328] Tom Lemongillo, "Let's End the Search for Mobile TV," *TechCrunch*, March 22, 2014, http://techcrunch.com/2014/03/22/can-we-end-the-search-for-mobile-tv/.

[329] Wheeler Winston Dixon, *Streaming: Movies, Media, and Instant Access* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 2013), 71-72.

[330] Ellis, *TV FAQ*, 9-12; Jostein Gripsurd, "Broadcast Television: The Chances of its Survival in a Digital Age," *Television After TV: Essays on a Medium in Transition*, eds. Lynn Spigel and Jan Olsson (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 217-218.

email, composing documents, etc.), but the television set is almost entirely associated with relaxation.[331] Together these factors suggest that televisual norms that solidified over the second half of the 20th century remain powerful nodes for organizing and interpreting the medium today.

Part of the reason that television may also remain a cohesive category in the minds of contemporary users involves the overstatement of new media's innovation. Despite some immediate impressions of difference, streaming television actually manages to maintain many core elements of the traditional medium. J. P. Kelly notes a number of these continuities in his overview of online television.[332] As in traditional broadcasting, for example, online television is typically *ephemeral* or *transient* because network websites may only host the most recent episodes of a popular series (to say nothing of Netflix's own decisions to rotate programs out of their database every month). Those who miss an initial broadcast have a good change of missing its online correlate as well. Even more, while streaming may do away with the scheduling demands of broadcast television and allow audiences to access content whenever they wish, time is still critical to watching online. "Indeed," writes Kelly,

> one of the most striking things about watching content on Hulu is the prominent progress bar, which appears on screen and indicates total running time, time elapsed, as well as the precise points at which viewers should expect commercial breaks. Not only this, but even the promotional breaks themselves include countdown timers informing the viewer of how long they must wait before their chosen show resumes. Thus, while we might initially assume that time plays a less significant role in the structures of online TV (especially in contrast to its

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[331] Barbara Gentikow, "Television Use in New Media Environments," *Relocating Television: Television in the Digital Context*, ed. Jostein Gripsurd (New York: Routledge, 2010), 145.
[332] J. P. Kelly, "Beyond the Broadcast Text: New Economies and Temporalities of Online TV," *Ephemeral Media: Contemporary Screen Culture from Television to YouTube*, ed. Paul Grainge (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), 122-137.

centrality in the logics of broadcast flow), these examples suggest that it remains a pronounced feature of the televisual experience.[333]

The only real difference here, Kelly suggests, is that broadcasters attempt to conceal or normalize the role of time in television while streaming services make it a prominent feature. The importance of time to viewing itself remains unchanged.

I believe that the rhetoric of projective identification outlined in this project may function as another entry in this growing list of reasons that television remains a bounded and stable medium for many viewers. As a mode of address implicated in the many enduring televisual norms discussed here, it may even function as the thread that unifies these defenses into a single argument. The rhetoric helps explain why people have found it so difficult to give up the notion of television despite the rather permeable technological boundaries of the medium today. Viewers continue to gravitate toward the television set or continue to find time an especially important element of television reception not simply out of *habit*, but because these elements variously contribute to an "apparatus" with which all viewers are familiar on an unconscious level. Put differently, the extra-symbolic, suasory relation between viewer and medium established via projective identification creates a powerful sense of "television" on a conscious level, and it is because this impression is *appealing* in the depths of the mind that users have found it difficult to relinquish in an era of media convergence.

It may be especially important for the discipline of media studies to consider the organizing function of this mode in relation to those recurring, pointed debates about television's demise.[334] In a 2009 edited collection dedicated to exploring this very issue,

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[333] Kelly, *Beyond the Broadcast Text*, 133.

[334] For overviews of this debate, see Amanda D. Lotz, *The Television Will Be Revolutionized* (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 1-2; Joshua Green, "Why do they call it TV when its not on the box? 'New' Television Services and Old Television Functions," *Media International Australia* 126 (2008): 95-105; R. Stuart Geiger and Airi Lampinen, "Old Against New, or a Coming of Age? Broadcasting in an Era of Electronic Media," *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 58 (2014): 333-341.

Daniel Dayan soundly assures us that "it is much too early to pronounce [traditional] television dead," but the rest of his thought process here seems more uncertain:

> Of course, many dimensions of TV as we know it are endangered. But there are perhaps other dimensions of this form of television that are too important not to survive. If such dimensions exist, what are they and under what form will they survive? What about traditional television (the television of the center) is about to disappear or be replaced? And what might be here to stay?[335]

While Dayan is specifically interested in exploring how television's twin talents for establishing a public and connecting centers to peripheries survive in the face of recent technological changes, I find the questions he poses here generally useful for framing any discussion over the supposed end of television. What important facets endure even as individuals regularly pronounce the death of the medium? If the rhetoric of projective identification is not itself an answer to this question, it certainly enjoins thought about the unconscious as a realm for investigation in relation to these matters.

"SCREEN CULTURE" AND NON-SYMBOLIC RHETORIC

One consequence of the contemporary convergence of media technologies is the proliferation of electronic screens in daily life—what some have called the rise of a "screen culture."[336] Such an environment is notably more "active and interactive" than previous eras, a product of individuals' constant encounters and exchanges with "the screens of television, computers, movie theatres, mobile phones, game consoles, and many other technologies."[337] Communication scholar Charles Soukup reflects on the

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[335] Daniel Dayan, "Sharing and Showing: Television as Monstration," The End of Telvision? Its Impact on the World (So Far), eds. Elihu Katz and Paddy Scannell, special issue, *The Annals of The American Academy of Political and Social Science* 625 (2009): 20.

[336] Indeed, along with "DIY Health" and "Eco-cycology," "Screen Culture" was one of a dozen major social developments that the consumer forecasters at Trendwatching.com identified for businesses in 2012. See "12 Crucial Consumer Trends for 2012," *Trendwatching*, May 1, 2015, http://trendwatching.com/trends/ 12trends2012/.

[337] Dafna Lemish, *Children and Television: A Global Perspective* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2006), 216.

diversity and ubiquity of electronic screens in daily life through his own lived experiences:

> In my everyday life, I encounter multiple screens at virtual[ly] every moment of my day. Our home is filled with three televisions and three computer monitors. In my book bag, I carry a cell phone, MP3 player, and Palm Pilot. I drive to work with my iPod playing; I arrive at work to a computer screen and several televisions throughout the building. If we go to a restaurant for dinner, increasingly flatscreen televisions play sporting events or other television programs. Even when getting my haircut or waiting in line at the post office, I am staring [at] screens with entertainment media.[338]

He goes on to suggest that the prevalence of screens manifests even *within* the mass media itself, a dizzying notion evident in, for instance, the tendency among television news professionals to interact with screens on stage during live broadcasts.

Soukup's fascination with television screens in particular here would likely come as no surprise to Sheila Murphy, who suggests that television functions as something of an ur-medium for the majority of technological innovations witnessed within screen culture. "Television," she argues, "as a technology, as a cultural institution, and as a part of everyday life…has been and continues to be a key paradigm for understanding and using contemporary digital media culture and its operations."[339] Some of television's influence along these lines is evident in the physical specifications of new media. Video game consoles in the 1970s were manufactured specifically to allow people to use the television sets they already owned as monitors. Because this console-television hybrid provided the first sense of a "home computer" for many individuals, when desktop models became technologically viable in the following years, the electronics industry saw

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[338] Charles Soukup, "Magic Screens: Everyday Life in an Era of Ubiquitous and Mobile Media Screens" (presentation, National Communication Association Annual Convention, San Diego, CA, November 21-24, 2008), 5.

[339] Sheila C. Murphy, *How Television Invented New Media* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2011), 5.

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little reason to deviate from the accepted parameters of the television screen for the display. The logic was economic: Why challenge a form to which many consumers had already grown accustomed?[340] Murphy concludes that this decision and others helped to "naturalize" the personal computer we know today "as [a] domestic technology with both literal and metaphorical links to television"[341]—an insight that almost certainly extends now as well to the rectangular screens of smart phones (which seem to grow larger and more "TV-like" every year).[342]

Television's influence on the development of new media is also apparent in less tangible forms. One area that Murphy highlights involves structures of broadcasting and the web, especially in the shared impression of "liveness" during the reception of content. YouTube and other streaming services provide "audiences and users with an experience not unlike that of live television broadcast viewers, especially when those same images are also banal and produced or viewed remotely from where the images were produced."[343] Even when users understand that a video clip on YouTube is recorded, Murphy argues, there remains a distinct impression during the moment of reception that it is transmitted from elsewhere, and an initial viewing almost always prompts the sensation that the content is unfolding unpredictably. In this way, historical experiences of and with television provide a clear template for our interaction with newer screens in daily life.

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[340] Indeed, beyond this notion of familiarity, there is little reason to argue that computer screens *must* or even *should* resemble television screens. The overlap may even hamper some of the otherwise inherent possibilities of computing technology. For a fascinating rumination on the shortcomings of the standard computer screen in the realm of graphic/electronic design, see Jessica Helfand's essay "Dematerialization of Screen Space" in her edited collection *Screen: Essays on Graphic Design, New Media, and Visual Culture* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2001), 35-39.

[341] Murphy, *Television*, 56.

[342] Some technology journalists even link the growing size of smart phone screens explicitly to rising ability and desire to watch mobile television. See Ben Taylor, "Why smartphone screens are getting bigger: Specs reveal a surprising story," *PC World*, July 21, 2014, http://www.pcworld.com/article/2455169/why-smartphone-screens-are-getting-bigger-specs-reveal-a-surprising-story.html

[343] Murphy, *Television*, 95.

Given that media screens today are all in some way "television" screens, perhaps it makes sense that a major effect of this recent technological development on individuals goes by name "telepresence." Telepresence, or the "extent to which media users feel 'in' a media environment or 'with' mediated others," has become an increasingly familiar experience with the rise of digital media over the last decade or so.[344] The term helps capture the now common perceptual contradiction of *knowing* that one's experiences are facilitated through an electronic medium but *feeling* as though these experiences are at least somewhat "real" or unmediated. While such impressions occur when two people communicate via electronic means, a much more curious experience in this same register involves media that seem to demonstrate social presence themselves. When a computer "losses" a file, for example, it is common for users to become irritated *at* the technology as if it were an inept or malicious social actor. Byron Reeves and Clifford Nass account for such perceptions by recognizing that television, computers, and other new media exhibit qualities that until recently were demonstrated only by real or living subjects.[345] Media appear to respond to our input (through remote control or keyboard), accompany us in problem-solving and leisurely pursuits, and even often possess faces and voices that seem to engage us throughout the day. Unless people scrutinize their interactions with popular technologies, Reeves and Nass conclude, they cannot help but treat the devices as they would any other individual in the social environment. This means that as screens become a more prevalent feature of daily life, the line between "real" and "simulated" social presence becomes much harder for individuals to discern.

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[344] Cheryl Campanella Brackwn and Paul D. Skalski, "Telepresence in Everyday Life: An Introduction," *Immersed in Media: Telepresence in Everyday Life*, eds. Cheryl Campanella Brackwn and Paul D. Skalski (New York: Routledge, 2010), 3-4.
[345] Byron Reeves and Clifford Nass, *The Media Equation: How People Treat Computers, Television, and New Media Like Real People and Places* (Standford, CA: CSLI Publications, 2002), 11-13.

What does any of this have to do with the rhetoric of projective identification? In a very specific sense, this mode may provide an alternate, generalized explanation for the uncanny impression of telepresence pervasive in contemporary screen culture. To the degree that the digital screens that surround us today physically index the traditional television set, and to the degree that our interactions with these screens readily prompt impressions of the broadcast medium, so-called "new" media like computers and smart phones may nevertheless approximate—to some extent—the rhetorical mode of their televisual predecessor. Throughout this project I have characterized the rhetoric of projective identification as a mode of address *unique* to television as a medium, but in light of the very recent developments within screen culture, it may be more accurate to say that the mode is historically *born* of the televisual medium and possibly finds some limited expression in newer media to the degree that they draw upon this apparatus. Put differently, the fullest expression of this mode today certainly remains with television, but it seems shortsighted to deny the possibility of *some* manifestation of this mode in new media given their historical operation within the parameters of the televisual.

The rhetoric of projective identification implies that television invites viewers to experience the medium as both an object of psychical relation and as a provider of objects for further relations. The unconscious mechanism that establishes such relations between viewers and television is the same one that individuals utilize to establish relations with actual people as well. As Klein notes throughout her work, there is no discrimination in the unconscious between animate and inanimate objects (between, say, the mother and the bottle); both can come to stand as influential phantasies in the mind of the individual. As a result, people may experience a mysterious and ineffable sense of "telepresence" from digital media within screen culture because these screens all activate viewers' capacities for projective identification to varying degrees. It is not that television

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exhibits a sense of presence alongside computers and smart phones in the current era, as Reeves and Nass suggest. Computers and smart phones can feel present to users largely because television historically paved the way for this experience.

Somewhat paradoxically, then, even as the rhetoric of projective identification helps explain why television remains a distinct medium in the minds of most users (as I noted in the previous section), it also helps account for some user experiences with new media in an age of technological convergence.[346] This second point carries notable implications for both media and rhetorical studies. For media scholars curious about the tradition of apparatus theory, the diffusion of the rhetorical mode within screen culture today prompts some thought about evolving interactions with electronic screens more generally. At one point the classic film theatre and its attendant, Oedipal mode of address may have dominated audience impressions of public screen media, but with the saturation of "television" screens in virtually every sphere of life today, a more intimate/relational mode of spectatorship inherent to the broadcast medium may be ascending as the new, public norm. The recent rise in film theatres across the United States that offer domestic comforts with the viewing experience (including dine-in menus, plush seating, and other amenities) may be read in part as a response to these changing expectations.

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[346] This paradox is admittedly puzzling. I am tempted to suggest that one can account for the discrepancy—that the mode simultaneously allows individuals to understand television as distinct but also relate to new media as they relate to television—through recourse to an old, psychoanalytic truism: The unconscious is not well known for adhering to conventional logic. Reeves and Nass, however, provide foundation for an explanation that some readers my find more palatable. In summarizing their research on the tendency for people to treat new media as social actors, the authors suggest that "media are more similar than different," meaning that people regularly responded to media as "alive" under experimental conditions regardless of the specific medium they worked with (p. 252). To translate this insight for my present work, new media may invite projective identification from users along lines vaguely similar to television ("media are more similar than different"), but at the end of the day, the nature of unconscious object relations allows media to remain distinct as internal objects. As is true of object relations carried out with people, the sameness of the mechanism of relation does not erase the distinctiveness of the object. Regardless of how one chooses to resolve the paradox, or if one chooses to resolve it at all, it certainly seems important to honor its existence as a facet of the present project. Perhaps this tension even provides a solid avenue for future work.

For rhetorical scholars, the ubiquity of the mode within contemporary screen culture specifically encourages thought about individuals' increasing openness to non-symbolic means of influence. If the rhetoric of projective identification circulates today via tributaries both strong (in the case of television) and weak (in the various instances of new media that resonate with the televisual), this means that audiences today are likely exposed to non-symbolic, suasory invitations to a greater degree than any previous generation. Such prevalence gives good reason to consider how contemporary individuals are perhaps also more *accustomed* now to responding to non-symbolic rhetorical appeals than individuals in past decades. It is not absurd to think about how continual exposure to the rhetoric of projective identification might produce subjects in some ways uniquely attuned to non-symbolic modes of address.

This line of thinking contributes directly to evolving discussions on the role of symbolism in rhetoric. Recall from Chapter One that "rhetoric" may refer to an art (the practice of influencing others), an object (influential discourse), or a theory (a way of thinking about or conceiving of influential relations in everyday life). Although debates about the centrality of meaningful symbol use to theories of rhetoric have raged since George Kennedy formally questioned the link in 1992, recent work on emotional affect and Diane Davis's specific exploration of a pre-symbolic "rhetoricity" have renewed attention on the matter within the field. The critical task before rhetorical scholars today, Davis argues, involves setting aside Kenneth Burke's foundational insights about symbolic motivation and instead examining "the implications of [the] always prior relation to the foreign(er) without which no meaning-making or determinate (symbolic) relation would be possible."[347] In other words, non-symbolic dimensions of human

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[347] Diane Davis, *Inessential Solidarity: Rhetoric and Foreigner Relations* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010), 2.

experience may herald more discernable acts of persuasion, and contemporary rhetorical scholars—as individuals who proclaim special insight into matters of influence—would do well to pay attention to these dimensions.

Until this point the present project has been very much in line with Davis's challenge. The rhetoric of projective identification is a new theory of rhetoric. The theory proposes the existence of an unconscious but highly influential tether between television and its viewers, one that exceeds and anticipates the medium's symbolic pleasures. Beyond merely answering Davis's call for an analytical reorientation, however, my contemplation of the mode within these final pages extends her concern with pre-symbolic activity and prompts additional questions for the field. The technological realities of media convergence and screen culture provide fertile space for considering not only how pre-symbolic capacities play a central role in suasory exchange, but also how the potential *priming* of such capacities by popular media may predispose people toward some types of rhetorical appeal over others. If such technological stimulation is in fact a reality, by what process does it occur? What is its effect on the nature of contemporary rhetorical practice? In what ways might it intersect with or further unseat Burke's concern with symbolism? These questions are speculative, of course, but they all provide possible avenues for future work on pre-symbolic rhetoric to explore.

A FINAL NOTE ON ETHICS

It is worth returning to Davis in the conclusion of the project as well to underscore briefly a social implication of the work here. My exploration of the rhetoric of projective identification may contribute to conversations within the disciplines of media and rhetorical studies, but what it suggests about the ethical dimensions of television reception is perhaps as important to people in general.

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As I noted at the beginning of this project, for Davis, better understanding the subject's ontological openness to the other—to the "rhetoricity" of human existence—necessitates a consideration of ethics. It is impossible to open oneself this way without simultaneously experiencing "an obligation to respond, after which ignoring the other becomes a conscious *effort*."[348] Klein too believes that realms of human experience before and outside of consciousness function as the seat of concern for the other. Inaugurated though acts of projective identification, the unconscious depressive position situates the subject as beholden to others for life. "Even in the small child," Klein writes,

> one can observe a concern for the loved one which is not, as one might think, merely a sign of dependence upon a friendly and helpful person. Side by side with the destructive impulses in the unconscious mind both of the child and of the adult, there exists a profound urge to make sacrifices, in order to help and to put right loved people who in phantasy have been harmed or destroyed. In the depths of the mind, the urge to make people happy is linked up with a strong feeling of responsibility and concern for them, which manifests itself in genuine sympathy with other people and in the ability to understand them, as they are and as they feel.[349]

Klein herself never utilized the term "ethics" to describe the social obligations of the depressive position, but her discussion of responsibility for and empathy toward others here certainly implies the idea.[350]

For the last several decades, one has never needed to look far to find criticism of television for supposedly encouraging antisocial behaviors among its most ardent audiences. Conventional wisdom holds that TV essentially corrupts viewers, isolating them from healthy interpersonal relations and transforming them into mindless "couch potatoes." The rhetorical mode of projective identification that I have outlined for the

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[348] Davis, *Inessential Solidarity*, 11.

[349] Melanie Klein, "Love, Guilt, and Reparation," *Love, Guilt and Reparation and Other Works, 1921-1945* (New York: Free Press, 1975), 311.

[350] Others, however, are more explicit in connecting Klein's ideas to ethics. See, for example, C. Fred Alford's *Psychology and the Natural Law of Reparation* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

medium here, however, implies that something else may in fact occur during the many hours of our lives that we spend sitting before the box. Rather than encourage selfish or harmful behaviors in viewers, television may function instead as an important arena for unconsciously negotiating the ethical imperative that comes with being human. Perhaps the object relations we inaugurate with the medium and its many personae allow us to practice what it means to feel responsible for another. Perhaps these connections sustain us as responsible social actors in moments when we are otherwise alone. Rather than spurn the increasing presence of television and other TV-like screens in life today (as many have), perhaps it is time to recognize the technology as a critical means of becoming and being an ethical individual within convergence culture.

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