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Queering and Qualifying the Wasteland: Network Television, Awards Discourse, and Gay Legitimation in Primetime from 1971-1995

DISSERTATION

submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in Visual Studies

by

Benjamin Kruger-Robbins

Dissertation Committee:
Associate Professor Victoria E. Johnson, Chair
Associate Professor Allison Perlman
Professor Jennifer Terry

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CURRICULUM VITAE

EDUCATION

Ph.D. Visual Studies with Graduate Feminist Emphasis, University of California, Irvine, 2019
Dissertation: *Queering and Qualifying the Wasteland: Network Television, Awards Discourse, and Gay Legitimation in Primetime from 1971-1995*
Committee: Victoria E. Johnson (Chair), Allison Perlman, Jennifer Terry

M.A. Radio-Television-Film with Portfolio in Women's and Gender Studies, University of Texas at Austin, 2014
Thesis: *Something's Happening on ABC: Queerly Reevaluating Twin Peaks and My So-Called Life*
Committee: Mary Beltrán (Supervisor), Mary Celeste Kearney (Second Reader)

B.S. Radio-Television-Film with Highest Honors, University of Texas at Austin, 2011

ACADEMIC PUBLICATIONS

Chapters in Edited Anthologies

- "The Owls are Not What They Seem: Retaking Queer Meaning in *Twin Peaks.*" *The Politics of Twin Peaks*. Eds. Amanda DiPaolo and Jamie Gillies. Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2019. 117-141.

Electronic Publications

- "Straight Men Can't Camp: The Politics of 'Too Gay' in *Behind the Candelabra*." *Flow,* 18.03 (2013). Web. http://flowtv.org/2013/07/behind-the-candelabra/

Book Reviews

- Review of *The New Gay for Pay: The Sexual Politics of American Television Production* by Julia Himberg. *Sexualities* (forthcoming, 2019).

INVITED TALKS

- "Queering and Qualifying the Television Wasteland: Thoughts on Archival Practice," University of Wyoming, 2018
- "Teen Soaps in Primetime: 1990s Network Branding and Youth Programming," California State University, Northridge, Dr. Frances Gateward, 2016

ACADEMIC AWARDS AND GRANTS

- American Heritage Center Research Grant, University of Wyoming, 2018
- Humanities Commons Research Grant, School of the Humanities, UCI, 2018
- Society for Cinema and Media Studies, Media Industries Scholarly Interest Group Conference Travel Grant, 2018
- Film and Media Studies Outstanding Teaching Assistant Award, School of the Humanities, UCI, 2017
- Gerard Endowed Award in Visual Studies, School of the Humanities, UCI, 2015
- School of the Humanities Graduate Student Research & Travel Award, UCI, 2015
- University of Texas Distinguished Scholar, 2011

SELECTED CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

- Society for Cinema and Media Studies, Seattle, WA, 2019 – "Healing through Quality TV: AIDS Public Pedagogy, Awards Discourse, and NBC's 1980s Rebranding"
- Society for Cinema and Media Studies, Toronto, Canada, 2018 – "What Would You Do If I Sang Out of Tune?: Queer Sonics of Winnie Holzman's ABC Shows"
- Console-ing Passions, Greenville, NC, 2017 – "Gutsy Attitude: ABC's Gendered Marketing of Prestige Television"
- Society for Cinema and Media Studies, Chicago, IL, 2017 – 'Holy Fruit Salad, Batman!': Unmasking Queer Conceits of ABC's Late-1960s Branding"
- Console-ing Passions, South Bend, IN, 2016 – "Bursting Free: The Sexual Biopolitics of *The Boy in the Plastic Bubble*"
- Society for Cinema and Media Studies, Atlanta, GA, 2016 – "I Don't Want to be a Brady: Queerly Selling *The Fosters* on ABC Family/Freeform"
- Console-ing Passions, Dublin, Ireland, 2015 – "Singing in the Closet: Queer Erasure and Emergence on *American Idol*"
- Film and History Conference, Madison, WI, 2015 – "Running Amok in Familyland: Seth MacFarlane's Problematic Queerness"
- Console-ing Passions, Columbia, MO, 2014 – "ABC's Queer Failures: Reconsidering *Twin Peaks* and *My So-Called Life* Through Press and Fandom"
- Society for Cinema and Media Studies, Seattle, WA, 2014 – "ABC's Queer Failures: *Twin Peaks* and *My So-Called Life*"
- Queer Affect/Queer Archives Symposium, Austin, TX, 2013 – "Archiving Porn and Murder in Paul Schrader's *Auto Focus"*
- Women's and Gender Studies Conference, Austin, TX, 2013 – "Film 'Censorship' and the Politics of Disease in Todd Haynes' Horror Trilogy"
- Popular Culture Association/American Culture Association National Conference, Washington D.C., 2013 – "The Owls are Not What They Seem: Reevaluating Authorship, Identity, and Politics in *Twin Peaks*"

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

University of California, Irvine

Instructor

- Writing 39B: Critical Reading and Rhetoric on Disney Dystopias, 2019
- Writing 39B: Critical Reading and Rhetoric on Disney Dystopias, 2018
- Film and Media Studies 85B: Broadcast Media History and Analysis, 2018
- Film and Media Studies 85B: Broadcast Media History and Analysis, 2017

Teaching Assistant

- Medical Humanities 3: Art and Medicine, Dr. Lyle Massey, 2018
- Film and Media Studies 85A: Introduction to Film and Visual Analysis, Dr. Catherine Liu, 2018
- Film and Media Studies 85A: Introduction to Film and Visual Analysis, Dr. Glen Mimura, 2017
- Film and Media Studies 85C: New Media and Digital Technologies, Dr. Braxton Soderman, 2017
- Film and Media Studies 85B: Broadcast Media History and Analysis, Dr. Allison Perlman, 2017
- Film and Media Studies 85A: Introduction to Film and Visual Analysis, Dr. Felicidad "Bliss" Cua Lim, 2016
- Film and Media Studies 85A: Introduction to Film and Visual Analysis, Dr. Racquel Gonzales, 2016
- Film and Media Studies 101B: History of Film-The Sound Era I, Dr. Lucas Hilderbrand, 2016
- Film and Media Studies 101A: History of Film-The Silent Era, Dr. Aglaya Glebova, 2016
- Film and Media Studies 101C: History of Film-The Sound Era II, Dr. Catherine Benamou, 2015

Guest Lecturer

- "Alternative Narrative and *Mulholland Drive,*" 2018, Dr. Catherine Liu
- "Postwar Westerns: Recovering and Mythologizing the American Frontier," 2016, Dr. Lucas Hilderbrand
- "*Angels in America*: HBO's Quality Audience and the Marketing of AIDS," 2016, Dr. Victoria E. Johnson
- "New American Cinema and the Rise of 'New Hollywood,' 2015, Dr. Catherine Benamou
- "Disney and ABC: Queer Directions, Straight Constraints," 2015, Dr. Lucas Hilderbrand

University of Texas at Austin

Mentor/Tutor

- Academic Mentor and Writing Tutor, Department of Intercollegiate Athletics, 2013-2014

PEDAGOGICAL TRAINING/WORKSHOPS

- AB 540 and Undocumented Student Ally Training, Oscar Teran, Esq., UCI, 2018
- Rhetoric and Teaching of Composition Graduate Seminar and Pedagogy Practicum, Dr. Bradley Queen, UCI, 2018
- Plagiarism as Educational Opportunity Workshop, Dr. Gerald Nelms, Wright State University, 2018

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

- George Foster Peabody Awards Screening Committee Member, 2019
- George Foster Peabody Awards Screening Committee Member, 2018
- George Foster Peabody Awards Screening Committee Member, 2017
- George Foster Peabody Awards, Screening Committee Member, 2016
- Reader, *Velvet Light Trap*, 2013-2014

UNIVERSITY AND DEPARTMENT SERVICE

University of California, Irvine

- Co-Coordinator, The Wellness Myth Conference, 2018
- Film and Media Studies Representative, UCI Visual Studies Graduate Student Association, 2016-2017
- Co-Coordinator, UCI Visual Studies Conference, 2016
- Co-Chair, UCI Visual Studies Graduate Student Association, 2015-2016

University of Texas at Austin

- Co-Coordinator, *Flow* Conference, Austin, TX, 2014
- Co-Senior Editor, *Flow,* 2013-2014
- Event Organizer, Queer Affect/Queer Archives Symposium, Austin, TX, 2013
- Column Editor, *Flow,* 2012-2013
- Panel Moderator and Organizing Volunteer, *Flow* Conference, Austin, TX, 2012

AFFILIATIONS

- States of Wellness Research Cluster, School of the Humanities, UCI
- Society for Cinema and Media Studies Queer Caucus
- Society for Cinema and Media Studies Caucus on Class
- Society for Cinema and Media Studies Television Studies Scholarly Interest Group
- Society for Cinema and Media Studies Media Industries Scholarly Interest Group

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Queering and Qualifying the Wasteland: Network Television, Awards Discourse, and Gay Legitimation in Primetime from 1971-1995

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Benjamin Kruger-Robbins

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This dissertation argues that celebratory recognition of a select few shows and networks occludes a broader history of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) programs across the "Big Three" networks (NBC, CBS, and ABC) between 1971 and 1995. It considers how awards organizations, notably the George Foster Peabody Awards, the Emmys, and the Golden Globes, propagated a public service ethos that meshed with the networks' strategies for capitalizing on "relevance" amidst heightened competition and diminishing returns. This strategy of commending "social problem" shows isolated LGBTQ characters, depriving them of subjectivity, and privatized the oppression of non-straight people. Here, awarding bodies most commonly honored LGBTQ-themed "special episodes" of dramatic series & episodic sitcoms, removing queer stories from a more broadly conceptualized "mainstream" synonymous with everyday mundanity. LGBTQ storylines developed as pedagogical tools for elite urbane audiences, consequently delegitimizing more affective connections between sexual minorities and television.

INTRODUCTION: GAY UPLIFT FROM THE TELEVISION WASTELAND

In a 1961 address to the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB), Federal Communications Commission chairman Newton Minow, famously described American network television as a "vast wasteland" and intoned that "we need imagination in programming, not sterility; creativity, not imitation; experimentation, not conformity; excellence, not mediocrity."[1] His contentions, based in New Frontier ideals, advocated public pedagogy and artistic merit as bedrocks of "quality" television, pitched to the NAB as necessary antidotes to a landscape of purportedly throwaway sitcoms and serials. Minow's mandate, which *New York Times* writer Jack Gould and other journalists championed through the 1960s, partially materialized in the 1970s through a slate of independently produced "relevance" shows that tackled controversial social issues within an educational framework. Key among these taboo topics was homosexuality, newly visible in popular press discourses, particularly between the years of the 1969 Stonewall Uprisings in New York City and the American Psychological Association's (APA) declassification of same-sex attraction as a mental illness in 1973. These mass-broadcast "quality" shows and their successors through the 1980s and 1990s helped position gay discourse[2] as a trademark of thematically "edgy" television that dared to serve the public good through messages of liberal tolerance.

[1] Newton Minow, "Television and the Public Interest," May 9, 1961, https://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/newtonminow.htm.

[2] Here I defer to Michel Foucault's understanding of discourse as "highly articulated around a cluster of power relations" and positioned as part and parcel to teleological narratives of social progress. See: Michel Foucault, "The Incitement to Discourse," *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction* (New York: Random House, 1977: 30.

This dissertation proposes that celebratory recognition of a select few shows (and network brands) has occluded a broader history of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) seriality and non-normative imaginations of family and community across the "Big Three" networks' (NBC, CBS, and ABC) programming and institutional history from 1971 and 1995—the years between the employment of the Financial Interest and Syndication Rules and the effective end of the broadcast network era.[3] I consider how awards organizations, notably the George Foster Peabody Awards, the Emmys, and the Golden Globes propagated a public service ethos that meshed with the networks' strategies for capitalizing on "relevance" amidst heightened competition and diminishing returns. I interrogate how award-winning programs and spotlighted episodes worked to uphold associations between homosexuality and white male-ness, thereby foreclosing the possibility of intersectional perspectives regarding sexuality and United States community across the major networks. Awards organizations' tendency to commend "social problem" shows has historically isolated LGBTQ characters, depriving them of subjectivity underscoring that the oppression of non-straight people is a 'private' and privatized matter. The Peabodys, Emmys, and Golden Globes most commonly bestowed LGBTQ-themed movies-of-the-week and "special episodes" of dramatic series and episodic sitcoms with awards, giving institutional weight to the implication that queer stories were (and are) not everyday stories, part of the flow of seriality and the mundane. Such strategies, I contend, have historically sold LGBTQ storylines as pedagogical tools for elite, urbane,

[3] The Telecommunications Act of 1996 helped to spur mergers between large media corporations, resulting in a system of conglomeration that enveloped the formerly monopolistic "Big Three" broadcast networks into horizontally integrated multimedia empires.

white, middle and upper-middle class audiences, thereby marginalizing and, further, delegitimating more affective connections between sexual minorities and television.

Taste Cultures and Media Pedagogy

My above claims grapple with assumptions about a cohesive, liberal public sphere, designated as an imagined space of "higher" discourse, civic virtue, and intellectual growth. While such philosophical ideals, most famously synthesized by theorist Jurgen Habermas, continue to encounter challenges about their exclusivity and bias, they have intermittently served as a challenge to American television's "commercial" imperatives. Industrial, press, and academic efforts to "enrich" the medium have historically relied on its *potential* as a public good, even (or especially) when ensconced in neoliberal goals of monetizing "better" programming/practices. Early critical precedents set a popular and trade press trend of artificially dividing American television by program types: separating the often culturally delegitimated "everyday programming" of serial TV epitomized by Raymond William's concept of "flow" from and awards-worthy "specials" and *films* made for TV that purportedly compelled a national ethos of purpose and progress beyond the market. Williams regards television not as a set of individualized segments but rather a sequential, continuous text wherein live specials, telefilm fictional programs, movies, advertisements, news, and other components of a network station's "broadcast day" lead into and interlock with one another to construct the illusion temporal and discursive unity.[4] Because

[4] Raymond Williams, "Programming: Distribution and Flow," *Television* (New York: Routledge Classics, 2003): 77-120.

Williams' argues that the structure and function of TV in the United States is primarily market-oriented, television criticism has often presumed that seriality (ritual, mundanity, flow) is *not* art. Awarded television programs, by contrast, are understood to be "artistic," and, therefore, exceptions to flow. As sexual orientation developed as a moniker of edgy, prestige television as early as the 1970s, gay "experience" materialized as awards bait and positioned such "difference" outside (if not "better than") mainstream purviews. In concert with Pierre Bourdieu's links between taste cultures and social capital, however, I maintain that many nakedly salable shows and supposedly "ordinary" viewing experiences evoked gender and sexual non-normativity that made queer discourses accessible to a mass viewership; conversely, elite projections of "relevance" and "quality" too regularly factionalized television audiences through classed and gendered hierarchies of consumption.

While reformers, sometimes with the best of intentions, have invoked television's "pedagogical potential" as a means to enhance public viewing practices, such discourse carries classed, gendered, generational, and geographic connotations. This rhetoric, which corporate entities regularly underscore, actually undergirds capitalist structures already in place. Pierre Bourdieu discusses how media invested in educational uplift are positioned against crass, uncouth commercialism in order to maintain dominant alignments of social and economic capital. He distinguishes between material signifiers of wealth and more symbolic forms of class privilege/power achieved through appropriate acculturation, while noting that "economic capital is at the root of all other types of capital, and these transformed, *disguised* forms of economic capital, never entirely reducible to that

definition, produce their most special effects to the extent that they *conceal* (not least from their oppressors) the fact that economic capital is at their root."[5] In other words, "sophisticated" taste cultures based in "objective" artistic valuations paradoxically depend on distancing mechanisms from overt consumption but, actually, maintain a classed commercial system. In *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste,* Bourdieu discusses the importance of "ordinary" media practices as required and abject counterparts to "aesthetic distancing" and the "pure gaze." He writes that, "the pure gaze implies a break with the ordinary attitude towards the world…rejecting what is generic, i.e. *common,* 'easy,' and immediately accessible, starting with everything that reduces the aesthetic animal to pure and simple animality, to palpable pleasure or sensual desire."[6] Thus, debasing "low" forms of popular engagement involves recirculating the moral virtues of intellectual refinement (a "scarce" resource marketed as available to "willing" aspirants) while consistently blocking entry into exclusive, "quality" spaces.

As television scholars have demonstrated, such classed pedagogical assumptions fuel political divides based in geography, education, and access. In *Viewers Like You?: How Public TV Failed the People,* Laurie Ouellette discusses how satirical and experimental PBS programs such as *The Great American Dream Machine* "construct stereotypical images of conservative middle-America, reiterating the same 'us-versus-them' opposition circulated

[5] Pierre Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education,* ed. John Richardson (New York: Greenwood, 1986): 252, emphasis mine.
[6] Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984): 32, emphasis in original.

by conservatives,"[7] thereby helping to fuel a decades-long "culture-war" based in imagined geographic values and lifestyles. Victoria E. Johnson elaborates upon this concept in *Heartland TV: Prime Time Television and the Struggle for U.S. Identity,* which unpacks the television industry's simultaneous mythologizing and devaluing of "fly-over America." With regard to regulatory "public interests" provisions embodied in the language of the FCC's 1946 publication *The Public Service Responsibility of Broadcast Licensees* (better known as the *Blue Book*), Johnson writes that:

> [It] restates the 1928 Interpretation of Public Interest to emphasize market and apparent *civic* distinctions between urban and rural locales…while "metropolitan" markets are presumed to be diverse in both program choices and program content, "rural" markets are imagined to have much narrower "tastes" and cultural proclivities.[8]

Herein, Johnson and Ouellette emphasize how ideals of civic engagement vis-à-vis television rely upon class prejudices and resultant hierarchies of taste and formal education. Both accounts illuminate perceptions of quality programming, critically and academically demarcated as "not *just* TV," as fraught with classist preconceptions of access (to formal education, to legitimated urbane values, to restricted cultural knowledges). Indeed, in *Public Interests: Media Advocacy and Struggles Over U.S. Television,* Allison Perlman explores how the Joint Committee on Educational Television (JCET) initially

[7] Laurie Ouellette, *Viewers Like You? How Public TV Failed the People* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002): 199.
[8] Victoria E. Johnson, *Heartland TV: Prime Time Television and the Struggle for U.S. Identity* (New York University Press, 2008): 51, emphasis in original.

conceived of alternatives to patronizing forms of pedagogical address in the 1950s by "[recognizing] the limited appeal of educational stations or the already entrenched expectations of what television *is*, even in communities that, under the [1948-1952 FCC licensing] freeze had yet to access it firsthand."[9] She determines collaboration *with* commercial stations as paramount to JCET's populist strategy. Here Perlman elucidates collaborative counterpoints to a politics of uplift in educational programming, "histories of opportunity"[10] that academic readings of U.S. public television within the limited/limiting context of a non-commercial Habermasian public sphere may have eclipsed.

More recently, however, popular press outlets have dispensed with the "inherent" benefits of public television to herald "superior" commercial entertainments across a diverse array of channels/platforms, usually available only through cable and/or subscription services (Netflix, Hulu, HBO, FX, AMC, etc.), that adhere to similar logics of "elevating" the debased medium of television to affect sociopolitical consciousness. Charles McGrath's 1995 *New York Times* article "The Triumph of the Prime-time Novel" remains a seminal example here in describing how "[contemporary] TV drama is one of the few remaining art forms to continue the tradition of classic American realism, the realism of Dreiser and Hopper: the painstaking, almost literal examination of middle- and working-class lives in the conviction that truth resides less in ideas than in details closely observed."[11] His auteurist intervention, which celebrates the "naturalistic" dialogue of TV

[9] Allison Perlman, *Public Interests: Media Advocacy and Struggles Over U.S. Television* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2016): 30, emphasis in original.
[10] Ibid: 32.
[11] Charles McGrath, "The Triumph of the Prime-Time Novel," *New York Times,* October 22, 1995.

writers like Steven Bochco and David Milch, disparages both public television productions like *Masterpiece Theater* ("devoid of complexity") and network sitcoms/teenage soap operas ("stuck on the premise of cramming as many unlike people as possible into a single household").[12] McGrath's preoccupations with realism, authorship, and "edgy" social issues speak to his sense of television's aesthetic and narrative "improvement." As Ouellette indicates, this vantage point involves using working class and middle-class positionalities for the educational benefit of socially aware upper-middle class viewers (*New York Times* subscribers, for example), while, simultaneously, deriding mass entertainment and "middlebrow" culture more generally. Janice Radway offers a corollary to this problematic in *A Feeling for Books,* her analysis of "Book of the Month" editors and subscribers in the 1950s and 1960s. She writes, with regard to ideological attacks on "middle-brow" reading sensibilities and group memberships that:

> The sustained invocation of nearly all semantic counters circulating about the use of the signifier "democracy," drew a stark contrast between the rational, independent, self-regulating adult confronted by a range of choices in a bookstore, and the infantilized, passive dupes of the book clubs who were content with the hand-me-down opinions of eminent book jurors.[13]

Like McGrath, the journalists that Radway cites promote a discourse of choice and selectivity in interpellating "discerning" readers and drawing contrasts between worthy literature and mass commodity. This tactic, Radway notes, results in fragmentation based

[12] Ibid.
[13] Janice Radway, *A Feeling for Books: The Book-of-the-Month Club, Literary Taste, and Middle-Class Desire* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1997): 227.

in imagined binaries such as highbrow/middlebrow and masculine/rational/discerning versus feminine/emotional/consumerist that unnecessarily caricature taste cultures.

Ironically, and in tandem with Bourdieu's argument, these positions rely on and reinforce capitalist hierarchies even while denigrating consumer culture, a recurrent feature of "quality" media framing. Michael Curtin, for instance, discusses how NBC documentary programming and expansion of nightly newscasts in the 1960s, under the supervision of Robert Kintner, bolstered NBC's "public service" bona-fides in contrast to its critically reviled entertainment shows. Curtin describes how NBC's news division maintained the cultural hegemony of Kennedy-era politics (especially regarding communist containment) and notes an inherent contradiction in how critics like Jack Gould contextualized Kintner's contributions in this arena as cultivating a robust public sphere without citing the network president's penchant for ratings and "profit making" programs.[14] Jon Kraszewski also cites Bourdieu's considerations that cultural capital allows immersion in "legitimated" spheres of influence in his analysis of how MTV's *The Real World* (which, like McGrath's "prime-time novels," maintains a serial interest in "documenting" identity-based tensions) "[mediates] race, reality and liberalism."[15] Similar to the NBC news shows that Curtin discusses, *The Real World*, in Kraszewki's estimation, engages a politics of "elevating" a network's image and reifying upscale viewers' liberal

[14] Michael Curtin, "NBC News Documentary: 'Intelligent Interpretation' in a Cold War Context" in *NBC: America's Network,* ed. Michelle Hilmes (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2007): 182-183.
[15] Jon Kraszewski, "Country Hicks and Urban Cliques: Mediating Race, Reality, and Liberalism on MTV's *The Real World*" in *Reality TV: Remaking Television Culture – Second Edition*, eds. Susan Murray and Laurie Ouellette (New York: New York University Press, 2009): 205.

complacency through social issues discourse. He regards the show's and MTV's strategy as contingent on "[lending] credence to the liberal characters" through "editing [that] calls attention to the way they can unpack the inferential racism of rural conservatives"[16] and concludes that the program discounts systemic racism (including that propagated by *The Real World* itself) in order to maintain the sanctity of its viewer base and MTV's "hip, anti-racist" marketing initiatives. Michael Z. Newman and Elana Levine's *Legitimating Television: Media Convergence and Cultural Status* similarly describes classed ramifications of "quality" wherein "legitimation in historical cases is [used] to manage social change and class mobility, to secure the culture of an elite against the intrusion of undesirable masses, and thus to perpetuate the privilege of the dominant."[17] Their work extends capitalist logics of "enlightened" programming and viewing practices into critique of how academe, industry, and popular press collude to bolster narrow-appeal shows in the "post network" era.

How, then, do scholars imagine television public spheres that do not adhere as readily to classed concepts of "elevation" and journalistic/academic ideals of "quality"? How might television "pedagogy" be reframed as a collaborative, rather than a liberally imposed and self-congratulatory, project? Jennifer Petersen, in *Murder, the Media, and the Politics of Public Feelings* discusses the "political pedagogy of melodrama" as emphasizing "the feminine, private sphere to make claims in the public sphere, using the language of feeling to make structural social organization and change, even examples of social injustice,

[16] Ibid: 213.
[17] Michael Z. Newman and Elana Levine, *Legitimating Television: Media Convergence and Cultural Status* (New York: Routledge, 2012): 9.

available for public discourse."[18] She underscores the ambivalence of this positionality in relation to the murder of James Byrd in Jasper, Texas, noting that the melodramatic news narrative surrounding his death "made undeniably visible for a moment the continuing economic, social, and physical violence that sustains systems of racial hierarchy and white privilege" while simultaneously "[reinscribing] whiteness as the center of law, justice, and the social contract." Still, in her next chapters, Petersen discusses melodrama as a crucial "space for public mourning and for arguments about the value of what, or who, is lost," which, in her consideration "works to humanize [abstract] legislation and put political and moral pressure on lawmakers to feel and act in ways appropriate to this grief."[19] Elayne Rapping discusses this political conceit in terms of genre, turning to made-for-TV movies as "an important element of TV's socializing and educational role."[20] She suggests in *The Movie of the Week: Private Stories, Public Events* that the TV movie's "power and importance…comes from [its] ability to enter the public sphere and arouse deep passion for political injustice."[21] To this end, Rapping posits that such activation and investment results *because of* rather than in spite of the form's accessible and readily identifiable narrative/formal constructions. Elana Levine also considers TV melodramas, and made-for-TV movies in particular, politically complex in terms of audience involvement. She discusses subversive knowledges imparted to adolescents and teenagers through these

[18] Jennifer Petersen, *Murder, the Media, and the Politics of Public Feelings: Remembering Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Jr.* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 2011): 97.
[19] Ibid: 129.
[20] Elayne Rapping, "Made for TV Movies: The Domestication of Social Issues," *Cinéaste* 14, no. 2 (1985): 30.
[21] Elayne Rapping, *The Movie of the Week: Private Stories, Public Events* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1992): 45.

programs, writing that, "because part of the adult world's effort to shield young people from the new sexual culture involved keeping them from sex-and-violence themed television, watching [made-for-TV movies] was one way that kids refused to mind the boundary between childhood and adulthood."[22] Sarah Banet-Weiser carries this consideration into a discussion of pre-teens' formation of viewer/consumer citizenship constituencies *on their own terms* (though within a corporate branding paradigm). In *Kids Rule! Nickelodeon and Consumer Citizenship* she reiterates the methodological argument that "audience interaction is more than watching an individual program or having one specific fan base…it is a social and cultural practice that involves media structures and individual agency, production and consumption, text and audience."[23] Here, as in Petersen's and Levine's scholarship, community camaraderie and affective identification develop through complicated real and imagined viewer relationships rather than as a result of narrowly dictated industrial, journalistic, or academic constructions. As Ien Ang asserts in *Desperately Seeking the Audience,* her critique of ratings-based classification systems, "ethnographic knowledge can provide us with much more profound 'feedback' because it can uncover the plural and potentially contradictory meanings hidden behind the catch-all measure of 'what the audience wants.'"[24] Even though Ang's analysis pertains to profit-based industrial taxonomies, her statement can just as easily be applied to academic and journalistic considerations of what the audience *needs*.

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[22] Elana Levine, *Wallowing in Sex: The New Sexual Subculture of 1970s American Television* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007): 121.
[23] Sarah Banet-Weiser, *Kids Rule! Nickelodeon and Consumer Citizenship* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007): 32.
[24] Ien Ang, *Desperately Seeking the Audience* (New York: Routledge, 1991): 169.

Queer television scholars often generatively consider television practices that defy what Ang describes as "facile, nominalist notions of 'the consumer' [and] 'the market,'"[25] though some unwittingly uphold the classed, gendered, and raced paradigms that Bourdieu explicates. Others, however, cite spaces of cultural negotiation within purportedly "dispensable" texts, genres, industry practices, and brands that expand, complicate, and enrich LGBTQ+ television experiences. My use of "queer" pertains most directly to media scholar Alexander Doty's oft cited work in *Making Thinks Perfectly Queer,* wherein he provocatively intones that "queer readings" of purportedly mainstream television shows such as *Laverne & Shirley* (ABC, 1976-1983) and *Pee Wee's Playhouse* (CBS, 1986-1990) "aren't 'alternative' readings, wishful or willful misreadings, or 'reading too much into things' readings…they result from the recognition and articulation of the complex range of queerness that has been in popular culture texts and their audiences all along."[26] Such a consideration speaks to often overtly anti-heteronormative media objects that, nonetheless, do not *denotatively* include LGBTQ characters and/or narratives. Indeed, these "non/anti/contra-straight" interpretations substantially factor into my considerations of delegitimated television programs/practices. While Doty provides a compelling case for wresting queerly affective media away from heteronormative cooptation, however, he adopts a method of auto-ethnography that sometimes downplays sociopolitical pitfalls and blind-spots of media "queering." Therefore, I seek to nuance his useful approach in terms of

[25] Ibid: 169.
[26] Alexander Doty, *Making Thinks Perfectly Queer* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, 1993): 16.

how class and race regularly inflect such readings to unnecessarily correlate queer with quality.

Ron Becker, for instance, most explicitly links upward mobility, urban geographies, and representation of sexual minorities with 1990s-era television. He draws attention to how a Socially Liberal Urban-Minded Professional ("Slumpy") imagined viewing constituency functions to determine boundaries of queer representation, arguing that "gay material [in the 1990s] was useful for network executives, in part, because it was useful to certain viewers for whom watching prime-time TV with a gay twist was a convenient way to establish a 'hip' identity."[27] While he notes that Slumpy branding is a restrictive mode of address wherein industry personnel interpellate upscale straight viewers, he nods toward potentially more complicated strategies in "Guy Love: A Queer Straight Masculinity for a Post Closet Era?" Here, Becker suggests how purportedly "straight" relationships between men in 2000s-era programs such as *Scrubs* (NBC, 2001-2008 and ABC, 2009-2010) and *Boston Legal* (ABC, 2004-2008) destabilize hegemonic norms of masculinity and allow audiences across sexual persuasions to challenge the hetero/homosexual romantic binary.[28] This type of viewer participation also works to destabilize and renegotiate the terms of what Lynne Joyrich refers to as the "epistemology of the console," wherein "television constructs illicit sexualities ambivalently, as both known and unknown"[29] in

[27] Ron Becker, "Gay-Themed Television and the Slumpy Class: The Affordable, Multicultural Politics of the Gay Nineties," *Television and New Media* 7, no. 2 (May 2006): 186.
[28] Ron Becker, "Guy Love: A Queer Straight Masculinity for a Post Closet Era?," *Queer TV: Theories, Histories, Politics,* eds. Glyn Davis and Gary Needham (New York: Routledge, 2009): 121-140.
[29] Lynne Joyrich, "Epistemology of the Console," *Queer TV: Theories, Histories, Politics,* eds. Glyn Davis and Gary Needham (New York: Routledge, 2009): 27.

service of consistently repurposing the discourse of the closet on TV. Authors like Joe Wlodarz also recognize the epistemology of the closet/console as fragile and corruptible; he considers how two archetypes of 1970s television programs, the "gay jock" and "teetering on the brink adolescent" offer "a cross-textual approach" to queer viewing. This positionality, he argues, "can foreground alternative developmental narratives for ambiguously gay [teenagers] that need not shut down the queer potential of the adolescent experience nor simply posit adult gay sexuality as a stable, predictable state,"[30] thereby renegotiating genre-based taxonomies as well as illuminating queer modes of reclaiming culturally reviled texts.

This project stems from the above modes of cultural studies inquiry, which question and reconfigure hierarchies of taste that correlate progressivism with "higher" forms of television spectacle, "exceptional" appointment entertainments extracted from everyday rubbish. In concert with these imperatives, I do not seek to "rehabilitate" bad objects or "scorn" lauded programs but to demonstrate how awards discourse around select gay texts has established a broader cultural link between "enlightened" television and homosexuality, a relationship that ironically inhibits queer modes of interaction across categories of class, race, gender, politics, geography, and sexuality. Since the TV texts that I use derive from various and seemingly incompatible genres (sitcom, drama, TV movie, etc.) my next section considers how "quality" developed as a malleable and ever-shifting construct to define notable programs against the "common" rhythms of scheduled flow.

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[30] Joe Wlodarz, "'We're Not All So Obvious': Masculinity and Queer (In)visibility in American Network Television of the 1970s," *Queer TV: Theories, Histories, Politics,* eds. Glyn Davis and Gary Needham (New York: Routledge, 2009): 104.

Historicizing Quality TV

Media historians offer that, because American television emerged from the commercial network system already in place during radio's heyday, that the medium was borne of "low" and suspect status; regardless, TV's quality *potential* held as a dominant discourse since its post-war popularization but shifted over several decades in terms of which genres were upheld as critical darlings. William Boddy interrogates how industry and popular press fashioned a "golden age" of 1950s live specials based in "legitimate" theater, a trend that pre-recorded telefilm sitcoms and westerns soon overtook, much to the chagrin of cultural critics. Boddy interprets this declension narrative, though, as papering over NBC and CBS's "strategy to assert network control over program production and scheduling [that] included a growing emphasis on self-production."[31] Indeed, Mike Mashon posits in "NBC, J. Walter Thompson, and the Struggle for Control of Television Programming" that live specials aired on anthology programs like *Kraft Television Theater* (NBC, 1947-1958) were, in fact, conceptualized and packaged by corporate sponsors and tied into television scheduling to maximize financial gain. He notes, for instance, that "although *KTT* quickly established itself as a critical favorite, in Kraft's estimation the show was only as useful as its ability to move product."[32] To this effect, Mashon writes:

> [Advertising] agencies, of course were, of course, deeply dedicated to their own shows, devoting considerable research to their proper timeslots…for example,

[31] William Boddy, *Fifties Television: The Industry and its Critics* (Urbana and Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1985): 27.
[32] Mike Mashon, "NBC, J. Walter Thompson, and the Struggle for Control of Television Programming, 1946-58," *NBC: America's Network,* ed. Michelle Hilmes (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2007: 140.

> [Walter J.] Thompson purchased 9:00-10:00 P.M. for *Kraft Television Theater* because their research showed that Wednesday was the night people were most likely to be home [and] the agency didn't want [*KTT*] to interfere with Thursday night's *Kraft Music Hall* on radio.[33]

As Boddy observes, however, popular press contextualized live televised productions as largely extra-commercial and of higher cultural significance, a claim NBC and CBS capitalized on to manage negotiations with Hollywood for telefilm products. He ascertains that while "networks painted themselves as allies of the critical defenders of the aesthetically privileged nationwide live dramatic broadcast" the two majors were actually steeling themselves against anti-trust threats and leveraging their negotiating power against studios like Disney and Warner Brothers, which they were coming to rely on for inexpensive programming.[34] Journalists such as Jack Gould, however, blamed the popularization of telefilm shows on an intellectually lazy mass population disinterested in high art. As early as 1946 Gould insisted that "television must have what radio has not—an alert, articulate, and critical audience that can make its influence felt,"[35] and, by 1952, "denounced the 'dog-eared films that Hollywood is churning out for television…pedestrian little half-hour quickies.'"[36] This type of popular discourse established a revisionist story of television's downfall, wherein pre-recorded frivolity drowned out the craft and nuance of live theater.

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[33] Ibid: 143.
[34] Boddy: 29.
[35] Jack Gould, "Television: Boon or Bane?" *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 10, no. 2 (Autumn, 1946): 320.
[36] Quoted in Boddy: 28.

As a result, primetime network sitcoms and hour-long westerns/action serials, in addition to reviled daytime programming like soap operas and quiz shows, bore the brunt of late-1950s/early-1960s social blame for television's "dumbing down"; in this moment, media scholar Michael Curtin points out, news documentaries largely usurped the all-but-defunct live anthology dramas' prestige standing. Curtin cites FCC Chairman Minow's regard for the educational benefits of NBC's news division, which produced, in addition to the acclaimed nightly *Huntley-Brinkley Report* (NBC, 1956-1970), globally focused non-fiction programs like *White Paper* (NBC, 1960-1980). He determines, however, that "many viewers identified network documentaries with the reform agenda of a political and cultural elite,"[37] and that the shows themselves offered a predominantly white, male purview aligned with hegemonic ideals of the Kennedy administration. By contrast, Lynn Spigel analyzes how often non-normative, if culturally disparaged, "fantastic family sitcoms" of the 1960s, "a hybrid genre that mixed the conventions of the family sitcom with the space-age imagery of the New Frontier,"[38] posed a disruptive challenge to both straight technocratic progressivism and xenophobic dystopianism in media. She describes half-hour comedies like *Bewitched* (ABC, 1964-1972)*, My Mother the Car* (NBC, 1965-1966)*, My Favorite Martian* (CBS 1963-1965), *The Munsters* (CBS, 1964-1966)*, The Addams Family* (ABC, 1964-1966) and their ilk as embodying an "unlikely collision of genres that gave audiences a chance to reflect on their own expectations—not only about the sitcom's

[37] Curtin: 188.
[38] Lynn Spigel, "From Domestic Space to Outer Space: The 1960s Fantastic Family Sitcom," *Close Encounters: Film, Feminism, and Science Fiction*, eds. Lynn Spigel and Constance Penley (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1991): 205.

conventions—but also about the social conventions by which they lived their lives."[39] While not revolutionary, these emerging network staples, Spigel maintains, provoked queer possibilities of the space-age that countered the gender/sexual conservatism and heteronormative teleology of Frontier-era documentary specials.

Relevance sitcoms of the 1970s, however, worked to legitimate the genre's standing through socially conscious appointment television despite their often-conflicting narrative, stylistic, and political preoccupations. Following the FCC's 1970 invocation of both the Prime-Time Access Rule (PTAR), which limited the amount of network programming that local stations could air during evening hours, and the Financial Interest and Syndication Rules (Fin-Syn), preventing the Big Three from owning shows aired in primetime, independent production companies capitalized on the new policy incentives. As Jane Feuer discusses in "The MTM Style," Norman Lear and Bud Yorkin's Tandem Productions, Inc. and Grant Tinker and Mary Tyler Moore's MTM Enterprises stood out as the two most successful purveyors of "quality" television in the 1970s, though each possessed different modes of political address and aesthetic constitution. Feuer regards Tandem as an "extraordinary" counterpoint to "everyday" broadcasting, tackling "significant issues" through didactic strategies of liberal enlightenment. She argues, however, that Tinker and Moore's company, unlike Tandem, helped establish genre *hybridity* as a quality attribute, writing that:

> The MTM style is both typical and atypical. Its politics are seldom overt but the concept of "quality" is itself ideological. In interpreting and MTM programme as a

[39] Ibid: 228.

> "quality" programme, the quality audience is permitted to enjoy a form of television that is seen as more literate, more stylistically complex, and more psychologically "deep" than ordinary TV fare.[40]

Herein, she designates both forms of programming as "specially" coded and classed in relationship to "regular" television despite MTM's allusions to complacent midwestern normalcy.

Kirsten Lentz expounds on this distinction in "Quality versus Relevance: Feminism, Race, and the Politics of the Sign in 1970s Television," attaching relevance to "realism" (Tandem) and quality to "reflexivity" (MTM) as raced, gendered, and classed concepts. Her semiotic critique considers how the Lear shows approached race by correlating the "sign" of difference with the "real." She argues that bodies of color themselves stood for political ideals, unencumbered by the shows' "economy of style" that foregrounded sociopolitical reality rather than proto-televisual excess and distraction.[41] John Thornton Caldwell describes this fraught aesthetic as "anti-style…[a] throwback to the golden age of early anthology drama" that "redefined television as theater."[42] Contrastingly, Lentz cites MTM as "[mobilizing] a politics of the signifier" since "representing feminism meant engaging questions of signification itself"[43] through self-referential narratives/styles surrounding the medium and its history. MTM's namesake program, *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* (CBS,

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[40] Jane Feuer, "The MTM Style," *Television: The Critical View (Fourth Edition),* ed. Horace Newcomb (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984): 80.
[41] Kirsten Lentz, "Quality versus Relevance: Feminism, Race, and the Politics of the Sign in 1970s Television," *Camera Obscura* 43, vol. 15, no. 1 (2000): 44-93.
[42] John Thornton Caldwell, *Televisuality: Style, Crisis, and Authority in American Television* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1995: 56.
[43] Lentz: 57.

1970-1977), Lentz offers, combined internal critique of television with more pronounced/expressionistic mise-en-scène and "complex" characterization to "provide a critique of the television image…[and contribute] to its status as 'quality television': it represents *The Six O'clock News* [the *Mary Tyler Moore Show*'s fictional intertext] as an example of bad television in order to establish *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* as good television."[44] Moreover, she considers how entertainment journalists characterized this distinction between "relevance" and "quality," noting that:

> The popular press used these differences in the shows' content and class aesthetics to evaluate and compare them. In the guise of benign contrasts, this criticism repeatedly promoted *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* (and the MTM shows generally) as more noble, more ethical, and more intelligent than the Lear show[s]. The press routinely made a distinction between the treatment of politics on the two shows, favoring the political style of *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* over that of *All in the Family.*[45]

One of Lentz's key interventions here lies in the paradox that MTM's "quality" treatment, based in feminist principle, downplayed race and class concerns through style, while Tandem's didactic anti-style compelled television's reversion to masculine ideals of "high-culture."

In a decided reversal from "relevance" and "quality," Elana Levine invokes ABC's popular, critically maligned, and sexually suggestive sitcoms of the mid-to-late 1970s and

[44] Ibid: 52.
[45] Ibid: 64.

NBC's cautionary, if also titillating, "movies of the week" as industrial counterpoints to Tandem and MTM-type shows. She writes that, "television's sex-themed comedy began to shift by the mid-1970s toward a less politicized form of humor that trivialized the changes engendered by the sexual revolution, the gay rights movement, and the women's movement."[46] Programs like *Happy Days* (ABC, 1974-1984) and *Three's Company* (ABC, 1977-1984), Levine argues, helped render sexuality commonplace, a departure from its explicitly controversial framing on *All in the Family* (CBS, 1971-1979) and its (mostly) CBS-aired brethren. Here she invokes *network* as well as *genre* in order to contextualize distinctions between the exceptional and the everyday, correlating hour-long shows like *The Love Boat* (ABC, 1977-1986) with the aforementioned sitcoms to underscore ABC's strategy, under network president Fred Silverman, of "providing week-to-week continuity" and "[designing] programs to be family-friendly" while "[enticing] viewers with suggestions of sex."[47] In a separate chapter, Levine discusses NBC's "movies-of-the-week" such as *Born Innocent* (1974) and *Dawn: Portrait of a Teenage Runaway* (1976) in relation the network's dual strategy of promoting sexual morality (geared toward parents) and adolescent bawdiness (their kids). She offers a distinction here from some of ABC's more critically lauded entries in the same genre like *That Certain Summer* (1972).[48] As her examples show, "quality" developed as an opaquely defined genre of its own, separated along lines of network brand identity, genre, and style.

[46] Levine, *Wallowing in Sex*: 178.
[47] Ibid: 182.
[48] Ibid: 76-122.

Programming trends of the 1980s afforded starker class divisions between "everyday" television and "quality TV" but also complicated matters of aesthetic and narrative coding. Robert Thompson, a television historian whose writing bridges academic scholarship and popular journalism, sought to (re)define prestige television in his 1997 book *Television's Second Golden Age: From Hill Street Blues to ER*. In this text, Thompson provides a list of criteria meant to establish a clear distinction between "quality" and "everyday" programming, writing that, first and foremost:

> Quality TV is best defined by what it is not. It is not "regular TV." The worst insult you could give to Barney Rosenzweig, the executive producer of *Cagney and Lacey,* was to tell him that his work was "too TV." *Twin Peaks* was universally praised by critics as being "unlike anything we had seen on television." In a medium long considered artless, the only artful TV is that which isn't like the rest of it. Quality TV breaks rules.[49]

While Thompson claims to dispel accusations of snobbery, citing his regard for "regular" programs like *CHIPs* and *The Andy Griffith Show*, the distinction he presents lends cultural weight to TV "rulebreakers" that engage newly expressionistic narrative/visual styles and diminishes the everyday without citing political consequences of upholding a quality/regular binary. Jane Feuer's *Seeing Through the Eighties,* by contrast, contextualizes "art discourse in 1980s television" as socially fraught. She describes *thirtysomething* (ABC, 1987-1991), for instance, as "[creating] an aesthetic out of yuppie guilt" wherein "envy

[49] Robert J. Thompson, *Television's Second Golden Age: From Hill Street Blues to ER* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1997): 13.

recedes into the background and reemerges in the show's own commercials and product merchandizing"[50] in order to assuage the consumerist guilt of baby boomer audiences. The text and paratexts exist as separate, coded units that allow for "safe" viewing supposedly devoid of market manipulations. Shows like *Dynasty*, on the other hand, "rely on the continuity provided by flow in order to *erase* the boundaries of the different programming segments," a characteristic that, Feuer indicates, led to that program's camp popularity and political force. She observes that "advertising and programming segments…jar rather than blend at key moments of supreme melodrama" and suggests that *Dynasty*'s modes of postmodern parody emerges from marginalized viewers' *disidentification* with the show and its commercial flow.[51] Feuer writes, for instance, that, "perhaps the failure of the *Dynasty* Collection [a tie-in clothing line] was also an ideological failure…the subcultural activation by gays and women defeats the commodification of the Fox Licensing Corporation—it becomes an act of resistance."[52] Here, *Dynasty*'s purportedly Reaganite aesthetics actually belie a queer form of cultural cooptation based in messy, explicit advertising rather than quality management and clear-cut segmentation.

Similarly, as indicated previously, Becker's "Gay-Themed TV and the Slumpy Class" cites "high-brow" sitcoms like *Seinfeld* (NBC, 1989-1998) as evincing tongue-in-cheek social critique while catering to the tastes of a "knowing" and privileged elite. Other scholars such as Jason Mittell, however, observe such trends as leading to a triumphal

[50] Jane Feuer, *Seeing Through the Eighties: Television and Reaganism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995): 68.
[51] Ibid: 131-148.
[52] Ibid: 143.

quality-adjacent genre of "complex TV" in the late 1990s and early 2000s. In *Complex TV: The Poetics of Contemporary TV Storytelling,* Mittell argues that, "over the past two decades, a new model of storytelling has emerged as an alternative to the conventional episodic and serial forms that have typified most of American television,"[53] and, like Thompson's earlier invocation of a "new" genre, this account rather uncritically reiterates a binary between the exceptional and everything else. As Becker intones, such distinctions are not without a governing politics and they necessitate continued interrogation.

Chapter Summaries

The chapters that follow assume a chronological structure, each relating to a moment wherein awards discourse changed vis-à-vis gay representation and sociopolitical norms. Chapters two and three feature a subsection for each of the "Big Three" networks of ABC, CBS and NBC to explicate how changes in the "Big Three" network brands, exemplified by their programming, both inculcated traditions of "quality" and offered potentially queer alternatives to legitimated shows. Every subsection offers a case study that exemplifies the given network's dominant marketing strategies in relation to awarding institutions, and each examines whether and how a discourse of public pedagogy reinforces "positive" gay representations. At the same time, these network-based critiques address queer conceits of "everyday" content, often diminished in popular press and neglected by awards organizations. While the three-decade span may seem an unmanageable length of

[53] Jason Mittell, *Complex TV: The Poetics of Contemporary TV Storytelling* (New York: New York University Press, 2015): 17.

time for a project of this scope, the number of explicitly LGBTQ-themed episodes to air on network television between the 1970s and the early 1990s numbers around one-hundred, a very small swath. Amongst these, only a fraction undertook social issues pedagogically and/or bolstered homosexuality to "prestige" levels of consideration. Regardless, these few episodes and their paratexts helped to inextricably link gay discourse, respectability politics, and "quality" television, all with crucial ramifications for contemporary programming trends.

The first chapter historically contextualizes the legitimating role of three awards organizations referenced throughout the project: the Primetime Emmy Awards (Emmys) presented by the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences (NATAS), the Hollywood Foreign Press Association (HFPA)-governed Golden Globe Awards (Golden Globes), and the George Foster Peabody Awards (Peabodys) granted by the Henry W. Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Georgia. Most of the programs under discussion, at one time or another, have received these various honors, though the accolades' weight is not distributed equally. Industry professionals preside over the Emmys, which often go to "respectable" if popular fare and are notorious for repeatedly lauding prized shows in each category over the length of their runs. Still, Emmy winners "push boundaries" (albeit not too far) with regard to social messaging. The Golden Globes project more spontaneity and journalistic regard for the "obscure," often awarding programs that are offbeat, short-lived, and "cinematic" in style. Unlike the other two organizations, the HFPA recognizes films and television programs in the same ceremony, which ascribes cultural value (if not predictable longevity) to the shows honored. The body,

however, historically courted controversy for its infatuation with celebrity, vague membership criteria, and slanted voting practices. Lastly, the Peabodys involve the input of academics, journalists, and industry personnel to herald "socially/artistically valuable" texts and players, an annual list that often devalues "popular" programs in favor of recognizing "exceptionality." Positioning these taste-making accolades in relation to one-another helps to consider the programs under discussion as key signifiers of broader trends rather than "cherry-picked" examples.

Chapter 2 begins with a breakdown of the "Big Three's" network identities in the 1970s to assess the networks' handling of homosexuality, a taboo topic increasingly marketable to cosmopolitan tastes during the decade's early years. It examines, first, how CBS underwent severe restructuring as the longtime instigator of upscale, tasteful programming, transitioning from rural comedies to sophisticated "relevance" sitcoms. I argue that Norman Lear's Tandem Productions and its marquee show, *All in the Family* (CBS, 1970-1979), offered a network precedent for exploring the fraught subject through one-off "special episodes" that sequester gay representation and compel "positive" depictions. The sitcom's and Lear's awards haul highlighted CBS's tactic of advancing purported quality in tandem with social tolerance, even while the network deployed queer criminality in episodes of primetime crime dramas such as *Medical Center* (CBS, 1969-1976), *Hawaii Five-O* (CBS, 1968-1980), and *Kojak* (CBS, 1973-1978). This dichotomy reveals a convergence between the network's "highbrow" marketing that tied gay characters to (straight) public pedagogy and its "middle/lowbrow" incentives toward cashing in on gay deviance (which, ironically, offered opportunities for subversive counter-

readings). Indeed, I examine a serialized arc of CBS's widely watched *Hawaii Five-O* that more intricately navigates queer agency than the network's "quality" entries, despite *Five-O*'s general critical dismissal as frivolous. ABC, meanwhile, resonated (in Elana Levine's parlance) as an adolescent network immersed in immaturity, yet still grasping for industry recognition and accolades via miniseries and made-for-TV movies. The chapter subsection highlights its penchant for developing critically lauded social-issue "movies-of-the-week," with *That Certain Summer* (ABC, 1972) as a foundational example. Yet, ABC simultaneously indulged what the National Gay Task Force (NGTF) regarded as "harmful" or "negative" portrayals in increasingly delegitimated (though popular) medical dramas such as *Marcus Welby M.D.* (ABC, 1969-1976). The network, largely an awards non-contender until the end of the decade, received attention both for its more "daring" illuminations of gay life and for bankrolling shows that incited gay urban protest. ABC's positioning illuminated an early disregard for gay-positive pedagogy (except in occasional movie form), while allowing for a broader spectrum of queer and camp productions. NBC, meanwhile, remained largely distanced from aspects of gay life/depiction in popular press, a conceit that Levine attributes to its "non-identity" following a slate of disbanded "middlebrow" hits in the 1960s. NBC's floundering search for a marketing hook left episodic crime dramas and awards holdovers such as *The Bold Ones: The New Doctors* (1969-1973) to grapple with one-off handlings of newly profitable gay storylines. Episodes such as "Discovery at Fourteen" (1972), though, presented connections between quotidian traumas and homosexual experience, thereby offsetting the "exceptionality" of CBS's and ABC's representational politics in favor of cultivating cross-demographic empathy.

Fluctuations in brand identities and gay representations from the late-1970s to the mid-1980s provide the second chapter's discursive framework. The first section of the chapter focuses in detail on NBC, which, because of its muddled identity in the late 1970s, broadcast several gay-themed episodes of popular but critically dismissed crime procedurals such as *Police Woman* (NBC, 1974-1978) and *The Rockford Files* (1974-1980), which adhered to detective "tropes," and were not regarded as stylistically/narratively innovative. The network's shift to "cutting edge" MTM-produced prime-time melodramas such as *Hill Street Blues* (NBC, 1981-1987) and *St. Elsewhere* (NBC, 1982-1988) in the early-to-mid 1980s, however, worked to establish a "quality" brand that included homosexuality as a "realist" liberal trope. In episodes such as *St. Elsewhere*'s "AIDS and Comfort" (1983), gays were depicted on the network as personified social problems geared toward straight liberals under the auspices of auteur-driven television art. More importantly, though, these episodes gained status as non-televisual, hallmarks of a genre that bordered on cinematic exceptionalism. The network's TV films such as the 1985 melodrama *An Early Frost*, about a gay man with AIDS coming out to his family, further indicated NBC's tendency to heighten sexual non-normativity to "event" status and use art-house talent to distinguish their product as "progressive." Such marketing worked in tandem with government sponsored viewers guides as a neoliberal solution to the AIDS crisis and positioned NBC as the "adult in the room" amidst the Reagan administration's inaction on the epidemic.

By comparison, the other two networks declined in critical status during the early 1980s but offered queer viewers more serialized attention and expanded agency in primetime. ABC's fandom amongst gay viewers during this period revolved largely around

Aaron Spelling's evening soap operas like *Family* (ABC, 1976-1980) and *Dynasty* (ABC, 1981-1989), both of which explicitly addressed gay livelihoods but in vastly different ways. *Family,* created by Hollywood screenwriter Jay Presson Allen, provided an extension of the "movie-of-the-week" conceit wherein writers invoked gay issues "sensitively" for the pedagogical benefit of a presumably straight audience within an episodic structure. The program, though a regular awards contender, paled in popular comparison to the later *Dynasty*, which subsisted on camp theatrics and stylistic aplomb largely at the expense of social topicality. Despite both programs' emanation from the same production company, though, only the latter was popularly labeled a "Spelling" show, press shorthand for crassly consumerist escapism. *Dynasty*'s queer appeal, in turn, centered around such excess and "trashiness" as social parody, embodied more in Joan Collins' over-the-top performance as villain Alexis Carrington than in the "respectable" and tragic gay token character Steven Carrington's (played by both Al Corley and Jack Coleman) arc. The show compelled the network's shift away from *Family*-style prestige toward lucrative properties that eschewed "current events" like HIV/AIDS yet kept a finger on the pulse of queer sensibilities. In the same vein, if to different effect, CBS moved away from "relevance" as Tandem/MTM shows ceded to long-running medical and crime procedurals targeted toward older viewers such as *Trapper John, MD* (CBS, 1979-1986) and *Murder, She Wrote* (CBS, 1984-1996). *Lou Grant* (CBS, 1977-1982), a dramatic spin-off from the *Mary Tyler Moore Show* representative of its late-1970s trends, offered a more "realist" style of address with regard to gay and lesbian issues and abided by stricter conceits of episodic closure than "trashy" ABC melodramas like *Dynasty* and CBS's own soap opera standard bearers (*Dallas,* 1978-1991) and imitators

(*Falcon Crest,* 1981-1990). While *Lou Grant* and its dramatic ilk maneuvered to contextualize non-straight characters within a discourse of "tolerance," they never wholly integrated sexual "otherness" into the program's or network's fabric. The show's Peabody-winning 1978/79 season, for instance, featured only one episode, "Cop" (1979), that explicitly addressed sexual discrimination. By contrast, CBS's more traditional "genre" fare, if not its conservative primetime soaps, emphasized systemic problems of medical discrimination against gay men in the AIDS era (*Trapper John, MD*) and queer pleasures in heterosexual life (*Murder, She Wrote*). Such shows, however, came under ageist and gendered attacks in popular press, while more "youthful" and "innovative" entries on NBC reaped accolades and acclaim.

Lastly, my conclusion considers how CBS and ABC sought to usher in gay marriage and familial normalization in the early 1990s via increasingly less popular awards mainstays like *Northern Exposure* and *Roseanne,* while NBC pursued liberal pedagogical projects concerning Clinton-era initiatives such as the Don't Ask, Don't Tell military ban on gay and lesbian service members and national hate-crimes legislation. *Serving in Silence: The Margarethe Cammermeyer Story* (NBC, 1995), which starred Glenn Close as a member of the Washington National Guard expelled from the military under Don't Ask, Don't Tell, offered a salient example of the network's pedagogical strategies. Along with highly rated series such as *ER* (NBC, 1994-2009), the film combined NBC's penchant for procedural narratives with the "relevance" bona fides of fraught topicality; its numerous accolades indicated an "exceptional" discourse on LGBTQ social inclusion. While the melodrama helped to bolster NBC's more legitimated brand, gay mainstreaming on the network's

sitcom *Friends* (NBC, 1994-2004) mirrored the upscale imperatives of *Roseanne*'s queer nuptials. Programming leading up to *Ellen* (ABC, 1994-1998), the epilogue argues, worked to more formally sanctify the imagined boundaries separating LGBTQ imperatives and concerns of economic justice. Awards organizations, moreover, lodged conceits of quality within a discourse of increased "choice," thereby deemphasizing classed codes of access and disparaging "mass" tastes. This practice, I maintain, continues to tarnish the social goals that these cultural gatekeepers claim to advance, and helps to shape highly partisan, irreconcilable audiences with little television ground on which to meet.

CHAPTER 1: AWARDS DISCOURSE AND HISTORIES OF QUALIFICATION

This chapter considers how three major television awards organizations, The Primetime Emmys bestowed by the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences (NATAS), the Golden Globes determined by the Hollywood Foreign Press Association (HFPA), and the George Foster Peabody Awards granted by the Henry W. Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Georgia, historically sought to establish particular criteria for quality television. I argue that, while the Emmys have functioned as the television industry's most esteemed awards body since 1949, the Golden Globes and Peabodys served a more directly "pedagogical" function in purporting to recognize social value and artistic merit in often popularly low-rated niche programs. The Emmys, however, garnered a reputation for honoring the same programs in repeated succession, thereby canonizing "important" texts at the expense of marginal perspectives. Such practices encouraged largely white and male gay media advocacy organizations like the National Gay Task Force (NGTF) and, later, the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD), to embrace "positive" representations in "quality" programs, thereby adopting awards organizations' standards of excellence. While GLAAD began as an LGBT media watchdog in the late 1980s, referred to in popular press as an activist contingent, by the 1990s the organization served an "awarding" function whereby it worked to determine programs' artistic and narrative "quality" vis-à-vis queer themes.

After providing a brief historical overview of each awarding body's origination, I analyze how the Emmys, Golden Globes, and Peabodys worked to shape television discourse at the key moments of transition that structure my next two chapters: the late-

1960s to early-1970s and the late-1970s to late-1980s. These rough dates not only correspond with programming and industry changes that boosted a variety of gay shows (and network brands) to awards prominence but also mark shifts in the organizations' reputations and cultural ethos. Throughout, I examine discord between and within the ATAS, HFTA, and Peabodys that altered the legitimating function of each. The last section considers how GLAAD adopted characteristics of these industrial, academic, and journalistic institutions to shape gay-themed shows as arbiters of quality. While following chapters examine the National Gay Task Force's role in negotiating standards of "acceptable" gay characters and storylines, I propose that GLAAD contoured that mandate to usher in standards of television "excellence" which unwittingly positioned LGBT visibility/subjectivity as an elite and divisive purview.

The Emmys and Industrial Standards

The first Primetime Emmy Awards ceremony in 1949, over which the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences (NATAS) presided, set preconditions for quality programming: the organization determined entries based on "live" presentation, a moniker of superior standing dating back at least to the Radio Act of 1927. As Michele Hilmes discusses in "NBC and the Network Idea: Defining the American System," the newly formed national network embraced Radio Act provisions, later codified in the Communications Act of 1934, as a means of cementing its monopoly over the airwaves under the auspices of regulation and responsibility. The congressional act, Hilmes notes, established the Federal Radio Commission (FRC), which in 1928 would enact General Order 40, "[creating] a

preferred category of 'general public interest' stations—commercial stations selling to any and all—and gave such stations higher power and more favorable frequency allocations."[54] The National Association of Broadcasters' (NAB), citing General Order 40, determined live performance (rather than recordings) as a signifier of exceptional public address and key criteria for attaining preferred licenses. "Liveness," then, as Jane Feuer discusses in "The Concept of Live Television: Ontology as Ideology,"[55] became enshrined as an *inherent* and defining characteristic of broadcasting media rather than an advent of corporate control and a carefully negotiated formal construct. As a result, the trade paper *Variety* reported in 1949 that, "there will be no Emmys for actors and actresses appearing in television films…all personality awards will be meted out to thesp[ian]s appearing in live shows."[56] The award's title even derived from broadcast technology that allowed for clearer live signal transmission. As *Radio and Television Mirror* reported in 1950, "Originally, the TV statue was called Immy, after television's image orthicon tube, but someone decided Emmy sounded more suitable and the name stuck."[57] While rules quickly changed to allow telefilm stars eligibility in the annual contest, such beginnings signified adherence to industrial definitions of quality and purpose.

Furthermore, such criteria proved both largely incompatible with popular tastes and disconnected from regions outside of Los Angeles and New York, resulting in public

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[54] Michele Hilmes, "NBC and the Network Idea: Defining the 'American System,'" *NBC: America's Network,* ed. Michele Hilmes (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2007): 15.
[55] Jane Feuer, "The Concept of Live Television: Ontology as Ideology," *Regarding Television: Critical Approaches,* ed. E. Ann Kaplan (Frederick, MD: University Publications of America, 1983): 12-22.
[56] "L.A. Emmys Only For 'Live' Actors," *Variety,* December 14, 1949, ProQuest.
[57] "Coast in Television," *Radio and Television Mirror* 33, no. 2 and 34, no.1, June-January 1950, Lantern Media History Digital Library.

backlash against the NATAS. Harry S. Ackerman, then-president of the organization, acknowledged as much in 1961 by writing that, "beset by criticism from the press, the public, and the industry itself, [Emmy] has struggled to achieve her present eminence and to be worthy of having become the *one* significant accolade to achievements in the most important medium of mass communications the world has ever known."[58] (Ackerman 1961, 98, emphasis mine) Regardless of this admission, Ackerman's editorial did not offer a nuanced corrective to Emmy's limited/limiting categories, nominating rubrics, or voting practices. It instead speculated that changes based on "budget, length of program, etc." as well as the NATAS prospectively expanding influence outside of the Los Angeles enclave, "cannot prevail when 'art' and 'science' are meant to be the criteria" (ibid, 98). This industry sentiment prompted national syndicators such as Henry Saperstein, president of Television Personalities Inc., to intone, "we aren't in business to win Emmys…and I'm just as happy to have it that way."[59] Saperstein's remarks in trade press about responsibility to sponsors and enticing "customers" distinguished Television Personalities' "bread-and-butter" fare like *Mr. Magoo, Dick Tracy, Ding Dong School* and a variety of sports programming from what Ackerman termed "each year's valedictory" Emmy nominees/recipients.

Popular press criticism of the awarding body, however, ultimately revolved around perceptions of its increasingly stagnant celebrity-based and socially irresponsible

[58] Harry S. Ackerman, "Putting Flesh on an Image: The Evolution of the Emmy," *Variety,* January 4, 1961, ProQuest (emphasis mine).
[59] "A Syndicator is to Sell, Not Win Emmys: So, Henry Saperstein Concentrates on Films That Please Public," *Broadcasting,* April 3, 1961, ProQuest.

selections rather than its insularity and regionally exclusive design. *New York Times* columnist Jack Gould lambasted the NATAS for awarding "blue ribbons" to undeserving news and entertainment programming "without regard to minimum standards of excellence."[60] While he stingingly described drama and comedy winners, *The Defenders* (CBS, 1961-1965) and *The Dick Van Dyke Show* (CBS, 1961-1966) respectively, as "a sad lot" indicative of "declining qualitative norms," his harshest rebuke was directed toward a documentary broadcast, *The Tunnel*, an *NBC White Paper* installment that clinched the Emmy for "Program of the Year" (a now-defunct category). Gould denounced the film, which charted the digging of an escape route beneath the Berlin Wall, as not only gimmicky but politically dangerous, an "injection of profit motive into the delicate situation involving the East Berliners [that] might have had serious consequences."[61] The broader critique called out NBC's news division for grooming celebrity television personalities like Chet Huntley and David Brinkley and the Emmys for advancing the interests of capital over "hard news" programming such as the Edward R. Murrow-hosted *See It Now* on CBS. While scholar Michael Curtin discusses how the reputation of NBC's news division improved under Robert Kintner's supervision, he keenly observes that critics like Gould viewed Kintner's engagement with global affairs as exploitative and ratings-driven.[62] The Emmys, in reviewers' estimation, conferred legitimacy on increasingly "soft" news and documentary projects, a discourse that CBS picked up on and used to their advantage by

[60] Jack Gould, "A Prize Package? Emmy Grab Bag Yields a Thought: How State of TV Has Declined," *New York Times,* June 2, 1963, ProQuest.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Curtin, "NBC News Documentary," 183.

boycotting the 1964 awards ceremony. *Variety* quoted Fred Friendly, the president of CBS news, as stating that "[news and public affairs] are judged by persons in the cinema and entertainment arena—perhaps 90% of those voting are without knowledge of the intricacies and achievements in news and documentary programming" and ultimately calling the awards "unprofessional, unrealistic, and unfair" (*Variety* 1964, 24). Such statements posited the Emmys and its home network as increasingly socially deficient and star-driven, with capital as the culprit in elevating poor taste.

By the early 1970s, popular and trade press contextualized the entertainment categories as upholding standards of mediocrity, a self-fulfilling prophesy that Gould and company nourished in the previous decade. The *Times* critic warned in 1959 that "the Emmy Awards...are in danger of becoming an annual joke"[63] and, four years later, sardonically indicated that "some observes of the award show derived a measure of hope from the failure of 'The Beverly Hillbillies' to win recognition," a venomous slight against the popular CBS sitcom. He intoned, though, that "it is usually tradition with the academy that a new show need not win in its first season of presentation…beware 'The Beverly Hillbillies' next year."[64] In 1973, *Los Angeles Times* entertainment journalist Aleene MacMinn echoed these earlier sentiments in describing the year's winner for Outstanding Drama Series, *The Waltons,* as "regarded by many as a throwaway to appease those who deplore television's excessive crime and violence."[65] Her remarks indicate institutional

[63] Jack Gould, "It's Emmy Time Again: TV Awards Suffer From Too Many Categories," *New York Times,* April 6, 1959, ProQuest.
[64] Gould, "A Prize Package?" 1963.
[65] Aleene MacMinn, "Waltons, Julia Lead in Emmy Race," *Los Angeles Times,* April 20, 1973, ProQuest.

disdain for programs perceived as rural and conservative, and they position the Emmys ceremony as a sanitizing ritual that rewards mediocrity. By contrast, though, MacMinn posited the "Outstanding Single Program" category as "particularly strong this year…in addition to 'That Certain Summer,' ABC's Movie of the Week about homosexuality, the nominated programs are 'Long Day's Journey into Night,' 'The Marcus-Nelson Murders,' 'The Red Pony,' and 'A War of Children.'"[66] Two of these programs were esteemed literary adaptations of Eugene O'Neill's and John Steinbeck's work, while the remainder took on gritty social issues, all in contrast to *The Waltons'* timidity and middle-brow positioning.[67]

The NATAS, as evidenced above, drew occasional press applause for awarding both television "specials" and "relevance" sitcoms through the decade, but the organization was noted more for its omissions and acquiescence to public tastes. A scathing "TV View" column by John Leonard of the *New York Times,* for instance, lamented that "of 342 nominations, not one went to [Norman Lear's syndicated show] 'Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman,' the official explanation [being] that it doesn't seem to fit into any of the categories."[68] Leonard's frustration with genre classifications that, in his view, fueled a network power grab to disenfranchise a superior sitcom, led him to sarcastically propose an Emmys alternative, "The Enemas," which would commend "mindless" programs and industry decisions. John O'Connor similarly bemoaned the academy's neglect of cutting-

[66] Ibid.
[67] *The Marcus-Nelson Murders* would end up being the movie-length pilot for CBS's *Kojak*, which, in its later, lower-rated seasons garnered numerous Emmy nominations and a win for Telly Savalas' lead performance. The series, however, received greater critical scrutiny and disdain than did this adaptation of Selwyn Raab's book.
[68] John Leonard, "Aargh! It's Emmy Awards Time Again," *New York Times,* April 25, 1976, ProQuest.

edge shows and unnecessary investment in rule changes, writing that, "it would be far more useful [for the TV Academy] to concentrate on improving the quality of television…[and] it does not help that public television was ignored for original productions like the American Ballet Theater documentary or for imports like 'War and Peace.'"[69] Here, the *New York Times,* in particular, privileged literary and supposedly "independent" productions from companies like Tandem and public broadcasting outlets over what they qualified as mediocre filler. And their blame circled back to awarding institutions, despite idealistic claims that "the Emmys can be useful tokens of recognition and endorsement."[70]

By the late 1970s, divisions between the New York and Hollywood chapters of the NATAS underscored tensions regarding the perceived "quality" of winners and nominees. While the New York contingent obsessed over program popularity and, therefore, ratings of the Emmys broadcast itself, producers in Los Angeles lamented what they perceived as the declining standards of upper East Coast elites. Since production units for much of network television's daytime fare such as soap operas and news broadcasts remained based in New York, a discursive split emanated between the everyday "business" and primetime "art" factions of the television academy. This tension became codified at least as early as 1974 when the daytime Emmys split from the larger ceremony, cast as a "relaxed, convivial" event albeit one besotted by "endless interruptions for a plethora of

[69] John J. O'Connor, "Did They 'Upgrade' the Emmys or Downgrade Them?" *New York Times,* June 9, 1974, ProQuest.
[70] Ibid.

commercials."[71] At its most basic level, according to the *New York Times,* this rift stemmed from "the Hollywood chapter [of the NATAS] maintaining that East Coast chapters, especially New York, are controlling academy policy, while 5,000 of the academy's 12,000 primetime entertainers, artists, crafts workers, writers, producers, and directors live and work in the Los Angeles area"[72] Despite these pretenses of "diversifying" away from rigid New York standards, however, the Hollywood chapter sought to enshrine L.A. as the preeminent site of television production, thereby disenfranchising local crews and stations around the country. The *Los Angeles Times* noted that, "Hollywood-based members of the Academy felt that the organization was too broad-based and ought to be restricted to persons involved in national program production,"[73] placing emphasis on the increasingly niche products emanating from established companies like Tandem and MTM with "auteur" producers at the helm.

Indeed, following NBC's refusal to telecast the 1977 Emmys due to the Hollywood chapter boycotting the ceremony, NATAS rules changed to reflect the interests of Los Angeles-based television personnel. The *Los Angeles Times* reported in 1979 that, "the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences this year reduced the number of categories from 74 to 56…despite a 14% increase in entries,"[74] (Marguilies 1979, E1) which aligned with the Hollywood chapter's goal of limiting the categorical scope and geographic origins of

[71] Aleene MacMinn, "ABC Dominates Daytime Emmy Awards," *Los Angeles Times,* May 29, 1974, ProQuest.
[72] Gerald Fraser, "NBC Cancels Emmys, Asks $300,000 Back from Divided TV Academy," *New York Times,* April 16, 1977, ProQuest.
[73] Lee Margulies, "Boycott Cited as NBC Cancels Emmys Telecast," *Los Angeles Times,* April 16, 1977, ProQuest.
[74] Lee Margulies, "'M*A*S*H,' 'Backstairs,' and 'Lou Grant' Lead the Pack," *Los Angeles Times,* August 10, 1979, ProQuest.

nominees. Moreover, CBS's critically beloved programs like *Lou Grant, M*A*S*H,* and *The Mary Tyler Moore Show,* each produced by key players/companies within the Hollywood NATAS faction, "topped all other programs," while more mass-appeal oriented outlets like "ABC, which handily won the prime-time ratings race, did not follow suit in the Emmy nominations."[75] Modifications, in this instance, contributed to a more homogenous field of nominated shows and established a new industry hegemony of rewarding arbiters of artistic "quality" rather than acknowledging and accommodating a more diverse programming landscape.

This shift coincided with challenges to the Federal Communication Commission's (FCC) 1970 Prime Time Access Rule (PTAR) which mandated that the three major networks' Owned and Operated (O&O) and affiliated stations in the fifty largest national markets set aside the first hour of prime-time for local telecasts. The *Los Angeles Times* reported in 1973 that the FCC took measures to water down the PTAR, which included "allowing network-affiliated stations an extra hour of network programming on Sunday nights without restrictions."[76] Such actions, which worked to roll back regulations on powerful corporate entities, nonetheless remained shrouded in rhetoric of public pedagogy and social service. The FCC cited networks' decisions to air "frivolous" variety and game shows rather than high art as a defense for the PTAR's eventual revocation. Penny Girard of the *Los Angeles Times* referenced a vague FCC report in 1980 which claimed that "only 'modest' efforts have been made to produce local shows" and, "instead, 'most stations have

[75] Ibid.
[76] Aleene MacMinn, "Waltons, Julie Lead in Emmy Race," *Los Angeles Times,* April 20, 1973, ProQuest.

offered syndicated programs which are most likely to attract the widest audience and thereby to maximize stations' profits."[77] Here, as in the NATAS Hollywood chapter's rationale for reducing categories and refining nominating criteria, arguments for bolstering television "quality" relied on fears of "mass" opinion to justify the industry's increased insularity and deregulatory impulses.

Critics who took note of the change in awarding criteria, however, commended the NATAS for bolstering "better" television, without necessarily recognizing privatizing incentives behind "quality." Most exuberantly, the *New York Times* cheered the 1981 Emmys voting body for awarding *Hill Street Blues*, a gritty police drama from MTM Enterprises, declaring the win a "hopeful sign…that [the show] make it through a second, perilous season" despite its dismal ratings.[78] Additionally, reviewers cozied up to the celebrity spectacle that establishment journalism had rejected through the 1960s and early 1970s, recognizing star power as legitimating the television industry. The *New York Times* gushed about how "unlike last year [1980] when the Emmy show went starless because of the actors' strike" the 1981 ceremony featured a smattering of high-profile actors from elaborate productions, including "Peter O'Toole, Richard Chamberlain, Loretta Swit, Pernell Roberts, Loni Anderson, plus the 'Hill Street Blues' cast, eight of whom were up for awards."[79] Similarly, Paul Henniger of the *Los Angeles Times* chimed in that the 1982 Emmys would "be pretty much like last year's telecast, and that's great news."[80] That the

[77] Penny Girard, "Prime Time Rule is a Failure, Study Finds," *Los Angeles Times,* June 19, 1980, ProQuest.
[78] "'Hill Street Blues' Sweeps Emmys," *New York Times,* September 14, 1981, ProQuest.
[79] Ibid.
[80] Paul Henniger, "Emmies to Imitate Last Year's Success," *Los Angeles Times* (reprinted in the *San Francisco Chronicle*), September 19, 1982.

"fun," which Henniger attributed to the 1981 and 1982 Emmy broadcasts' "veteran TV showmen, Gary Smith and Dwight Hemion," elevated the profiles of critically adulated shows, provided the telecast itself with a newfound sense of *purpose.* Celebrity presence developed as an asset to raise "quality" TV's national profile and to boost the relevance of a formerly derided annual extravaganza.

Only in the late 1980s did national publications change their perception of the awards ceremony as a display of public conscience to that of a self-congratulatory spectacle coasting on autopilot. Whereas the *Los Angeles Times* championed the 1984 Emmys for its emphasis on gender and racial diversity, most notably because of its awarding the night's top honor to CBS's "under-watched" *Cagney and Lacey,*[81] his paper determined in 1987, citing the Caucus of Producers, Writers, and Directors, that "'the integrity of the academy and its awards is in jeopardy…the academy has become lazy in its administration and complacent about the image and prestige of the award.'"[82] This article noted in particular that the Caucus in question included "cream of the TV community" talents including "Norman Lear, Lee Rich, Fred Silverman, Aaron Spelling, and David Wolper,"[83] thereby implying that the medium's artistic innovators remained out of synch with the increasingly stagnant NATAS awarding body. John O'Connor summed up this vantage point well in his review of the 1990 Emmys, an article that focused extensively on how the NATAS neglected

[81] Lee Margulies, echoing a popular opinion amongst national critics, cited the program's "strong portrayal of women in what has typically been a man's job [police detective]" in his praise for *Cagney and Lacey's* win: "'Cagney and Lacey,' 'Cosby Show' Capture Top Emmys," *Los Angeles Times,* September 23, 1985, ProQuest. For a more complicated view of the show's production, reception, and popular press discourse see: Julie D'Acci, *Defining Women: The Case of Cagney and Lacey,* University of North Carolina Press, 2000.
[82] David Crook, "Complaints Cloud Emmy Picture," *Los Angeles Times,* July 30, 1987, ProQuest.
[83] Ibid

critically beloved productions like David Lynch and Mark Frost's mystery series *Twin Peaks* (ABC 1990-1991). After calling the Fox network's Emmys broadcast "not a bad show," O'Connor nonetheless lamented that while, "television is improving considerably in several areas, the academy voters who determine the nominees and recipients too often seem to be overlooking the most significant evidence" of exceptional strides.[84]

These articles invoked the Emmys' shift from the three major networks to the newly formed Fox in 1987 as a marker of decline in the telecast's quality and, again, linked the ceremony's irrelevance to celebrity; interestingly, though, both popular and trade press also indicated some fatigue with the NATAS' predictability in awarding "important" shows. O'Connor's recap of that year's Emmys featured familiar gripes about format changes such as the executive producer Donald Ohlmeyer Jr.'s decision not to limit the length of winners' speeches. At the same time, he struck a newly populist note by disparaging the NATAS' repeated favoring performances in niche shows such as *Cagney and Lacey* and *St. Elsewhere* over competitors like "Angela Lansbury, who was again overlooked for 'Murder, She Wrote,' a series to which she has consistently brought class and Top 10 ratings."[85] O'Connor subsequently offered "a suggestion for spreading the Emmys honor: any winner in a continuing series should not be eligible the following year for an award in the same category," which, he surmised, "might dredge up a few more citations for, say, the adventurous 'Moonlighting' instead of the slicker 'L.A. Law,' which seems to be the new safe favorite replacing 'St. Elsewhere.'"[86] His intervention, which initially cited the NATAS' stuffy

[84] John J. O'Connor, "Once Again, the Emmys Perplex," *New York Times,* September 18, 1990, ProQuest.
[85] John J. O'Connor, "No Emmy for the Emmys," *New York Times,* September 27, 1987, ProQuest.
[86] Ibid.

elitism in neglecting popular fare, ultimately compelled another form of exclusivity; awarding a new subset of formally/narratively "cutting edge" niche series rather than quality standbys. In terms of Nielsen ratings, however, O'Connor's 1987 summation meshed more holistically with popular tastes as *Moonlighting* (ABC 1985-1989) had risen into the Top 10 while NBC's dramatic series like *L.A. Law* and, especially, *St. Elsewhere* did not breach the Top 20. Serendipitously, *Variety* reported a realization of O'Connor's overture during the 1988 Emmys telecast, when "two Freshman ABC series, 'thirtysomething' and 'The Wonder Years' won respectively as best comedy and drama series" while "NBC's *L.A. Law,* which topped the Emmy nominations with 19, took home only 2 prizes."[87] The article, however, reinforced Emmy's feminization, calling the statues "Golden Girls" (perhaps a botched reference to NBC's hit sitcom, the previous year's Outstanding Comedy Series winner) in the same sentence that it diminished an ABC special, "Julie Andrews…The Sound of Christmas" for its multiple awards. Despite the press' newly (and limitedly) populist bent, gendered appraisals of the awarding body, echoing Jack Gould's 1959 determination that "it's time Emmy turned into a lady, not a girl of dubious virtue"[88] set the tone for Emmys discourse going forward.

Moreover, by 1990 press outlets meted out paradoxical viewpoints that, on one hand, chastised the Emmys for refusing to recognize marginal, niche, "innovative" programs and, on the other, wagged a finger at institutional elitism. *Variety* once again criticized the awarding body for honoring NBC's long-running courtroom procedural *L.A.*

[87] Dave Kaufman, "ABC Winner of 20-Something Emmys," *Variety,* August 31, 1988, ProQuest.
[88] Gould, "It's Emmy Time Again."

Law and admonished its judges for having "virtually snubbed 'Twin Peaks' and 'The Simpsons,' the shows that gave tv [*sic*] its sharpest jolts of invention during the past season."[89] John O'Connor, as mentioned previously, also expressed surprise and displeasure at the *Twin Peaks* shutout but ended with a contention that the Emmys "refusal to recognize even the existence of Roseanne Barr [and her ABC sitcom *Roseanne*] smacks of middle-class stuffiness."[90] His choice of emphasizing the Emmys' "middle class" rather than "upper class" pretension placed the NATAS unceremoniously within the realm of middle-brow culture and encouraged *New York Times* readers to disparage its awarding criteria as neither notably innovative nor socially conscious enough to matter.

Regardless of such critiques, though, the Emmys have remained the industry standard for judging the merits of programs in long-established categories, an annual process that boosts the profile and prestige of "quality" television and network branding. Home Box Office (HBO), for instance, has employed its Emmy record as a marketing device to undergird the subscription channel's "It's Not TV, It's HBO" slogan since 2001, when *Variety* reported that year's ceremony as "the first time a broadcast network hasn't garnered the most nominations."[91] Only in 2018 did a competitor, the streaming service Netflix, edge out HBO following a sixteen-year streak of netting the largest number of nominations and accolades. Moreover, as press have historically noted, Emmy voters tend

[89] David Kissinger, "'Peaks' Loses Edge as Emmys Snub Innovative TV," *Variety,* September 24, 1990, ProQuest.
[90] O'Connor, "Once Again the Emmys Perplex."
[91] Michael Schneider and Josef Adalian, "Mob, HBO Put Hit on the Emmys," *Variety,* July 16-22, 2001, ProQuest.

to continuously award a beloved program and/or network, even after the public has lost interest and critics have soured on "stale" properties. Such practices have helped to canonize "important" shows, often to the detriment of entertainment more in line with popular appeal and access. The Emmys, therefore, maintain power as a taste-making apparatus that can imbue preferred texts with lasting cultural value.

The Golden Globes: Misfit Journalists and Queer Selections

While popular press and trade industry critical opinion about the Emmys fluctuated, the Golden Globes, awarded by the Hollywood Foreign Press Association (HFPA), remained an odd duck of television accolades. Outcast and yet able to confer cult status and/or artistic legitimacy on unsuspecting nominees, the HFPA became notorious for both its unorthodoxy and opportunism. The Globes originated as an event recognizing achievement in motion pictures and offering a perspective beyond that of the Hollywood-based, inter-industry Academy Awards voters. After the organization established categories for television in the mid-1960s, however, the HFPA became mired in scandal that both impeded the show's broadcast for decades and identified the ceremony itself as an anything-goes celebrity bacchanal. In its interstices of relevance, however, the Globes recognized fledgling television programs that the Emmys either disregarded or found socio-politically unremarkable. The HFPA, therefore, occasionally demonstrated a queer penchant for raising the profile of "uncouth" television, albeit one ensconced in numerous pretensions, manipulations, and prejudices.

NBC began nationally televising the Golden Globes at the same time that the HFPA established new categories for the small screen, thereby bringing an outré judging sensibility to American television, albeit one that garnered a mixed press reception. As *Variety* noted in 1962, the same year that the Globes' first included TV shows and performers in its ceremony, the awarding body drew both notoriety and prestige for "[selecting] pictures on the basis on high artistic standards, regardless of subject matter."[92] By comparison, the Academy Awards (Oscars), bestowed by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (AMPAS) shied away from onscreen sex and violence in the early 1960s when the Motion Picture Production Code was still in effect.[93] *Variety* surmised, however, that "the foreign correspondents, who are neither overly prudish nor sensation seeking, are concerned primarily with 'Operation Artistic Upgrade'…they are not interested in sex or sensation for sex or sensation's sake."[94] These remarks worked to legitimate the Globes as an intellectual enterprise with a *sophisticated* Eurocentric appeal, one that could soon be applied to television as well as film. Popular press outlets, however, admonished the HFPA for even trying, with industry insider Peter Bart writing for the *New York Times* in 1965 that, "many members of the film colony believe [the Globes] simply mirror the views of a

[92] Dora Albert, "Foreign Press in New Hard Look," *Variety,* February 21, 1962, ProQuest.
[93] The Motion Picture Production Code originated in 1930 as a self-regulating mechanism wherein the then-Motion Picture Producers and Distributers of America (MPPDA), later renamed the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA), agreed to severely limit and/or excise instances of "sex, vulgarity, obscenity, profanity, and overt violence" onscreen, a doctrine that became sacrosanct in the industry after the Catholic Legion of Decency intervened in 1933. The Code, though challenged repeatedly during the 1960s, remained in effect until the MPAA ratings system replaced it in 1968. Amongst other sources, please see Stephen Vaughn's "Morality and Entertainment: The Origins of the Motion Picture Production Code," *The Journal of American History* 77 no. 1 (1990): 39-65; and Thomas Doherty's *Hollywood's Censor: Joseph I. Breen & the Production Code Administration,* Columbia University Press, 2007.
[94] Albert, "Foreign Press in New Hard Look."

small clique of reporters in Hollywood who write for foreign periodicals."[95] Cecil Smith of the *Los Angeles Times* penned a piece in 1962 that prefaced Bart's fatigue with the number of awards ceremonies leading up to the Oscars as well as the Globes' "gimmicky" overtures toward TV. During the first year the Globes recognized select television shows, Smith contextualized the HFPA honors as non-awards, indiscriminately allocated statues that meant nothing amidst sprawling self-congratulatory events. In a column titled "Making Mountain Out of Ant Hill," he mockingly wrote that:

> The association gave four TV awards Monday night—Bob Newhart was named the 'Best New TV Comedian;' John Daly for his work on What's My Line was awarded for "consistent excellence;" Pauline Frederick for her work on Purex Specials for Women received the distinguished service award, and Fred MacMurray won the "Best Family Entertainment Award" for My Three Sons. The Foreign Press is quite generous with awards—it delivered 20 Golden Globes in various movie categories. And the association plays no favorites—it gave both Mike Connolly of the Hollywood Reporter and Army Archerd of Daily Variety journalistic plaques.[96]

Bringing the awards to a national audience, in the opinions of Smith and Bart, only diluted an already overhyped and unnecessary ritual in applauding mediocrity.

The HFPA achieved the most press and industry disdain, however, for scandals involving voters' quid pro quo exchange of awards for celebrity access and financial gain. Most notably, the FCC dealt a dramatic blow to the organization's respectability and

[95] Peter Bart, "Everything's Coming Up Laurels," *New York Times,* February 21, 1965, ProQuest.
[96] Cecil Smith, "Making Mountain Out of Anthill," *Los Angeles Times,* March 7, 1962, ProQuest.

national exposure in 1968 after the commission uncovered, amongst other abuses, that "representatives of the HFPA advised press agents of certain nominees that 'it is important that your client be there'" in order to ensure the attendance of prominent celebrities.[97] Accordingly, the FCC not only chastised the Golden Globes but also the ceremony's broadcast network, NBC (and specifically its Los Angeles O&O KNBC), for "substantially [misleading] the public as to the basis on which winners were chosen and the procedures followed in choosing them."[98] As a result, the Globes were not nationally broadcast again until 1978, when NBC picked the ceremony once more before offloading it to the Robert Wold Company to be aired in live syndication the next year. As *Variety* reported in late 1978, "Golden Globes producer Kjell Rasten acknowledged that NBC turned a deaf ear to his pitch for another big event slot…he speculated that [the cancellation] was prompted by a feeling that there has been an overkill of awards shows and that the Golden Globes special does not fit into NBC's current programming policies."[99] Rasten surmised that the eleven-year hiatus had turned the Globes into an insular event, and one that network television deemed not suitable for the mass populace.

While Rasten's sentiment relates to the Globes' decade-long exile from network television due to ethics violations (which all trade press articles cite), his comment about a chasm between the awards ceremony and NBC's programming practices also hinted at matters of taste and branding, positioning the HFPA's accolades as "above" popular TV and,

[97] "FCC Scores NBC and KNBC on 1967 Globes as 'Misleading' Public on Vote Method; Also Pans '68 Edition," *Variety*, May 8, 1968, ProQuest.
[98] Ibid.
[99] "Golden Globes Back in Syndie As NBC Snubs," *Variety,* December 6, 1978, ProQuest.

therefore, incompatible with "mass" broadcast. Elana Levine writes in "Sex as a Weapon: Programming Sexuality in the 1970s," that NBC "lacked the clear identity that its competitors had attained [during the decade]," but she maintains that its programming slate which included such highly watched fare as *Little House on the Prairie* (1974-1983), *McMillan and Wife* (1971-1977), *Police Woman* (1974-1978), *The Rockford Files* (1974-1980), and *Sanford and Son* (1972-1977) in addition to numerous "movie-of-the-week" anthologies "can help us see which genres, themes, and representations were considered valuable."[100] Levine determines NBC's attempts to forge a more "sophisticated" and moralizing approach to sex than its principal competitors, CBS and ABC, a qualified failure, but nonetheless provides insight into the networks' efforts to establish "middle-brow" alternatives to newly burgeoning risqué television. Indeed, these strategies *did* conflict with the Globes' "spirit" as *Variety* reported after the 1978 ceremony. The paper noted that the rowdy, "freewheeling decoration rites" (notably celebrities' drunken antics) had been "edited for the two hours of allotted airtime" but also in the interest of upholding decorum.[101] NBC's "chief casualties" in the live-to-tape broadcast, from *Variety's* perspective, included "the acceptance speeches of Ed Asner, winner of the Golden Globe for Best Actor in a Dramatic TV Series [*Lou Grant*], and Mort Lachman [executive] producer for

[100] Elana Levine, "Sex as a Weapon: Programming Sexuality in the 1970s," *NBC: America's Network,* ed. Michele Hilmes (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007: 225-226.
[101] Will Tusher, "Say NBC Edited Out Golden Globes 'Spirit,'" *Variety,* February 1, 1978, ProQuest.

All in the Family,[102] chosen 'Best Television Comedy or Musical Series.'"[103] This framing illuminated growing divisions between "provocative" quality sensibilities ensconced in political outspokenness and "timid" network attempts to regain audiences lost during the late-1960s "rural purge." NBC's address to "the middle," in this context, could not accommodate an awards show that bolstered the entertainment opinions of select foreign journalists and relied on the in-jokes, outbursts, missteps, and self-congratulations of Hollywood celebrities for spectacle.

In addition to the HFPA's broadcast woes, the organization came under heightened scrutiny again in the 1980s for its obscure membership requirements, as popular and trade press sought to paint the Globes as a cultish sham. These concerns have continued to define the HFPA's discursive positioning through the present[104] but also helped to transform the Golden Globes broadcast into spectacle-based trash TV increasingly geared toward niche audiences. The *Los Angeles Times* released a "special report" by Dave Pollock in 1981 evaluating the criteria for becoming an HFPA voter. This and other articles drew repeatedly on the body's small population of 78 foreign journalists (compared with the thousands of industry personnel constituting the AMPAS and the NATAS) as a dubious number for

[102] The winning season of *All in the Family* notably included a record three LGBT-themed episodes: "Cousin Liz," in which the Bunkers learn that Edith's deceased relative Liz was romantically involved with a woman, and the two-part "Edith's Crisis of Faith" wherein recurrent character Beverly LaSalle (played by openly queer drag star Lori Shannon) is murdered during a homophobic/transphobic assault and Edith, subsequently, questions her belief in God.
[103] Tusher, "Say NBC Edited Out Golden Globes 'Spirit.'"
[104] See, for instance, Catie Weaver's 2019 *New York Times* column, "Wait – Who Runs the Hollywood Foreign Press Association?" wherein the author surmised that "many [HFPA members] appear to be freelancers from small-scale foreign publishing operations with scattershot output…prominent outlets like *Le Monde* and *The Times of London* are not represented, [and when] *Vulture* attempted to track down all the members in 2015 with baffling results: some appeared to no longer be writing, others never to have written, others to have existed mainly in theory." Catie Weaver, "Wait – Who Runs the Hollywood Foreign Press Association?" *New York Times,* January 10, 2019, https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/10/style/hfpa-golden-globes.html.

"[deciding] what is 'the best' in movies and TV by awarding Golden Globes."[105] The *Los Angeles Times* further prodded the HFPA's legitimacy via its members' journalistic credentials and voting incentives, wherein Pollock determined that "at least 14 do not actually represent periodicals for which they are accredited" and uncovered that "at least 1 HFPA voting member regularly works as an acting extra on a TV series that this year is nominated for Best Musical or comedy [and] other HFPA members have worked in feature films or TV programs and have voted for given either to those films or programs, or the studios and producers who made them."[106] The timing of the *Los Angeles Times'* exposé on the HFPA's culture of corruption coincided with the Golden Globes' return (yet again) to network broadcast, this time on CBS. Pollock's article made certain to emphasize that "people pay attention [to the Globes]…some 50 million viewers are expected to watch the ceremonies on CBS this Saturday evening,"[107] thereby tying the organization to public fraud that would inevitably tarnish popular conceptions of "quality" entertainment. Notably, in future years, the Golden Globes went back into live syndication before Ted Turner's niche cable network TBS contracted to televise the show in 1989. As *Variety* indicated, the deal in which TBS paid 1.1 million dollars for two years of exclusive rights to the Globes telecast led to the ceremony's "[having] found a berth on cable TV."[108] To this point, the *Los Angeles Times* offered, "the Golden Globes have often been considered a poor cousin to the Academy Awards…but what the ceremonies lack in respect, they make up for in raw

[105] Dave Pollock, "The Globes: Another Side of the Glitter," *Los Angeles Times,* January 25, 1981, ProQuest.
[106] Ibid.
[107] Ibid.
[108] "TBS Pays 1.1-mil for 2 Years of Golden Globes," *Variety,* February 1, 1989, ProQuest.

Hollywood glitz" thereby rendering the coverage lucrative for live telecast on a niche station and mutually beneficial for the HFPA, which, "by selling the TV rights to TBS this year…[was] hoping to clear $100,000 on [an] event" that regularly lost money in syndication.[109] Still, the show resonated as an unworthy predecessor to the Oscars, the telecast leapfrogging to various obscure distribution outlets.

The HFPA's cultivation of celebrity spectacle and increasingly "relevant" television selections, however, helped to elevate the ceremony's broadcast appeal and cultural cache amidst the popularization of cable. An elated Robert Welkos of the *Los Angeles Times* proclaimed in 1995 that "a few years ago…the awards show was seen as something of a joke in Hollywood but, today, all that has changed"[110] His article went on to describe not only the revered roster of Hollywood A-listers in attendance but also awards granted to oft-neglected narrow-appeal shows, singling out "Claire Danes, who picked up a statuette for best actress in a TV series [drama] for 'My So-Called Life.'"[111] That program, which had received critical plaudits and a devoted "save our show campaign"[112] but was largely shut out by the Emmys, also garnered publicity for featuring the first gay teenage character in primetime, Rickie Vasquez (Wilson Cruz). Other queer-explicit shows that fared better amongst the HFPA than the NATAS in the early 1990s included *Roseanne* (won Best

[109] Nina J. Easton, "'Rain Man' Sends a Global Message," *Los Angeles Times,* January 30, 1989, ProQuest.
[110] Robert W. Welkos, "The Golden Globes Finally Get Some Respect," *Los Angeles Times,* January 23, 1995, ProQuest.
[111] Ibid.
[112] For more on the program's ratings discourse and "Save Our Show" campaign, see both Susan Murray's "Saving Our So-Called Lives: Girl Fandom, Adolescent Subjectivity, and *My So-Called Life*" and Caryn Murphy's "'It Only Got Teenage Girls': Narrative Strategies and the Teenage Perspective in *My So-Called Life*" from the anthology *Dear Angela: Remembering My So-Called Life,* eds. Michele Byers and David Lavery (Lanham MD: Lexington Books, 2007).

Television Series, Comedy or Musical in 1993), *Citizen Cohn* (nominated Best Miniseries or Television Movie in 1993), *Quantum Leap* (Scott Bakula was nominated for his lead performance in 1993 and Dean Stockwell for his supporting role in 1991), *Grace Under Fire* (nominated Best Television Series, Comedy or Musical in 1995), and *Party of Five* (won Best Television Series, Drama in 1996). As Ron Becker discusses in *Gay TV and Straight America,* television executives in the early 1990s were only beginning to "appreciate how important it was to more aggressively target slumpy [socially-liberal, urban-minded professional] viewers with edgy programs"[113] but were not yet content to deviate from industry orthodoxy that gay content inevitably translated to revenue loss. The HFPA, operating under seemingly specious membership guidelines but also contributing largely from outside the bounds of Hollywood insularity, could legitimate controversial programming that, as *Quantum Leap* showrunner Donald Bellisario commented in 1992, "advertisers just won't touch."[114]

While the Globes ceremony ultimately returned to its NBC home in 1996, scholars including Becker have described network television as an increasingly niche platform in the decade's latter half. He writes that "all three networks, with a zealous NBC in the lead and an irresolute CBS bringing up the rear, started to stray from their broadcasting approach" in order to "[target] young adult sensibilities much more aggressively, greenlighting shows that ran the risk of alienating younger and older audiences."[115] This

[113] Ron Becker, *Gay TV and Straight America* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2006): 146.
[114] Ibid: 142.
[115] Ibid: 92-93.

television landscape, unlike that of the mid-1980s, more suitably accommodated an event "less formal than the Academy Awards" wherein "many of the winners and presenters [felt] looser as they fielded questions from the press" and spoke onstage.[116] The ceremony's casual, youthful appeal as "hip" programming itself reflected voting outcomes wherein, as the *New York Times'* James Sterngold noted in 1999, "especially on television side, shows with poor ratings or little appeal to critics have at times broken through to win."[117] While Sterngold's article evaluated the Globes' anomalous TV choices as a current phenomenon, the HFPA had previously catered to critically disparaged programs like *Dynasty* and *Murder, She Wrote* in the 1980s when the telecast still aired in syndication. The Globes' 1990s narrowcast positioning, however, and the ceremony's reversion back to a "reinvented" NBC allotted the HFPA and its selections a new degree of prestige and authority, thereby fueling "quality" discourse that peaked in the early 2000s when critics almost unanimously proclaimed that television had reached its second "Golden Age."

The Peabody's Academic Shifts

Unlike both the HFPA and NATAS, the George Foster Peabody awards organization structured social conscience into its mission statement and boasted academic authority. As *Variety* described the accolade's origin in 1941, following the Peabody Board of Regents' announcement of its first broadcast winners, "a plan [was defined] whereby the oldest chartered state university [University of Georgia] would recognize and encourage the

[116] Welkos, "The Golden Globes Finally Get Some Respect."
[117] James Sterngold, "Hollywood's Public Party," *New York Times,* January 24, 1999, ProQuest.

social responsibilities of the youngest of the media of communication [radio]."[118] Although the Henry W. Grady School of Journalism at the University of Georgia, which administers the awards annually, partnered with the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) in 1940, key broadcasting lobbies accused voters of an anti-capitalist bent over the next two decades. Such discourse shaped the Peabody in press and public opinion as a non-commercial entity, especially as educational television broadcasts began to reap awards in the 1950s and continued to do so at an accelerated pace after the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) was established via the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967. While this trend granted the Peabodys significant prestige and the valence of multicultural moral responsibility, the organization did not recognize any programs featuring sexual minorities until 1977 when *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* belatedly won an award; moreover, it did not overtly acknowledge non-straight subjectivities until 1985's writeups for HBO's documentary *The Times of Harvey Milk* and NBC's AIDS drama *An Early Frost.*[119] Peabody voters later gushed over queerness, though, and consistently broke their anti-commercial attachments as premier networks submitted projects that the body deemed artistically valuable and politically edgy. Ironically, in capitulating to "quality" trends, the Peabody's focus on fair and public television access diminished.

When first established, the Peabody organization entered into partnership with the NAB, a collaboration that would grant civic legitimacy to the medium of radio, which, since

[118] "Georgia Award for Network to CBS," *Variety,* March 26, 1941, ProQuest.
[119] Even the Peabody citation for *An Early Frost* pivots around the issue of gay subjectivity, using "AIDS" as a stand-in for "homosexuality." "An Early Frost," Peabody Awards, Accessed April 2, 2019, http://www.peabodyawards.com/award-profile/an-early-frost.

the passage of the Communications Act of 1934, had attained a reputation for unabashed commercialism. The trade publication *Broadcasting* described in 1940 how the University of Georgia, in conjunction with the NAB, would "confer annually the George Foster Peabody Radio Awards for the most disinterested and meritorious service rendered by each of three radio stations (local, regional, and national), and also by a national broadcasting chain."[120] This description painted the Peabodys as a (perhaps unnecessary) arbiter of radio's public service, one that a guided strategic union between dissimilar factions. Considering that, two years earlier, NAB president Neville Miller had come out passionately against "enemies of private competitive radio" wherein he lambasted "agencies of government" for seeking to impose oppressive controls,"[121] his organization's partial oversight of the Peabodys signified the industry's need to qualify as a public good to forestall state intervention in its commercial practices.

As indicated previously, though, tensions with broadcasters peaked in the 1960s when the Radio and Television Executives Society of New York (RTES) openly accused voters of harboring biases against industry leaders, a conflict that would reach its apex later in the decade. *Variety* first reported in 1961 that the RTES had formally dropped its Peabody sponsorship, a decision that the paper described as:

> Motivated by two considerations, first that awards which are constituted like the Peabody prizes seem to have lost a great deal of their value, and second that it might

[120] "How the Peabody Awards Will Be Made," *Broadcasting,* August 15, 1940, Entertainment Industry Magazine Archive.
[121] "Miller Challenges Enemies of Private Competitive Radio in Peabody Address," *Broadcasting,* September 1, 1938, Entertainment Industry Magazine Archive.

> be more appropriate for an industry group like the RTES to sponsor its own awards which would lay more emphasis on industry achievement in its more trady [*sic*] aspects.[122]

This measured statement papered over dissent from RTES members who did not vote to split with the Peabodys (the vote was not unanimous) but it also covered up more contentious sentiments that industry advocates held about academics and journalists. Samuel Cook Digges, a member of the RTES's Board of Governors, openly chastised "the Peabody panel, on the whole" for not being "knowledgeable about broadcasting [with] many members [who are] basically anti-broadcasting" and ended his remarks with the fierce contention that, "it is not logical that educators, community leaders, and newspapermen are better equipped to judge creativity in our business than people in our industry."[123] These sentiments and defections had, by the mid-late 1960s, led to increased accusations of quid pro quo arrangements within the voting body that "[diminished] somewhat the value of the awards, which have traditionally been the most prestigious in broadcasting."[124] Trade publications highlighted practices within the purportedly "enlightened" institution as not all that different from the corruption-laden Golden Globes, citing geographically exclusive winners (stations honored because of their proximity to cities where board members resided) and favors exchanged between board members and industry recipients. Despite such concern about the Peabody organization's too-close relationships with select broadcasters, however, the article ended by speculating that petty

[122] "RTES Walking Out on Peabody To Set Up Its Own Awards Next Year," *Variety,* April 12, 1961, ProQuest.
[123] "What's with the TV Awards?" *Variety,* May 3, 1961, ProQuest.
[124] "Peabody's Tattered Ensign," *Variety,* April 26, 1967, ProQuest.

clashes between industry personnel and voters were perhaps a stronger catalyst for the Peabodys' gradual delegitimation. *Variety* posited that, "a number of commercial broadcasters is nettled by the flip phrasing in several [Peabody] citations" such as a write-up about National Educational Television (NET) that "praised [the network] for 'swimming valiantly against the current which seems to be sweeping tv [*sic*] toward mediocrity.'"[125] Such remarks, on one hand, implicated the organization in forms of classism that may have undermined the awarding body's initial intentions of boosting open, educational television access; on the other, however, they obviated broadcasters' crass hypocrisy in tarnishing the Peabodys' public service mandate to slip out of their civic responsibilities toward viewers.

During the 1970s, however, the Peabodys actively courted more network television sitcoms and dramas, thereby expanding its parameters of public good to coexist more harmoniously with private broadcasters. While 1968 saw CBS reel in a record number of Peabody accolades, which *Variety* showcased in a two-page spread (Figure 1), these winners were largely culled from categories like political documentary, news/current affairs, and "progressive" children's variety programs that the organization already recognized as emblematic of public television and "relevant" local station transmissions. Within the same year/cycle, the *Los Angeles Times* reported that James R. Killian Jr. received a "special award" for "[heading] a study group for the Carnegie Commission on Educational Television, whose suggestions lead to the creation of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting."[126] Paired with another *Los Angeles Times* article two years later that

[125] Ibid.
[126] "For Radio, TV Merit, Peabody Awards Conferred," *Los Angeles Times,* April 24, 1968, ProQuest.

noted the organization's enthusiasm for the NET/PBS mainstay *Sesame Street,*[127] the 1968 pieces demonstrated the genre-specificity and educational prerogatives that the Peabodys sought to uphold as standards of television excellence.

Figure 1: Variety captures the Peabody Awards' emphasis on documentary and "live" theater in their 1968 selections of network programs like Opportunity Line and CBS Playhouse. "And the winner is…CBS," *Variety*, April 24, 1968, ProQuest.

By contrast, the popular network drama series *The Waltons,* won a 1973 Peabody in the same year that it swept the Emmys. The *Los Angeles Times,* without quite recognizing the awarding organization's shift, commented that "CBS had two winners: *The Waltons*, cited as a 'sensitive, dramatic interpretation of life during the great depression,' and *Captain Kangaroo*, the 18-year-old morning series for youngsters."[128] Neither program title appeared in the article's headline. Two year later, however, *Variety* announced "Record Number of Peabody Awards in 1975," an increase that included more attention to the major networks whereby "CBS won 4 of 27 George Foster Peabody Awards…followed by

[127] "Sesame Street, KCET Win Peabody Awards," *Los Angeles Times,* April 22, 1970, ProQuest.
[128] "Peabody Awards to Cooke and Monroe," *Los Angeles Times,* March 31, 1973, ProQuest.

ABC-TV with three [and] NBC [with] one."[129] Aside from honoring news coverage and documentary productions, the Peabodys embraced programs like CBS's top-rated hit *M*A*S*H* and the popular adolescent and teen-targeted anthology *ABC Afterschool Special,* demonstrating a penchant for reconciling commercial entertainment with public enrichment.

The organization's begrudging recognition of "important" social issues and pedagogical value in commercial television, however, did not extend to overtly LGBT texts. Entry forms and press materials housed at the University of Georgia's Hargrett Rare Book Library offer a perspective not only on awarded shows but also the publicity strategies/narratives behind programs that were not ultimately selected. Beginning with *That Certain Summer*'s campaign for inclusion in 1972, which I discuss in greater detail next chapter, and continuing into the late 1980s, all three major networks sought to push gay and lesbian specials and episodes of prominent series (many of which won Emmys and Golden Globes) for Peabodys, but to little or no avail. ABC's publicity packet for *That Certain Summer* indicated extensive lobbying as the network compiled fan letters, annotated press reviews, and a presentation folder featuring production stills of the film's two prominent lead actors, Hal Holbrook and Martin Sheen. While it won the Golden Globe for Best Movie Made for TV and sported a slew of Emmy nominations, *That Certain Summer* was exempted from the Peabodys' vaguely defined "Institutional Award" to "ABC, CBS, NBC Television for Outstanding Contributions to Entertainment Through an Exceptional Year of Televised Drama," which cited *The Glass Menagerie, The Red Pony,* and *Catholics* as standout

[129] "Record Number of Peabody Awards in 1975," *Variety,* March 31, 1976, ProQuest.

productions.[130] Repeat occurrences of the institution's blind-eye toward queer subjectivity included non-recognition of both CBS's *American Parade* entry "Song of Myself," about Walt Whitman's life and homosexual relationships, in 1976, and ABC's 1978 Sunday Night Movie *A Question of Love*, which concerned a lesbian mother's court battle for custody (both received critical raves and the latter was nominated for a Golden Globe for Best Movie Made for TV); refusal to regard gay elements in awarded shows such as *All in the Family, The Mary Tyler Moore Show, Hill Street Blues,* and *St. Elsewhere;* dismissal of programs for which gay-themed episodes were submitted as screeners such as *Taxi* and *Fame*; and rejection of radio programs featuring mere discussion of gay themes like ABC's 1983 *Listen Closely* episode "Kids in the Closet: Gay Youth in America." Whether the organization's newfound accreditation of network shows precluded LGBT television on the basis of controversy or perceived frivolity, the Peabodys only used the word "gay" (or any variant) for the first time in awarding the 1985 HBO distributed *The Times of Harvey Milk.*[131] The term did not appear again until 1991 despite the Peabodys recognizing prominent examples of AIDS-themed television during the mid-late 1980s. This timeline synchs roughly with the Golden Globes' growing relevancy as narrowcast TV and, not coincidently, industry contentment with homosexuality as an "edgy" network selling point.

[130] "Institutional Award: ABC, CBS, NBC Television for Outstanding Contributions to Entertainment Through an Exceptional Year of Televised Drama," Peabody Awards, Accessed April 2, 2019, http://www.peabodyawards.com/award-profile/institutional-award-abc-entertainment-cbs-nbc-television-for-outstanding-co.

[131] "The Times of Harvey Milk," Peabody Awards, Accessed April 2, 2019, http://www.peabodyawards.com/award-profile/the-times-of-harvey-milk.

Indeed, the Peabody board began heralding gay programming advances as a defining civil rights issue in the 1990s, around the same time that it started allocating a significantly large portion of its awards to niche TV platforms and subscription cable outlets. Significantly, three of the first denotatively gay shows[132] to secure honors, *The Times of Harvey Milk* (1985), *Common Threads: Stories from the Quilt* (1989), and *Citizen Cohn* (1991) all aired on the pay channel HBO, then prohibitively expensive and limited to around 17 million subscribers.[133] By the early-mid 1990s, however, the Peabodys lavished praise on "special episodes" of relatively narrowcast network sitcoms, dramas, and issues-based TV movies dealing explicitly with gay issues. While the organization shunned prospective recipients like CBS' landmark *Designing Women* episodes "Killing All the Right People" and "Suzanne Finds a Friend," submitted individually in 1987 and 1990 respectively, it was unequivocal in supporting numerous NBC productions including the *Northern Exposure* two-parter "Cicely" in 1992 and *Serving in Silence The Margarethe Cammermeyer Story* in 1995 as well as PBS's relatively niche programs *Silverlake Life: The View from Here* (an installment of the anthology documentary series *P.O.V.*) in 1993, the *American Playhouse* miniseries adaptation of *Armistead Maupin's Tales of the City* in 1994, and Deepfocus Productions' *Coming Out Under Fire* in 1995. Selections of this type, all announced during a three-year period of time, underscored the Peabodys' newfound

[132] Here I mean programs that not only privileged a gay/lesbian subjectivity but were cited for their gay/lesbian themes in Peabody rationales. The *Common Threads* description alluded to the gay-identified filmmaking team of Rob Epstein and Jeffrey Friedman without actually using the word at any point: "Common Threads: Stories From the Quilt," Peabody Awards, Accessed April 2, 2019, http://www.peabodyawards.com/award-profile/common-threads-stories-from-the-quilt.
[133] John Dempsey, "HBO Gives Viewers Multiple Choice Option," *Variety,* May 13, 1991, ProQuest.

appreciation for LGBT issues as part and parcel to shifting industry discourse. Their aims aligned with what Amanda Lotz describes in "Must See TV" as "[NBC's] mid-1990s winning strategy" of "[scheduling] programs that featured characters reflecting, and themes targeted to, a narrower demographic, namely a younger and more affluent urban audience."[134] The Peabodys, at best, followed the network hegemony of brand-building rather than setting a trend for recognizing and honoring sexual minority perspectives. Such a reality, however, did not stop the organization from declaring *Serving in Silence* "perhaps the first TV movie to depict a lesbian orientation and its personal and professional consequences"[135] in 1995, despite numerous earlier submissions featuring lesbian perspectives dating back to the 1970s. Self-congratulations in this case warranted historical ignorance and mendacious subscription to changing market politics.

Conclusion: GLAAD, from Watchdog to Lapdog

Shifting tides in gay programming's awards appeal also helped to transform an activist organization, the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD), into another arbiter of "quality" TV. GLAAD emerged in the 1985, during the tumultuous throes of the AIDS crisis, to serve a more specific role in championing queer-inclusive media than its overburdened predecessor, the National Gay Task Force (NGTF). Initially, the group formed as a collective of social crusaders that included the influential film historian Vito

[134] Amanda Lotz, "Must-See TV: NBC's Dominant Decades," *NBC: America's Network,* ed. Michele Hilmes (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2007: 262.
[135] "Serving in Silence: The Margarethe Cammermeyer Story," Peabody Awards, Accessed April 2, 2019, http://www.peabodyawards.com/award-profile/serving-in-silence-the-margarethe-cammermeyer-story

Russo, author Allen Barnett, and poet/playwriter Jewelle Gomez, all infuriated over homophobic and scaremongering AIDS coverage. By 1989, GLAAD developed an award for programs deemed LGBT-inclusive but the accolade transformed first into a signifier of "positive" representation and, later, following the organization's corporatized make-over in the mid-1990s, a distinction for "complex" characterizations. In its more contemporary iterations, GLAAD's media awards became largely indistinguishable from the Emmys, Golden Globes, and Peabodys' neoliberal, classist honors for gay achievement.

Despite GLAAD's investments in awarding criteria, however, the organization did not gain traction with the mainstream press until the mid-1990s. Citations prior to this point painted members as loosely connected protesters committed to stopping "negative" LGBT depictions. One of GLAAD's only mentions in *Variety* prior to 1991, for instance, involved the "gay group's" frustrations with how Oliver Stone's film *JFK* "will reinforce myths and stereotypes about [homosexuals]."[136] Such positioning harkened back to the NGTF's efforts throughout the 1970s and 1980s to stage protests around media texts, networks, and companies identified as detrimental to gay rights. While the NGTF remained active in both combatting "harmful" images and consulting with producers to "elevate" gay and lesbian plotlines, its members did not function as a panel of judges assessing the overall artistic merit of particular shows and films. They did ultimately succumb to traps of simplistic evaluation, as my next chapters discuss at length, but also served a different purpose than GLAAD circa 1992. By that point the organization achieved legitimation through its annual awards ceremony, after which the group started to develop classist

[136] Lawrence Cohn, "'JFK' Riles Reviewers; Brits Sour on Sue," *Variety,* December 23, 1991, ProQuest.

preoccupations in evaluating winners. Their self-compiled list of successes in 1991/1992 included "[achieving] a high level of credibility with the media" through "a star-studded bicoastal GLAAD Media Awards for positive gay and lesbian images,"[137] (GLAAD 1992) though its criteria still largely maintained the negative/positive binary rather than a high/low distinction. While the organization chastised celebrated films like *The Silence of the Lambs*, it simultaneously applauded advancements in less-than-acclaimed television series such as *Dear John* (NBC, 1988-1992).

GLAAD soon graduated to considering programs on the basis of "narrative complexity" and "artistic achievement," though, signifiers of television "quality" and cultural status that altered the organization's founding goals. Notably, the group's 1995 awards ceremony included an address by executive director Ellen Carton, wherein she denounced the talk show genre in toto as "[offering] a proliferation of gays as sideshow attractions" while commending IKEA furniture commercials, NBC "slumpy-appeal" programs *Frasier* and *Friends,* PBS's *Tales of the City,* and ABC's little-watched but critically adored *My So-Called Life.*[138] All of the honored texts overtly interpellated middle to upper-middle class young, urban, and white viewing constituencies, thereby reflecting the non-diverse make-up of GLAAD's voting body, which the group's leadership internally critiqued in 2002. Despite maneuvers to more closely "reflect the diversity of LGBT's [*sic*]"[139] during

[137] Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation, "GLAAD Announces 1993 Media Awards," January 26, 1993, Box 2, Folder 12, Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) Records, Coll2012-173, ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives, USC Libraries, University of Southern California.
[138] Greg Evans, "GLAAD Honcho Blasts Talkers at Awards," *Variety,* March 20, 1995, ProQuest.
[139] Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation, "Senior Staff Meeting Discussion Document," September 13, 2002, Box 1, Folder 40, Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) Records, Coll2012-173, ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives, USC Libraries, University of Southern California.

the 2000s, GLAAD had already established a system of pedagogical rigidity, recognition based in celebrity appeal and industry definitions of quality, a mash-up of the NATAS's, HFPA's, and Peabodys' logics. Its guides continuously emphasized public "teaching" practices and built public relations strategies to "normalize" gay discourse.[140] At the same time, the organization worked to recruit numerous inter-industry "Honorary Co-Chairs," as indicated in a 2003 letter from GLAAD's special events coordinator Jason Burlingame to television mogul Aaron Spelling. Burlingame's emphasis on corporate fundraising in exchange for philanthropic status, wherein he offered that "being an Honorary Co-Chair means that you will be listed on the letterhead, [awards] invitation, and corporate brochure,"[141] reflected GLAAD's mid-1990s extravaganzas "which included silent auctions and $250-per-plate dinners."[142] Such gestures, without rising to the inappropriate level of the Golden Globes' and Peabodys' alleged quid-pro-quo antics, nonetheless demonstrated a collusive and symbiotically promotional relationship between GLAAD and industry hegemons. Its masquerade as civil rights champion and public pedagogue effectively obscured the group's lucrative rise as yet another niche qualifier handing out gold.

[140] A guide's list of "Do's" and "Don'ts" implores language protocols such as "using the 'so-called' qualifier" before repeating anti-gay slogans "to remind audiences that opponents' terminology is misleading," not using "language of conflict" and "not [focusing] on differences in religious beliefs" because "research shows that theological arguments with those who aren't comfortable with gay people are rarely effective." Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation, "Things to Avoid," n.d., Box 1, Folder 39, Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) Records, Coll2012-173, ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives, USC Libraries, University of Southern California.
[141] Jason Burlingame, Letter to Aaron Spelling, August 15, 2003, from the Aaron Spelling Collection, Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center at Boston University.
[142] Evans, "GLAAD Honcho Blasts Talkers at Awards."

CHAPTER 2: SUPERIOR PRODUCTIONS ON SENSITIVE TOPICS – ELEVATING 1970s GAY PROGRAMMING

Since 1967, the Emmys had begun regarding counterculturally tinged and "experimental" programs like *Get Smart* (NBC, 1965 and CBS 1966), *The Monkees* (NBC, 1967-1969), and *Rowan and Martin's Laugh-In* (NBC, 1968-1973) as more awards-worthy than former mainstays such as *The Dick Van Dyke Show* (CBS, 1961-1966). As Aniko Bodroghkozy writes in *Groove Tube: Sixties Television and the Youth Rebellion,* "between 1966 and 1967, the television networks announced their desire to revamp their programming schedules for 'youth'" given that "as early as 1967 CBS expressed concern about its position as video's 'maiden aunt'"[143] and all three networks feared such "geriatric," out-of-touch designation. She further argues that generational conflict, embodied by the networks' courtship of an "eighteen-to-forty-nine" demographic, came to define the revamping of television programming to cater to both the low and high ends of this prospective audience. By the early 1970s, following FCC reforms such as the Prime-Time Access Rule (PTAR) and the Financial Interest and Syndication Rules (Fin-Syn), the networks developed programming that more explicitly courted niche audiences and dabbled in targeted sociopolitical controversy. NBC, ABC, and (most especially) CBS engaged "social issue" commentary in fictional programming that incorporated previously taboo issues including homosexuality. Awards organizations underscored this discursive

[143] Aniko Bodroghkozy, *Groove Tube: Sixties Television and the Youth Rebellion* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001): 65.

shift by awarding the new genre of "relevance" shows but segregated their accolades based on genre and network distinctions.

Therefore, this chapter considers how awards discourse around homosexuality in the 1970s both challenged and reified the "Big Three" networks' claims to "quality" branding. I maintain that particular programs sought to coopt controversy surrounding gay people in order to appeal to "prestige" demographics and spark awards attention, thereby qualifying homosexuality as a "special issue" reserved for groundbreaking television. CBS, ABC, and NBC offered "enlightened" public pedagogies of tolerance and inclusion at the same time that the networks' awards promotion obfuscated both more "queer" positioned projects and shows that used gay issues for "mainstream" shock appeal (these two strategies not necessarily being mutually exclusive). In keeping with historical nomenclature, I will be referring to programs' "gay" content rather than LGBT+ representation or any variant acronym, considering that regular inclusion of bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer and/or questioning individuals alongside gay men and lesbians in popular press began only during the 1980s and 1990s. I do, however, retrospectively and ahistorically employ the term "queer," a pejorative during the 1970s and later an LGBTQ politically activist self-designation, to discuss series or aesthetic and narrative sensibilities that would have appealed to and directly interpellated sexually non-normative persons despite a lack of denotatively "gay" content. Here I borrow Alexander Doty's contention in *Making Things Perfectly Queer* that "when I use the term 'queer' or 'queerness' as adjectives or nouns, I do so to suggest a range of non-straight expression in or response to mass culture…[which] includes gay, lesbian, and bisexual expressions [but

also] all other potential (and potentially unclassifiable) non-straight positions."[144] (Doty 1993, xvi) Moreover, in line with Elana Levine and Michael Newman's contentions in *Legitimating Television: Media Convergence and Cultural Status*, I interrogate the class, gender, and racial repercussions of bestowing industry/critical/awards attention on programs marked as edgy and sold under the guise of liberal virtue due to gay subject matter. The chapter begins a brief historical purview of how the popular press discussed homosexuality in the early 1970s following civil rights struggles of 1969. I then preface the three major networks' industrially circumscribed brand identities at the decade's start before undertaking analysis of how CBS's, ABC's and NBC's Peabody, Emmy, and Golden Globe awards contenders employ homosexuality in both support and defiance of "mainstream" marketing appeal. These subsections combine textual and press discourse analysis of central texts, including *All in the Family*'s "Judging Books by Covers" (CBS, 1971), *That Certain Summer* (ABC, 1972), *Hawaii Five-O*'s "V for Vashon: The Patriarch" (CBS, 1972), *Marcus Welby M.D.*'s "The Outrage" (ABC, 1974) and *The Bold Ones: The New Doctors'* "Discovery at Fourteen" (NBC, 1972), with examinations of series' and networks' awards promotion strategies to consider how television gayness and prestige function in tandem, often to the exclusion of marginal subjectivities and audiences.

Mainstreaming Homosexuality in Early 1970s Urban Spheres

Compared with social discourse immediately following the June 1969 uprisings of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender patrons at New York City's Stonewall Inn Bar

[144] Doty, *Making Things Perfectly Queer*: xvi.

following unrelenting police crackdowns and terror, metropolitan popular press coverage of homosexuality developed a tone of tolerance and (limited) inclusion for sexual minorities in the 1970s. Such articles vehemently denounced bigotry and championed the APA's impending decision to declassify same-sex desires as a form of illness. At the same time, journalists actively framed urban centers as liberal bastions of open-mindedness and often employed reader responses from suburban/rural "fringes" as counterpoints to enlightened understanding. Furthermore, coverage relied on tying gay identity to white urbane maleness, thereby promoting a raced, classed, and gendered construct of a singular community under threat from miseducation and emotional bias. Such contentions and strategies elided systemic issues of disenfranchisement and highlighted media personnel as "activists" for and harbingers of social tolerance. Additionally, these same pieces worked to maintain a clear hetero/homosexual binary and privileged a victim/savior relationship narrative between downtrodden gays and straight liberal advocates.

Metro newspaper coverage of "gay liberation" offered underdog tales of achieving visibility and justice for a socially maligned population while upholding and reifying sexual, gender, and racial norms. Dave Smith of the *Los Angeles Times* recognized and helped narrativize such political shifts between 1969 and 1972, writing in a prominent article that:

> The mere creation of such groups [as the Homophile Effort for Legal Protection, the Gay Community Alliance, and the Gay Community Services Center], most within the past two or three years, indicates that under the surface and shot through all the

> empty spaces in the Establishment, Los Angeles' gay society is *for the first time* rapidly consolidating and organizing itself into a coherent culture.[145]

The paper's celebratory statement positions a motley group of five gay men—Rev. Troy Perry, Clifford Letierri, Dave Glascock, John Platania, and Don Kilhefner—as trailblazers for gay respectability in Los Angeles. Discussing San Francisco's similar mapping of gay white male provinces in the early 1970s, scholar Christina Hanhardt writes in *Safe Space: Gay Neighborhood History and the Politics of Violence* that "[homophile Carl Wittman's 1970] ideas that anti-gay violence is disproportionately committed by people of color and that it is expressive of other forms of inequality are early hints of what would emerge as a key aspect of the new gay rights activism."[146] A 1972 article in the *New York Times* about the growing acceptability of gay youths coming out to their families similarly featured young white men (pictured are activist Morty Manford and his parents) with the journalist, Judy Klemesrud, indicating sympathy toward "alternative lifestyles" and changing medical discourse surrounding homosexuality.[147] Klemesrud underscores, in tandem with Smith, gay community organizations within urban centers (Madison' Avenue's Homosexual Community Counseling Center, for instance) and emphasizes a generational reconciliation narrative between parents and children that may only be available to privileged subsets of gay youth.

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[145] Dave Smith, "Homosexual Groups Push Fight for Liberalized Morals Laws," *Los Angeles Times,* January 24, 1972, ProQuest (my emphasis).
[146] Christina B. Hanhardt, *Safe Space: Gay Neighborhood History and the Politics of Violence* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013): 87.
[147] Judy Klemesrud, "For Homosexuals, It's Getting Less Difficult to Tell Parents," *New York Times,* September 1, 1972, ProQuest.

As previously indicated, these publications also locate spaces "outside" of enlightened discourse, thereby allocating geographic demarcations of progress. Media scholar Mary Gray suggests detriments of such fragmentation in *Out in the Country: Youth, Media, and Queer Visibility in Rural America,* arguing that "the systematic marginalization of the rural as endemically hostile and lacking the cultural milieu for a *celebratory* politics of difference naturalizes cities as necessary centers for and standard bearers of queer politics and representations."[148] Despite the historical discrepancies between Gray's mid-to-late 2000s ethnographic study and early-1970s national discourse, the same distinction between urban and suburban/rural spheres appeared consistently in popular national publications and intertwined frequently with conceits of class. The *Los Angeles Times* published a slate of responses to Smith's article, and the vast majority of these write-ins came from the L.A. metro area (simply labeled as "Los Angeles") and reiterated (with the exception of one out gay man's perspective) straight liberal support for homosexuality, largely communicated through a pseudo-political "live and let live" ethos. Only one response reeked of outright bigotry, wherein the author, Derek Gill, wrote that "without exception, every civilization that has began [*sic*] to tolerate homosexuality has started its decline and fall,"[149] comments debunked by the paper's more "rational" readers. Notably, Gill, is listed as residing in San Pedro, a working-class Los Angeles neighborhood officially incorporated into the city since 1909; the citation, however, excludes Gill from the collective progressivism of the urban sphere, presenting a wedge between Angelinos and

[148] Mary Gray, *Out in the Country: Youth, Media, and Queer Visibility in Rural America* (New York: New York University Press, 2009): 18 (my emphasis).
[149] Derek L. Gill, "The Homosexuals' Fight for Rights," *Los Angeles Times,* January 29, 1972, ProQuest.

unassimilated "others" on the outskirts. In relation to his counterparts, Gill resonates as uneducated (grammatically challenged, historically uninformed) and an exception to the paper's dominant discourse of enlightenment. To similar effect, analysis in Klemesrud's *New York Times* piece quotes a metro-era lesbian author as affirming the urban/rural dichotomy; she laments, "my parents live in a terribly conservative community New Jersey…they're even upset if a black person walks through, or if they see a Volkswagen, or a miniskirt, or a pants suit, or a Jew."[150] Such descriptions sequester discrimination to backwards spaces of misinformation and prejudice, thereby elevating New York City as a "safe" harbor of rationality and openness. These geographic contentions, as my next section describes, helped foster a television-based divide into what Benedict Anderson describes as "imagined communities," political constituencies bifurcated along hierarchical lines of taste, culture, education, and caste.

Dawn of 1970s "Relevance" Programming: Affirming Urban Attitudes on CBS

The imagination of tacit metropolitan approval of gay men's rights fit with the CBS network's much-discussed shift from rural-based comedies such as *Green Acres, The Beverly Hillbillies,* and *Petticoat Junction* to programs emanating largely from Norman Lear and Bud Yorkin's Tandem Productions Inc. (*All in the Family, Maude, Good Times*) and Mary Tyler Moore & Grant Tinker's MTM Enterprises (*The Mary Tyler Moore Show, The Bob Newhart Show, Rhoda*). As Jane Feuer and John Thornton Caldwell detail at length, these so-called "relevance sitcoms" prompted a cultural shift from critically reviled entertainment

[150] Klemesrud, "For Homosexuals, It's Getting Less Difficult to Tell Parents."

television to "quality" series that incorporated 1960s and 1970s social contingencies including the African American Civil Rights Movement, Second Wave Feminism, and, most recently for 1970s political discourse, Gay Liberation. These programs' topical episodes, including *All in the Family*'s gay-themed fifth episode, "Judging Books by Covers" garnered immense popularity in terms of national ratings while simultaneously establishing CBS as a major awards contender and public pedagogue, belatedly fulfilling former FCC Chairman Newton Minow's 1961 mandate for "enlightened" entertainment. This transition was, however, politically fraught, as evidenced in President Richard Nixon's attacks on *All in the Family*. Herein, debates around 1970s "taste cultures" revived and reconsidered how television preferences marked "elite," "liberal," and "urbane" ideologies. The "rural purge" and popularly inscribed "return" to Golden Age programming conceits on CBS most explicitly used gay content as a wedge to attain social cachet and network profits, often at the expense of a more diversified queer subjectivity and to the exclusion of purportedly unsophisticated "everyday" viewers.

Publicity for *All in the Family*'s first seasons heightened the show's status as "event" television and touted creator Norman Lear's bona fides as author, artist, and activist force in American programming. The Los Angeles-based freelance writer Arnold Hano noted in a 1972 piece for the *New York Times* that "when Sammy Davis Jr. is appearing at a nightclub, his usual schedule involves two shows, one at 8 and one at midnight…on Saturdays he changes the 8 P.M. show to 8:30 so that he can watch [*All in the Family*] in his dressing room."[151] The quote signifies not only the show's break from what theorist Raymond

[151] Arnold Hano, "Can Archie Bunker Give Bigotry a Bad Name?" *New York Times,* March 12, 1972, ProQuest.

Williams referred to in 1974 as American television's flow, "the 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"[152] but *All in the Family*'s specific social importance as an influence and commentary on minority culture/audiences. Hano's article opines that the show has "brought back" the ethnic humor of 1950s sitcoms like *The Goldbergs* and *The Honeymooners* as well as variety programs derived from vaudeville tradition including *The Jack Benny Show* and Milton Berle's *Texaco Star Theater*, entertainments purportedly lost to homogenous family comedies and staid westerns of the 1960s. He credits Lear as a visionary innovator, writing that "[Lear] runs the show. Script ideas often originate with him. Scripts must meet with his approval. He is on set every day to watch the production."[153] His article continues to enshrine *All in the Family* as a text carrying autobiographical weight, alluding to how the show's roots "go back further than [its British source material] *Till Death Us Do Part* [sic], they go back to Norm Lear, son of a bigot…[who] separates bigotry into shades of intensity"[154] to render the protagonist, Archie Bunker, complex and, ultimately, sympathetic. These perspectives render the program an authorial experience rather than a series based on intellectual property, thereby "guaranteeing the artistry of individual production and downplaying the collaborative nature of industrial media-making."[155] As a result, the mythology of *All in the Family*'s originality extends to the heroic interventions of an artisanal craftsman fed up with

[152] Williams, *Television*: 93.
[153] Hano, "Can Archie Bunker Give Bigotry a Bad Name?"
[154] Ibid.
[155] Newman and Levine, *Legitimating Television*: 49.

television's apolitical mediocrity. As Hano phrases it, "we still have *Bonanza* and *Ironside* with their comic book plots, their superman heroes, their fairy tales, their unreality (and their hate)…but we also have *All in the Family* [and] America has come face to face with itself."[156]

The social realism that Hano and other journalists cite as key to *All in the Family's,* Lear's, and, to a lesser extent, CBS's cultural intervention lies at the nexus of what John Thornton Caldwell designates a "zero-degree" style and thematic content addressing controversial issues, most notably homosexuality. In *Televisuality: Style, Crisis, and Authority in American Television* Caldwell retrospectively considers how Tandem Productions helped to usher in an "antistyle…an abhorrence of style [that] was a throwback to the golden age of live anthology drama, a connection that producers and critics were more than willing to tout"[157] He also connects aesthetics to awards culture, adding that "the Lear shows typically won their Emmys for writing, acting, and directing" resulting in a "company style defined entirely [by] content, not form."[158] Here, Caldwell invokes the zero-degree turn as employing monikers of overt artificiality (constructed stages, "live" studio audiences) but deviating from expressionistic cinematographic techniques to underscore "quality" programs' kinship with "legitimate" theater. This strategy, perhaps contradictorily, underscores stylistic lack as an indicator of mature televisual realism for entertainment journalists and social critics. Jane Feuer attends to this historical discourse in "The Concept of Live Television: Ontology as Ideology," pointing out

[156] Hano, "Can Archie Bunker Give Bigotry a Bad Name?"
[157] Caldwell, *Televisuality*: 56.
[158] Ibid: 56-57.

that, "from an opposition between live and recorded broadcasts, we expand to an equation of the 'live' with the 'real'…television is *not* recorded; live television is *alive;* television is living, real, not dead."[159] (Feuer 1983, 14, author's emphasis) Both allude to how constructs of liveness and zero-degree form in the 1970s reinforced and validated what Jack Gould and other media critics call television's "Golden Age" of 1950s anthology teleplays, vaudeville-inspired variety shows, and "cutting-edge" news documentaries such as Edward R. Murrow's and Fred Friendly's *See It Now* (CBS, 1951-1958).

National publications from the early 1970s reinforce Feuer's and Caldwell's readings of how stage-bound formal constructions and signifiers of liveness bolster TV programming's truthfulness, immediacy, and sociopolitical relevance in the popular imagination. Articles in the *New York Times* and *Los Angeles Times* notably draw attention to *All in the Family*'s engagement with "real issues" without discussing Lear's proscenium presentation as artifice. Hano rhetorically asks, "How often is menopause a theme in a half-hour comedy show? Or homosexuality?"[160] pointing to the program's immersion in topicality despite reservations on the part of CBS, which, he indicates, "preferred a less explosive start."[161] Additionally, Hano credits the show with a certain degree of improvisation and hurried changes, viewed in his article as a marker of *All in the Family'*s uninhibited spontaneity. He observes that the production process "is all very much like a stage play except everything is telescoped in time…nobody has six weeks of rehearsal and

[159] Feuer, "The Concept of Live Television: Ontology as Ideology": 14 (author's emphasis).
[160] Hano, "Can Archie Bunker Give Bigotry a Bad Name?"
[161] Ibid.

then a week in New Haven to get ready."[162] Hano continues to narrate the editing events that follow, describing how "lines are scrapped and rewritten. Always, however, in *haste*. An actor once said to me 'this is not acting, this is *instant* performing.'"[163] Here, an ethos of immediacy and even necessary mistakes (Hano acknowledges production "flaws" but invokes them as markers of authenticity) help to ground the *All in the Family* firmly and uncritically within the ontology of liveness that Feuer theorizes. *Los Angeles Times* columnist Joyce Haber similarly cites the program's boldness and popular adulation as a product of its rawness, ticking off *All in the Family's* accomplishments: "consistently in the top 10 rated shows on TV; frequently it is in the top 3 and often it's No. 1. It has earned [Carroll] O'Connor an Emmy and Jean Stapleton (who plays his wife Edith) two Emmys, and the show an Emmy for two consecutive years on the air."[164] She attributes much of its success to Lear and producer Bud Yorkin's ability to skirt CBS's censorship division to explore such taboo subjects as "menopause, homosexuality, and miscarriage."[165] Within this discussion of topicality Haber lauds *All in the Family*'s supposed lack of filter, which bolsters the mythology of Lear's triumph is sneaking issues, hurriedly and without concern for polish, ahead of CBS's puritanical standards and practices bureaucracy.

Within this discourse, CBS emerges paradoxically as both a transformative force and a blockade to independent production companies (Tandem, MTM) and their lead creative personnel like Lear. Hano and Haber similarly mock the network's previous programming,

[162] Ibid
[163] Ibid (my emphasis).
[164] Joyce Haber, "Archie's a Loser, but Carroll's a Winner," *Los Angeles Times,* September 17, 1972, ProQuest.
[165] Ibid.

echoing *New York Times* writer Jack Gould's and former FCC Chairman Minow's disparagements of television's "wasteland." Hano most overtly denigrates the third-place ABC for "getting cold feet and abandoning" *All in the Family,* then titled *Those Were the Days*, before a pilot was ever broadcast. He further laments, though, that "two days before airing time, CBS still had not made up its mind [on the show]" since "the network was leery of the pilot, which begins with son-in-law Mike trying to persuade wife Gloria to have sexual intercourse in the middle of the day while Archie and Edith are in church."[166] By contrast, the article cites Lear's integrity and willingness to quit as prodding CBS to relent and air the pilot as written. Additionally, Hano dismisses CBS's earlier programming slate including *Gilligan's Island* and *Green Acres* as "schlock jobs" that garnered "huge audiences" despite their intellectual inferiority.[167] Haber's piece similarly includes a quip from Lear that "we did two pilots, both for ABC, and both were turned down" and, thereafter, commends the creative team's resolve against "CBS's censor William Tankersley's ruling against a segment involving the temporary impotence of Archie's son-in-law Mike." She quotes Lear as railing "it will be on or I will be gone."[168] Here the authors position CBS as hierarchically above ABC (*at least* they aired the pilot) in terms of social respectability while deriding both networks as crass managers of mass product interested in bottom lines and entangled in skirmishes with transformative creative agents. Elana Levine discusses CBS's fading reputation as the "Tiffany Network," a beacon of quality and respectability, and fears of eventually losing in the ratings to third-place ABC's increasingly risqué

[166] Hano, "Can Archie Bunker Give Bigotry a Bad Name?"
[167] Ibid.
[168] Haber, "Archie's a Loser, but Carroll's a Winner."

programming slate as prompting the network's strategic rebranding beginning in 1969. She writes that:

> Responding to this climate, Robert Wood, the president of CBS, declared that he was setting out to change 'the character of the network from more bucolic material to more fresh or updated, contemporary [fare].'Assisted by Fred Silverman, his programming chief, Wood gradually revamped the whole primetime schedule, first adding more dramatic stories with young casts and social issue story lines and then phasing out the older, rural appeal series in favor of more social-oriented issue-shows, this time in comedic form.[169]

Determining that "CBS's politicized brand of sexual humor in its new sitcoms helped win the 1972-1973 season a reputation as 'the year TV turned to sex,'"[170] Levine reveals Wood's and Silverman's marketing ploy as an economic necessity that relied on and worked in conjunction with independent producers' "edgy" material to build a cohesive identity around "hip" controversy. Such tactics problematize the sustained press narrative of discord between CBS and "auteurs" like Lear in 1972. Moreover, the popular journalism response helps to bolster the network's mythical narrative of socially conscious rebranding, underway since the late 1960s.

All in the Family's early seasons follow what Levine describes as comedic scenarios that "[make] both young and old, rebels and authority figures objects of good-natured ribbing,"[171] a description that reinforces thematic unity between CBS and Tandem and runs

[169] Levine, *Wallowing in Sex*: 22.
[170] Ibid: 23.
[171] Ibid: 22.

afoul of the show's claims to radical difference. Moreover, the program's stylistic traditionalism undercut queer televisual sensibilities on display in earlier programs. The first season's fifth episode, "Judging Books by Covers" (airdate February 9, 1971), invokes a "mistaken identity" gay plotline to stoke ideological differences between Archie Bunker (Carroll O'Connor), a disenchanted working-class conservative living in the Queens borough of New York City, and his liberal son-in-law Mike Stivic (Rob Reiner). In this story, Archie berates Mike's loudly gesticulating, college-educated friend, Roger (Anthony Geary), for what he calls the man's "faggotry." These insinuations lead Mike into platitudes about the ridiculousness of stereotypes and later compel him to investigate and "out" Archie's drinking buddy, Steve (Phillip Carey), a hyper-masculine former pro-football star. The show, characteristic of Lear's sitcoms, features a muted, atonal color palate and wide proscenium blocking, which John Caldwell summarizes in *Televisuality* as "remarkably conservative in terms of style…scenes played wide with a dominance of two-and-three shots to emphasize conversation…the technical apparatus in place only to allow the televised stage play to unfold."[172] Indeed, "Judging Books by Covers," shot using the three-camera studio setup that Caldwell describes, changes setting only once from Archie's brownstone, decorated in tans and subdued greens, to a similarly dour straight bar. During this transition, the bartender Tom Kelsey (Robert Hastings), framed in a medium two-shot with Mike, promptly discharges the flamboyantly mannered Roger, positioned in his own screen space and attired in a purple shirt and red-and-white ascot that provide the episode with its sole inflections of bright color. Tom compares Mike's friend unfavorably with the

[172] Caldwell, *Televisuality*: 56.

gay but gender-conforming Steve, who "only comes in here once and a while for a drink on his way home," and expresses discomfort with how Roger "camps it up." He laments, "I don't want my place to become no hangout." This dialogue, accompanied by a laugh track meant to chide the bar's working-class homophobes for their unenlightened presumptions, could ironically be applied to the show's own discomfort with queer visual sensibilities. As Caldwell points out, Tandem's "zero-degree" anti-style, with its focus placed on writerly intellectualism, prompted "critics and learned viewers [to] celebrate the birth of a TV art that was defined structurally by its sparseness and seriousness, not by messier formal excesses, kitsch, or camp."[173] Roger, the imposing signifier of aesthetic overkill, promptly disappears at episode's end, leaving CBS's "hangout" space to the gently warring heteronormative/gender-conforming factions at *All in the Family*'s ideological center.

In contrast to Tandem's promotion of zero-degree aesthetics in the name of topicality, scholar Fabio Cleto discusses camp iconography's value for queer cultural encoders and decoders. He writes in "Queering the Camp," that "camp is a discourse of enacting a 'sham,' provisional, performative existence, and translating its definitional 'fakeness' onto critical constructions which cannot but be based on categories both provisional and partial – from a position, on behalf of a position."[174] Camp signifiers, in Cleto's definition, draw attention to construction and artifice, attributes that allowed gay and other sexually marginalized readers/producers in the 1960s and 1970s navigate changes to societal codes through various modes of performance. As Richard Dyer

[173] Ibid: 57.
[174] Fabio Cleto, "Introduction: Queering the Camp," *Camp – Queer Aesthetics and the Performing Subject: A Reader*, ed. Fabio Cleto (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1999): 36.

expresses in "It's Being Camp as Keeps Us Going," a 1976 essay that Cleto's edited anthology reprints:

> [Camp] is a way of prizing the form of something away from its content, of reveling in the style while dismissing the content as trivial…it is precisely a weapon against the mystique surrounding art, royalty, and masculinity – it cocks an irresistible snook, it demystifies by playing up the artifice of by means of which such things retain their hold on the majority of the population.[175]

All in the Family, however, diminished camp sensibilities/characters while also mocking Archie (and perhaps Tom) as Nixonian "silent majority" bigots. Even the title of Haber's *Los Angeles Times* piece, "Archie's a Loser, but Carroll's a Winner" reinforced an emerging culture wars divide between righteous elites and working-class xenophobes that neglects what media scholar Herman Gray terms "oppositional readings," in this case of conservative viewers more closely aligned with Archie's worldview. As previously mentioned, these perspectives might not have been solely decoding mechanisms, except in the popular press imagination, since CBS and Lear sought a broad audience invested in "good-natured ribbing," which continuously placed *All in the Family* at the top of the Nielsen charts. Lear's desire to have his cake and eat it too, however, helped stamp out even fleeting signifiers of flamboyant excess in order to legitimate its social purview and heighten its critical standing, glibly disparaging the show's ideological dissenters and disenfranchising the minorities it purported to champion in the process. Roger and his

[175] Richard Dyer, "It's Being Camp as Keeps Us Going," *Camp – Queer Aesthetics and the Performing Subject: A Reader*, ed. Fabio Cleto (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1999): 113.

meager camp signifiers disappeared from the diegesis at the same time that press outlets publicly derided conservative fans for their supposed inability to read irony, leaving the "hangout" to upscale white liberals in on the joke.

Contrastingly, though, some of CBS's less critically availed, hyper-stylized and campy 1970s dramatic series recalled both the kitschy attributes of its own 1960s programming such as *Lost in Space* (1965-1968), *The Wild, Wild West* (1965-1970), and *Mission Impossible* (1966-1973) the exploitation-fare topicality of ABC's low-rated crime procedurals like *N.Y.P.D.* (1968-1969) and *Judd, for the Defense* (1967-1969). Notably, the network's top-rated *Hawaii Five-O*, first aired in 1968, managed to undertake a considerably more complicated view of homosexuality and institutional discrimination in a largely dismissed episode, "V for Vashon: The Patriarch" (airdate November 28, 1972). The last part of a three-episode serial arc, preceded by "V for Vashon: The Son" and "V for Vashon: The Father," this installment begins with Dominick Vashon (Luther Adler), the elder head of an organized crime enterprise, seeking vengeance for his son's imprisonment and grandson's death at the hands of police in the earlier stories. Dominick retaliates against the show's recurring protagonist, Detective Steve McGarrett (Jack Lord) of the titular police task force, via a complex framing scheme to ensure the head of the Five-O squad will be tried and imprisoned by the same justice system that has taken down the Vashon family. The patriarch's ultimate undoing, however, is a young, gay hustler, Bobby Reisbeck (John Beatty), who has been betrayed by several institutions and powerful men. Bobby discredits a key witness's altered testimony, revealing that a prominent lawyer, Harvey Drew, carried on secret homosexual liaisons and became susceptible to Vashon's

blackmail. After Harvey asks Bobby, "Is this what you wanted to do to me?" Bobby replies, "I got busted selling a couple of joints to a guy. And my dearest friend, the biggest lawyer in Honolulu wouldn't even answer the phone when I called. You're getting what's coming to you, you old queen." While being escorted out of the district attorney's office, Bobby mournfully tells Drew about prison: "You've got to have friends in a place like that. You know what happens if you don't have friends? A guy like me? After you let me down I had to have someone on the inside. They told me to talk to Vashon and after that I'd have all the friends I needed. And I need friends." This exchange, far from progressive considering McGarrett's and the district attorney John Manicote's (Glenn Cannon) homophobic disgust with Bobby, nonetheless allows the minor character a subjectivity. The young man's monologue includes a social vantage point about marginalization and physical/emotional torment at the hands of a privileged elite, which Harvey Drew embodies here, that can move between homosexual tourism and heterosexual respectability. Most heartbreakingly, Bobby, unlike Roger or Steve, whose identities we "straighten out" in "Judging Books by Covers," remains trapped in a merciless purgatory, deprived of respect or dignity despite his unacknowledged heroism in bringing down the Vashon patriarch, exonerating McGarrett, and exposing Drew's deceit.

The impact of Bobby's scene results largely from *Hawaii Five-O*'s stylistic and narrative construction, both derided in the popular press. Unlike *All in the Family*'s penchant for medium two-shots between Archie and Steve and long shots of Roger interacting within a group dynamic, *Hawaii Five-O* emphasizes the intimacy of close-ups. Tight framing and a zoom-in to close-up of Bobby's distraught face allow for a sense of

interiority whereas Roger registers as more of a prop, centered within the frame but pushed far to the background (Figures 2 and 3).

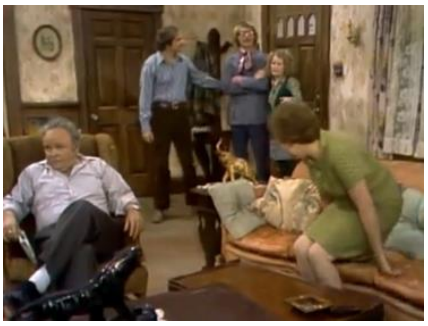

Figure 2: All in the Family, "Judging Books by Covers" (1971), from left: Carroll O'Connor (Archie Bunker), Rob Reiner (Mike Stivic), Anthony Geary (Roger), Sally Struthers (Gloria Stivic), Jean Stapleton (Edith Bunker), author's screencap.

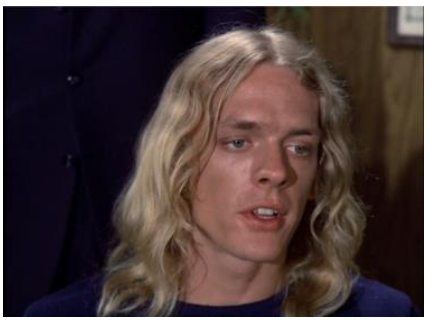

Figure 3: Hawaii Five-O, "V for Vashon: The Patriarch" (1972), John Beatty as Bobby Reisbeck, author's screencap.

Furthermore, "Judging Books by Covers" regularly features only Mike's or Archie's reaction shots when cutting to close-up, a point of reference for audience awareness (ironic disbelief for white liberals, identification for "oppositional" conservatives), whereas "V for Vashon: The Patriarch" centralizes a shot/reverse-shot dynamic between Bobby and Drew, legitimating the pain of their storyline. The scene only belatedly and briefly cuts to D.A. Manicote's resigned expression. These moments of melodrama fold into a broader aesthetic that highlights quick whip pans, jarring color schemes, lengthy location shots of Hawaii's scenic outposts, and expressionist crime sets bathed in shadows.

While the "V for Vashon" episode arc won a Director's Guild of America (DGA) award for TV veteran Charles S. Dubin and the larger fifth season of *Hawaii Five-O* received an Emmy nomination for Outstanding Drama Series (losing to NBC's *The Waltons*) in 1972, the program garnered minimal attention, positive or negative, in the popular and trade press, both of which discounted the queer valences of "V for Vashon." Journalistic outlets, largely disinterested *Hawaii Five-O* more generally, chided the show in its early years for what they perceived as milquetoast qualities. Jack Gould wrote in a 1968 *New York Times* article titled "Put Them All Together, They Spell Last Year" that "the new television season is a hack job…the moguls of the medium have virtually abandoned the cause of creativity and imagination in their own métier."[176] While he capitulated that "*Hawaii Five-O* on CBS Thursdays at 8 was an improvement over *Hawaiian Eye* of many seasons back,"[177] his flip placement of the show under the banner of disposability and sameness spoke to a broader disdain for network television. Gould's derision is more pronounced in a 1968 review of *Hawaii Five-O* where he summarized the premier episode as follows:

> The Columbia Broadcasting System's lei variation on *Dragnet* features unit Five-O of the Hawaii police force. Its chore last night was to track down a couple who specialized in swindling and murdering the newly bereaved. There was a modicum of good suspense as a police woman played bait for a homicide-oriented duo. But

[176] Jack Gould, "Put Them All Together, They Spell Last Year," *New York Times,* October 13, 1968, ProQuest.
[177] Ibid.

> the sequence was slow in coming and ended in stereotype gunplay. Jack Lord was stern and efficient as the head lawman.[178]

His use of adjectives signifying the rote and everyday rendered the show workmanlike rather than exceptional, a symptom of commercial television's stasis. This positioning counters the logics of "very special episodes," wherein a program renders social difference a resolvable and contained political problem rather than an integrated and uncommented part of the show's diegesis. The *Los Angeles Times,* which wrote up "V for Vashon: The Patriarch" in its November 22, 1972 TV listings, as simply the conclusion to a ho-hum serial arc wherein "the Vashon Family devises a cunning scheme to frame McGarrett and send him to prison in disgrace."[179] Unlike *All in the Family*'s coverage wherein articles featured "Judging Books by Covers" homosexuality plotline in direct relation to the show's "superior" positioning, *Hawaii Five-O's* more overt instance of gay subjectivity escaped notice entirely. This despite a 1973 article announcing that "CBS Leads Nielsens with *Hawaii Five-O*" and "not with its usual lead-in, *All in the Family.*"[180] Such coverage speaks to a divergence between what large swaths of Americans watched at the beginning of the decade (including a queer-inclusive, hyper-stylized police drama) and how industry and popular press sought to sell a narrative of cultural fracture.

CBS's class-based mythology of a clear-cut urban/rural, liberal/conservative binary around programming, however, efficiently fueled culture wars wedge issues, as apparent

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[178] Jack Gould, "TV Review: 'Journey to Unknown' on ABC Network," *New York Times,* September 27, 1968, ProQuest.
[179] "TV Times," *Los Angeles Times,* November 26, 1972, ProQuest.
[180] Cecil Smith, "CBS Leads Nielsens with 'Hawaii Five-O," *Los Angeles Times,* May 23, 1973, ProQuest.

through the White House's private response to *All in the Family* and public politicization of television's "out-of-touch" social liberalism. President Richard Nixon, in a taped conversation with staffer Harry Robbins "H.R." Haldeman, described "Judging Books by Covers" in narrative detail before considering how the show's urbane ideology could cement his white, working-class base. He lamented to Haldeman:

> I was trying to tune into the damn baseball game on NB—CBS. And the game went off and CBS came on with a movie [*sic*], one that they made themselves and I'll be—the damnedest thing I ever heard, two magnificently handsome guys and a stupid old fellow and a nice girl—they were glorifying homosexuality. I mean, the guys were admitting they were homosexuals and so forth, and this other poor guy is going 'Gee whiz, you know—this's guy's'—is this what people listen to?[181]

Nixon's almost half-hour soliloquy, inflected throughout with a startling blend of virulent homophobia, homoerotic fascination, and quasi-acceptance of homosexuality as a naturally occurring phenomenon, ultimately ended with a comment to Haldeman about the strategic expediency of weaponizing gays on TV. The president opined that "I don't think much of that" and ascertained, "getting back to my point, I want everyone around here thinking, from now on, politically…we'll run it better with our left hand than the others every time because we're honest and we're smart."[182] This tactic, which pitted an imagined elite deviously engaging in metropolitan petri dish politics against "honest," disenfranchised

[181] Richard Nixon, "RICHARD NIXON TAPES: Archie Bunker and Homosexuality," Recorded (May 1971), YouTube video, Posted (December 2008), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TivVcfSBVSM&t=2s.
[182] Ibid.

hard-hats, effectively exploited Lear's and the popular press's well-intentioned but often tone-deaf and casually classist television discourse.

Exclusive organizations' adulation for both *All in the Family* and Lear as "auteur/activist" played directly into Nixon's shrewd and divisive plan. As a result of the CBS's shift toward zero-degree sitcoms, and not because of popular holdover fare like *Hawaii Five-O,* the network reaped numerous accolades from both the more mainstream Primetime Emmy Awards and the more academically prestigious George Foster Peabody Awards. *All in the Family*, as 1970s press articles repeated incessantly, won the Emmy award for Outstanding Comedy Series consecutively from 1971 through 1973. In 1974 it was dethroned by CBS's politically charged Korean War sitcom, *M*A*S*H,* and in 1975 to 1977 by the network's MTM namesake production *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*. The NATAS awarded *All in the Family* its top prize again in 1978 before CBS's quality slate finally fell in the Outstanding Comedy Series category to ABC's *Taxi* in 1979. Moreover, the Peabodys, enmeshed in the social institutions (academia, entertainment, journalism) that Nixon sought to discredit, elevated the show and its creator to "better [than] TV." In 1977, the organization belatedly presented a "Personal Award" to "Norman Lear for *All in the Family*" and unequivocally offered the commendation for "giving us comedy with a social conscience…[Lear] uses humor to give us a better understanding of social issues; he lets us laugh at our own shortcomings and prejudices, and while doing this, maintains the highest entertainment standards."[183] These accolades helped to differentiate pedagogical TV,

[183] "Personal Award, Norman Lear for 'All in the Family,'" Peabody Awards, Accessed April 2, 2019, http://www.peabodyawards.com/award-profile/personal-award-norman-lear-for-all-in-the-family.

enlightened TV, as better TV, instilling an "us/them" divide between viewers of mass programming and elite connoisseurs of "high[er]" art.

Furthermore, retrospective articles discussing CBS's quality legacy celebrated the network's attention to social issues, and commended Lear/*All in the Family* for ushering in gay rights on television. A 1979 write-up in the *Los Angeles Times* cemented Lear's TV legacy under the banner "The Hopes and Fears of all Those Years," with journalist Cecil Smith terming 1971 "the year of relevance." He writes that, "it was *All in the Family*…the program of the decade…[that] changed the nature of television by probing areas that had always been taboo: impotence and homosexuality, bigotry, pollution, the economy—the *true* social issues, *true relevance*."[184] (Smith 1979, J48, my emphasis) Within this same paragraph Smith also lauds Robert Wood's turn in the early 1970s away from "such high-rated shows as *The Beverly Hillbillies, Green Acres,* and *Hee Haw* to shed the network's cornpone image,"[185] echoing Hano's 1972 musings. This rhetoric speaks to the durability of qualifying popular press discourse at the beginning of the decade as well as a naturalization by its end of geography and class-based sociopolitical divides. Along the way, awards organizations helped to link "smarter" taboo television with provinces of the "real," diminishing purportedly inferior shows as destined to refuse status and writing off "cornpone" viewers as fickle and politically expendable in a new "golden age" of true relevance.

[184] Cecil Smith, "The Hopes and Fears of All Those Years," *Los Angeles Times,* December 30, 1979, ProQuest (my emphasis).
[185] Ibid.

ABC's Queer Interventions: Courting Prestige and Outrage in the Early 1970s

In *Wallowing in Sex,* Elana Levine recognizes that "ABC had long been the butt of jokes among industry insiders…while CBS was often deemed the 'Tiffany Network' (especially by its self-serving executives), ABC was said to stand for the 'Almost Broadcasting Company.'"[186] The network, throughout the 1960s, forged an identity for airing what the onetime Vice President of Daytime Programming, Harve Bennett, described as "wild-ass" shows, known for rejecting aesthetic and narrative traditions of respectability while also, in the case of programs like *The Addams Family* (1964-1966), *Batman* (1966-1968), *Bewitched* (1964-1972), *Dark Shadows* (1966-1971), *The Green Hornet* (1966-1967), and *That Girl* (1966-1971) evincing a queer, camp sensibility. ABC, unlike CBS, did not have a reputation to uphold in the early 1970s but, in a competitive bid, sought a "quality" turn away from its marginal (and arguably queer) status at this more sexually permissive broadcasting moment. The network overtly deployed gay themes, especially in dramatic series and made-for-TV movies, in an attempt to rebrand its previously "exploitative" maneuvering as, in fact, an "edgy" and "adult" social conscience.

Unlike its network brethren, ABC had regularly tackled homosexuality, connotatively and denotatively, during the 1960s in ways that challenged some heteronormative cultural and television tropes. Media scholar Andrew Owens recounts in "Coming Out of the Coffin: Queer Historicity and Occult Sexualities" how:

> ABC, in an attempt to move out of its longtime location in the basement of the Big Three, realized that corralling the interests of a more youth-oriented audience

[186] Levine, *Wallowing in Sex*: 20.

> steeped in the sexy, supernatural fascinations of 1960s counterculture was absolutely critical to the network's survival, a trend one trade [*Television Age*] referred to as the increasingly 'sensual appetite' of young American viewers."[187]

As Owens describes, such programs featured queer aesthetic and narrative cues indicating departure from entirely straight worlds. Signifiers of fantasy, satirical upending of family unity, extra-narrative visuals and tongue-in-cheek dialogue worked to entice young viewers dissatisfied with, or at least skeptical of, post-war social mores. While they rarely featured overt depictions of homosexuality, "wild-ass" shows spoke knowingly to sexually non-normative viewers.

Moreover, ABC's penchant for gay appeal seeped into trade and popular press discourse during the late 1960s. As Sasha Torres observes in "The Caped Crusader of Camp" with regard to the network's adaptation of *Batman,* "[the show] with its self-conscious appropriations of pop and camp, has been read by fans and producers alike, as a major setback in Batman's redemptive heterosexualization."[188] She recognizes an industrial strategy in the program's promotion that oscillates between disavowal of gay pretenses, most recognizable in showrunner William Dozier's assertion that he hates the word camp ("which sounds so faggy and funzies") and tongue-in-cheek nods toward Batman's ironic tactics of subversion, best encapsulated in writer Lorenzo Semple's quote that "on a very

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[187] Andrew J. Owens, "Coming Out of the Coffin: Queer Historicity and Occult Sexualities," *Television & New Media* 17, no. 4 (2015): 7.
[188] Sasha Torres, "The Caped Crusader of Camp: Pop, Camp, and the *Batman* Television Series," *Comp – Queer Aesthetics and the Performing Subject: A Reader,* ed. Fabio Cleto (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1999): 334.

sophisticated level, the show is highly immoral because crime seems to be fun."[189] Considering the performative excesses of queer-inflected actors portraying the litany of flamboyant villains, including the closeted Cesar Romero (as the Joker) and anti-war activist/cabaret icon Eartha Kitt (as Catwoman) amongst others, the show constructs characters with whom Semple identifies as non-normative purveyors of deviant criminality. While certain ABC personnel, notably Dozier and Burt Ward, who portrayed Robin, attempted to downplay the show's queer tropes and amenability to gay reception, others such as Semple and *Batman's* lead, Adam West—who Torres cites as quipping in a 1966 interview that, "with the number of homosexuals in this country, if we get that audience, fine, just add 'em to the Nielsen ratings"[190]—recognized and economically exploited *Batman*'s non/anti/contra-straight valences.

In addition to the more connotative use of queer marketing techniques, ABC also promoted a slate of crime procedurals late in the decade that dealt overtly, and often sympathetically, with homosexuality. A gay-themed 1967 episode of the police procedural *N.Y.P.D*, for instance, aired to vitriolic response amongst some affiliates and viewers. The pilot, titled "Shakedown," used an unorthodox blackmail storyline to introduce its protagonists, Lt. Mike Haines (Jack Warden) and Det. Jeff Ward (Robert Hooks), as sympathetic and ethically motivated opponents of bigotry and social injustice. The 30-minute episode observes the two investigators convincing a closeted construction worker (James Broderick) to risk outing himself as gay in order to expose a gang of extortionists

[189] Ibid.
[190] Ibid.

that prey on homosexual men. In response to this framing device, James Brown, the General Manager of ABC's San Antonio affiliate station KONO-TV Channel 12, accused the show's writers of "reaching way out to try the shock treatment with a highly distasteful subject"[191] in a letter to network president Leonard Goldenson. Brown concludes the note by stating, "last night…I was ashamed of being an ABC primary affiliate." If these statements underscore ABC's 1960s reputation as what television scholar Elana Levine considers "the impetuous adolescent" amongst the Big Three networks, "quick to jump into bed with whatever attractive offer came by, unconcerned about how it looked to the [other two major networks]"[192] the response to Brown's correspondence remains invested in the show's tenets of emotional realism and public service. Writing on behalf of Goldenson, ABC's director of the Department of Standards and Priorities, Grace Johnsen, vigorously maintained that:

> *N.Y.P.D.* is an adult show dealing with topical, adult themes of which homosexuality is one. The blackmailing of homosexuals is a distasteful subject, to be sure. However, the majority of problems encountered by police departments are distasteful. Yet they exist. It is our responsibility as broadcasters to not only entertain but to acquaint the adult viewer with his responsibility to society and in this particular show to educate him as to the function of the New York Police Department.[193]

[191] James M. Brown, letter to Leonard H. Goldenson, September 6, 1967 (Box 37, Folder 1), Leonard Goldenson Collection, Collection no. 2242, Cinematic Arts Library, USC Libraries, University of Southern California.
[192] Levine, *Wallowing in Sex*: 20.
[193] Grace M. Johnsen, letter to James M. Brown, September 14, 1967 (Box 37, Folder 1), Leonard Goldenson Collection, Collection no. 2242, Cinematic Arts Library, USC Libraries, University of Southern California.

The exchange illuminated a paradoxical strategy in ABC's simultaneous "juvenile" intent to shock as a means of bringing in a younger audience through the upending of sexual norms and its "grown-up," highbrow promotion of *N.Y.P.D.* as a public pedagogical undertaking. This strategy continued in the early 1970s as the network sought a higher degree of relevance and prestige.

While the popular press largely ignored ABC's 1960s productions, reserving ink for shock-value "nonfiction" fare like CBS's Mike Wallace news documentary *The Homosexuals* (1968), national papers enthusiastically publicized a 1973 ABC movie-of-the-week, *That Certain Summer,* which fit neatly with liberal discourses of understanding and tolerating urbane sexual difference. The film, set in and near San Francisco, involves a father, Doug Salter (Hal Holbrook) agonizingly coming out as gay to his fourteen-year-old son, Nick, (Scott Jacoby) while contending with his own shame and rocky relationships with ex-wife, Janet (Hope Lange) and partner, Gary McClain (Martin Sheen). John O'Connor's *New York Times* review, which compared the production favorably to *All in the Family's* "Judging Books by Covers," intoned that:

> "Controversial" subjects are just as capable of stimulating junk as "safe" subjects. But, just as obviously, those involved in in the production of *That Certain Summer* were very much aware they were skirting controversy, [and] the result is that a good deal of time, thought and intelligent care were, evidently, devoted to the project. This is the secret formula for improving all television, on any level, on any subject, from situation comedies to talk shows."[194]

[194] John J. O'Connor, "That Certain Subject is Here," *New York Times,* October 29, 1972, ProQuest.

Broader critical discourse across Coastal, Midwestern, and Southern U.S. metropolitan publications used similar adjectives indicating sophistication and social bravery on the part of ABC and *That Certain Summer*'s creative team. Madison Wisconsin's *Capital Times* praised its "adult sensitivity," (recurrent descriptors in almost every media outlet) and speculated that the film "could have taken countless missteps in its execution, particularly for a *mass audience* primarily weaned on *escapism*"[195] and the *Pittsburgh Press* declared the film "a rare work of good taste, subtlety, sensitivity, and honesty," surmising, in response to fears about its youth appropriateness, that "it will go way over a young child's head if it doesn't bore him [*sic*] first."[196] In a slight twist, the *Houston Post*'s Ed Swinney hailed *That Certain Summer* as an educational resource for teenagers, one that would allow them (and their bigoted parents) to empathetically engage with the movie's "humane approach to a human condition."[197] The article opens, however, with a knock against the "kid stuff aimed at 10-year-old minds" that, Swinney suggests, constituted the vast majority of TV programming in 1972 and continued to infantilize grown viewers.

These slights, used to legitimate ABC's *Movie of the Week* anthology as a rare bit of quality on the juvenile network, echoed industrial, press, and select audience disgust and frustration with the network's earlier *Batman* and like-minded camp escapism geared

[195] Rick DuBrow, "ABC Movie Takes Quiet Look at Life-Styles of Homosexuals," *Capital Times,* November 1, 1972, Box 83, Folder 72003 ENT, George Foster Peabody Awards Collection, Series 2. Television Entries, ms 3000, Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, The University of Georgia Libraries (my emphasis).
[196] Barbara Holsopple, "That Certain Summer," *Pittsburgh Press,* November 1, 1972, Box 83, Folder 72003 ENT, George Foster Peabody Awards Collection, Series 2. Television Entries, ms 3000, Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, The University of Georgia Libraries.
[197] Ed Swinney, "ABC Movie Sensitive Several Ways," November 1, 1972, Box 83, Folder 72003 ENT, George Foster Peabody Awards Collection, Series 2. Television Entries, ms 3000, Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, The University of Georgia Libraries.

towards and/or purportedly inclined to corrupt impressionable children. Correspondence between Nelson Kerr, an attorney from Towson Maryland and Alfred Schneider of ABC, for instance, raised concerns about the commercial exploitation of kids viewing *Batman* based on both content and exposure to ads. Kerr expressed concern about ABC's legal skirting of an FCC advertising rule to air four minutes of commercials during the broadcast of *Batman*'s pilot episode as a means to capitalize on a young audience. His "protective action," though, most forcefully advocated "highbrow" television over childish frivolity, lamenting that:

> A number of years have passed since Mr. Minnow [*sic*] described the television programs of the time as constituting a vast wasteland. In my opinion, for whatever its [*sic*] worth, the area of desolation is still more vast, and the intellectual content so dry that the wasteland (which presumably supported some vegetative life) is now an arid desert.[198]

In solidarity with this view, one respondent to ABC, Mrs. Robert Thode of Wayne, New Jersey, advocated censorship of "corrupting" programs and exclaimed that "everyone wonders what is happening to today's children; when such shows as *Batman* are put on, supposedly for the appeal to children, it's a dreadful reflection of our times."[199] Thode's stance used what queer theorist Lee Edelman describes in *No Future* as the "symbolic

[198] Nelson R. Kerr, Jr., Letter to the Federal Communications Commission, January 5, 1966, Box 54, Folder 6, Leonard Goldenson Collection, Collection no. 2242, Cinematic Arts Library, USC Libraries, University of Southern California.
[199] Mrs. Robert Thode, Letter to the Executives of the American Broadcasting Company, March 18, 1966, Box 54, Folder 6, Leonard Goldenson Collection, Collection no. 2242, Cinematic Arts Library, USC Libraries, University of Southern California.

child," "a figure that alone embodies the citizen as an ideal, entitled to claim full rights to its future share in the nation's good, though always at the expense of the rights 'real' citizens are allowed,"[200] to caution against what she perceived as the program's intellectual and moral harms. Here, the "symbolic child" discursively replaced actual young people in the cultural imaginary and opportunistically fused financial corruption with phobias of queer indoctrination. Popular press substantiated such perspectives by promoting *That Certain Summer* as a "different" and "appropriate" means of addressing sexual non-normativity in "adult ways": "boring" for young, impressionable kids and "educational" for older teens and intolerant parents. Such programming, as a result, remained valued against earlier "exploitative" instances of queer visibility.

Notably, though, ABC's movie of the week differed in terms of marketing and reception from CBS's more urban-targeted sitcoms. Whereas press outlets and industry executives perceived Norman Lear as pushing buttons and shaking up a milquetoast network, ABC advertised *That Certain Summer* as "familiar" despite its controversial subject matter. The film's Peabody awards submission packet describes it as "a unique departure from sensationalism…portrayed with restraint, honesty, clarity, directness, and startling sensitivity,"[201] thereby comparing the show against more brash "social issues" television. Viewers supplemented these perspectives through (selectively archived) fan mail and correspondence with ABC. The publicity materials forefront letters from Ankeny,

[200] Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004: 11.
[201] "That Certain Summer: Entry Form," February 14, 1973, Box 83, Folder 72003 ENT, George Foster Peabody Awards Collection, Series 2. Television Entries, ms 3000, Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, The University of Georgia Libraries.

IA, Muskegon, MI, Lancaster, SC, and Dallas, TX, which underscore *That Certain Summer*'s "flyover" appeal. Victoria E. Johnson indicates in *Heartland TV* that industry executives regularly refer to "taste cultures" in tailoring/marketing programming and offers that certain shows "and their critics share a 'common sense' understanding that midwesternness and homosexuality are presumptively understood to be irreconcilable identifications."[202] She notes, however, that "the primetime friendly, apolitical twist enacted by these programs is their evacuation of *sexual* identity from [their] primary concern."[203] Following this logic, *That Certain Summer*'s television presentation and fan mail emphasized the authors' rational heterosexuality but evinced sympathy for the film's characters and called for more "realistic" programming tackling "tough" issues. A characteristic letter from Diane Stiles of Walworth, NY framed the show as a sober, pedagogical experience, relaying how the "beautiful and moving story told with realism and excellent taste…provided our family an opportunity to understand some other human beings a little better than we had before, which will make us, perhaps, a little more human."[204] Her sentiments mark the film as mild and illuminating in its exploration of sexual "otherness" and appealing because of its quotidian treatment of a potentially "outrageous" taboo. Many letters also commended ABC and the movie for not "taking a position" on homosexuality but rather, as a note from Los Angeles resident Jim Chandler pointed out, "[covering] a sensitive subject…without eather [*sic*] condoning or condemning

[202] Johnson, *Heartland TV*: 148.
[203] Ibid.
[204] Diane Stiles, Letter to the American Broadcasting Company, October 2, 1972, Box 83, Folder 72003 ENT, George Foster Peabody Awards Collection, Series 2. Television Entries, ms 3000, Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, The University of Georgia Libraries.

the homosexual."[205] The movie's performances by Holbrook and Sheen, *Los Angeles Times* critic Charles Champlin noted, "achieves a kind of understated complexity, a power of implication"[206] intended to make homosexuality palatable to "square," though immanently reasonable heartland contingencies.

By contrast, a 1974 episode of ABC's medical drama *Marcus Welby M.D.,* fittingly titled "The Outrage," served as a provocative foil to *That Certain Summer's* middlebrow liberalism and boosted the political clout of gay rights organizations. While *Marcus Welby* was a commercial success and awards contender from its premier in 1969 through 1973, the program fell off of the Nielsen's "Top 30" in its 1973-74 season and failed to receive recognition in the Emmy Awards' "Outstanding Drama Series" category in 1974. ABC, reviving "shock value" tactics that predated its appeals for top ratings,[207] used homosexuality as a means to salvage the failing program in its later run. "The Outrage," which follows a male teenager traumatized by a rape at the hands of his science teacher, courted sexual explicitness that was largely absent from *That Certain Summer* and garnered negative national publicity stemming from gay activists' acrimony toward ABC. San Francisco's left-leaning Media Action Coalition, which cited support from the California Federation of Teachers and the AFL-CIO, condemned *Marcus Welby* for "bolstering the false image of gay men as child molesters and treating homosexuality like a contagious

[205] Jim Chandler, Letter to KABC-TV Los Angeles, n.d. Box 83, Folder 72003 ENT, George Foster Peabody Awards Collection, Series 2. Television Entries, ms 3000, Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, The University of Georgia Libraries.
[206] Charles Champlin, "Homosexuality Faced in 'That Certain Summer,'" November 1, 1972, ProQuest.
[207] *Marcus Welby, M.D.* became the network's first show to place first in the Nielsens during its 1971-72 season.

disease"[208] and organized a picket of San Francisco's ABC station KGO-TV the week that "The Outrage" premiered. This action prompted decisions by ABC affiliate stations in Philadelphia, PA, Boston, MA, and Lafayette, LA to not air the episode and several advertisers including Shell Oil, Colgate-Palmolive, and Lipton to pull their spots amidst the controversy.[209] The National Gay Task Force (NGTF) waged additional campaigns urging ABC to cancel the broadcast entirely and ruminated in a news-bulletin flyer that "according to every gay person who has been able to preview the actual show, the subtlety [between homosexuality and pedophilia] will be completely lost on *Welby* viewers, who will not get beyond the myth-reinforcing image of a homosexual rape."[210] Advocacy groups cited the show's diminishing viewership and prestige as prompting what they considered a socially deleterious storyline, and sympathetic journalists such as the *San Francisco Examiner'*s Dwight Newton chimed in that "the whole morbid mess is plot to boost *Welby'*s sinking ratings."[211] Even popular press critics who opposed efforts to prevent the episode's broadcast such as *Los Angeles Times* columnist Dick Adler addressed *Marcus Welby*'s slip. Adler intoned that the once popular show "had been lagging [all season] behind both *Barnaby Jones* and *Police Woman*"[212] though he went on to validate "[*Welby* producer,

[208] Media Action, "Stop the Outrage!" October 8, 1974, Television Folder, ONE Subject File Collection, Coll2012.001, ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives, Los Angeles, CA.
[209] As reported in "Two Stations Drop Homosexual Episode of 'Marcus Welby,'" *Wall Street Journal,* September 30, 1974, Television Folder, ONE Subject File Collection, Coll2012.001, ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives, Los Angeles, CA.
[210] National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, "News from NGTF: Philadelphia Kills Marcus Welby," September 25, 1974, Television Folder, ONE Subject File Collection, Coll2012.001, ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives, Los Angeles, CA.
[211] Dwight Newton, "Television," *San Francisco Examiner,* October 3, 1974, Television Folder, ONE Subject File Collection, Coll2012.001, ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives, Los Angeles, CA.
[212] Dick Adler, "One 'Outrage' That Ought to Be Aired," *Los Angeles Times,* October 8, 1974, Television Folder, ONE Subject File Collection, Coll2012.001, ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives, Los Angeles, CA.

David] O'Connell" as "both firm and credible when he insists that whatever other factors go into the choosing of script subjects, the search for exploitation isn't one of them."[213] NGTF Executive Director Bruce Voeller declared such industry rhetoric "bullshit" in a handwritten notation scribbled across a letter from ABC's East Coast Director for Standards and Practices, Richard Gitter, a piece of correspondence that maintains *Welby*'s "responsible and unsensational" approach to "the problem of child molestation from both a physical and emotional point of view."[214] Within the court of public opinion, however, NGFT and its allies seemed to gain the upper hand over ABC as national press outlets largely excoriated the episode for its monetary opportunism, derogatory representations, and perceived threats to livelihoods of gay men during the fraught years leading up to the failed 1978 Briggs Initiative, which would have prevented gays and lesbians from teaching in California public schools.

Many attacks on "The Outrage," though, concerned its aesthetic and narrative inferiority rather than (or as an indicator of) the program's skewed politics; such correlations echoed ABC's earlier tactic of combining "wild ass" storylines with queer thematic conceits. Terrence O'Flaherty's review in the *San Francisco Chronicle* admonished the male rape storyline as "in outrageous poor taste—as much television is these days" before going on to lambast the performances ("extremely amateurish") and Eugene Price's

[213] Ibid.
[214] Bruce Voeller's handwritten note on the first page reads, "This is the kind of bullshit letter ABC is sending to those who complain to them." Richard P. Gitter, Letter to Mr. William Page of the Gay Human Rights League of Queens County, NY, August 13, 1974, Television Folder, ONE Subject File Collection, Coll2012.001, ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives, Los Angeles, CA.

teleplay ("embarrassing to the point of hilarity").[215] His column charts melodramatic unbelievability throughout the episode, downplaying its narrative effectiveness while, in the same breath, attesting to its immanent social harms. By contrast, though through similarly delegitimating tactics, the episode's defenders largely brushed off the NGTF's campaign as unnecessary and reactionary in light of the show's deficiencies and perceived irrelevance. Rex Polier wrote in Philadelphia's *The Evening Bulletin,* "frankly, I do not think [the episode] makes a mass condemnation of homosexuals." He conjectures that, "as has happened so frequently before in 'censored' TV programs before, I believe we have another prime case of overreaction on the part of everyone concerned" in that "the poorly produced, cast and scripted episode's…sketchy, highly soap operatic" storyline defied plausibility.[216] Polier's more derogatory remarks speak to critical disenchantment with the medical drama's genre excesses more generally while correctly intimating that the protests supplemented ABC's strategy of generating controversy to temporarily bolster ratings.

These writings and protests largely discounted the episode's potential queer modes of spectatorship, especially considering the dearth of gay storylines on TV in the early-to-mid 1970s. Several articles posited, though, that conservative affiliates might have found strange bedfellows in gay protesters, considering their aversion to mentions of homosexuality, in any context, on television. The gay periodical *The Bay Area Reporter* speculated that, despite national coverage championing the NGTF as victors (or righteous

[215] Terrence O'Flaherty, "Terrence O'Flaherty Views TV," *San Francisco Chronicle,* October 9, 1974, Television Folder, ONE Subject File Collection, Coll2012.001, ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives, Los Angeles, CA.
[216] Rex Polier, "'Welby' Episode That Ch. 6 Won't Show," *The Evening Bulletin,* September 26, 1974, Television Folder, ONE Subject File Collection, Coll2012.001, ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives, Los Angeles, CA.

combatants) in the fight for homosexual dignity on TV, "the third station to cancel, KATC in Lafayette, La. probably acted more from concern with the subject matter than with the alleged injustice to homosexuals."[217] (Broshears, 1974) In fact, scholars taking a retrospective view of "The Outrage" consider the episode's identificatory power for queer youths important despite its ambivalent treatment of gays. Joe Wlodarz writes in "We're Not All So Obvious: Masculinity and Queer (In)visibility in the 1970s" that this episode admonishes forms of toxic masculinity that traumatize its young protagonist and "exposes a more widespread cultural anxiety in the wake of gay liberation that there is actually no 'safe space' in seventies American television or culture to work through (or revel in) the instability of male adolescence."[218] In his estimation, the episode, unlike more "legitimate" productions, also renders gay sex licit and bodily, as the fourteen-year old Ted awakens semi-nude with bruises and internal bleeding, an image that Wlodarz claims "conflates the more normalized physical abuse of sports with the potential horrors of sexual assault" but is also "indicative of a more metaphoric 'bleeding' that is tied to [male] transgression of sexual, social, and corporeal boundaries."[219]

[217] Rev. Ray Broshears, "Marcus Welby Anti-Gay?" *Bay Area Reporter,* October 9, 1974, Television Folder, ONE Subject File Collection, Coll2012.001, ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives, Los Angeles, CA.
[218] Wlodarz, "We're Not All So Obvious": 103.
[219] Ibid: 102-103.

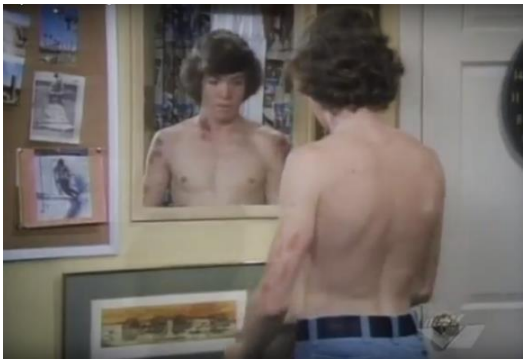

Figure 4: Marcus Welby M.D., "The Outrage" (1974), Sean Kelly as Ted Blakely, author's screencap.

Without excusing *Marcus Welby*'s "offensive and reactionary modes of representation,"[220] such a reading emphasizes the trauma imposed on questioning and socially stigmatized adolescents, a response to the "adult" and heteronormatively skewed marketing campaigns behind the Golden Globe-winning *That Certain Summer*. Critics, of course, largely failed to note that, perceived "quality" aside, both products emanated from the same network strategy of using gay "novelties" to bolster ratings amidst financial turmoil. While *That Certain Summer* and its *Movie of the Week* brethren (such as the acclaimed cross-racial "bromance" *Brian's Song*, which scholar Travis Vogan links with the popularity of ABC's Monday Night Football[221]) served a legitimating function vis-à-vis identity politics, ABC's struggling "standard fare" sought controversy and queer exploitation, its logotype dating back to the 1960s, to entice young and perhaps sexually questioning viewers. Such seemingly contradictory motives spoke to ABC's broader investment in the 1970s gay rights movement as a means of reviving and elevating its corporate brand.

[220] Ibid: 103.
[221] See: Travis Vogan, "*Monday Night Football* and the Racial Roots of the Network TV Event," *Television and New Media* 18, no. 3 (2016): 235-251.

Stuck in the Middle with You: NBC's Incorporation of "Everyday" Gay Storylines

NBC's *The Bold Ones*, like ABC's *Marcus Welby, M.D.* functioned as a network holdover and former awards contender that, by the mid 1970s, had lost its hip cache. The series, though, constituted a franchise for NBC that included four iterations: *The New Doctors* (1969-73)*, The Lawyers* (1969-72), *The Protectors* (1969-70), and *The Senator* (1970-71). By the time NBC aired a mildly "controversial" episode of *The Bold Ones: The New Doctors* titled "Discovery at Fourteen," the network's first gay-themed dramatic episode of the decade, its more awards-besotted counterpart, *The Lawyers,* was nearing the end of its run. "Discovery at Fourteen," proved markedly different from "The Outrage" in that the writers transferred bodily markers of queerness from an adolescent, Cory Merlino (Ronny Howard), to his father, Jack Merlino (Robert Hogan), as the episode largely diminished possibilities that the teen might not be straight. Despite this insistence, though, *The New Doctors* sought to normalize gayness through "expert" spokespersons like the character Dr. Amanda Fallon (Jane Wyman), a sympathetic physician, thereby circumventing protest from groups like the NGTF and offering a surrogate for discourses of homosexuality on an "everyday" program.

The episode fits with NBC's network framing in the 1970s, which Elana Levine describes in "Sex as a Weapon: Programming Sexuality in the 1970s" as "[lacking] the clear identity that its competitors had attained; it was much like the middle child lost between a popular older sibling and a scrappy younger one."[222] NBC's most popular and acclaimed 1970s fare such as *The Waltons* (1971-1981) and *Little House on the Prairie* (1974-1983)

[222] Levine, *Wallowing in Sex*: 225.

harkened back to idyllic American myths of the past, largely sidestepping CBS's and ABC's social-issues driven controversies and recovering those networks' "lost" viewers amidst CBS's "rural purge" and ABC's youth campaigns. Here, Levine discusses how NBC's "efforts helped develop a quite narrow, quite conservative construction of sex on television during a time of potentially radical sexual change,"[223] what she terms an "adult" response to ABC's "kiddie porn." She later cites executive Paul Klein's attempts to offer a "sophisticated take" on teen sexuality and considers productions such as the docudrama *James at 15* (1977) and the made-for-TV movies *Born Innocent* (1974), *Dawn: Portrait of a Teenage Runaway* (1976), and *Alexander: The Other Side of Dawn* (1977) in terms of how "the network handled 'adult' subjects but did so without validating non-normative sexuality…keeping with NBC's interests."[224] This in-between strategy on sex, Levine notes, ultimately paled in comparison to the network's more stable "wholesome fare," thereby resulting in a largely inconsequential tenure for Klein.

"Discovery at Fourteen," as an early precursor to the programs that Levine discusses, fits this in-between and largely indistinguishable network identity. Ronny Howard, himself transitioning between playing Sherriff Andy Taylor's precocious but wholesome son, Opie, on CBS's *The Andy Griffith Show* (1960-1968) and teenager Richie Cunningham on ABC's *Happy Days* (then credited as Ron Howard, 1974-1984), portrays fourteen-year old Cory Merlino as physically anguished about his father's homosexuality (and the possibility of his own). Cory enters the hospital and complains of an ulcer that Dr.

[223] Ibid: 228.
[224] Ibid: 236.

Fallon thinks is due to a stressful discovery that the boy's mother, Dee (Lynnette Mettey), wants suppressed. Through talks along the beach with Cory and her own sleuthing, Fallon uncovers the already apparent "big secret" that Cory's dad, Jack, a professional tennis player (which Cory also aspires to be), lives as an out gay man following his divorce from Dee. According to Jack, Cory uncovered his father's homosexuality when the boy dropped by unannounced and encountered a flamboyantly mannered ("obvious," he calls them) group of men at the house. Fallon's reaction, however, relieves the "secret" of its narrative power, thereby deflating the climactic reveal. Dressed in her white lab coat and framed in an authoritative, "straight-on" medium shot, Fallon responds to the shame-stricken Dee:

> Oh, for heaven's sake, you'd think he [Jack] had two heads and warts on all four eyeballs. Now, we're not going to get anywhere until you crawl out of your Victorian caves. These are enlightened times. Lies do not protect, they only postpone the truth.

At this point, a surprising impossible match-on-action transfers the conversation from the quotidian space of Dr. Fallon's office to Peter Merlino's (Jack's disapproving father and family patriarch played by Jim Davis) lavish pseudo-Victorian mansion, thereby bringing an enlightened presence into the aforementioned cave of intolerance (Figure 5).

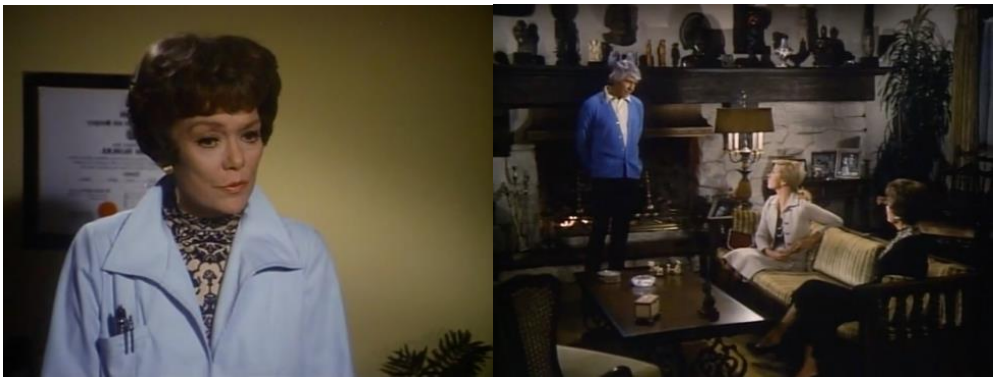

Figure 5: The quotidian and pedagogical space of Dr. Amanda Fallon's (Jane Wyman) office cuts to the extravagant Merlino mansion in *The Bold Ones: The New Doctors* episode "Discovery at Fourteen" (1972), author's screencap.

The following sequence, a hazy montage of Cory's self-discovery and growth, which moves from darkened enclosures to open sunlight, "normalizes" adolescent knowledge of homosexuality. Contradictorily, though, a line from Dr. Fallon about Cory's "recovery," that "he doesn't see the [tennis] game as something he's inherited from his father; he's playing all on his own" juxtaposed against a freeze-frame of Cory hitting the ball, suggests the health and normalcy of restored heterosexuality (Figure 6).

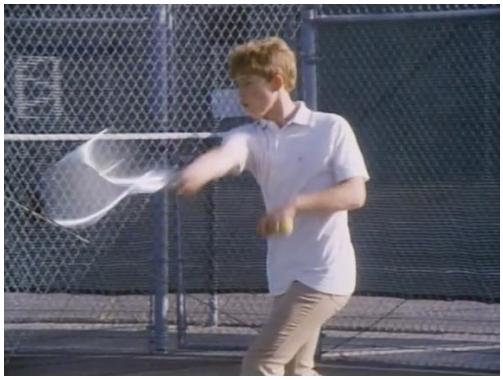

Figure 6: Cory Merlino's (Ronny Howard) athletic prowess and heterosexuality restored at the end of *The Bold Ones: The New Doctors* episode "Discovery at Fourteen" (1972), author's screencap.

The episode plays it both ways, serving in its penultimate sequence as a CBS-style liberal social conscious despite previously relying on exploitative narrative framing in the mode of ABC. Here, *The Bold Ones* discursively ends up in the mushy middle, constructing a

"common sense" approach to gay tolerance that rather unambiguously construes heterosexuality as a cherished and sustainable status quo. Indeed, Joe Wlodarz compares "Discovery at Fourteen" unfavorably to the *Marcus Welby M.D.* episode "The Outrage," in noting that the former "ultimately disavows the crisis of both gay male visibility and paternity by insisting that Cory's interest in tennis doesn't necessarily mean he's a chip off the old block."[225] From this standpoint, the episode, show, and network all denote static averageness.

Still, the primetime drama managed to skip notice and, therefore, overt politicization in the popular press while still offering opportunities for queer exploration, including a visit to a gay bar (courtesy of Dr. Fallon as audience surrogate/tour guide) and, for part of the episode, a gay parental alternative to the Merlino family's unbending patriarch, Peter. If anything, outlets such as the *New York Times* mentioned *The Bold Ones: The New Doctors* in terms of its blasé presentation, with John O'Connor lamenting "if taboo subjects are going to be used for little more than injecting titillation into inane plots, they should be left taboo."[226] His preference for continued homosexual invisibility over *The Bold Ones'* tactics, however, discounts NBC's ability to court audiences turned off by the early 1970s branding of CBS and ABC though still amenable to gay storylines. The ageism and classism tied to understandings of quality programs and networks worked to marginalize gay entries like "Discovery at Fourteen," programs that *The New York Times* and its ilk considered stale TV holdovers. In fact, *The Bold Ones: The New Doctors* featured more frank

[225] Wlodarz, "We're Not All So Obvious": 102.
[226] John J. O'Connor, "TV: Homosexuality is Subject of Two Programs," *New York Times,* November 3, 1972, ProQuest.

discussions of gay sexuality in this episode than did *That Certain Summer* while also placing gay men within the realm of "everyday life," longstanding episodic medical dramas, rather than employing their presence to sell "event" television. Considering the "failed" in-betweenness of this marketing profile, however, NBC would only arrive at a destination of gay "quality" with its novelized, awarded, and critically lauded 1980s primetime serials.

CHAPTER 3: QUALITY TRANSFORMATIONS, THE AIDS EPIDEMIC, AND GAY TELEVISION IDENTITY INTO THE REAGAN ERA

As Jane Feuer has explained, conventions of "quality" programming changed to reflect narrative and stylistic "sophistication" in the early-mid 1980s. Feuer's germinal 1986 study, "The MTM Style," assessed how Mary Tyler Moore and Grant Tinker's production company grew to accommodate serialized programs with a "memory," largely as a consequence of both time-shifting technologies like the Video Cassette Recorder (VCR) and the three major networks' financial need to remain competitive with niche cable outlets. She writes that, "one can see in [*The Mary Tyler Moore Show*'s dramatic spinoff] *Lou Grant* the beginnings of the multiple-plot-line construction claimed as one of *Hill Street* [*Blues*]' great innovations in primetime…the series is seen as possessing a history, moving it away from the ahistorical sitcom genre and towards the continuing serial."[227] Politically, such shows and their corresponding production company and network strategies revolved around intertextuality, a form of knowing awareness amongst writers and viewers that allows them to engage with a text's self-reflexivity through a privileged subjectivity.[228] Feuer underscores that spectatorship is a classed position both in market and ideological terms. Richly intertextual television series "[permit] the quality audience to enjoy a form of

[227] Feuer, "The MTM Style": 67-68.

[228] Gendered and classed understandings of the "prime-time" audience demographic allowed for these series to be considered qualitatively important and distinctive over genre shows slated for daytime hours (such as soap operas), which had exhibited the "complexities" of seriality, ensemble casts, and topical issues since the radio era. Furthermore, the "cinematic" rather than "videographic" look of later MTM shows "advanced" the company's "zero-sum" aesthetic (emblematic of *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*) to Lou Grant's Emmy-worthy cinematic look and narrative "sophistication." Here, the term "art" entered the lexicon of prime-time TV descriptors, sometimes to the exclusion of "relevance." In addition to Feuer, see: Caldwell, *Televisuality*; Lentz, "Quality versus Relevance"; Christine Gledhill, "Speculations on the Relationship between Soap Opera and Melodrama," *Quar. Rev. of Film and Video* 14, no. 1-2 (1992): 103-124.

television which is seen as more literate, more stylistically complex, and more psychologically 'deep' than ordinary TV fare."[229] She highlights an ideology of "elite" programming that, while purportedly working to promote progressive ideals, actually aligns with neoliberal tenets of Reaganism, an argument made more direct in *Seeing Through the Eighties,* where she observes that "the quality TV tradition of the family of coworkers transformed easily into the work-obsessed yuppie values system of the 1980s."[230] While such early-to-mid 1980s shows "progressed" in terms of narrative structure, this attribute was often erroneously applied to their governing politics.

This chapter links the "ascent" of serialized quality television with the growing representation of the AIDS epidemic in American media. While awards organizations and popular critics came to laud what they considered to be complex shows dealing with homosexuality, such programs often used gay men as access points to narrative "sophistication" and "edgy" cache. These niche series within the purportedly mass medium of network TV cemented correlations between LGBT communities and condescending, upper-class postmodern television address. They also eclipsed more playful renditions of gay life on television, most notably on ABC and CBS. Popular press decreed many "procedurals" as dated, homophobic throwbacks to episodic crime/medical dramas of earlier decades. NBC, as an institution regaining the "quality" pedigree initially conferred on it in the 1920s, proved complicit in "privatizing" and, therefore, delaying the national response to AIDS as their fiction and news programming often blamed wayward

[229] Ibid: 80.
[230] Feuer, *Seeing Through the Eighties*: 68.

individuals for the disease even whilst they claimed accolades for enlightened liberalism, supposedly filling the public service void of President Reagan's missing-in-action administration. In fact, "quality" television in the 1980s expanded the gulf between the medium's "artistic development" and political viability.

Healing Through Quality TV: AIDS Public Pedagogy and NBC's Quality Rebranding

NBC's quality ascent during the early Reagan years relied in large part on urgent, depictions of gay men suffering through trauma of the emergent AIDS epidemic. During the 1970s, the network remained stuck with a muddled, precarious identity and broadcast several gay-themed episodes of popular but critically dismissed crime procedurals such as *Police Woman* and *The Rockford Files* that largely paled in national attention against CBS' slate of "relevance" shows accredited to Norman Lear's Tandem Productions and Mary Tyler Moore & Grant Tinker's MTM Enterprises. NBC's gradual shift to "cutting edge" prime-time melodramas such as *Hill Street Blues* (1981-1987) and *St. Elsewhere* (1982-1988) in the early-to-mid 1980s, though, worked to establish a "novelized," brand of politically charged serial programming, which popular scholar Robert Thompson retrospectively hailed in 1996 as a "new genre" of quality TV. Beginning in 1983, NBC capitalized on the AIDS epidemic, then understood principally as a gay disease,[231] as key to the network's social rebranding. A 1983 episode of the acclaimed medical drama *St. Elsewhere*, titled "AIDS and Comfort," wove a variety of public service announcements into

[231] The non-medical but pervasive popular press acronym for the disease, coined by the *New York Times* in May of 1982, was GRID (Gay-Related Immune Deficiency) and remained until 1983 when AIDS (Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome) became the standard nomenclature.

its dramatic arc and forged a message of liberal tolerance in its pedagogical address. Gays, through the remainder of the 1980s, were contextualized on NBC as tragic medicalized specimens, hospital-bound teaching tools for straight tolerance under the auspices of auteur-driven television art.[232] Although, the network's lauded 1985 TV film *An Early Frost*, about a gay man with AIDS coming out to his family, sought to break from this discourse in some regards as a mass television "event," the movie's medicalized paratexts, including a Tom Brokaw-anchored news addendum and a Health and Human Services commissioned pamphlet, reframed NBC as the (heterosexual) adult in the room at a moment of governmental disregard for gay lives, thereby simultaneously spectacularizing and minimizing queer experience. The network's newfound awards prestige, as its programs became top Emmy and Peabody recipients, further validated NBC's pedagogical authority on gay issues.

In 1983, the same year that *St. Elsewhere*'s "AIDS and Comfort" episode premiered, NBC began its marketing campaign "Be There," a prompt toward live spectacle and enlightened multicultural entertainments that could not be missed. Lines within the promotional jingle included "there's something in the air for you and me there" and "look around everything will look so new there,"[233] and these lyrics overlapped shots from Reagan-era staples of racial reconciliation programming such as *The A-Team* (1983-1987),

[232] Depictions of sexual "otherness" in quality television of the 1980s almost always revolved around white, middle/upper-middle class cisgender men (and occasionally women), eschewing any degree of intersectionality and upholding the limited/limiting imagination of non-straight subjectivities on network television.
[233] ApotheounSTK, "NBC Fall 1983 (Be There)," YouTube, Posted August 08, 2011, Accessed April 14, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ocJsiJuViFc&t=55s.

Diff'rent Strokes (NBC, 1978-1985 and ABC, 1985-1986), and *The Facts of Life* (1979-1988) as well as brief clips of "edgy" and cinematically stylistic dramas like *Hill Street Blues* and *St. Elsewhere.* As Amanda Lotz observes in "Must-See TV: NBC's Dominant Decades," the network's 1980s branding still relied predominantly on mass appeal programming despite the impending threats of cable and video, though NBC worked more aggressively than its competitors to incorporate marginal characters. Lotz writes that, "NBC's winning strategy in the 1980s was to schedule shows that relied on universal stories of family, friendship, and mystery that drew on underrepresented groups in casting,"[234] and her contention reflects Herman Gray's understanding of "assimilationist" TV during the Reagan years that "constructed a United States where the historic and contemporary consequences of structured social inequality and a culture deeply inflected and defined by racism are invisible and inconsequential to the lives of its citizens."[235] While NBC's early 1980s promotional materials highlighted "coming together" vis a vis the network's sitcom revival with shows like *Cheers* (1982-1993), *Diff'rent Strokes,* and *Family Ties* (1982-1989) that afforded a presentation of national assembly and cross-cultural reunion, NBC's loss-leader medical and crime dramas were sold as exemplars of gritty social realism that would come to define its later 1990s "quality" brand. Lotz notes that network executives Grant Tinker and Brandon Tartikoff decreed the birth of such low-rated dramas "the train-wreck of 1983" yet channeled these productions to "deliver the viewers most highly prized by advertisers [via NBC's] ability to create distinctive programming and take certain content

[234] Lotz, "Must See TV": 263.
[235] Herman Gray, *Watching Race: Television and the Struggle for Blackness* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1995): 86.

and scheduling risks."[236] While programs like *St. Elsewhere* and, later, *An Early Frost* offered an early precedent for this classed, niche tactic, they also incorporated pedagogical appeals for mass audiences to engage quality TV as a "high-minded" moral prerogative linked with social wellness. Consequently, both shows received George Foster Peabody Awards, then relatively uncommon for explicitly commercial fare and reserved for "programs that demonstrate how media can defend the public interest, encourage empathy with others, and teach us to expand our understanding of the world around us."[237]

Indeed, one pivotal way that these newly awards-besotted contenders proclaimed "difference" was to build a gay-themed social conscience into NBC's multicultural address. While the other major networks, ABC and CBS, capitalized on cross-over gay viewership through camp-coded primetime soap operas such as *Dallas* (CBS, 1978-1991) and *Dynasty* (ABC, 1981-1989) and "mistaken identity" comedy plots on shows like *The Love Boat* (ABC, 1977-1986), *Taxi* (ABC, 1978-1982), and *Too Close for Comfort* (ABC, 1980-1983 and Syndication, 1984-1987), the "proud peacock" largely opted out of non-straight representation in its "everyday" programming, reserving LGBT storylines for "exceptional" dramatic specials. The network, for instance, attempted to inject controversy into its dismally rated *St. Elsewhere* with the episode "AIDS and Comfort," then promoted as the first fictional program to tackle the AIDS epidemic. The show's co-creator, Bruce Paltrow, commented to Patrick Goldstein of the *Los Angeles Times* prior to the episode's airing that,

[236] Lots, "Must See TV": 264.
[237] "Who We Are," Peabody Awards, Accessed April 14, 2019, http://www.peabodyawards.com/about#messagedirector.

"we're not trying to make a nice, polite show—who needs another one of those?"[238] but Paltrow's response arose from a question about the show's unpopularity and worked to bolster *St. Elsewhere's* daring storylines as a critical prestige point. The paper's specific coverage of "AIDS and Comfort," though, proved minimal, with only a small write-up in an "of special interest" scheduling box synopsizing that, "Dr. White (Terrance Knox) learns that one of his patients has AIDS."[239] The hourlong drama, by contrast, served as an urgent self-help intervention as the medical team members chastise and heroically reform a closeted city councilman, Anthony Gifford, who they initially accuse of cowardice and hypocrisy in keeping his disease and sexual orientation private. Medical images throughout, replete with "isolation: needle precaution" warnings and medium close-ups of doctors aggressively scrubbing down, cue the viewer to an environment of panic and stigma, hammered home through a B-plot about the hospital's imperiled blood donation drive. The young Dr. Knox's desire to transfer away from his AIDS-stricken patient and the staff's unwillingness to give blood provide "teachable moments" wherein older, wiser superiors intervene and offer "correct" knowledge about transmission to their colleagues and NBC's viewership. These same liberal-minded professionals compel Councilman Gifford to "disclose" both his condition and homosexuality, which occurs at episode's end via radio and, therefore, deprives viewers of Gifford's subjectivity beyond an earlier stare into the mirror to denote the man's shame and unsustainable duality. All the while, NBC functions as the "adult in the room," adopting the combined perspective of Doctors

[238] Patrick Goldstein, "'St. Elsewhere': NBC's New Medical Show," *Los Angeles Times,* July 8, 1982, ProQuest.
[239] "Television: Of Special Interest," *The New York Times,* December 21, 1983, ProQuest.

Westphall and Craig and Nurse Rosenthal in stepping up to alleviate discrimination and motivate self-betterment.

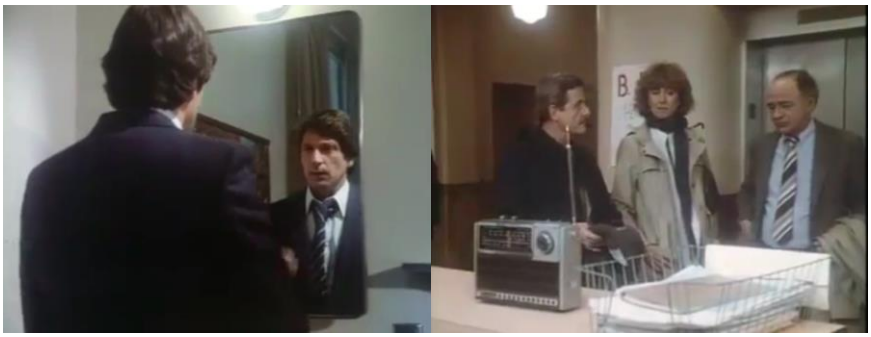

Figure 7: An ashamed Councilman Gifford (Michael Brandon) takes a hard look in the mirror as (from left) Dr. Craig (William Daniels), Nurse Rosenthal (Christina Pickles), and Dr. Westphall (Ed Flanders) mourn his life and candidacy, author's screencap.

Popular press outlets responded to this approach with recognition of NBC's superior standing, awards pedigree, and, therefore, its responsibility to uphold a public service ethos. In an especially notable 1986 *Chicago Tribune* piece, journalist Steve Daly unfavorably compared AIDS storylines in ABC's programs *Mr. Belvedere* and *Hotel* to *St. Elsewhere* but warned NBC to avoid similarly "exploitative" fare, writing:

> There is a qualitative difference between [shows like] *St. Elsewhere* and *Mr. Belvedere*. The difference is that the former offers a legitimate reason to watch your TV. The latter offers a solid reason to sell it. The risks are far greater for *St. Elsewhere*, a decent program with an audience consisting of people who know their ZIP codes from their area codes. When not much is demanded (e.g., *Hotel*), not much is expected. A choice like the one being made in Wednesday`s episode, where Caldwell learns that he has apparently contracted the illness through contact with a

female prostitute, could undo almost four years of good will with a devoted but critical audience.[240]

In declaring an upscale, introspective, and *critical* audience the collective guardians of moral and physical health, Daly rejected "everyday" encounters with sexual difference and, despite his praise for *St. Elsewhere,* blamed NBC for "[getting] the hospital gurney going…on primetime's ghoulish fascination with AIDS"[241] via the highly lauded TV movie melodrama *An Early Frost*. That production, compared with *St. Elsewhere*'s slim viewership, earned a 23.3 share with 34 million viewers to end up number one in the Nielsen ratings which, for Daly, spoke to NBC's growing favor for profits over its moral commitments to discerning audiences.

Regardless of Daly's criticism, though, *An Early Frost* proved a much more discussed, praised, and awarded signifier of NBC's sociopolitical revamping than "AIDS and Comfort," despite airing two years later in November of 1985. Unlike the *St. Elsewhere* episode, which sought the status of event television but was, to the chagrin of its production team and journalists like Daly, relegated to unexceptional writeups in newspaper programming schedules, *An Early Frost* garnered a successful marketing campaign as groundbreaking and educationally necessary appointment television. Numerous advertisements evoked critical praise to help sell the movie, about a young Chicago lawyer coming out to his parents and disclosing his disease, as ethically mandated viewing. A spot broadcast a week prior to its premier insisted that "this is not an *ordinary* movie, *An Early Frost* tells you

[240] Steve Daly, "'St. Elsewhere' Contracts a Problem With AIDS," *Chicago Tribune,* January 31, 1986, Accessed April 14, 2019, https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-xpm-1986-01-31-8601080556-story.html.
[241] Ibid.

more about AIDS than many news stories or hysterical gossip can,"[242] framing the program as an antidote to sensationalism, a calm, rational, tolerant, and, above all, factual narrative that would inculcate these same values in NBC viewers. Moreover, the film featured a governmentally composed "viewer's guide" as the Reagan administration's department of Health and Human Services, headed by Margaret Heckler, partially outsourced responsibilities of AIDS prevention to television. Heckler reasoned in a retrospective interview with PBS's *Frontline* that "throwing money at the problem was exactly the kind of philosophy that President Reagan would have hated and was not authorized,"[243] compelling cheaper, less-effective methods of instilling personal responsibility through national education. The pamphlet poses not only "identificatory," introspective questions posed to (presumably straight) viewers about how they might interact with AIDS-inflicted family/friends based on the movie's characters/situations but also a fact sheet that ends with a section titled "Can AIDS be Prevented?" Its definitive answer, "yes," relocated burden of halting contagion from HHS to 1.) vaguely determined individuals and groups that should "distribute the AIDS fact sheet in [their] communities" by "leaving copies in waiting areas, library reading rooms, churches and synagogues" and 2.) reckless "at risk" individuals who might endanger the population through dangerous activities, including "having sex with multiple partners or with persons who have had multiple partners," and

[242] Sean Mc, "An Early Frost 1985 NBC Movie Promo # 1," YouTube, Uploaded June 13, 2015, Accessed April 14, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cDtpLOBKdyg.
[243] Featured in the Renata Simone produced episode of *Frontline,* "The Age of AIDS," PBS, May 30, 2006.

who, therefore, must properly surveil their behavior or be taught to do so.[244] As sociologist Robert Crawford notes in "Health as a Meaningful Social Practice," such appeals relied on an ethos of personal responsibility for achieving mind-body holism, a "super-value" that "equated failure to achieve health or seek it [with] a failure to embrace life, an inability to master one's emotions or to appreciate the spiritual dimensions of being."[245] The HHS guide's capitalized clause "Made Possible by NBC," in this way, recognized the network (long decreed "America's Network") as an arbiter and guardian of national wellness.

NBC's self-righteous positioning, however, conflicted with more overtly "exploitation" oriented paratexts that redefined *An Early Frost* in terms of genre and mission. A separate 1985 PSA-style ad refashioned the production as a horror picture rather than the "sensitive, honest, and tender story" described in HHS/NBC's pamphlet. In this spot, an announcer ominously asks "What if your son had AIDS?" as a still photo of Aidan Quinn in the lead role of Michael Pierson slowly drains of color before fading to white. Overlaid with excerpts of distorted, disturbing dialogue, the spot depicts a vanishing body and again asks spectators *not* afforded Michael's wasting subjectivity, "What would you do?"[246] Despite the network's purported objective to rebut sensationalist reporting, the program also included a follow-up Tom Brokaw news special that revived years-old footage of dying activists like Billy Walker and Bobbi Campbell plagued with Kaposi's

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[244] "An Early Frost, Viewer's Guide," compiled by Cultural Information Services in consultation with NBC November 11, 1985, Box 136, Folder 85060 ENT, George Foster Peabody Awards Collection, Series 2. Television Entries, ms 3000, Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, The University of Georgia Libraries.
[245] Robert Crawford, "Health as a Meaningful Social Practice," *Health: An Interdisciplinary Journal for the Social Study of Health, Illness and Medicine* 10, no. 4 (2006): 411.
[246] Sean Mc, "An Early Frost 1985 NBC Movie Promo # 2," YouTube, Uploaded June 13, 2015, Accessed April 14, 2019. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eVlwmGjewdI.

Sarcoma and charted a terrifying, unknowable course in terms of treatment, avoidance, vaccination, and cure. Such paratexts, perhaps unwittingly, exposed the solutions-based pamphlet as a ruse standing in for full-throated governmental response and appropriations.

Press outlets and awards organizations, though, largely staked out a self-congratulatory stance for recognizing "better television" as part and parcel to communal healing and understanding around AIDS. The Peabody judges commended *An Early Frost* (without ever using the term "gay") for its "choice to avoid gratuitous scenes which capitalize on public and press panic and to concentrate instead on the impact of this deadly disease on family and personal relationships"[247] and, a year earlier, offered *St. Elsewhere*'s second season praise as "distinguished television, set apart from other dramatic series by its depth of characterization."[248] Robert Thompson's 1996 book *Television's Second Golden Age: From Hill Street Blues to ER* largely upheld these myths of quality television's enlightened 1980s contributions as Thompson, seeking to define a new genre, wrote that, "the subject matter of quality TV tends toward the controversial; *St. Elsewhere* presented the first prime-time story about AIDS and other quality series frequently included some of television's earliest treatments of subjects like homosexuality."[249] In a mid-2000s TV Land rebroadcast of *An Early Frost*, Thompson lobbed similar praise at NBC during commercial-break commentary and remarked on the writers and producers' courageous stances

[247] "An Early Frost," Peabody Awards.
[248] "St. Elsewhere," Peabody Awards, Accessed April 14, 2019, http://www.peabodyawards.com/award-profile/st.-elsewhere.
[249] Thompson, *Television's Second Golden Age*: 15.

against standards and practices personnel to limit its pro-gay politics. Such statements unwittingly diminish queer investment in "everyday television" in order to uphold quality TV as intrinsic to social awareness about AIDS and gay rights in the 1980s. These classed appraisals of "complex/innovative" programs also refuse to recognize how selective canonization maintains rigid hierarchies of taste at the expense of marginal subjectivity.

In contrast, as my next sections will discuss, gay men maintained a cult fascination with ABC network soap operas like *Dynasty* and *Hotel,* fandoms often supplemented with Reaganite idealizations of wealth, while CBS presented gay life more nonchalantly on recurring network staples. ABC's programs unabashedly offered weekly parties replete with camp iconography rather than "event status" melodramas capitalizing on gay death, though, in the case of *Hotel,* also included numerous (critically admonished) AIDS narratives that integrated the disease into everyday goings on at the fictional Fairmont Hotel in San Francisco. Meanwhile, CBS's medical shows and crime procedurals such as *Trapper John, M.D.* and *Murder, She Wrote* overtook NBC's early 1970s strategy of "normalizing" homosexuality for straight viewers, albeit to popular effect.

ABC's Cultivation and Managing of Camp in the 1980s

In the l970s, TV producer Aaron Spelling became so ubiquitously linked with ABC's programming success that industry executives dubbed the network "Aaron's Broadcasting Company."[250] This title, however, came alongside criticisms that Spelling's shows

[250] Bill Carter, "Aaron Spelling, Prolific Television Producer, Dies at 83," *New York Times,* June 24, 2006, ProQuest.

contributed to, and perhaps defined, the television wasteland. At the Television Academy Hall of Fame's 1996 tribute to Spelling, *Dynasty* star John Forsythe indicated that his former boss' work was so prolific that there is a "good chance you will never finish a retrospective of his work" but joked that "if you were to sit down and read rave reviews for Aaron's work you could start at 5:59 and finish in time for the 6-o'clock news."[251] As a number of his contemporaries observed, however, Spelling, a child of Jewish immigrants to the United States, maintained investments in social justice through TV programming, and his shows featured numerous gay and queer characters. At the same time, the producer's "trivial" 1970s programs such as *Charlie's Angels* (ABC, 1976-1981), *The Love Boat* (ABC, 1977-1986), and *Starsky and Hutch* (ABC, 1975-1979) remain popularly critiqued for their bawdy heterosexuality, while his few critical successes, including the Jay Presson Allen-created drama *Family* (ABC, 1976-1980), are regularly cited for compelling "realistic" gay and lesbian visibility. This trend continued into the 1980s as Spelling's lavish primetime soaps like *Dynasty* (ABC, 1981-1989) and *Hotel* (ABC, 1983-1988) met with disdain for purportedly glorifying Reagan-era wealth despite their continuous indulgence of queer theatricality and regular inclusion of LGBTQ-storylines, which the other two networks heavily lacked. By contrast, one of the producer's rare moments of critical adulation after *Family* came with HBO's belated 1993 AIDS drama, *And the Band Played On*, a solemn one-

[251] Television Academy Hall of Fame Awards Telecast, 1996, VHS, from the Aaron Spelling Collection, Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center at Boston University.

off movie that more closely reflected NBC's 1980s "quality" contextualization of gay lives.[252]

As Elana Levine notes, most of Spelling's 1970s productions largely drew critical disenchantment and became synonymous with raunchy heterosexual displays in contrast to the network's more denotatively gay and (ultimately) lauded shows like *Soap* (ABC, 1977-1981). Levine writes, for example, with regard to the hit ABC/Spelling show, *Charlie's Angels,* that, "it became a scapegoat for all television sex to those groups seeking to regulate content, as well as being a target for feminists and a source of derision for many."[253] At the same time, as she and other academics discuss, Spelling's slate of shows, along with ABC's ratings juggernaut, *Three's Company,* far surpassed the other two networks in terms of consistent gay and queer storylines on popular programs. Only the more polarizing and niche-targeted Spelling outing *Family*, however, gained awards attention while "everyday" gay affects became lost in the broader discourse of throwaway heterosexual titillation that Levine discusses. Media theorist Amy Villarejo, recognizing such omissions, writes about a *Starsky and Hutch* episode, "Death in a Different Place" (1977), "what distinguishes it from its companion 'gay episodes' may be simply the volume of its gayness; the proliferation of gay characters, sights, sounds, places, and issues seeps into the queerness of the buddy relationship between the two protagonists…by the time the episode is over, everything's queer."[254] By contrast, Levine discusses *Soap*—a more explicit text in the queer TV canon

[252] *And the Band Played On* was initially slated as an NBC production but the creative team cited the broadcast network's skittishness around gay content as a reason for its ultimate production for/airing on HBO.
[253] Levine, *Wallowing in Sex*: 147.
[254] Amy Villarejo, *Ethereal Queer: Television, Historicity, Desire* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014: 12.

(and not a Spelling show)—in terms of its ambiguous and fraught attempts to placate *both* NGTF protesters and socially conservative viewers/critics by making the openly gay character Jodie Dallas (Billy Crystal) "a multi-dimensional non-stereotypical representation [in later episodes]" but one whose "gay identity becomes less and less significant to his identity."[255] Whereas *Soap*'s perceivable cutting-edge characters, genre reconstructions, and self-aware callbacks earned the program seventeen Emmy nomination and several wins in major categories, critics overlooked or reviled much of ABC's other queer overtures—especially as relates to Spelling. Moreover, much of *Soap*'s critical appreciation arrived retrospectively and without much attention paid to its popular (and, of course, lewd) beginnings.

Despite historical revisions that position *Soap* as *always* having been socio-politically unorthodox and groundbreaking, its initial queer characteristics resulted more from ABC's late-1970s industrial context than the showrunners' politics of gay "respectability." A 1977 article in the *Los Angeles Times* referred to a now infamous leaked memo from ABC's Department of Standards & Practices—the "Soap Memo"—as the network's attempt to "tame a lusty show."[256] The *Los Angeles Times'* editorialization also cited Paul Witt, *Soap*'s producer, who recalled, for instance, that ABC demanded "the word 'boff' be deleted as a synonym for sexual intercourse" but that "we met with standards and practices and ended up with three 'boffs' instead of five" (ibid). Such comments and press framings were, in fact, emblematic of what Levine describes as "an industry-wide change in

[255] Levine, *Wallowing in Sex*: 190.
[256] "Taming a Lusty Show, Censor's Memo Tells How," *Los Angeles Times,* June 27, 1977, ProQuest.

network dominance as ABC rose to the number-one ratings spot…now suggestive sexual humor would move to the *center* of TV shows (Levine 2007, 181, my emphasis). As writers developed increased sensitivity toward activist organizations such as the National Gay Task Force (NGTF), coupled with fear of controversy, scripts picked up in "dramatic" resonance, eschewing some of the sharp, tongue-in-cheek dialogue that echoed gay camp culture. A number of annotated scripts in the J.D. Lobou Collection at the University of California Los Angeles' Charles Young Library include crossed-out exchanges that have little to do with explicitly vulgar/offensive language like "boff." Instead, excised dialogue is laced with innuendo, such as when, in a script for the show's twenty-third episode, Jodie's sexuality again comes into question after numerous erotically charged encounters with a woman named Carol. While Jodie's stepfather, Burt Campbell, is overjoyed about this development, his stepbrother Chuck quips (via a sarcastic and homoerotically inclined ventriloquist dummy/alter ego, Bob), about the couple's planned trip to the beach, "Wonderful, she'll learn to swim, he'll fall in love with a lifeguard!" [257] The line was changed to "I hope she brings a good book!" In a consistent pattern, episode writers changed other dialogue spoken by and about Jodie that emphasized his effeminate characteristics and/or sexual interests in men.

Furthermore, these revisions, absent from many early first season scripts, increased in tandem with the show's critical status and political serialization. In a more sensational 1978 article by M. George Haddad in *Modern People* magazine, misleadingly titled "*Soap*'s

[257] Susan Harris, *Soap,* "Episode 023," First Draft Script, February 25, 1978, Box 2, Folder 12, J.D. Lobue television scripts (Collection PASC 199), UCLA Library Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, UCLA.

Gay Jody [*sic*]: My Secret Wish is to Become Pregnant!," actor Billy Crystal explicitly commented that "Jody [*sic*] is a much tamer version of what might have been if gay activists hadn't gotten after the producer, Susan Harris, and the network…[he] was supposed to be more outrageous than the way I play him, but we had to tone him down."[258] Despite some of Crystal's more homophobic and transphobic asides in the piece, he confided that, despite public protests about the character's effeminacy, "I like Jody [*sic*] and I'm not ashamed to say that if he existed, I'd like to have him for a friend."[259] His comment worked to justify a campy and playful portrayal of Jodie, wherein gendered constructs undergo consistent reinvention, here in a serialized context. Press articles, however, largely framed the show in its first two seasons as either offensive filth or benign nonsense, with a *Time* editorial announcing that "if *Soap* had other comic concerns besides sex, its nastiness wouldn't be so pervasive…unfortunately, [Susan] Harris has none of Norman Lear's redeeming flair for witty social satire."[260] Cecil Smith's *Los Angeles Times* review mockingly sighed that, "*Soap* is a prolonged dirty joke; it's a postcard sold in a Paris alley; it is without cleverness, or style, or subtlety. Its sex jokes are delivered by the shovelful, like manure. And the real problem is *it's not very funny.*"[261] Publications like *The Los Angeles Times* and *Time* that disparaged *Soap* as an irreverent, popular comedy imbued with gay cultural verve,

[258] M. George Haddad, *Modern People,* "Soap's Gay Jody [sic]: My Secret Wish is to Become Pregnant!" n.d., Television Folder, ONE Subject File Collection, Coll2012.001, ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives, Los Angeles, CA.
[259] Ibid.
[260] "Viewpoint: Soap, Betty, and Rafferty: Mary Hartman Without Hart," *Time,* September 12, 1977, Television Folder, ONE Subject File Collection, Coll2012.001, ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives, Los Angeles, CA.
[261] Cecil Smith, "Soap: What the Lather's All About," *Los Angeles Times,* September 13, 1977, Television Folder, ONE Subject File Collection, Coll2012.001, ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives, Los Angeles, CA (my emphasis).

however, commended (or, at minimum, conceded to) its "development" as niche social critique. Coming off of four consecutive Emmy nominations for the sitcom, Katherine Helmond, who portrayed socialite Jessica Tate, told the *Los Angeles Times* in a glowing 1981 interview that "ironically, I think Susan Harris, who created the show, contributed a lot to Americans' understanding of issues like homosexuality and women's rights…I think she helped audiences everywhere learn to deal with their prejudices by helping them laugh at them."[262] Such reframing of the program as an acerbic social teaching tool, an assessment that popular discourse followed only after *Soap* received a steady slew of industry awards and nominations, continues to hold as contemporary critics cite the show as inherently revolutionary in retrospective articles. Writing for *Time* in 2007, James Poniewozik observed in "All-Time 100 TV Shows," that, "the sitcom was unapologetically outrageous, but it wasn't totally outlandish; part of its appeal and daring was that it showed, at the tail end of the sexual revolution, that the real world was changing in ways that soaps could barely keep up with."[263] His article legitimated the program by both obscuring its more irreverent and reviled origins and deriding the soap opera genre to elevate *Soap*'s sitcom innovations. This move diminishes the program's reputation as popular television to recognize it, instead, as an exceptional cult text.

Aaron Spelling's prime-time soap operas, *Dynasty* and *Hotel,* did not meet with similar critical reevaluation despite their serial interest in numerous LGBT issues and immersion in camp style. Press narratives around *Dynasty* did invoke the openly bisexual

[262] Joan Borsten, "'Soap' Star Won't Let Bubble Burst," *Los Angeles Times,* July 18, 1981, ProQuest.
[263] James Poniewozik, "All-TIME 100 TV Shows," *Time*, September 6, 2007, Accessed April 19, 2019, http://time.com/collection/all-time-100-tv-shows/.

(often described as gay) character, Steven Carrington (played first by Al Corly and later, more controversially, by Jack Coleman) but these articles consistently used Steven to forefront ABC's lack of courage in keeping a key player's sexuality ambiguous. Moreover, while most outlets cited *Dynasty*'s camp appeal, articles usually tied its baroque indulgences to Reagan-era excess, failing to both properly interrogate affective relationships between gay audiences and Joan Collins' star image/performance as villain Alexis Carrington and consider the show's queer re-appropriation as parody and performative critique. This contextualization also overlooks Collins' role in shaping Alexis and her industrial clout within *Dynasty*'s production and, therefore, unwittingly ascribes the actress's camp appeal to audience "reading" rather than carefully plotted construction.

Steven Carrington, the first bisexual character in a dramatic serial prime-time program, received extensive press for both his gender-revisionist makeover in season two of *Dynasty* and his supposedly indeterminate sexuality. Gay writer and social critic Armistead Maupin accused the show of "straightening" out Steven and, consequently, betraying the trust and patronage of LGBT viewers; he speculated on a conversation between the show's producers wherein "[Doug] Cramer might have said to Mr. Spelling, 'Find Steven a wife, we have the fags already!'"[264] Maupin's assertions that the network stymied Steven's homosexual love affairs to prevent an inevitable gay kiss seems more than plausible, especially considering Jack Coleman's 1983 statement to *USA Today* that, "It's really almost impossible to have a gay storyline. You can talk about it and hint about it and

[264] Olaf Odegaard, "Is He, or Isn't He? Stephen [*sic*] Carrington's Sexual Ambivalence," *Connection,* March 28-April 11, 1984, Television Folder, ONE Subject File Collection, Coll2012.001, ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives, Los Angeles, CA.

innuendo, but you can't really do it. You just can't put that on primetime TV. The standards won't allow it."[265] Press articles, however, dismissed the character's bisexuality entirely via numerous "Is he, or isn't he?" editorial pieces lamenting Steven's "heterosexualization." In addition to Olaf Odegaard's *Connections* magazine piece in which Maupin is quoted, the *Los Angeles Times* sought to answer the either-or proposition via a 1984 story, "Is Steven Gay? Yes, 'Dynasty' Creators Say." Entertainment journalist John M. Wilson wrote that Spelling and Doug Cramer forcefully denounced Maupin's comments as "a vulgar attack on both of us" but quoted *Dynasty*'s creators Richard and Esther Shapiro as qualifying Steven's marriage to a close friend, Claudia, in terms of how "like straight men, [gay men] want to be fathers, family men."[266] These remarks justified outrage not only by Maupin but by gay media watchdog groups like the NGTF and The Alliance for Gay Artists (AGA), who had previously commended *Dynasty* for "positive portrayals," according to Wilson's article, but viewed ABC's narratives as stripping Steven's sexual/social non-normativity. The actress Pamela Bellwood, who plays Claudia, offered more nuanced insights, however, that spoke to the restrictions inherent in sexual binaries like the ones that Maupin, the NGTF/AGA and *Dynasty*'s production team all defended. Wilson quoted Bellwood as intoning that:

> Armistead Maupin makes an important point in saying that television and movies rarely portray gay people in positive images. However, his tongue-in-cheek use of the statement that you are only gay until you find the right woman is incorrect. My

[265] "Jack Coleman: Straight Talk on 'Dynasty,'" *USA Today,* June 1, 1983, Television Folder, ONE Subject File Collection, Coll2012.001, ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives, Los Angeles, CA.
[266] John M. Wilson, "Is Steven Gay? Yes, 'Dynasty' Creators Say," *Los Angeles Times,* February 26, 1984, Television Folder, ONE Subject File Collection, Coll2012.001, ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives, Los Angeles, CA.

> character did not "save" Steven from a "gay life." Claudia is a "city lady" who went into the marriage with her eyes open, knowing Steven's past and who is fully capable of dealing with his other life. Steven genuinely loved my character early on in the series and the marriage between them was a natural evolvement. Bisexual men can have happy marriages, and that's what we were portraying…a relationship with the potential of enjoying *all* of life's choices.[267]

While Bellwood revised Richard and Esther Shapiro's rationalization for Steven's marriage and suggested sexual fluidity as a defining characteristic of *Dynasty*, she nonetheless reverted to geographical assumptions about why Claudia ("a city girl") might be more amenable to marrying an openly bisexual man. Her comments, while evocative, relocate the Steven Carrington debate to the realm of positive/negative representations based in liberal/urban and rural/conservative dichotomies.

However, both the gay *and* popular appeal of the show resided not with Steven but with an overtly "negative" character, the patriarch Blake Carrington's (John Forsythe) scheming and materialistic ex-wife Alexis (Joan Collins), who many underrepresented minorities embraced as a standard-bearer of defiant performativity. Wilson's article amusingly noted that "spokespersons for ABC and KABC TV, the local [Los Angeles] affiliate said that viewer response on the issue [of Steven's marriage] (prior to the Maupin commentary) has been virtually nonexistent."[268] Whether or not the corporate statement was entirely accurate, gay-identified fans who wrote into numerous mainstream and LGBT-

[267] Ibid (emphasis in original).
[268] Ibid.

specific papers largely eschewed Steven altogether to instead celebrate their infatuation with Alexis/Collins. All, save one, respondent to a question in the lesbian & gay periodical *The West Hollywood Paper*, "Which *Dynasty* character would you like to have dinner with?" answered, unequivocally, Alexis (or, conflating the character and star, Joan Collins). Stephen Michael Fields, both black and presumably queer, forcefully exclaimed, "Alexis! I mean, please—Alexis is the One!" before going on to admiringly observe, "she's the only one smart enough to have any money left…she's the only one who can just take companies, and wreck governors' and senators' lives. I want to have dinner with Alexis—maybe I can learn a few of her tricks and my life would be much more pleasant"[269] Fields not only offers an identification with Alexis but adopts her as a sociopolitical icon of resistance. Another fan, Mondy Hermosa, similarly lauded the character's defiance of traditional gender roles, writing that, "She shows independence in women…she's not the frail type of woman that lets a man take care of her. She can do her own thing, she can be aggressive and do her own thing."[270] The gossip-laden 1990s Joan Collins Fan Club newsletter further allowed fans to adopt Alexis/Collins' subjectivity via a series of diary entries that served as an early fan fiction forum. Accounts within included tongue-in-cheek repartee from the fictional Collins' sexually fluid celebrity cohort. "She" recounted, for instance, an episode where the Italian actress Eleanora Duse commissioned a mug-shot style portrait from John Singer Sargent, "who was reputed not to be the marrying kind." When the artist hastily hashed out a

[269] Mary Gabriel, "Talk of the Town: Which 'Dynasty' Character Would You Like to Have Dinner With?" *The West Hollywood Paper,* May 1-May 8, 1986, Television Folder, ONE Subject File Collection, Coll2012.001, ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives, Los Angeles, CA.
[270] Ibid.

charcoal likeness, according to this scripted anecdote, "[Duse] suddenly leapt up, wafted across the studio, turned at the door and declared to the bewildered artist, 'Mr. Sargent, I wish you a long, happy life with many, many children!'"[271] While retrospective, the newsletter originated from openly gay comedian Julian Clary's flamboyant act, "The Joan Collins Fan Club," from the mid-1980s that offered similar types of imagined fiction and situated the actress in a space of queer idolatry.

Moreover, Collins herself has continually nurtured this image, even playing along to promote gay-devised narrative speculations about her demeanor. She frequently labored from behind the scenes to cultivate her producer image around such "diva" star discourse, thereby bringing LGBT "decoding" practices into realms of industry encoding. Notably, Clary and the Joan Collins Fan Club president Paul Keylock both befriended Collins, with Clary noting several decades after his original act that "we play a lot of poker [together]. She's terribly good, and of course she is Joan Collins, which is a constant thrill."[272] The feeling appeared to have been mutual as the actress repeatedly sought to bolster her gay fanbase through explicit production choices. A memo from her assistant Joanne Sawicki to the screenwriter Robert Rovner about an apparently abandoned film project titled *Jealousy and Hate* revealed Collins' frustrations with Rovner's conception a gay character. Sawicki wrote, relaying her boss' notes, "Nicky [gay confidante] must always remain by Dolores'

[271] Paul Keylock, "Joan Collins Diary," The Joan Collins Fan Club, 1999, Box 3, Folder 8, Joan Collins Collection, Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center at Boston University.
[272] Cole Moreton, "Julian Clary Tells How He Started out as Joan Collins's One-man Fan Club... and Now She's a Friend, Why She Stars in His New Stand-up Show," Daily Mail Online, March 19, 2016, Accessed April 19, 2019, https://www.dailymail.co.uk/home/event/article-3496807/Julian-Clary-tells-started-Joan-Collins-s-one-man-fan-club-s-friend-stars-new-stand-show.html.

[Collins' character] side. They musn't become outwardly estranged. This relationship is very rich with pathos and needs to be retained."[273] Furthermore, Collins (via Sawicki) contested the last-minute actions of a straight, male hero, conjecturing that, "it is not believable to have Rico (love interest) save the women – especially as they are both angry with him for two-timing them – why would he have any sway??? Far more funny [*sic*] to have Nicky and some of his gay hunky stuntman friends swoop in to save them."[274] These comments, which question the necessity of Rico, "a superfluous male character," at all in a production that was supposed to "be a female two-hander"[275] captured Collins' desire to construct and inhabit spaces of feminist and queer agency.

While *Dynasty* and Collins mapped out television territory based in reprieve and identification for gay men mired in a national health crisis, another Spelling evening soap opera, *Hotel,* explicitly tackled both sexual fluidity and stigma around AIDS via popular address. A *New York Times* article on ABC's ratings slippage in the 1980s, however, posited Spelling shows like *Hotel* as stymying the network's creative energy while its head executives, Leonard Goldenson and Frederick Pierce, sought to develop "quality" projects for entry into cable. "Part of the problem," the article states, "is that ABC has relied too heavily on Aaron Spelling, whose programs constitute 42 percent of the network's primetime schedule."[276] The article considered that ABC's success in the previous decade relied on comedy and that the network might recover its losses with a change in genre

[273] Joanne Sawicki, Memo to Robert Rovner, n.d. (c. 1994), Box 4, Folder 14, Joan Collins Collection, Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center at Boston University.
[274] Ibid.
[275] Ibid.
[276] Sally Bedell Smith, "An ABC Strategy Goes Wrong," *New York Times,* December 9, 1984, ProQuest.

focus. This ratings discussion, however, masked the paper's outright disgust with *Hotel* as a commercial property. John O'Connor's 1983 review lambasted the program, summing up that Spellings' show was "slick, outrageously manipulative, and blatantly ridiculous…it should enjoy a good run on commercial television."[277] Right as *Hotel* set to premier, Howard Rosenberg of the *Los Angeles Times* self-knowingly mused that "Aaron Spelling cannot get respect…[from] the critics. You know, those sniveling snooties who write nasty columns about the public for liking what they—the critics—don't like."[278] Even with this winking awareness, though, Rosenberg went on to equate Spelling with amoral monetary gain, casting taste not merely as difference but as moral signifier. As part of his interview with Spelling, Rosenberg rhetorically asked his readers, "[Spelling's] shows have enriched Aaron Spelling but have they enriched America?"[279] Repeated references to the "mind candy man" in this interview posited the producer and his shows as serial evaders of the "public good" and worked to frame *Hotel* as another instance of exploitative mass fare. Both O'Connor and Rosenberg described the show as leftovers, reheated situations, characters, and set pieces from Spellings' previous ensemble shows like *The Love Boat*.

Hotel did, in fact, employ a single fictive space, The Fairmont Hotel in San Francisco, as setting for the large, celebrity cast's convergences; this device provided a recognizable template for incorporating multiple genre tones (comedy, drama, suspense) into a single episode and imbricating delicate social issues into broad entertainment. As O'Connor rightly (but sarcastically) pointed out, "the idea of juggling several stories in a hotel goes

[277] John J. O'Connor, "TV: ABC Opens New 'Hotel' Series," *New York Times,* September 21, 1983, ProQuest.
[278] Howard Rosenberg, "How to Spell Success, Not Respect," *Los Angeles Times,* January 6, 1983, ProQuest.
[279] Ibid.

back…[to] the 1930s [where], in one instance, there was the spectacularly popular movie *Grand Hotel*. Apart from the faces, nothing much has changed in the formula."[280] I would argue that this construct allowed for Spelling, Cramer and the show's writers, including *Trapper John, M.D.* alumnus James Fritzhand, to fashion at least seven explicitly gay-themed episodes over *Hotel's* series run. Plotlines ran the gamut of fraught issues facing gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people without condescendingly mocking conservative viewers; rather the show engaged public pedagogy from the standpoint of what theorist Gayatri Spivak terms strategic essentialism, employing broad claims/arguments to foster large and diverse coalitions.

An episode from *Hotel*'s third season, "Scapegoats," proves especially instructive here as a casually homophobic (though well-intentioned) bartender at the Fairmont, Frank Jessup (Ken Kercheval), is diagnosed with AIDS and must ultimately seek help from his gay/HIV-negative friend and coworker, Joel Shubert (Leigh McCloskey). Frank's illness, firstly, allowed the episode to abandon "bury your gays" tropes pivotal to the political transformation of straight characters (as evidenced in *St. Elsewhere* and *An Early Frost*). Rather, "Scapegoats" defied the circulation of blame from individual to individual and maintained interest on how definitions of "family" broaden and change amidst medical/social crisis. A liberal-minded character, Christine Francis (Connie Sellecca), does offer a mid-episode monologue about viruses being non-prejudicial and explaining (for the audience, in one-shot medium-close-up) how AIDS is and is not transmitted, but the speech is part of a good-faith conversation amongst hotel managers/employees of various political

[280] O'Connor, "TV: ABC Opens New 'Hotel' Series."

stripes. More importantly, the central relationship revolves around Frank and Joel, who establish a familial bond in the throes of terror; after Frank's wife and son express fears about his potentially hidden affairs with men and/or drug use, Joel confronts mischaracterizations of AIDS while bringing the group together as a coalition of support. The episode focuses on sensibilities of touch, beginning with Frank demanding that Joel not lay a hand on him and ending with an intermingling of fingers that cross in solidarity.

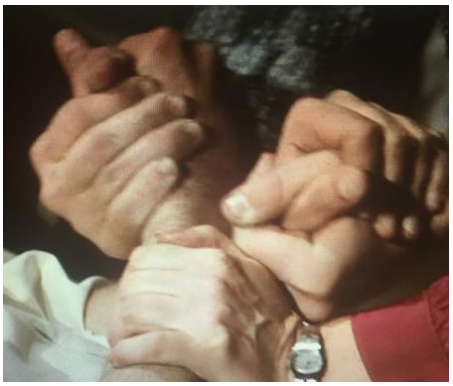

Figure 8: The final shot from the penultimate scene of "Scapegoats" (1986), a third season episode of *Hotel* (author's screencap).

Furthermore, this form of everyday activism is segmented into the episode's other stories, revealing the AIDS narrative not as a "very special" event but as interspersed within the Fairmont's comings and goings. In tandem with *Dynasty* and prior Spelling shows, *Hotel* situated sexual otherness strategically within popular discourse, a tactic that, in part, contributed to critical disinterest in the program during the 1980s and retrospective disregard for its sociopolitical interventions in later decades.

CBS's 1980s Cultural Decline and "Normalized" Gay Portrayals

Following its critically adulated slate of 1970s "relevance" programming, CBS hit a cultural snag by the mid 1980s after its marquee sitcom *M*A*S*H* (1972-1983) concluded and once-popular prime-time soaps like *Dallas* lost their cache amidst competition from cable and video. Tandem and MTM productions continued to cultivate gay-themed quality programming through the late 1970s and into 1980 as shows like the *All in the Family* spinoff *Archie Bunker's Place* (1979-1983)*, WKRP in Cincinnati* (1978-1982)*,* and, most notably, the dramatic procedural *Lou Grant* (1977-1982, descendent from *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*) politically excoriated homophobia on the national stage. *Lou Grant* won an Emmy for outstanding drama series for its 1979 season featuring the acclaimed episode "Cop," about a closeted officer investigating arson at a gay bar and contending with a politics of "outing" victims, and the series earned a Peabody award the previous year as a "program which is first-rate in every respect." Tandem's and MTM's (then connected directly with CBS's brand identity) presumed carte blanch with gay content so infuriated other showrunners that some lodged open complaints in trade press. Danny Arnold, the creator and producer of *Barney Miller* (ABC, 1975-1982), for instance, lamented in *Variety* that, "there used to be a double standard [that] you could be controversial in drama but not in comedy; now there is a triple standard—Norman Lear can deal with it but nobody else can."[281] As a result, the other networks' experiments with gay and queer-themed programming, including but not limited to ABC's flamboyant satire *Soap* and cop dramas

[281] Dave Kaufman, "Arnold's Complaint: Only Lear Can Get Controversy on the Air," *Variety,* December 18, 1974, ProQuest.

Starsky and Hutch (1975-1979) and *The Streets of San Francisco* (1972-1977) as well as NBC's made-for-TV movies *Dawn: Portrait of a Teenage Runaway* (1976) and *Alexander: The Other Side of Dawn* (1978) and police procedurals *Police Woman* ("Trial by Prejudice," 1976) and *The Rockford Files* ("Requiem for a Funny Box," 1977), either failed to receive critical praise or caught flak for exploitative, illiberal plotlines/characterizations, despite their popularity.

ABC, the new ratings champion beginning in 1977 due to network president Fred Silverman's slate of sexually enticing "jiggle" comedies/dramadies, and NBC, a struggling enterprise as of the late 1970s, exposed fissures in CBS's "socially conscious" standing. ABC, as discussed previously, promoted *Soap* as an irreverent challenge to television decorum late in the decade and earned controversy amongst both social conservatives and gay rights activists within the NGTF. The premier episode's high rating (39 share) alongside ABC's new sexually playful hit *Three's Company* (1977-1984), however, pointed toward audience discontent with CBS's ethos of "high minded" gay commentary. In fact, contrary to its Tandem-inspired image, the network itself experienced political blowback for a 1976 episode of its popular drama *Kojak*, "A Need to Know," about a foreign diplomat, Carl Dettrow (Hector Elizondo), who sexually assaults two young boys. Paul Duncan of the NGTF complained about CBS's disregard for "positive" gay representation in a letter to Richard L. Kirschner, the network's Vice President of Programming Practices, with Kirschner then responding back that the episode met with staff approval and arguing (unconvincingly) that a slur for Dettrow as a "fruitcake…was in reference to a lunatic, not a

gay."[282] This battle over semantics hewed closer to ABC's aforementioned disputes with the NGTF about language in *Soap*, while CBS's use of "exploitative" storylines in mainstream genre programs reflected NBC's mode of scooping up viewers disinvested in Tandem/MTM-type messaging. Recognizing *Kojak*'s targeted address, Kirschner expressed little regard for Duncan's concerns, noting simply "we will continue [to be in touch with the NGTF] when necessary,"[283] a dismissive tone that grew dominant as CBS pivoted away from its gay-friendly urbane pedagogy in the early 1980s.

A 1980 documentary, *Gay Power, Gay Politics*, presented a fraught synthesis of liberal education and popular spectacle, opaque in its intentions and target demographic(s), that served as a point of decline for CBS's "relevance" shows, especially amongst gay liberation leaders. According to the program's critics and detractors, the news special was "a freak show for maximum ratings in Des Moines, Valdosta, and Sioux City" that diminished "the gay women and men who spend their lives helping people of all persuasions and who are also attuned to politics."[284] The Los Angeles Committee, a gay and lesbian advocacy organization, began a campaign called "National Operation Tune-Out (NOT) CBS" that, in response to *Gay Power, Gay Politics,* sought to stymie ratings for the network's LA owned-and-operated station KCBS-TV by prompting a boycott during

[282] Richard L. Kirschner, Letter to Paul Duncan, November 10, 1976, Television Folder, ONE Subject File Collection, Coll2012.001, ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives, Los Angeles, CA.
[283] Ibid.
[284] Jack MacFarlane and William McGrath, "Open Letter to William Paley and Harry Reasoner, CBS Television," *Variety,* May 1, 1980, CBS Folder, ONE Subject File Collection, Coll2012.001, ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives, Los Angeles, CA.

"sweeps" week.[285] *The Advocate*, a prominent national gay periodical, amplified The Los Angeles Committee's concerns and, in fact, described CBS's program as a personal betrayal. The magazine's Peter G. Frisch, who had met with *Gay Power, Gay Politics*' co-producers George Crile and Grace Diekhaus a year or so earlier to discuss the project, wrote to Diekhaus in April 1980 that, "you are a talented filmmaker and a shitty journalist…you went for the obvious, the sensational, and, in doing so, missed the *real* story."[286] (Finch 1980, my emphasis) His letter emphasized "disappointment" in CBS and Diekhaus, indicating the author's expectations for "substantial" and "realistic" portraits of gay life in line with the network's 1970s liberal reputation. Unlike ABC's "Homosexuals," which elicited a more muted response from activists, "Gay Power, Gay Politics" unleashed political ire that helped tarnish CBS's "quality" bona fides amongst both gay activist contingents and the popular press. Journalistic outlets, however, worked to construe such justifiable outrage as a middle-America versus coastal elite battle of ideals, wherein CBS purportedly chose to cater to prejudices of Iowans rather than pursue "educational discourses" for thoughtful, urbane Californians.

This narrative held through the early 1980s without the national press recognizing that many critically dismissed narrative programs on CBS were more holistically incorporating gay themes than "quality" competitors on NBC. A 1981 episode of the network's medical series *Trapper John, MD,* "Straight and Narrow," explicitly addressed

[285] Los Angeles Committee, "National Operation Tune-Out (NOT) CBS: Tune Out CBS During the Crucial Sweep Week of the Fall Season," n.d., CBS Folder, ONE Subject File Collection, Coll2012.001, ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives, Los Angeles, CA.
[286] Peter G. Frisch, Letter to Grace Diekhaus, April 25, 1980, CBS Folder, ONE Subject File Collection, Coll2012.001, ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives, Los Angeles, CA.

institutionalized homophobia and linked gay activism with quotidian daily life. As Stephen Tropiano describes it, "there's a lot going on in this well-intentioned episode," notably a subplot "involving a drag queen named Judy (played by *Outrageous* star Craig Russell) [that shows] acceptance shouldn't be limited to handsome, seemingly straight cops."[287] He goes on to note that the A-story of "Straight and Narrow" uniquely positioned police officer Joey Santori's (Joseph Cali) participation in a gay rights protest as quotidian, leaving only the straight characters, including the gunman who shoots and paralyzes Santori, to turn the everyday into spectacle. *Trapper John M.D.*'s conceit of magnifying homophobia's hyperbolic bent, Tropiano points out, occurred during "the same year as the *New York Times* article about AIDS [first used] words like 'contaminating' and 'spreading' [which] would soon become standard homophobic rhetoric in America."[288] The episode's political intervention here stemmed from its rendering of institutional prejudice, like that perpetuated by mainstream press outlets through the rest of the decade, more extraordinary than the stigmatized gay bodies in *Gay Power, Gay Politics*.

A later episode of *Trapper John, M.D.* that sensitively tackled AIDS, "Friends and Lovers," aired eight days prior to NBC's *An Early Frost* on November 3, 1985 but received significantly less press attention, fewer industry accolades, and scant critical acclaim. While not at the peak of its popularity, the program remained in the Nielsen's Top 30 consistently through the 1984-1985 season, airing on Sunday nights along with the network's new hit (especially amongst older-skewing audiences) *Murder, She Wrote.* "Friends and Lovers,"

[287] Stephen Tropiano, *The Prime Time Closet: A History of Gays and Lesbians on TV* (New York: Applause, 2002): 82.
[288] Ibid.

accordingly, offered a less pious and more playful script than other AIDS dramas, evoking the resilience of HIV-positive people rather than their drawn-out declines and ultimate deaths. It also included a healthy treatise on bisexuality wherein the episode's protagonists, nurse Libby Kegler (Lorna Luft) and her former boyfriend, Terry Elliot (Robert Desiderio), maintain a romantic rapport and attraction that allows Libby, along with Terry's current partner Brad (Terry Kiser), to form a triage of familial support for one-another by episode's end.

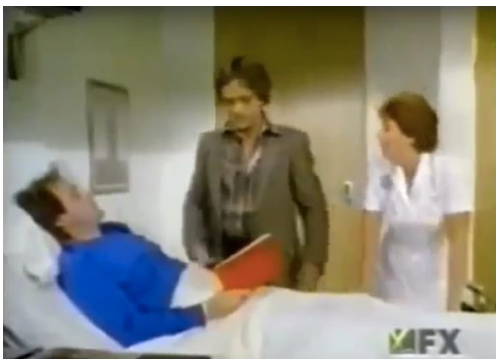

Figure 9: From Right, Nurse Libby Kegler (Lorna Luft) and Brad Tobias (Terry Kiser) rally around HIV-positive Terry Elliott (Robert Desiderio) in the *Trapper John, M.D.* episode "Friends and Lovers," first aired November 3, 1985 on CBS, author's screencap.

Regardless of the show's attributes, critics consigned *Trapper John, M.D.* to quotidian and, therefore, throwaway status, remarking negatively on its genre coding and perceived ordinariness. Howard Rosenberg of the *Los Angeles Times* sarcastically proclaimed in his review of *An Early Frost* that "primetime has discovered AIDS," yet mentioned only three programs (*St. Elsewhere, Trapper John, M.D.,* and the Showtime subscription network's *Brothers*) to have given the disease screen time since 1981. He dismissed "Friends and Lovers" in particular as "an otherwise routine episode of a *Trapper John, M.D.* story on CBS…a small inconsequential nibbling" while lauding *An Early Frost* as a television event that "represents one of those rare meshings of talented writing, directing and acting where

everyone seems in tune and where a *network* is determined to air an important story without distortion or deception."[289] CBS, when compared with NBC, his review implied, deserved ridicule for both its inferior programming and insincere social posturing. A supplemental article placed under Rosenberg's review, "Thumbs Up from Doctors" by Robert Steinbrook, legitimated the reviewer's opinion from a medical perspective, holding *An Early Frost* up as educational and realist, especially when compared to trifles like "Friends and Lovers." Steinbrook, a medical writer, extensively quoted Dr. Paul Volberding of the San Francisco General Hospital and Dr. Shirley Fannin of the Los Angeles Country Public Health Department in explicating the public health virtues of *An Early Frost* and NBC.[290] *The New York Times* used a different tactic, insinuated that CBS opportunistically slated its *Trapper John, M.D.* episode to precede *An Early Frost* and chided the show's executive producer, Don Brinkley, for stating "at the time we first started talking about an AIDS story, we had no idea about the NBC film…and our episode was always slated for November."[291] The article's author, Stephen Farber, slyly noted that "the episode finished shooting only two weeks before it aired," evidence to contest Brinkley's denial that "['Friends and Lovers'] was rushed on the air ahead of *An Early Frost*."[292] Such comments upheld CBS's post-*Gay Power, Gay Politics* framing as detrimental to gay liberation despite

[289] Howard Rosenberg, "Frost – Brisk Air of Reason in Murky AIDS Arena," *Los Angeles Times,* November 11, 1985, ProQuest (my emphasis).
[290] Robert Steinbrook, "Thumbs-Up from Doctors," *Los Angeles Times,* November 11, 1985, ProQuest.
[291] Stephen Farber, "News Special on AIDS to Follow NBC Drama," *New York Times,* November 6, 1985, ProQuest.
[292] Ibid.

Trapper John M.D.'s comparative nuance surrounding gay issues, particularly HIV/AIDS, and appeal to large factions of geographically diverse gay and allied viewers.

To this second point, another critically disregarded CBS show, the aforementioned *Murder, She Wrote,* garnered an LGBT fanbase through its star and producer Angela Lansbury's camp reputation and outspokenness on gay rights; regardless, the show succumbed to ageist put-downs and callous narrative critiques that either dismissed or reviled overtly queer episodes like 1984's "Birds of a Feather." Lansbury, though, in a retrospective interview with *Out* magazine, discussed her pride in remaining a gay icon (Nichols 2011) and, in *The Daily Mirror*, described the queer valences of her persona as extending back at least to her 1966 performance as the title character, Mame Dennis, in the Broadway production of *Mame.* Lansbury recollected that her version of Dennis (a role portrayed onscreen in 1958 by fellow camp icon Rosalind Russell in *Auntie Mame* and in 1974 by *I Love Lucy* star Lucille Ball) as "just every gay person's idea of glamour…everything about Mame coincided with every young man's idea of beauty and glory and it was lovely."[293] In this vein, the actress, who, as production records at the Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center at Boston University show, maintained an extraordinary amount of influence over the program along with her husband, Peter Shaw, and son, Anthony Peter Shaw, considered *Murder, She Wrote* a non-realist female-centric fable. In an inter-office directive to the show's writers during the eighth season, Lansbury maintained that, "although Jessica [Fletcher, the show's crime-solving protagonist], has a

[293] "'I'm Proud to Be A Gay Icon!': Angela Lansbury Opens Up In New Interview," The DataLounge, March 6, 2015, Accessed April 22, 2019, https://www.datalounge.com/thread/15063293--i-m-proud-to-be-a-gay-icon!-angela-lansbury-opens-up-in-new-interview.

number of male friends (all of whom are fascinated by her!) she has resigned herself and in fact prefers to remain a *woman alone.*"[294] Despite her understanding of the program as adventure/fantasy, however, the actress eviscerated several attempts to dilute *Murder, She Wrote*'s characterizations, believing that the show should not condescend to its smart, capable audience. Lansbury composed a handwritten note to this effect in a 1987 exchange with then-showrunner Peter Fischer, lamenting that, "I can see absolutely no reason on any occasion for Jessica to play down to get an audience—providing [that] the plot is interesting and the characters intelligently defined, we will appeal to an across-the-board audience."[295] Such sentiments align with Joan Collins' interventions around her *Dynasty* portrayal and her efforts to rebut 1980s press arguments that progressive artistry accompanied only realist, "exceptional" television. Rather, escapism and "mass-production" served a political function, which female star/producers advanced to minimal industry/journalistic acknowledgement.

Press disregard for *Murder, She Wrote* reached such heights that Lansbury collaborated on a *Modern Maturity* article in December 1995, written by Susan Champlin Taylor, that recounted how advertisers, networks, and award organizations alike sidelined "older-skewing" shows deemed stale and conservative. In response to her program's elimination from its prestige Sunday night timeslot on CBS, Lansbury countered that "I've tried to instill in Jessica [Fletcher] an ageless quality – call it girlish adventure, the

[294] Angela Lansbury, Memo to *Murder, She Wrote* Writing Staff, 1987, Box 6, Folder 6, Angela Lansbury Collection, Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center at Boston University (emphasis in original).
[295] Ibid.

inquisitiveness of the young, wry humor."[296] Here questions of age and gender work against *Murder, She Wrote* as "quality" text despite its Golden Globe wins for Best Dramatic TV Series in both 1985 and 1986 and its Best Dramatic Actress awards for Lansbury in 1985, 1987, 1990, and 1992 (despite being nominated through eleven consecutive seasons for Outstanding Lead Actress in a Primetime Series Emmy–1985-1996 –Lansbury never received the award, nor was the show ever considered in another major category). Rick Du Brow of *The Los Angeles Times* brought up this latter fact in a 1991 interview with the star, stating that:

> Lansbury, whose enduring series launches its eighth season Sunday, has some blunt thoughts about the Emmy Awards, noting the lack of industry honors for the well-crafted program—a traditional, gentle, well-mannered show that came along just as TV was turning to harder-edged, sexually suggestive, and often nastier series.[297]

The author's adjectives, which portray the show as old-fashioned and perhaps underserving of accolades, conflict with Lansbury's direct quotes wherein she calls "bull" on ageist implications that the series is only for viewers fifty years old and up, while maintaining that "our viewers love the idea of a woman who is making it on her own, who has shown that a woman of her age–60-65–is not over the hill and can have a fruitful, exciting life"[298] Newman and Levine discuss in *Legitimating Television* how NBC's slate of "quality" dramas worked to elevate certain serialized hour-long programs (particularly, *Hill*

[296] Susan Champlin Taylor, "Primetime's Big Sleep: When Will Television Wake Up to the Realities of its Older Audience?" *Modern Maturity*, November-December 1995, Box 5, Folder 2, Angela Lansbury Collection, Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center at Boston University.
[297] Rick DuBrow, "It's Murder, She Says, of the TV Industry," *Los Angeles Times*, September 3, 1991, ProQuest.
[298] Ibid.

Street Blues and *St. Elsewhere*) in the 1980s to the detriment of episodic procedurals like *Murder, She Wrote* and more overtly soap operatic primetime staples (*Dallas, Dynasty, Falcon Crest*). They recognize here a gendered bias wherein "popular and scholarly critics…helped to canonize *Hill Street Blues* as an initiator of a new kind of Quality TV—central to which was some degree of serialization, character memory and development from episode to episode, and open-endedness."[299] *Murder, She Wrote*'s narrative construction and presumed demographic address, rather than its content, positioned the program as "conservative" and "out of touch," despite its aforementioned gay and female fandom. Ironically, such masculinized demands for "complexity" and "edginess" minimized the show's subversive interventions and everyday pleasures for marginalized viewers.

The 1984 episode "Birds of a Feather," part of the show's first Golden Globe-winning season, served as camp-laden spectacle for Lansbury's gay fans and offered joyously celebrations of non-heteronormative performativity at the same moment that AIDS was ravaging urban centers and bolstering a national climate of homophobia. Most of the program takes place in a San Francisco cabaret featuring a variety of drag vaudeville routines. As the setup, Victoria Brandon (Genie Frances), enlists her famous aunt, Jessica Fletcher (Lansbury), to help figure out if her fiancé, Jeff Conway (Howard Griffin), is having an affair. To Victoria's and Jessica's (amusing) relief, Jeff has been keeping secret his drag performance at the Les Champignons cabaret rather than a covert romance, but he has been wrongly implicated in the murder of the club's owner, Al Drake (Martin Landau,

[299] Newman and Levine, *Legitimating Television*: 88.

briefly reprising a version of his nefarious, queer seducer, Leonard, from Alfred Hitchcock's 1959 film *North by Northwest*).

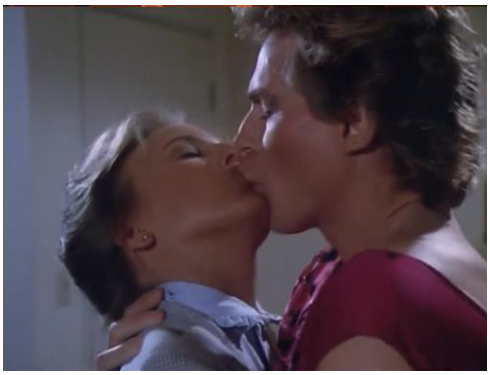

Figure 10: Victoria Brandon (Genie Francis) romantically reunites with her drag-clad fiancé Jeff Conway (Howard Griffin) in the *Murder, She Wrote* episode "Birds of a Feather" (1984), author's screencap.

Aside from a quick instance where Jeff (nonviolently) refuses the sexual advance of another male inmate, the episode does not present his sexuality as an "issue" nor does it try to ascribe his character a label. Victoria readily accepts his desire to perform and responds without trepidation to his nightclub act/persona. Jessica, for her part, immerses herself in the cabaret culture, befriending (and helping to exonerate) numerous patrons/talents including Drake's maligned but ultimately misunderstood diva wife, Candice (Carol Lawrence) and another prominent drag queen, Mike (Dick Gautler). Moreover, Lansbury nods overtly at her queer fanbase by taking the stage at Les Champignons as Jessica to act out the murder timeline and interrogate her own close call with death (a beam is cut above her head earlier in the episode). Her command of the cabaret, in semi-masculine attire and amongst the show's queer ensemble, unmistakably revives the likeness of Mame Dennis. Similar to Mame's subversive charades, Jessica theatrically unveils a misogynistic, entitled, and self-obsessed comedian to be the true villain, and confronts bullying police officers

along the way (who, themselves, are revealed to defy gender stereotypes in private—such as the single, "hardened" Chief who is revealed as having a flair for interior decorating, a female cat named "George," and a "Save the Whales" bathrobe, all in defiance of what he terms "my office persona"). Jessica's quip, "well, it just goes to show that you can't go by first impressions" works to further causally and humorously destabilize both assumptions of heteronormativity and of "conservative" archetypes.

Figure 11: Jessica Fletcher (Angela Lansbury) performs for her queer admirers in "Birds of a Feather" (1984), author's screencap.

While CBS also made inroads and won accolades in the mid-to-late 1980s for gay-themed episodes of critically acclaimed sitcoms and dramas such as *Kate and Allie* (1984-1989) and *Cagney and Lacey* (1982-1988), these shows did not rival the popularity and "wide-net" appeal of *Murder, She Wrote.* At the same time, unlike the heralded, serialized NBC "quality" dramas, even episodes of CBS' "prestige" programs did not dwell predominantly on the spectacularized events of gay suffering and death. They, therefore, might have been seen as insufficiently "educational" by the Peabody Awards, which worked to laud a variety of cautionary, occasionally shaming AIDS documentaries and NBC's fictional "pedagogical" programs *St. Elsewhere, Hill Street Blues, L.A. Law,* and *An Early*

Frost. The HFPA, however, during the Golden Globes' most delegitimated period as syndicated oddity, repeatedly honored Lansbury and *Murder, She Wrote* between 1985 and 1993. National newspaper write-ups, mostly regurgitated from the Associated Press, largely dismissed this series of wins, coupling lists of names (Lansbury's amongst them) with dismissal of the Globes' as having "[fallen] into disrepute over rigged voting practices."[300] At the same time, many gay fans revered the Globes, an excess-laden celebrity spectacle, as evidenced in a Joan Collins' Fan Club photomontage that centralizes the *Dynasty* star posing and beaming with her Golden Globe statuette in 1984.[301] Like Lansbury, Collins never received an Emmy, nor did either of their programs receive Peabody attention of any sort. While network television occasionally celebrated gay *lives* and offered queer viewers a subjectivity in the 1980s, press critics and more "prestige" awards organizations largely responded with a shrug and a smirk, choosing an empty, image-conscious liberalism and elite celebration of ill-defined televisual "complexity" over modes of communal understanding and healing.

[300] "'Platoon' Wins 2 Awards at Golden Globes Ceremony," *New York Times,* February 2, 1987, ProQuest.
[301] "The 41st Annual Golden Globe Award Winner for Best Performance by an Actress in a Television Series, Drama," n.d., Box 3, Folder 8, Joan Collins Collection, Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center at Boston University.

CONCLUSION: DISAVOWING THE WASTELAND

The 1990s promised a noticeable shift in both LGBT representation and awards discourse as gay television became more prevalent and broadcast networks lost their narrative programming mass appeal. Ron Becker discusses at length in *Gay TV and Straight America* how "by the mid-1990s, executives at ABC, NBC, and CBS faced increasing pressure to adapt to the cable and niche revolutions and deliver *good demographics,* not just big audiences."[302] This prerogative however, proved more a continuation of trends established in previous decades rather than a pivot toward newly established niche targets. Increasingly, more cautious and elite awards organizations took notice of gay-themed prestige, hoping to spotlight queer television as central to their "brands" once narrowcasting became a legitimated (and desirable) practice. New recipients of Peabody and Emmy recognition, though, often held to earlier standards of "quality" production that marginalized sexual otherness.

By 1992[303], the Peabody organization presented two gay-themed television specials with its coveted award, following a three-year absence of recognizing any LGBT-pertinent programs and a seven-year dry-spell wherein the body did not refer to sexual orientation at all in describing its winners.[304] Suddenly, though, and within the same year, the Peabody

[302] Becker, *Gay TV and Straight America*: 91 (my emphasis).
[303] Becker cites this year as pivotal to gay activism, politics and increased television representation, noting outrage over Colorado's passage of Initiative 2, a constitutional amendment preventing the state from recognizing homosexual and bisexual women and men as a "protected class," hopeful expectations around the election of Democratic President Bill Clinton, and recurrence of queer depictions in primetime on programs such as *Roseanne* and *Northern Exposure.* See Becker, *Gay TV and Straight America*: 37-79.
[304] This despite honoring San Francisco's CBS O&O station KPIX-TV for its AIDS coverage in 1986 and Rob Epstein and Jeffrey Friedman's HBO documentary *Common Threads: Stories from the Quilt* in 1989.

collective announced a single episode of CBS's *Northern Exposure,* "Cicely," as exceptional for having "moved the show to an even higher standard"[305] and marveled at how HBO's made-for-TV film *Citizen Cohn* overcame the limitations of "more mundane movies one encounters on television" to "[expose] the public and private life of an influential individual from our recent past [disgraced attorney Roy Cohn]."[306] Rather than admitting culpability in formerly neglecting queer inclusion in their awarding criteria, which might have allowed for a generative reckoning with the historical footprints of gay, lesbian, and bisexual (and occasionally transgender, to anachronistically apply the term) television tracing back to at least the 1960s, the University of Georgia-based group implied that gay TV was a new advent which could not have prevailed without "quality" transformations. Whereas, previously, the organization rejected shows with broad *and* gay appeal (*The Bold Ones, The Streets of San Francisco, Police Story, The Rockford Files, Soap, Taxi, Dallas, Dynasty, Miami Vice, Murder, She Wrote, The Golden Girls,* to name only a few), "Cicely" offered an opportunity to rebrand the institution as "uniquely" gay-affirmative while simultaneously dismissing network television's non-straight history. The committee's writeup emphasized *Northern Exposure*'s win as a "rare occasion when a television entertainment series is recognized with a Peabody Award in two consecutive years," declaring a very special occasion for this "very special" episode.

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[305] "Northern Exposure: Cicely," Peabody Awards, Accessed April 14, 2019, http://www.peabodyawards.com/award-profile/northern-exposure-cicely.
[306] "Citizen Cohn," Peabody Awards, Accessed April 14, 2019, http://www.peabodyawards.com/award-profile/citizen-cohn.

The networks appeared overjoyed to play into such a narrative, celebrating "diversity" as part and parcel to a natural teleology that they were honorably working to usher in; indeed, CBS and NBC touted awards and artistry as evidence of their social and political progress. CBS's *Northern Exposure* submission packet for Peabody consideration drew attention first and foremost to the program's sixteen nominations and six Emmy wins in 1992 before heralding the creators' (Joshua Brand and John Falsey) high-brow qualifications: Columbia University graduate (Brand), creative writing degree from the University of Iowa (Falsey), fiction appearing in the *New Yorker* (Falsey), finalists for the Humanitas Award (both).[307] These northeastern auteurs, the packet underlined for Peabody voters, courageously trained their eyes on "the rustic location of the Alaskan wilds" as "[representing] a place where people could express their individuality…people could go there to create themselves" and to uncover diversity out in the country. Without slighting the showrunners' accomplishments, it remains important to critique CBS's rhetoric here in, first, elevating *Northern Exposure* by baring its creators' sophisticated roots and, second, relying on awards tallies to signify "difference" from the everyday (pinpointing rural geographies as uniquely suited to such exotic mysticism and magical realist exceptionality in the process). The next year, NBC pushed its urbane, sardonic sitcom *Seinfeld* for consideration based on a gay-themed episode, "The Outing," which, according to submission materials, offered a "fresh perspective on the issue [of

[307] "Biography: Creators/Executive Producers Joshua Brand and John Falsey," Peabody Award Entry Form and Packet for *Northern Exposure,* "Cicely," 1992, Box 179, Folder 92072 ENT, George Foster Peabody Awards Collection, Series 2. Television Entries, ms 3000, Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, The University of Georgia Libraries.

homosexuality]."[308] Such positioning reiterated the "newness" of gay discourse, and employed the Peabody organization's own rhetoric from 1992, when the selection committee had decreed *Seinfeld* a "fresh and innovated situation comedy."[309] Importantly, though, the network emphasized the quotidian function of homosexuality as central to its show's distinctiveness, a paradox uncovered in press materials that elucidate the narrower address of such purportedly "mass" programming. Peabody voters, perhaps unwittingly, echoed NBC's contradiction, writing that *Seinfeld* "deals with common experiences as encountered by the eccentric but strangely typical characters which inhabit its universe" before concluding that it "[lets *us* laugh at *ourselves*]."[310] In other words, the program riffs on the problems of educated, upper-middle class white people who are "in the know," thereby redefining the everyday as *their* everyday – a better, wittier, smarter alternative to mundane sitcoms past.

Only ABC remained an outlier in this regard until the mid-1990s, though that network continued its self-sabotaging queer erasure tactics when putting programs up for awards. Despite a primetime slate featuring numerous gay, lesbian, and bisexual characters in recurrent roles, which included shows like *Coach* (1989-1997), *Grace Under Fire* (1993-1998), *My So-Called Life* (1994-1995), *N.Y.P.D. Blue* (1993-2005), and *Roseanne* (original run, 1988-1997), ABC largely withheld explicit discussion of sexual orientation from its

[308] "Seinfeld – The Outing," 1993 Peabody Award Entry Form, Box 187, Folder 93064 ENT, George Foster Peabody Awards Collection, Series 2. Television Entries, ms 3000, Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, The University of Georgia Libraries.
[309] "Seinfeld," Peabody Awards, Accessed April 28, 2019, http://www.peabodyawards.com/award-profile/seinfeld.
[310] Ibid (my emphasis).

Peabody materials. Most notably, the network's entry forms for *My So-Called Life*, a drama series that featured the first serialized storyline about a queer youth, Rickie Vazquez (Wilson Cruz), in primetime, excised references to teenage sexual identity. The document substituted the euphemism "mature subject matter" for sex and synopsized an episode, "So-Called Angels," wherein Rickie's family disowns him for his sexual and gender non-normativity, as a story about "the Chase family [learning] the true meaning of Christmas."[311] Such linguistic contortions seem intentional, especially considering that *My So-Called Life's* creator, Winnie Holzman, emphasized that "[the network] was struggling with the show and [how] to relate to it."[312] Publicity materials for *NYPD Blue* and *Grace Under Fire* similarly refused to tie gay content into the fabric of these shows, as neither submission packet denoted an episode or story-arc that featured non-straight vantage points despite numerous selections to pick from. Perhaps ironically, ABC/Touchstone Television found itself championing (in press and on the awards circuits at least) the gay milestone of *Ellen*'s "The Puppy Episode" in 1997, promoting itself as having "opened the closet door"[313] via a one-off television event.

This dissertation has argued that the three major networks strategically tethered gay content to awards circuit discourse since the 1970s, a limiting narrative that popular and trade press outlets repeated ad nauseum. As a result, homosexuality developed an

[311] "My So-Called Life – So Called Angels," 1994 Peabody Award Entry Form, Box 199, Folder 94156 ENT, George Foster Peabody Awards Collection, Series 2. Television Entries, ms 3000, Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, The University of Georgia Libraries.
[312] Winnie Holzman, interview with Benjamin Kruger-Robbins, personal interview by phone from Irvine, CA, October 26, 2017.
[313] "Ellen – The Puppy Episode," 1997 Peabody Award Entry Form, Box 252, Folder 97024 ENT, George Foster Peabody Awards Collection, Series 2. Television Entries, ms 3000, Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, The University of Georgia Libraries.

elite, rare, and valued positioning vis a vis television and served as a type of refined counterpoint to the base and murky wasteland. Such classed associations devalued and dismissed queer content within "mass appeal" programs and naturalized TV's nichification rather than scrutinizing it as a product of Reagan, Bush, and Clinton-era deregulation and privatization. Awards organizations have only magnified such distortions since the mid 1990s by focusing on subscription networks (especially HBO) and streaming platforms (Netflix, Hulu, Amazon Prime) as the provinces of superior television. Now, with a product of the righteously disavowed "wasteland" having assumed high office, the purveyors of quality might reckon with the divisions they foment.

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