The bardic utterance in situation comedy theme songs, 1960-2000

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THE BARDIC UTTERANCE
IN SITUATION COMEDY THEME SONGS,
1960-2000

A Dissertation

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Louisiana State University and
Agriculture and Mechanical College
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine the function of the bard in situation comedy theme songs. This study calls upon Fiske and Hartley's concept of television as a cultural bard, a singer and teller of stories that create and conserve community. The bard reaffirms the culture's identity while delivering social and political messages relevant to the culture at specific times throughout history.


To date, very little scholarly attention has been paid to the area of television theme songs. Given that television is a central part of popular culture, and that sitcoms and theme songs
comprise a significant amount of television air time, it is important to understand their relationship to culture and culture making.

This study concludes that theme songs are concise bardic utterances that offer brief yet powerful rhetorical statements. Through the performance of these texts, the bard speaks to the prevailing values of the culture, using familiar means to uphold a sense of community and offer the audience a reinforcing idea of themselves.
Jon Burlingame states that television music is "the soundtrack of our lives" (1). Many of us in the United States live and grow up in front of our television sets, and television theme songs become ingrained in our minds. Theme songs are catchy jingles that tell a brief story. Just as advertising jingles stay in our minds to remind us of a product, theme songs stay in our minds to remind us of a particular show. One could walk into a room of people and start singing, "Here's a story of a lovely lady. . ." and, more than likely, almost everyone present would be able to join in the song. As John Fiske and John Hartley state, television is our current culture's bard. This singer of songs and teller of tales performs a "bardic function" for the "culture at large and all the individually differentiated people who live in it" (85). As with bards of old, the TV bard seeks to draw all members of a society together at the cultural center. The bard does so by constructing messages that confirm and reinforce the culture's idea of itself, its myths, and its assumptions about reality. The bard also structures messages in a manner that is clear or familiar to members of the culture. Oral and visual media are preferred over print and its literate demands. In these ways, the bard shows that it values the desires and needs of the culture (and consumer) over those of the text or the individual communicator (Fiske and Hartley 85-87).

In this study, it is my argument that the television theme song exemplifies Fiske and Hartley's notion of TV as a bardic utterance. The theme song then is not just a ploy to sell a show but also a cultural expression that draws from the oral tradition of singing and telling stories so as to create and conserve community. The challenge and craft of the theme song is to meet these bardic aims within a five to sixty second time frame.
To investigate my thesis, I analyze select theme songs from situation comedies that aired on television in the U.S. between 1960 and 2000. My method of analysis is based in part on semiotics, particularly as it is conceived of and used by John Fiske in his studies of television texts. However, I draw upon semiotic codes and signs only as they are appropriate to describing the themes. It is not my intention to dissect each theme into a set of signs and codes; rather, I am interested in how the signs and codes function together, as a whole. More precisely, I use Fiske and Hartley's concept of television as a "bardic utterance" to focus and drive my analysis. I also use social-historical and cultural perspectives to further understand and evaluate the content, composition and function of the bard's theme song.

To date, television theme songs have received little scholarly attention. The study seeks to fill that gap. I argue that, as an introduction that serves to "hook" the viewer to stay tuned for the show, the theme song is of importance to the production and consumption of the show. However, by describing the visual, vocal and musical elements of the theme song and its bardic features, I also offer an analysis that understands the song as a complex social-cultural text that identifies and represents culture, as well as meets production exigencies and consumer expectations.

Subject and Limitations of the Study

In this section, I define the television theme song, and identify its general forms and functions. I also undertake a definition of situation comedies and their prevailing themes, formulas, and aims. Lastly, I acknowledge the various limitations of my study. Although the specific theme song texts I analyze are very much the subject of my study, I specify my selection in the concluding "Organization" section of this chapter. I do so because the texts and the decades in which they fall also determine how I organize the study.
A television theme song is a recurring or identifying musical score, with or without lyrics, accompanied by a composition of visual elements used to introduce and often conclude the show. The theme songs for television sitcoms range from five seconds to a minute in duration.

Much of my study concentrates on the visual elements present within sitcom theme songs. Actors, costumes, and settings are comprised of visual components such as color, movement, rhythm, lighting, angle, focus, size, shape, and distance. In *Visual Intelligence*, Ann Marie Barry asserts that each separate visual element has its own impact, and in combination, these factors ultimately "create a whole mindset that affects each part, just as each part affects the whole" (140). Like music and lyrics, visual components can communicate moods, emotions, and ideas. Barry explains that all images are by nature "gestalts," implying more than their parts. Visual images are "always in process" and "actively seeking meaning" (69).

Visual images exist not only in dimensions of shape and form, but in levels of meaning from literal to metaphoric. They can be "simple or multilayered," and they can be "manipulated into reflecting political or philosophical ideologies" (Barry 139). Our past experiences as well as personal and cultural attitudes and values combine in a variety of ways to "build a rationally and emotionally meaningful communication" (Barry 140).

Like the visual components of the theme songs, the acoustic or musical components are significant also. Television music has received far less attention from academics and critics than has music for films. The lack of attention may be due to the fact that film has relied heavily on original musical scores while, in its early years, television shows relied on "canned music." Canned music refers to the use of prerecorded selections. *The Lone Ranger* (1949), for example, used the finale of the overture to Gioacchino Rossini's 1829 opera *William Tell* for its theme song.
It was not until the 1960s that original scores were created for television. During this time, many top film composers moved from working in film to working in television because film producers were shunning original film scores in favor of preexisting pop songs. Furthermore, as television matured, its production values increased, particularly as regards to the big budget, socially oriented, made-for-TV movies such as *Roots*, *War and Remembrance*, and *Shogun*. The use of original scores for these shows established a trend and, from the 1960s on, television programs used original music on a regular basis.

As with music in film, music in television has many functions. It may be used to create a mood, be used to foreshadow, suggest internal or hidden emotions of characters, or provide an ironic contrast to the scene.\(^1\) The primary function of the theme song, however, is to "hook" the audience into watching the show. As my study reveals, the theme song attempts to attract the viewer by serving as a bard. In particular, it does so by offering a narrative abstract and/or providing expository information, and by means of a brief, catchy, singable tune and engaging visual elements. As a narrative abstract, the theme offers rationale for why the show is worth watching. It generalizes the particularities of the show to a basic theme or point of focus which commonly confirms a value, myth, or assumption that is widely held by the viewing public. The durability of "family" or family-like groupings is a common theme in situation comedies, and theme songs often advance this theme as rationale for watching the show.

It is not uncommon for theme songs to also offer expository information. By means of lyrics and visuals, the theme song introduces the viewer to the key characters, their relationships and situation, such as locale, setting(s), and social-economic class. In almost all cases, the expository information is rendered in a way that is clear, familiar, and easily read by the mass audience. Generally, realistic conventions, such as verisimilitude and syllogistic patterns, govern the visual and vocal elements of the song.
Theme songs attempt to hook the audience by contextualizing the abstract and/or exposition within a song that viewers can easily access, sing or hum themselves. Therefore, theme songs become part of the shared culture, integrated into the everyday lives and conversations of viewers. The show, in turn, is publicized and popularized by its catchy lyrics or tune being shared outside the confines of the show's airing. The theme song then hooks viewers by advancing a song that, in a sense, the viewers themselves produce or co-produce. They own or have stake in the cultural currency of the show or, at least, the show's defining song.

Although, in general, sitcom theme songs function similarly, they take many different forms. Sometimes an anonymous voice-over or the main character will use spoken narration to convey the program's theme and, in the following example, situation. At the beginning of The Odd Couple, the voice-over tells us,

On November thirteenth, Felix Unger was asked to remove himself from his place of residence. That request came from his wife. With nowhere else to go, he appeared at the home of his childhood friend, Oscar Madison. . . . (The Odd Couple)

Other theme songs use lyrics to advance the show's focus. In The Mary Tyler Moore Show, for example, the sung lyrics direct the viewer's attention toward the main character and, thereby, a recurring theme of the show. "Who can turn the world on with her smile? / Who can take a nothing day and suddenly make it all seem worthwhile? / Well it's you girl and you should know it."

A few shows not only have an opening but a closing theme song as well. The Beverly Hillbillies opens with "Come and listen to ma story 'bout a man named Jed . . ." and closes with "Well now it's time to say goodbye to Jed and all his kin. / They would like to thank you folks for kindly droppin' in. / You're all invited back next week to this locality." This theme song offers a story frame that directly situates the viewer within the telling situation of the story. Thereby, the song implies that the viewer is integral to the production and performance of the
show and story. The strategy serves not only to remind the viewer to tune in for the next episode of the show but that his or her participation is of value to the "live" performances of the story's telling.

In the 1990s, there is a shift in the narrative content and form of the television theme song. Rather than running thirty to sixty seconds, many songs are no longer than five to ten seconds. Also, in contrast to the use of realistic conventions, quirky musical or verbal introductions are common. The theme song of Home Improvement, for instance, uses tool sounds and ape-like grunt noises. As I analyze in the study, these alterations reflect alterations in the social-aesthetic values of the viewing culture. Viewers of the nineties, accustomed to computer technology, desire information at a faster pace. The alterations also reflect a sacrifice of certain bardic functions to commercial exigencies. To make room for more commercials, producers shorten the length of television programs and theme songs may be seen as expendable elements.

In the U.S., viewers tend to identify more closely with sitcoms than with other types of programs. Sitcoms make us feel good, they make us feel comfortable. They produce, as Rick Mitz explains, a "sitcomaraderie" (4). How and why is the sitcom able to accomplish this task? First, the overarching theme in situation comedies is family and family-type groupings who, despite the situational ups-and-downs, preserve their identity as such, as a family. This theme reflects a prevailing value of the U.S. audience. It also imitates that social grouping that is most common to most viewers.

Mitz describes seven types of sitcoms, some of which overlap and all of which deal with the building or preservation of family or family-like groups. Domcoms are domestic comedies that revolve around family life at home. Kidcoms are comedies about kids and their relation to their parental figures. Couplecoms concentrate on the close relationship of two people.
SciFiComs situate elements of magic and fantasy within everyday family life or situations. Corncoms situate a family in a rural setting. Ethnicoms concentrate on families of a particular racial or ethnic group. Careercoms concentrate on the key character's work life and his or her relationship to the surrogate work family.

In his article, "Trials and Tribulations--Thirty Years of Sitcom," Arthur Hough distinguishes between Domestic and Nondomestic situation comedies. Domestic sitcoms are The Traditional Family (married couples), The Nuclear Family (mother, father, sons, daughters), The Eccentric Family (single parents, divorced parents, monster families such as The Munsters), The Social Family (miscellaneous adults), and The Ethnic Family (blacks, Latinos, Asians).

Nondomestic sitcoms include Military Sitcoms (Major Dad), Business Sitcoms (The Last Resort), Fantasy Sitcoms (My Favorite Martian), Rural Sitcoms (Petticoat Junction), Adventure Sitcoms (Get Smart), and Working Group Sitcoms (Murphy Brown). Again, observe that Hough's "nondomestic" categories are about building or preserving family or family groups too.

A second reason sitcoms are popular is that they communicate with their audience by means of easy-to-read plot formulas that usually end happily or in an upbeat way. The formulaic plot is "dramatic" in structure. It typically establishes, complicates, confuses, and resolves the situational conflict (Hough 204). Humor is effected by "how" the family (mis-)handles the conflict and the "by chance" occurrences that typically resolve the conflict and return the family to its "normal" state. Sarah Schuyler explains that the resolutions emphasize the "sameness" of the family and its members and, thereby, the shows "banish the threat of the sit in each episode" (478). The resolutions also send a reassuring message to the viewer regarding the consistency and durability of family life.

Situation comedies also create "sitcomeraderie" because they rely on characters or character types that are familiar to the viewing public. Mitz identifies sixty-seven of the most
popular sitcom types. Some of these include the cantankerous old geezer (Fred Sanford on *Sanford and Son*), the dumb sexpot (Chrissy on *Three's Company*), the tough-but-tender hoodlum (Fonzie on *Happy Days*), the sensible father (Jim Anderson on *Father Knows Best*), and the heartwarming immigrant (Balki on *Perfect Strangers*) (6-7). In addition to being well-recognized social types, the characters display a "certain set of personality traits and recognizable habits that do not . . . change during the series" (Schuyler 477).

In my study, I investigate a decade by decade range of situation comedy theme songs from 1960 through 2000. I begin my study with the 1960s because sitcoms did not hit their stride until this decade. Also, most of the earlier sitcoms relied upon canned music instead of original musical compositions.

My basis of selection for the themes in each decade centers around selecting the sitcoms of each decade that best address the prevailing social themes and values of the culture during the respective time period. I also select shows that were popular with the viewing public during each decade. In general, the shows of the sixties deal with culture clash, single father households, the military, magic, and the independent woman. The shows of the seventies address racial relations, the women's movement, the antiwar movement, and the sexual revolution. In the eighties, narrow-casting leads to diversity in subject matter, yet some shows do achieve cross-market appeal by offering a mediation of race, class or age. In the nineties, our "idea of ourselves" is treated in critical, nihilistic and celebratory ways. The shows of the nineties also show interest in diversity, digital artistry, and self-reflexivity.

Although I attempt in my selection to take into account the representation of different races and social classes, most sitcoms typically feature middle to lower class white families or characters. In the 1960s, there was one sitcom, *Julia*, that featured an African-American in the lead. Diahann Carroll, who played the title character, was the first black female to star in her
own comedy series. The show itself, however, was completely integrated. The 1970s was the decade with the most racially diverse sitcoms. This decade offered such shows as *The Jeffersons, Good Times, Sanford and Son,* and *Chico and the Man.* The 1980s offered two popular African-American families in the shows *Family Matters* and *The Cosby Show.* In the 1990s, shows such as *Martin* and *Sister, Sister* appear on cable networks, but the three major networks of ABC, CBS, and NBC offer very little in the way of racially diverse sitcoms. The two shows *Cosby* and *The Hughleys* offer a blending of African-American and white families.

In regard to class, almost all television sitcoms portray families from the middle to lower working classes. This appears to be the case because the majority of the U.S. viewing audience is from these classes and therefore the shows are produced to "speak to" them. In other words, the sitcoms attempt to tell the tales and sing the songs of middle to lower working class families. Although many dramas, particularly those that aired in the 1980s, depict characters from the upper class (e.g., *Falcon Crest, Dallas,* and *Dynasty*), sitcoms usually do not. One notable exception to this trend is the sitcom *Filthy Rich* (1982-1983). This sitcom was a sendup of the *Falcon Crest/Dallas/Dynasty* prime time soap opera genre. Another rather odd exception is *Green Acres* which situates an upper class married couple from the big city in a working class, rural farm community. The immense popularity of the show may well have been due to the humorous uncrowing of the upper class when situated in the unfamiliar territory of the rural, working class.

**Methodology**

Many methods and perspectives have been used to study the medium of television. Marxist analyses explore such issues as materialism and class conflict. Gender analyses examine the representation of masculinity and femininity within television texts. Textual analyses look at the narrative structures of the texts or stories and how they are told and produced, and Reception
Theory investigates the effect that the television text has on the audience (i.e., how the audience perceives and interprets the texts of media culture).

Semiotics has been widely used by researchers in the areas of film and theatre. John Fiske first used a semiotic analysis to investigate the content and construction of television shows. In *Television Culture*, Fiske uses the semiotic approach to investigate how television makes, or attempts to make, meanings that serve the prevailing interests in society and how it circulates these meanings among the wide variety of social groups that constitute its audience.

Fiske defines a code as "a rule-governed system of signs, whose rules and conventions are shared amongst the members of a culture, and which is used to generate and circulate meanings in and for that culture" (4). For Fiske, signs are anything that carry meaning. They consist of an image and a concept. Codes are highly complex patterns of associations that we learn in our society or culture. These codes affect the way we interpret signs. For example, if we, in our given culture, see a man in dirty overalls (image) we may believe he does some type of manual labor (concept) and, therefore, is of the blue-collar working-class within the social-economic class system (code).

Fiske explains that codes in media culture are "links between producers, texts, and audiences, and are the agents of intertextuality through which texts interrelate in a network of meanings that constitute our cultural world" (4). In other words, the producers of the television programs strive to be in tune with the cultural codes of the designated audience and, thereby, create texts that contain codes that speak to that particular audience. These texts, in turn, create or maintain, enable and constrain cultural identities.

In addressing television texts, Fiske uses four categories of codes: social codes (appearance, dress, makeup, environment, behavior, speech, gesture, expression); technical codes (camera, lighting, editing, music, sound); conventional representational codes (narrative,
conflict, character, action, dialogue, setting, casting); and ideological codes (individualism, patriarchy, race, class, materialism, capitalism) (5). Fiske then places the categories of codes into a three-level hierarchy. Level one is "Reality," and is composed of social codes. Level two is "Representation," and it includes the technical codes and the conventional representational codes. Level three is "Ideology," and is composed of the ideological codes. Fiske admits that the categories of codes and their classification into levels in the hierarchy are "arbitrary and slippery" (4). However, both designations can be used to reveal how layers of encoded meanings are structured in television programs. For example, in the opening of the television sitcom Green Acres, the audience is presented with the image of a well dressed man and woman who are standing outside a run-down farm house. The man is holding a pitchfork. The social codes present the audience with a couple who appear to be from the white-collar upper class; that is, they are not farmers. The conventional representational codes, on the other hand, suggest a farm setting. The ideological codes present the audience with class conflict: New York high society meets "American Gothic."

In my study, I analyze the theme song texts using the code systems I find pertinent to understanding the constructed message of the theme. I analyze the visual theme as well as the accompanying musical theme. I acknowledge that I am not a music scholar and my musical background is limited. My musical analysis is predominantly centered around describing the style of the music, the rhythm and tempo, the instruments used to construct the theme, and the overall emotional connotation of the music.

I also examine the prevailing trends in U.S. society and culture during each of the four decades. I discuss the political and economic environment by looking at which party or parties were in power during the decade, and how our nation was situated politically in terms of national and international concerns. I examine the social environment which includes but is not limited to
how "family" was conceived and constructed. Movements and issues regarding race, gender, class, sexuality, and generational differences also interest me. Lastly, I take a look at the popular culture environment which includes fads and trends in entertainment. In the study, I begin each chapter with an historical overview of the decade which I then use to inform my reading of the theme songs. I acknowledge that the histories I offer are partial and incomplete. The social-cultural overviews consist of items I found most important, relevant, and interesting to my understanding of the decade and in anticipation of analyzing the theme songs in terms of their bardic functions. Also, not all of the events I describe in the overviews arise in my discussion of the themes. The events are included however in order to offer a broad understanding of the social and cultural climate of each respective decade. In sum, I seek to construct a rich and variable landscape within, upon, and sometimes against which the theme songs prove to sing.

By using social-historical and cultural perspectives, and a selective semiotic analysis combined with the concept of bardic utterances, I focus on how the themes function as cultural communicators, constructing and sending messages "in order to communicate with [a] collective self" (Fiske 85). By "collective self," Fiske means that, regardless of individual and group diversity, we as a mass culture have a shared or agreed upon language (a system of encoded signs) that indeed permits communication between diverse individuals and groups. Television shows rely on this shared or collective language in order to appeal to their mass audience. By applying Fiske's methods to television theme songs, I investigate how the songs use our collective language to communicate and inscribe a collective self.

In order to better focus my analysis, I draw on Fiske and Hartley's concept of the bard. The bard serves as a mediator between the individual creator of a text and the audience that receives and responds to the text. The bard occupies the cultural center and works to draw the audience into the center by articulating the cultural consensus. The bard celebrates the culture,
affirms the prevailing ideologies, and transmits a sense of community (Fiske and Hartley 88). The bard makes the audience feel good about itself. The bard also prefers oral discourse over print or literary media. This oral voice provides a "cementing" discourse for a culture which the more "abstract, elaborated codes of literacy" often fail to do (Fiske and Hartley 86). While printed discourse often individualizes or privatizes the audience, oral discourse unifies the listeners through the bard's collective voice.

Theme songs are, in effect, concise or condensed versions of bardic utterances. They offer powerful rhetorical statements in less than a minute. In addition to the production and consumption functions, understanding theme songs in terms of bardic functions suggests that theme songs undertake significant challenges. They speak to the prevailing values of the culture, using familiar means to offer the audience a reinforcing idea of themselves.

To summarize, I use social-historical and cultural perspectives, selective semiotics, and the bardic utterance to examine television sitcom theme songs. The social-historical and cultural perspectives help me understand the culture's "idea of itself." The selective use of semiotics allows me to investigate how the visual, vocal and musical texts operate as a whole. Finally, the bardic utterance permits me to focus on the overall function of the songs.

Significance of the Study

Much research has been done in the area of television. There are thousands of books and articles written on the subject of television, investigating such areas as the representation and presentation of gender, race, age, social-economic class, sex, and violence. There also have been numerous analyses of television talk shows and news broadcasts.

Some studies investigate the area of music and television. Otho P. Rink has studied the effects of television background music on students' perception and retention of cognitive content. There have been several studies of the content and effect of music videos, and the persuasive
power of music used in television advertising. Nonetheless, music for television is often dismissed as "lacking the quality or lasting impact of feature film scores" (Burlingame 2). Perhaps this is due to the fact that, for the most part, film has used original musical scores while in its early years television shows relied on "canned music."

Although some research has been done regarding the texts of television shows, very little has been done regarding their theme songs. Two works that have dealt closely with the subject are The TV Theme Song Trivia Book by Vincent Terrace and TV's Biggest Hits by Jon Burlingame. The former is a question and answer book about television theme songs, while the latter investigates the composers of theme songs. Two articles also address the area of television music. In "Episodic's Music Man: Mike Post," Edward J. Fink interviews Mike Post, one of the most successful and prolific music composers for television in the U.S. In the article, Post relates how he refuses to use any digital equipment in his music. Lastly, in "Popular Music, Television, and Generational Identity," Gary Burns explains how baby boomers have a greater attachment to the music of their decade than does any other generation.

Although television is widely studied because it is a popular medium, many critics ignore or condemn its function and value as entertainment. Because TV theme songs are so entertaining, this may explain why they are ignored. Yet, as Erik Barnouw and Catherine E. Kirkland point out, entertainment plays "a significant role in the cultivation of values and beliefs" (51). It is a way we tell and pass on stories, and thus it is "primary" to how "cultures speak to their members and thereby maintain a sense of coherence [and] history" (Barnouw and Kirkland 52). Entertainment is "attentive to the norms, myths, and fears of its audience but also serves to shape and reshape them; it reflects social trends but also nudges them into being" (52). Popular entertainment provides us with characters we can relate to on some level and offers us discursive formulas we can use to make sense of the world around us. As described by Barnouw
and Kirkland, entertainment functions very like Fiske and Hartley's bard and, as my study will show, the theme song exemplifies both: It is an entertaining bard. As such, it strives to meet that which Bertolt Brecht claimed was the "brodest" and "noblest" function of theatre: "to give pleasure" (180). Brecht continues to claim that from the first "it has been theatre's business to entertain people, as it also has of all the other arts. It needs no other passport than fun, but this it has got to have" (180). Brecht, then, found entertainment, pleasure, and fun to be paramount to his primary purpose which was to encourage audiences to enjoy educating themselves and by means of critical, analytical thinking. Whether we find the educative "cultivation of values and beliefs" in the theme songs to be productive to our society and culture is a question this study seeks to answer.

For these reasons, it is to our advantage to understand how television theme songs operate. The reasons are compounded when we consider that television is central to our culture, sitcoms are central to television, and the theme song is that which "hooks" the audience to stay tuned for the program. In a brief amount of time, theme songs provide an introduction or abstract that establishes an interpretive contract between the audience and the text. They provide the audience with the overall topic or story line, prevailing themes, and the general, usually humorous, temperament of the show. To draw on the Green Acres example once again, the opening theme song communicates to the audience that the show is about a high society couple from New York who have relocated to a farm near the town of Hooterville. The tune, lyrics, and visuals also communicate that the show will view the couple and their exploits in a lowbrow, satirized manner. Verbal and physical slapstick will be used to burlesque, or poke fun at, the upper class and the "miss-fit" of their manners when located down on the farm. In fact, this specific theme song may well incite critical thinking (regarding class), and as part of its entertaining function.
Theme songs also are worth studying because they are part of a media culture that Michael Real claims "unifies us ritually" and "connects us" to the "global village" (47). In *Exploring Media Culture*, Real argues that media texts "operate in a variety of ways to express and shape our relations with the society and the environment" (47). Real identifies several functions of media culture. It expresses a collective experience that unifies us emotionally and symbolically. It structures time and space in order to effect simultaneous participation in the present, connect us to an historical past and physical environment, establish order, and define roles. Media culture transports and transforms participants by breaking through the profane into the sacred. It publicly celebrates culture's central values and, lastly, media culture creates, maintains, modifies, and transforms reality (46). Although some of Real's claims are questionable, or worth investigating further, his central claim that media culture "unifies us ritually" echoes Fiske's view that television functions as "a social ritual, overriding individual distinctions, in which our culture engages in order to communicate with its collective self" (85). For Fiske, the social ritual occurs because at its center is the bard, or showperson, who sings songs and tells tales that are decoded "according to individually learned but culturally generated codes and conventions" (85). In other words, despite and because of the individual orientation of our society and culture, television works to communicate that which we share. It operates to break through the isolation of our individual lives in order to pass on central values that we may uphold, disapprove of, or question but that, as a collective, we share. And it is my purpose in this study to show how theme songs play a significant role in this "social ritual," or ritualization.

Theme songs meet their role and function by means of performance and, as I argue in the study, their performance is that of the cultural bard. As a "complex" of commercial production, highly efficient communication, entertaining education, and unifying ritual, the theme song as bard is well worth understanding in a more thorough manner than has been pursued by scholars
and critics to date. The study offers just such an in-depth investigation of this popular singer of songs and teller of tales.

Organization of the Study

This study concentrates on the bardic utterance in situation comedy theme songs from 1960 through 2000. Each chapter is divided into three sections: Historical Overview, Television Trends, and Analysis of Themes. In the Historical Overview section, I examine prevailing trends in U.S. society and culture. I discuss the political, economic, social, and popular culture environments. In the Television Trends section, I examine the prevailing trends in television programming as well as changes in the viewing habits of the television audience. Further, I list and categorize the most popular sitcoms of the decade. Lastly, I select themes from the decade which exemplify the prevailing social issues and values present within the culture and also confirm the culture's "idea of itself." In the Analysis of Themes section, I discuss the selected theme songs. Most of the themes I discuss are those of the most popular shows of each decade. In the appendices, I offer the selected theme songs in their complete form and, when possible, include mention of the composer, lyricist, and singer of each theme.

In Chapter Two, I examine the theme songs of five sitcoms from the 1960s. The shows and themes I discuss are The Beverly Hillbillies (1962-71), The Andy Griffith Show (1960-68), Gomer Pyle, USMC (1964-70), Bewitched (1964-72), and That Girl (1966-71). The Beverly Hillbillies focuses on a clash of cultures. The Andy Griffith Show explores a single father household in rural America. Gomer Pyle, USMC looks at life in the military. Bewitched is a magical, or an "extraordinary" woman, sitcom, and That Girl addresses the newly emerging independent woman. With the exception of That Girl, each of these sitcoms was the highest rated show in its respective category. Further, each remained in the Neilsen top ten rankings for a minimum of three seasons.
In Chapter Three, I describe and analyze the theme songs from six sitcoms of the 1970s. Each theme reflects one or more of the four prevailing social issues of the decade, race relations, the women's movement, the antiwar movement, and sexual liberation. The sitcoms I have selected are *All in the Family* (1971-79), *The Jeffersons* (1975-85), *Maude* (1972-78), *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* (1970-77), *M*A*S*H* (1972-83), and *Three's Company* (1977-84). I have chosen these particular shows because each was considered a ground-breaking show at the time of its respective premiere. Also, each of the sitcoms was ranked among the top ten shows at some point during its run.

In Chapter Four, I describe and analyze the theme songs of five prominent sitcoms from the 1980s, *The Cosby Show* (1984-92), *Cheers* (1982-93), *The Wonder Years* (1988-93), *The Golden Girls* (1985-92), and *It's Garry Shandling's Show* (1988-90). I have selected these shows because of their immense popularity and hence their significance to the decade. While diverse in subject matter, each show reflects our idea of ourselves and cultures. Three of the shows, *The Cosby Show*, *Cheers*, and *The Wonder Years* offer cross-market appeal. *The Cosby Show* offers a mediation of race by appealing to both African American and white viewers. *Cheers* offers a mediation of class by addressing both the upper and working classes. And *The Wonder Years* offers a mediation of age, engaging both young viewers and the baby-boomer generation. *The Golden Girls* focuses on the lives of elderly women, a segment of our population which, up until this time, had been ignored or stereotyped by television sitcoms. Finally, *It's Garry Shandling's Show* engages in technical experimentation and reflexive play, paving the way for similar experiments in the sitcoms of the nineties.

In Chapter Five, my selection and discussion of the sitcom themes of the 1990s fall into three main sections. First, I analyze three themes from the domestic sitcoms *Roseanne* (1988-97), *Married...With Children* (1987-97), and *The Simpsons* (1989-). All three shows
deconstruct the idealized nuclear family common to the sitcom tradition and, yet, each is quite
different in its deconstruction. The "songs" the themes sing range from nihilism to criticism to
guarded celebration. In the second section, I discuss the theme of *Home Improvement* (1991-99),
which is a sitcom that fuses domestic and workplace formats. Also, the sitcom makes use of
computer-generated graphics, crafting this bardic aspect of the 1990s in an inventive way. In the
third section, I describe and analyze the theme of *Dharma & Greg* (1997-2002), analyzing how it
views our nineties "collective self." As a result, aspects of diversity, digital artistry, and
reflexivity arise. To close, I focus solely on one of these bardic norms of the nineties, diversity
and variety, in the themes of *Everybody Loves Raymond* (1996-), *Frasier* (1993-), and *The Drew
Carey Show* (1995-).

In Chapter Six, I analyze the conclusions drawn from the study. I reiterate the value and
significance of the link between what occurs in our society and culture and the messages that are
offered in the sitcom theme songs by the cultural bard.

Notes

1 For example, in *The Ghosts of Mississippi*, the brutal courtroom slaying is
accompanied by the hymn, "Amazing Grace."

2 Roland Barthes' set of codes of signifying systems includes proaïretic codes (actions),
hermeneutic codes (puzzles for narrative suspense), cultural codes, connotative codes (theme and
character attributes), and symbolic codes (antithesis within the text).
CHAPTER TWO
THE 1960S: A CUNNING AND CAUTIOUS BARD

Talk to me,
So you can see,
Oh, what's goin' on.       What's goin' on.
What's goin' on.           What's goin' on.
Tell me, what's goin' on.  What's goin' on.
Oh, what's goin' on.

--Marvin Gaye, "What's Goin' On"

Historical Overview

The social and cultural climate of the 1960s was one of unrest and upheaval. It was a climate that was constantly changing and also struggling to break free from the perceived docile domesticity of the 1950s. In this chapter, I offer a brief overview of the social and cultural history of the 1950s so as to inform my more in-depth survey of the sixties that follows. In the second section of the chapter, I describe and analyze the theme songs from five of the most popular sitcoms of the decade in light of their bardic messages and functions; in light of the "themes" we sang about ourselves in these songs. The historical events, issues, and trends I offer below will inform my understanding of the songs in both the presence and absence of the history therein.

For the three out of every four U.S. citizens who considered themselves to be of the middle class, the 1950s had the potential to be the best decade of their lives. In economic terms, the country had recovered from the Great Depression of the thirties and the war years of the forties. In fact, the U.S. was the only major industrial power not severely damaged or depopulated by World War II. The nation's output of goods and services rose by more than one-third during the fifties, and the U.S. turned out more than two-thirds of all the world's
manufactured goods. In turn, personal incomes doubled and individual purchasing power rose by thirty percent (The American Dream: The 50s 26).

The fifties then marked the beginning of the so-called consumer culture. People had money in their pockets which they were eager to spend on the goods that the converted war industries were eager to sell. As Gerard Jones offers in Honey, I'm Home! Sitcoms: Selling the American Dream, "paradise had become a commodity" (89). Priorities of war production had generated an immense pent-up demand for automobiles and household appliances, such as refrigerators and washing machines. The GI Bill and Federal Housing Administration made it possible for returning veterans and their families to own affordable housing. In 1950 alone, 1.4 million single family homes were built, most of them in the suburbs as young couples looked to move away from the crowded cities. The suburbs represented "freedom, wealth, happiness, [and] personal fulfillment" (Jones 89). By 1953, one out of every five Americans lived in the suburbs and, during the fifties, the suburbs grew at fifteen times the rate of the rest of the country (Jones 88). The overall population also increased during the postwar years. The baby boom reached its peak in 1957 when a record 4.3 million babies were born in the U.S. (The American Dream: The 50s 28). The boom in babies resulted in a huge demand for toys, diapers, bottles, baby food, and related services.

It seems fitting that pink was the color of the decade. It appeared to symbolize the rosy future that Americans envisioned for themselves and the country. Popular items included pink cars, pink bedrooms, pink living rooms and kitchens, pink appliances for the kitchen, and pink wardrobes for both men and women.

During the war years, gender roles had altered as many men took up the fight overseas and many women took over their jobs in the factories here at home. After the war, the "proper" or "accepted" roles for men and women were reestablished. Women lost their jobs to the
returning veterans and, depending on their economic circumstances, either returned home or returned to jobs that upheld traditional gender roles and norms, such as domestic labor and service positions. To encourage and support the return of women to the home, magazines and advertisements advised women as to their postwar duties. House Beautiful reminded women that a wife's job was to meet her husband's every need and to forget her own preferences. Time magazine praised her as "the key figure in all suburbia. . . . the keeper of the suburban dream" (quoted in The American Dream: The 50s 58). Advertisements pictured her as a cheery homemaker whose deepest satisfaction and joy was in cooking for her family. "Betty Crocker" replaced "Rosie the Riveter" as the icon for the ideal woman.

As depicted by popular culture, teenagers in the fifties appeared to be a conformist lot. By and large, their depicted behavior upheld the wholesome values of the reclaimed paradise. They attended football games and dances. Girls worried about their reputations and dating around was the exception. Further, music on the teen scene was fairly clean cut, consisting of romantic ballads, quartet harmonies, or fluffy novelty songs. Popular hits of the decade included Nat King Cole's "Mona Lisa" (1950), Patti Page's "How Much is that Doggie in the Window?" (1953), The Crew Cuts' "Sh-Boom (Life Could Be a Dream)" (1954), The Chordette's "Mr. Sandman" (1955), Elvis Presley's "Don't Be Cruel" (1956), The Diamonds' "Little Darlin'" (1957), and The Everly Brothers' "All I Have to do is Dream" (1958). Rock and roll was beginning to develop with singers like Elvis Presley but would not hit its stride until the 1960s. One youth counter culture did develop during the 1950s. Known as the Beat Generation and its members as Beatniks, this counter culture rejected the material values and comforts of the decade. Instead, they reveled in the politics and poetics of street life, jazz music, spontaneous creative expression, drugs and alternative religions.
As evidenced by the Beat movement, beneath and often against the homogenizing culture of the fifties ran strands of discontent and fear. African Americans did not enjoy the same opportunities and possibilities as middle and upper class whites. As a result of the "separate but equal" Jim Crow laws, segregation was very much intact while accommodations were anything but equal, particularly regarding schools and other public facilities. During the 1950s, blacks and other civil rights activists mounted successful legal assaults on the separate but equal statutes. In the 1952 case of Brown v. the Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas, Oliver Brown sued on behalf of his daughter, Linda, who had to attend a run-down black school twenty-seven blocks away from her home when a better white school was within walking distance. On May 17, 1954, the Supreme Court unanimously ruled in favor of the Browns, stating that "separate educational facilities are inherently unequal." Although the Supreme Court decreed that school desegregation proceed "with all deliberate speed," the pace was agonizingly slow and many times the National Guard was called in to protect black students as they entered white schools (The American Dream: The 50s 111).

Further, in 1955, Rosa Parks was arrested for refusing to give up her seat in the "whites only" section of a bus in Montgomery, Alabama. Parks' arrest prompted a year-long boycott of the city's buses by blacks. Meanwhile, protesters went to court asking for an end to bus segregation. On November 13, 1956, after three hundred and eighty-one days of boycotting, the Supreme Court agreed that bus segregation was unconstitutional. Despite the crumbling of Jim Crow laws and policies during the 1950s, racial discrimination persisted throughout the U.S., most obviously in the South. Further, at least half of all black families lived in poverty and African Americans were virtually barred from the suburbs as most new housing developers refused to sell to them.
As perceived or desired, the docile domesticity of the fifties was also undermined by the fear and threat of Communist expansion. The Soviet Union, which had been the wartime ally of the U.S., became its nemesis as it installed Communist governments in the Eastern European countries it claimed as its World War II bounty. In an effort to contain the spread of Communism to other countries, President Harry Truman sent aid to Turkey and Greece as well as Japan. In the latter case, General Douglas MacArthur kept direct watch on Japan's recovery efforts and its establishment of a democratic constitution and government; "a further bulwark" against Communism (Decade of Triumph: The 40s 167). U.S. foreign policy and influence proved to be spread too thin however. In October 1949, Communist party chairman, Mao Tse-tung, established the People's Republic of China, wrestling control of the world's most populous nation from the regime of longtime U.S. ally, Chiang Kai-shek. Then, in 1950, the North Korean People's Army invaded South Korea. At the end of World War II, Korea was occupied by both Soviet and U.S. forces. For convenience, they divided the country into two parts: the Soviets administered the territory north of the "38th parallel" and the U.S., the south. President Truman, who saw the invasion as a Soviet test of American resolve, sent U.S. troops to help defend South Korea in the war. The war continued until North Korea agreed to a ceasefire in July 1953.

A crusade to crush Communism was also pursued on the home front, the most infamous effort being that of the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC). Chaired with fervent and often unwarranted zeal by Senator Joseph R. McCarthy of Wisconsin, HUAC conducted hearings in which individuals were grilled as to their supposed pro-Communist sentiments and activities. As a result of the HUAC hearings, hundreds of federal employees were dismissed for being "traitors" and scores of writers, composers, and performers were blacklisted for being suspected Communists.
The U.S. fear of Communism was deeply impacted by the Soviets' development of their own atomic bomb in 1949. In response, President Truman ordered the Atomic Energy Committee to develop a more powerful hydrogen bomb. Shortly thereafter, the Soviets countered with one of their own. The perceived threat to national security was intensified in 1957 when the Soviet Union launched Sputnik I, the first artificial satellite to orbit the earth. The possibility of the Soviets waging nuclear war from outerspace seemed an inevitable reality to many U.S. citizens at this point. Rather than quell fears, the U.S. government fostered them by urging homeowners to build underground fallout shelters in their backyards. Further, Civil Defense manuals encouraged homeowners to install shatterproof windows and buy Geiger counters to measure radiation levels. In schools, "duck and cover" drills were added to the curriculum, the child's safeguard from nuclear annihilation assured by a chipper little tune and the cover of her desk.

Television sitcoms of the decade chose to sideline issues of race and fears of nuclear attack in favor of a cheery, white bread portrait of life in the U.S. Shows such as The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet (1952) and Father Knows Best (1954) depicted the idealized family of suburbia. In the former, a voice-over narrator introduces the Nelsons as "America's Favorite Family," and the adventurous plots consist of buying furniture, eating ice cream, and teenage boys receiving telephone calls from teenage girls. As Gerard Jones explains, the Nelsons created "the suburban Neverland of family sitcoms in which details of locale and occupation are intentionally evaded and a homogeneous, threatless world is shown as being already in place" (95). Likewise, in Father Knows Best, the Anderson family was advanced as "a model social unit for the new suburban society" (Jones 97). In the show, Jim Anderson works as an insurance agent and his wife, Margaret, is a content housewife. The two live happily with their three children in a big two-story house in a town called Springfield. Jones asserts that the
show was "unabashedly intended to uplift the broad American audience" (97), an aim which was
ironically substantiated by the production company motto displayed at the end of every episode:
"ars pro multis" or art for the masses. Given the ardent Cold War sentiments of the decade, it is
difficult not to read the motto as an intentional critique and appropriation of Communist doctrine
for U.S. gain. Indeed, in 1959, the Treasury Department underwrote a special episode of Father
Knows Best called "Twenty-Four Hours in Tyrant Land." The episode depicted what life in
Springfield would be like under Communist rule. While the episode never aired on TV, it was
shown to civic and church groups to promote a Treasury Department bond drive. As such, the
Anderson family was federally endorsed as the ideal American family and Father Knows Best as
the ideal "art for the [American] masses" (Jones 101-102).

As Jones observes, television sitcoms, and popular culture generally, depicted the decade
as "a time of placidity and changelessness, an eerily homogenous landscape of spacious houses
and smiling, self-satisfied WASP families" (87). However, this portrait was far from accurate.
The fear, agitation and dissatisfaction of many U.S. Americans in the fifties continued to fester
and, in the 1960s, erupted in multiple and diverse ways.

The 1960s was a decade of unrest and change. The battle with the Soviets continued to
escalate. Early in the decade, Soviet supported rebels instigated attempts to invade South
Vietnam and Laos. Closer to home, Fidel Castro threatened to provide the Soviets with a
beachhead in Cuba. The threat materialized in what came to be known as the Cuban Missile
Crisis. On October 14, 1962, a U.S. surveillance plane took photos of Russian missile launch
sites in Cuba. The photos were delivered to President Kennedy on October 16th and, after eight
days of intensive deliberations, Kennedy commenced a naval blockade of Soviet vessels
assumed to be carrying nuclear weapons to Cuba. On October 24th, a pact between the U.S. and
Russia was reached. The Soviets agreed to recall their ships and remove their weapons from Cuba while the U.S. agreed to dismantle its weapons in Turkey.

The space race between the U.S. and the Soviet Union intensified on April 12, 1961, when a Soviet Air Force Major, Yuri Gagarin, became the first man in space. He made a single orbit around the earth in Vostok I. A few weeks later, U.S. Commander Alan Shepard, Jr., made a suborbital flight in Freedom 7. However, for the U.S., second place in the space race meant last place. Not to be outdone by the Soviets and to bolster national pride, Kennedy vowed that the U.S. would land a man on the moon by the end of the decade. On July 20, 1969, Kennedy's prophesy came to pass when Neil Armstrong stepped from Apollo 11 onto the lunar surface.

Although his tenure as President was short, Kennedy's legacy prevailed throughout the 1960s. He initiated policies to address the economic slump in which the country had fallen after the postwar boom of the previous decade. His liberal, social democratic agenda supported and was supported by minorities and women. Simultaneously, Kennedy and his family seemed to epitomize the fairytale, ideal America that had been constructed in the fifties. He was young and outgoing, with a stylish wife and two small children. In short, Kennedy represented hope for a "new generation of Americans" (Turbulent Years: The 60s 49).

Throughout the sixties, African Americans, women, and homosexuals fought to overcome the hegemonic norms of the fifties and stake their claim in the new America Kennedy envisioned. Having gained a foothold in the fifties, the Civil Rights movement entered a more intensive phase in the sixties. Across the south, blacks staged "sit-ins" to protest the Jim Crow laws that prevented them from eating at whites-only lunch counters, drinking from whites-only water fountains, and using whites-only restrooms. On February 1, 1960, four black college freshmen entered a Woolworth's five-and-dime in Greensboro, North Carolina, and seated themselves at the whites-only lunch counter. They ordered coffee, but were refused service.
They sat quietly until the store closed at 5:30 p.m. The next day they returned with twenty companions. On the third day, they returned with sixty companions. Their actions made news and encouraged other students, some of them white sympathizers, to follow suit. Within two months, similar sit-ins were staged in fifty-four cities in nine states (Turbulent Years: The 60s 63-64).

Segregatory policies in public transportation were also contested. Although, in December 1960, the Supreme Court had declared segregation illegal in interstate bus terminals, the legal system did little to enforce the ruling. In response, James Farrner, national director of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), organized groups of black and white "Freedom Riders" who claimed seats at the "front of the bus" on trips from Washington, D.C., through the south. In Anniston and Birmingham, Alabama, racists answered back by smashing windows, slashing tires, and beating Freedom Riders with baseball bats, lead pipes and chains.

On August 28, 1963, the country witnessed the largest human rights demonstration thus far in U.S. history, the groundbreaking March on Washington by two hundred and fifty thousand black and white civil rights supporters. It was here that Martin Luther King, Jr., delivered his most memorable speech, "I Have a Dream," on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, a location that symbolized the emancipation of slaves and now African Americans. While King advocated peace between the races, black militants such as Malcolm X and Stokley Carmichael called for "total revolution" and "black power." Although, in 1964, a national Civil Rights Act was passed, the fight for racial equality was and yet is far from over. In 1965, King continued the struggle by leading a fifty mile march for freedom from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama. In the years that followed, both Malcolm X, in 1965, and Martin Luther King, Jr., in 1968, were assassinated, their deaths seemingly foreshadowed by the assassination of President Kennedy in 1963.
Although many theories abound as to the responsible parties and reasons for the Kennedy shooting, there is little doubt that his death marked an end to the U.S. fairytale constructed in the fifties and further propelled the public outcry for social change that characterized the sixties. Indeed, Kennedy's vice president and successor, Lyndon B. Johnson, succeeded in pushing two civil rights bills through Congress and oversaw the birth of Medicare. However, his plans for a "Great Society," aimed largely at eliminating poverty, proved unsuccessful due to the bureaucratic centralization of funds and also the escalation of U.S. military involvement in Vietnam.  

In 1965, Johnson sent combat troops to Da Nang in South Vietnam and ordered the beginning of Operation Rolling Thunder, a bombing campaign aimed at railroad yards, troop camps, and other targets in North Vietnam. Many U.S. citizens strongly opposed the nation's involvement in Vietnam. The youth were particularly vehement, staging demonstrations with rallying cries of "Hell, no! We won't go!" and "Don't trust anyone over thirty." One key reason for the opposition concerned how class factors played a part in who was drafted for service. Until an overarching lottery was instituted in 1969, the Selective Service granted deferments to college and graduate school students. Hence, the average U.S. soldier was nineteen years old, eight years younger than those who had fought in World War II and Korea, and a disproportionate number came from poor, working class, and minority backgrounds. According to Turbulent Years: The 60s, many well-to-do young men joined the Reserves or National Guard, gambling correctly that the government would not risk the political cost of calling up units filled with the sons of the upper middle and upper classes (128). 

In January 1968, just as the government was claiming a "light at the end of the tunnel," Communist forces in South Vietnam mounted the Tet Offensive, a sudden and coordinated cluster of attacks on more than one hundred cities and military bases in South Vietnam. The
attacks resulted in turning millions of Americans against the war and, in turn, against President Johnson. Due to his unpopularity, Johnson did not seek another term in office and, in 1969, Richard M. Nixon was sworn in as the thirty-seventh president of the U.S.

In the 1960s, the country became increasingly concerned with the environment, particularly air and water pollution. In 1962, Rachel Carson published Silent Spring, a work in which she condemns the use of artificial pesticides. In the book, Carson makes reference to a spring where birds do not sing, trees do not bear fruit, and animals and children die mysteriously. Due to outspoken concerns regarding the environment, the decade saw the creation of the National Wilderness Preservation System (1964), the Land and Water Conservation Act (1964), the National Trails System (1968), and the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System (1968).

The notion of an ideal family and female roles regarding it were increasingly challenged by women over the course of the 1960s. Unlike the 1950s creed which instructed women to "ignore your own preferences in favor of your husband's," women of the sixties began to recognize and claim that their needs were as important as their husbands' and men's generally. Many middle and upper class women chose to delay marriage in favor of pursuing their own careers. In 1960, the FDA approved the use of the birth control pill. The pill proved to facilitate both the women's movement and the sexual revolution of the mid- to late-sixties.

Toward the end of the decade, Gay Liberation came of age. Encouraged by African American and women's civil rights efforts, the "homophile movement," as participants dubbed it, became more visible (Foner and Garraty 513). Angered by the June 27, 1969 police raid on Stonewall, a New York City gay bar, homosexuals rallied to challenge all forms of social hostility toward themselves and marginalized individuals in general.

All told, the events, activities and movements of the 1960s highlighted the generational differences between young people and their parents; between those who had experienced World
War II and raised children during the "populuxe" years of the fifties and their children, the baby-boomers. Due to the postwar baby boom, the number of U.S. citizens aged fifteen through twenty-four grew by nearly half during the sixties. While many young people chose to conform to the prevailing lifestyles and values of the prior decades, many did not. They opted out of the materialistic mainstream and created counter cultures of their own. Generally, the nonconformist youths comprised three major subcultures: the hippies, the diggers, and the yippies.

Hippies, who took their name from the slang term "hip" meaning "informed" or "in the know," wore their hair long, exulted in poetry, valued drug-induced alternate realities, and advocated peace, love and personal freedom. For the most part, hippies remained disengaged from political controversy. Although opposed to the political policies concerning Vietnam, hippies protested with the nonviolent slogan, "Make love, not war."

The diggers, a group who borrowed their name from the seventeenth century British rebels who despised private property and depicted the earth as "a common treasury for all" (Farber 224), emerged in San Francisco in the mid-1960s. Diggers worked to bring about social change by trying to persuade others to give up their materialistic lifestyles and values. To further their goals, diggers engaged in such activities as distributing free clothing and food in Golden Gate Park and defacing advertising billboards, a medium they felt perpetuated the consumer-driven culture.

Members of the Youth International Party, otherwise known as yippies, also advocated social change but, unlike the hippies and diggers, the yippies declared their agenda to be political and their main ploy, to receive as much media coverage as possible. The yippies' most memorable demonstration occurred during the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago where some three thousand yippie protesters attempted to storm the convention hall as delegates were debating party policy on Vietnam. As television cameras zoomed in, yippies provoked the
police officers with obscene gestures and verbal assaults. The police responded by throwing tear
gas into the crowd and beating the demonstrators with their clubs, turning the protest into a
major riot.

The youth of the sixties also used music to express their positions on the war and other
issues. Rock and Folk rock music carried political messages protesting against racism, the
Vietnam War, and the spread of nuclear weapons. Other songs offered affirmations of free love
and sexual pleasure. Multicultural fusions also occurred in the music of the sixties as white
musicians sang black blues and black musicians played psychedelic rock. Further, a new style of
music known as "soul" became popular during the decade as African American composers and
singers used the gospel form to sing about their personal relationships and social problems.
According to Farber, the blending of cultures and the emergence of regionally and racially
inflected music into the best-seller charts represented important changes in American popular
music and culture (226).

Television Trends

Over the course of the fifties and sixties, television came to play a central role in popular
culture in the U.S. The total number of television sets increased dramatically. In 1950, there
were one million sets while, in 1960, there were fifty million and the number rose steadily during
the decade. Nearly every household in the U.S. contained at least one television set, turning the
U.S. into what media theorist Marshall McLuhan describes as the electronic "'global village'"
(quoted in Turbulent Years: The 60s 32). And, as marginalized groups struggled to claim their
place in society, as family roles altered, as the war in Vietnam raged, and as Neil Armstrong
stepped from Apollo 11 onto the moon's surface, television programming proved to both reflect
and deflect the changing social cultural landscape of the U.S. and the world.
According to Morreale, in the 1960s, networks "began to try to reach heavy viewers rather than families gathered around the set" (88). Heavy viewers were predominately "working class, rural, and socially conservative" (Morreale 88). These particular groups were targeted as substantial viewers because, due to their isolated locale or lack of disposable income, television was their main source of entertainment. In addition to working class and rural individuals, middle aged and elderly folks of the middle class were marked as social conservatives as well. One result of the targeted market was that, while news programs increasingly conveyed images of fighting in Vietnam or civil protests and riots, television sitcoms and other light fare did not. Or, more precisely, in light of the conservative politics of the targeted audience, any adverse social-political criticism was veiled.

Four main themes and categories characterized the sitcoms of the sixties. There were culture clash sitcoms, single father sitcoms, military sitcoms, and magical sitcoms. Most of the cultural clash sitcoms positioned upscale, urban characters and rural or working class characters within the same locale or situation. The latter typically proved to outwit the former due to "common man" common sense or subversive foolishness. Such stories appealed to the aforementioned heavy viewers because they acknowledged and rewarded their own underdog status and savvy or, if a well-off social conservative, the stories substantiated that social underdogs were foolish and hence not a threat. In other words, almost all of the culture clash sitcoms could be read in at least two ways. Of the thirty sitcoms of the decade, four concentrated on a high/low culture clash. They were The Beverly Hillbillies, Green Acres, Petticoat Junction, and Gilligan's Island. In the vernacular of the sixties, establishment and anti- or non-establishment cultures confronted each other in The Addams Family and The Munsters. While geared toward younger audiences, the two sitcoms also proved popular with older and more conservative viewers because the monstrous families were silly enough to be dismissed as just
that. Also targeted at younger viewers was The Patty Duke Show, which explored the generation gap and clash.

While over the course of the sixties an increasing number of families were headed by single mothers, sitcoms that featured families headed by a single or surrogate father hit an all time high that has yet to be matched. The shows were The Andy Griffith Show, My Three Sons, The Courtship of Eddie's Father, The Danny Thomas Show, The Real McCoys, Mayberry, R.F.D., and Family Affair. By privileging the parental authority and abilities of fathers, over and to the absence of mothers, these sitcoms seem to send a message of resistance to the burgeoning women's movement. Despite statistics to the contrary, they insist that men head the U.S. family and, in light of the growing female work force, they imply that men value the U.S. family more so than do women who apparently disappear from the view once they claim rights that counter traditional domestic norms. On the other hand, the message may have been intended to reassure women that if they leave the home to join the work force, men will fill their domestic shoes ably. Given the long history of working class women who both tended to their families and held down jobs, this message of reassurance is patronizing at best. Lastly, this curious glut of single father families may simply reflect a corresponding glut of marketable male celebrities in the television trade at this time.

Given the volatile aspect of the Vietnam War, it comes as no surprise that the four military sitcoms of the decade did not directly deal with it. Two sitcoms, Hogan's Heroes and McHale's Navy, recalled U.S. successes in World War II and thereby appealed directly to the forty to fifty year old "heavy viewers" who served in the war. F Troop satirized the U.S. Cavalry and its foibles and foul-ups in dealing with the "injuns" in the late nineteenth century. Apparently, in this case, the military subject was far enough removed in time to be satirized without hitting the raw nerves of the military in the 1960s. As I discuss below, although Gomer
Pyle, USMC was set in contemporary times, the depicted illusion was that of a peacetime military.

Five sitcoms of the decade focused on characters with magical qualities or abilities. Three shows, The Flying Nun, I Dream of Jeannie, and Bewitched, attributed extraordinary powers to women while they simultaneously qualified or controlled those powers. In the first, a nun's "flying" abilities are qualified as spiritually powered. In the second, a genie's magic is geared to service her master's desires and, in the third, a witch is bewitched by mortal romance and domestic expectations. The sitcom My Favorite Martian capitalized on the nation's fascination with space exploration while Mr. Ed offered a talking horse.

Of the remaining sitcoms, some were domestic sitcom holdovers from the 1950s, such as Dennis the Menace and The Donna Reed Show, and others were anomalies, such as Get Smart, Hazel, Car 54, Where Are You?, The Flintstones, and That Girl. It is important to note that the categories I have identified above are not exclusive, overlaps and fusions are common. For instance, The Beverly Hillbillies investigates a clash between high- and lowbrow cultures and the family is headed by a single father while The Munsters is a culture clash sitcom precisely because the characters display magical qualities. For example, "Grandpa" is over a thousand years old and enjoys turning himself into a bat from time to time.

In the following section of the chapter, I describe and analyze one theme song from each of the categories outlined above. My rationale for selection is based on the fact that all four categories are fairly equal and also substantial in number. Hence, all four categories reflect a cultural consensus that they offered a valuable message to the "collective self" at this time (Fiske and Hartley 85). For reasons similarly attributed to bardic functions, I have narrowed my selections to the highest rated or most popular show in each category. Also, all four selections
remained in the Nielsen top ten rankings for a minimum of three seasons during the decade. The theme songs and shows I discuss are *The Beverly Hillbillies* (1962-71), *The Andy Griffith Show* (1960-68), *Gomer Pyle, USMC* (1964-70), and *Bewitched* (1964-72). In addition, I discuss one anomaly of the decade, *That Girl* (1966-71). I have chosen this show because it was the first sitcom to address the emerging "independent woman" and hence served as a prototype for the wave of independent woman sitcoms that were produced in the 1970s. In Appendix A, the lyrics and other information regarding the five theme songs are provided.

**Analysis of Themes**

*The Beverly Hillbillies* tells the story of the Clampetts, a poor Ozark Mountains family who, as a result of striking oil on their land, become instant millionaires and move to Beverly Hills. The Clampett clan includes Jed, the widowed patriarch of the family, Granny, Jed's elderly mother-in-law, Elly May, Jed's beautiful but naive daughter, and Jethro, Jed's nephew who is, as described by Castleman and Podrazik, the "country rube personified" (53).

The humor in *The Beverly Hillbillies* arises from the clash of two social classes: the highbrow elite of Beverly Hills and the lowbrow Clampett family. While the customs and manners of Beverly Hills are unfamiliar to the Clampetts, the various members prove to both adapt to "Beverly" customs and retain their "hillbilly" ways. The most stubborn of the bunch, Granny, insists that their "old timey" culture be conserved. She shuns caviar in favor of cooking up a kettle of "possum stew" and opts for a batch of her homemade "recipe" over the interventions of modern medicine. Elly May is more flexible, adapting the family's luxurious swimming pool into a "cement pond" for her "critters." Jethro embraces the Beverly Hills culture fully and awkwardly. In various episodes, he transforms himself into a Beatnik, a bank executive, a rock singer, and a movie producer in an attempt to attract young starlets. Jed, on the other hand, does not abandon his Ozark ways in favor of the uppercrust lifestyle and yet he does
not close his mind to new ideas either. Jed is able to "marry the best of both worlds" (Castleman and Podrazik 53). He retains his backwoods common sense while learning what is valuable or beneficial from urban society.

The main representative of the highbrow world is Mr. Drysdale, the owner of the Commerce Bank in which Jed has deposited his twenty-five million dollars. Although Mr. Drysdale views the Clampetts' hillbilly ways with disapproval, he refrains from offending them because they are the largest depositors in his bank. If they leave, their money goes with them. Most of the criticism of the Clampetts' behavior comes from Mr. Drysdale's wife, Margaret, a socially prominent, status-conscious woman who tries to "civilize" the Clampetts.

The theme song for *The Beverly Hillbillies*, titled "The Ballad of Jed Clampett," offers a complete story, sung and partly spoken by a male narrator who is accompanied by the bluegrass instrumentals of the famous Lester Flatt and Earl Scruggs. The story is told from a third person point of view in a realist style that emphasizes plot and character over abstract images. The narration also integrates free indirect discourse, largely implicative of Jed's perspective. In an open performance situation, the narrator gathers us around him with the opening lines, "Come an' listen to ma story 'bout a man named Jed" and, in a brief fifty-five seconds, the audience receives a full acoustic and also visual rendering of the Clampetts' rise from rags to riches.

The story begins in the woods with a long shot of Jed, a "poor mountaineer" in a tattered coat and beat up hat who, we learn, "barely kept his family fed." He and his hound dog are running through the woods in pursuit of unseen prey. A full shot of Jed follows as he lifts his rifle and shoots "at some food." There is a close-up of oil bubbling up from the ground followed by a medium reaction shot of Jed who has a confused look on his face as he watches the "bubblin' crude." The narrator helps Jed figure the situation by clarifying, "Oil, that is. Black gold. Texas tea." Simultaneously, the camera offers another close-up of the oil.
The second section of the theme begins with a long shot of Jed running through the door of his cabin. Inside he greets an elderly woman and, as deduced from the interaction between the two, tells her his news. The narrator exclaims, "Well, the first thing you know ol' Jed's a millionaire." The two jump up and down in excitement. Jed motions to the door and the two run outside. As the narrator continues, "So they loaded up the truck and they moved to Beverly," the visuals reveal a long profile shot of the entire family, Jed, Granny, Elly May, Jethro, and the hunting dog, piled into an old, open-bed truck which is parked outside of a small, broken-down log cabin. Jed is still dressed in his tattered hat and coat while Granny wears an old-fashioned ankle length dress, the bottom portion covered with an apron. Both Elly May and Jethro are clothed in long sleeved plaid shirts and jeans belted with a piece of rope. The truck pulls away on the line, "and they moved to Beverly."

The third section takes place on a roadway in Beverly Hills. Although the family is still in the truck, the setting has changed. The narrator clarifies the setting with the line, "Hills, that is. Swimmin' pools. Movie stars." We no longer see a cabin with pine trees surrounding it. Instead, we see the truck on a stretch of road flanked with palm trees on either side. The section begins with a long shot of the family in the truck, driving down the roadway. Jethro drives while Jed sits beside him. The back seat of the truck is elevated. Granny sits in the back seat directly behind Jethro while Elly May rides directly behind Jed. The dog is seated between the two women. The family is photographed full front. At the narrator's announcement, "The Beverly Hillbillies!" the camera snaps to a medium shot of the family. With this single line and shot, the theme introduces the family to the viewing audience, announces their "hillbilly" presence in Beverly Hills, and anticipates the class clash on which the humor of the show is based.

After the narrator announces the family, the show's title is overlaid in the center of the frame. The words "The Beverly" are written in flowing cursive writing. Beneath, the word
"Hillbillies" appears in block letters resembling wooden planks. The different typefaces further anticipate the clash of cultures voiced by the narrator and the extreme contrast in print types suggests that the conflict will be depicted in broad and comic rather than subtle and tragic terms. The comic disposition is communicated further by the casual and optimistic tone of the narrator's voice and, likewise, the expressions on the characters' faces.

The closing theme of The Beverly Hillbillies begins with a long shot of the closed doors of the Clampetts' Beverly Hills mansion. The names of the producers and guest stars appear overlaid on the closed doors. Again, bluegrass music plays while the narrator tells us, "Well now it's time to say goodbye to Jed and all his kin." The doors swing open and the Clampetts emerge, wearing the same tattered clothing as in the opening theme. The camera pulls back a few feet to reveal the four family members in a long shot as they stand side by side in a horizontal line and wave to the camera or, as the shot implies, to the viewing audience. The closing theme suggests that even though their lifestyle has changed, the Clampetts themselves have not. They have retained their mountain manners and tastes despite their great wealth. Even though they can afford it, they do not employ service staff to show visitors into or out of their dwelling. Instead, the family as a whole accompanies their visitors out of the mansion and waves to them as they depart. Also, the narrator's language, a reflection of the Clampetts' attitude and vernacular, remains unchanged. He tells us that the Clampetts would like to thank us "fer kindly droppin' in" and that we're "all invited back next week. . . / To have a heapin' helpin' of their hospitality."

Then, as with a narrative coda, the narrator sums up the point of his story by clarifying the kind of "hospitality" we can expect, "Hillbilly, that is. Sit a spell. Take yer shoes off."

The Beverly Hillbillies theme stresses the importance of a close knit family and friendly hospitality as ways to manage the collision of different cultures in our society. Given the point of view and prevailing perspective of the narrator and camera, the theme also emphasizes the
retention of localized cultures, in this case "hillbilly" culture, in the face of global capitalism and materialism.

The theme hooks the targeted heavy viewers or social conservatives by underscoring the value of family cohesion. The proxemic patterns in both the opening and closing themes indicate that the family is a close knit bunch. In the cabin, Jed holds Granny's arm as they jump up and down together, the family sits close together in the truck, and they stand side by side on the front patio as they wave good-bye to us. Although the early episodes are shot in black and white, the later ones use color and its composition further signifies the warmth of the Clampett clan. Garbed in a palette of oranges, reds and browns, the family is unified by the analogous colors and, as a group, they contrast the cool blue and green Beverly Hills setting and, in the show, the black, gray or blue suits that Mr. Drysdale, his wife, and his secretary, the gangly Miss Jane, commonly wear. The warm colors also implicate the friendly disposition of the family toward each other and the Beverly Hills set with whom they interact.

In the show itself, the Beverly/Hillbilly class clash usually arises from a misunderstanding on one of the characters' parts regarding the customs of the other culture and, as a result, planned or accidental tom-foolery and humor arise. Sometimes, the Clampetts use subversive foolishness to resolve the conflict but, in most cases, it is the family's and particularly Jed's earnest humility and hospitality that save the day.

The basic scenario and its themes are embedded in the content and composition of shots in the opening and closing themes. While the shots of the woods and cabin are loosely framed, when the family enters Beverly Hills, the frame tightens. This framing activity operates in a number of ways. First, the long loose shots help to summarize the expository action while the close shot focuses in on and particularizes the characters in their new setting. The framing implies that the viewer will get to know the characters well as they interact with the Beverly
Hills set. It also emphasizes that the backwoods Clampetts are or have become the main characters in Beverly Hills and, as such, the tightened frame simultaneously implies the close scrutiny they will receive from the Beverly Hills natives. In other words, the shot is "double-voiced." It "serves two speakers [or perspectives] at the same time and expresses simultaneously two different intentions" (Bakhtin 324). Significantly, the Clampetts appear unperturbed by the "eyeshot" they receive and smile happily as their rickety truck rambles along the well paved roads of the upper crust. In a sense, their engaging attitude deflects the cool eye of the camera, assuming it to be as friendly as they are. In this way, the Clampetts invite us into a world that, in less than a minute, they have made their own.

The use of a "heapin' helpin' of . . .hospitality" as a way to manage if not also erode class barriers is reiterated in the closing theme. Whereas, in the introductory theme, the narrator's discourse facilitated an open situation between the Clampetts and the viewers, in the closing theme, the visual composition is clearly "open" as well. The Clampett family acknowledges our presence as they look directly at the camera, smiling and waving their hands. Further, the free indirect discourse expresses the narrator's and the Clampetts' sentiments that we all "come back now, y'hear?" while it also serves as a marketing hook for the producers. The use of the open situation signifies the Clampetts' hospitality, and as a gesture that will not be isolated in a closed performance situation or "other" reality. The characters present themselves to us as "real" folks who would like us to "come back, take our shoes off" and watch them play within the upper crust world again, using tom-foolery and also a good dose of hospitality to manage the collision and clash of cultural exchange.

In many ways, the Clampetts we meet in the opening and closing themes carry signifiers that represent aspects of the various counter cultures of the sixties. Like the hippies, the Clampetts possess goodwill sentiments towards all. Like the diggers, they treasure the
environment and, especially Elly May, enact conservation practices in various episodes of the show itself. And, like the yippies' ploys, the Clampett construct is one that engages in subversive performance politics. On the one hand, the Clampetts' behavior can be read as "simply" foolish. The theme implies that the show will be about how silly the family behaves in the upper crust context. In this way, the theme hooks viewers who gain satisfaction from the apparent mockery of a socially inept backwoods family, or "white trash." However, it is precisely by performing foolish and hence seemingly unthreatening behavior that the Clampetts disarm the cool eye of the Beverly Hills elite upon their arrival and, in the closing frame, insist on their brand of hospitality over that of the contexting culture in which they live.

The Clampetts also most clearly represent the "hillbilly" people and cultures of the Appalachian and Ozark Mountains regions. While the visual composition offers synecdoches that signify these cultures, the bluegrass ballad and music offer the most persuasive evidence that the theme intends to advocate the retention of localized cultures, specifically hillbilly culture, in lieu of mass homogenized expressions.

A "representation of traditional Appalachian music in its social form" (Cantwell xi), bluegrass music is used in both the opening and closing theme of The Beverly Hillbillies. The ballad uses the bluegrass convention of a narrative frame to tell the Clampett story (Cantwell 226). The narrative frame is supplied by the split of the ballad into an opening and closing theme. The song introduces the story in the opening theme, telling us how and why the Clampetts moved to Beverly Hills, while the closing theme offers us a clear sense of closure and a coda. The show and its specific content are sandwiched between the opening and closing theme.

The story itself is indicative of "conversion stories" in bluegrass tradition. Conversion stories offer narratives of "souls who have been rescued from sin and degradation" (Cantwell
The ballad also integrates additional bluegrass conventions: an idyllic/abhorrent theme, a picturesque setting, and mysterious or magical events. Cantwell observes that the idyllic world is associated with "happiness, security, and peace" and is normally linked with "a cabin home among the rolling green hills" while the abhorrent world is associated with "exciting adventures" which may lead to "separation, loneliness, humiliation and pain" (226).

In light of these conventions, three possible interpretations of the story arise. First, due to a mysterious, chance event (i.e., the bubblin' crude), the Clampetts are saved from the sin and degradation of poverty. They leave their abhorrent (poor) world and join the picturesque idyll of Beverly Hills, thus converting to upper class tastes and values. The second interpretation is a reverse conversion story. Due to evil magic (i.e., the bubblin' crude), the Clampetts leave the idyllic, picturesque world of the mountains for the abhorrent and profane world of Beverly Hills where they are corrupted, not saved. The third interpretation is that due to a mysterious, chance event (i.e., the bubblin' crude as a symbolic "calling"), the Clampetts bring aspects of the idyllic mountain world with them to Beverly Hills in order to make the profane world better. In this sense, they are prophets who try to convert the "others." By crafting a conversion tale with multiple meanings, the bard acknowledges the heterogeneous collective of television viewers to whom he sings. The targeted market of rural folks might appreciate the second version while a more upscale social conservative might enjoy the first. And, as advocates of social change, the counter culture groups of the sixties might find good sense in the third version.

Bluegrass conventions also inform the rhetorical style of the narrator in "The Ballad of Jed Clampett." As is common in conversion stories, the narrator uses a "testifying style" which is directed toward and represents the congregation. The testimony comes from an individual who has "volunteered himself out of its ranks and who speaks as one of them" (Cantwell 211). The narrator in "The Ballad of Jed Clampett" "testifies" or "speaks" as one of the Clampetts and,
in turn, represents hillbilly culture. In addition to using free indirect discourse to speak as one of the clan, the narrator also uses "archaic" language indicative of the hillbilly vernacular and yet another bluegrass convention (Cantwell 225). For instance, he makes references to "kinfolk" and "Californy." He also omits the "ing" and "d" endings of words in his delivery, such as in the lines, "An' then one day he was shootin' at some food / An' up through the ground come a bubblin' crude."

The narrator also draws on the bluegrass convention of presenting more voices than there are persons singing (Cantwell 213). For instance, he uses direct discourse to include the voices of the kinfolk who urge Jed to "move away from there / . . .Californy is the place ya ought to be." He also adds spoken explanations at the end of each stanza. For example, after the line, "An' up through the ground come a bubblin' crude," the narrator clarifies, "Oil, that is. Black gold. Texas tea." The switch in vocal style and rhythm suggests two different voices although only one voice actually delivers the lines.

Lastly, the ballad relies upon the bluegrass tradition and vernacular of the banjo. The use of the banjo is socially significant because, aside from its being the emblem of bluegrass, it is the only instrument used in popular music of the U.S., such as folk, country, blues, and jazz, that is "one hundred percent 'folk' in its ancestry and development" (Rasof 44). According to Rasof, early American banjos were made out of whatever materials were handy, whether it was animal skin, scraps of metal and wood, or gourds. Thus, the sound of the banjo music in the opening and closing theme of The Beverly Hillbillies implies the inventive, "make do" industry of the mountain folk in general and the Clampett family in particular.

Family, hospitable grace and the value of rural culture(s) also arise as key themes in The Andy Griffith Show. The sitcom is set in the rural town of Mayberry, North Carolina. The show revolves around the character of Andy Taylor, a widower raising a young son named Opie.
Andy and Opie live with Andy's Aunt Bee who manages the home and serves as Opie's surrogate mother. Andy is also the town sheriff which, given the relative peace of Mayberry, is not a difficult task to perform. In fact, Andy does not even carry a gun. Andy receives assistance from his deputy, Barney Fife, who is "the most inept, hypertense deputy sheriff ever seen on television" (Brooks and Marsh 45). Unlike Andy, Barney packs a gun but it remains unloaded since, whenever the gun is loaded, Barney tends to discharge it accidentally. In case of an emergency, Barney carries a single bullet in his shirt pocket. Since there is very little crime in Mayberry, most of the story lines center around the various relationships of the town's citizens. In addition to Andy, his family and Barney, the other main townspeople include Gomer Pyle, the good-hearted but naive gas station attendant, Floyd Lawson, the know-it-all barber, and Otis Campbell, the town drunk who, on his own, locks himself inside the jail cell whenever he has had too much to drink.

The opening theme of *The Andy Griffith Show* reflects the peaceful temperament of small town life as rendered in the show. The visual content of the theme tells the story of a man and boy, Andy and Opie, strolling down a path to go fishing together. Rather than a series of montages, the story is told in one continuous action or shot and thus occurs in regular or "in scene" time.

Two elements prevail in the visual composition: the serene landscape and the relationship between father and son. The theme opens with an extreme long shot of Andy and Opie walking down a dirt path through the woods. The camera holds steady as the two progress forward down the path, coming closer into view. Both Andy and Opie carry fishing poles over their shoulders. Opie is dressed in a T-shirt and jeans while Andy is dressed in his sheriff's uniform. Opie kicks at a rock, picks it up, and throws it as Andy looks on. Andy makes a gesture with his head as if to say, "Wow! You threw that rock really far." As the two continue
to walk, Andy puts his arm around the boy's shoulder. The camera, still in a long shot, watches the two pass by and then follows them from behind. The final shot is a long shot of the man and boy at the edge of the lake. We now see only their backs as Opie picks up another rock and skips it over the lake as Andy looks on. During this stroll to the fishing hole, the title of the show appears at the bottom center of the frame. The title is followed by the names of the actors in white block letters (i.e., Andy Griffith, Ronny Howard, Don Knotts), also at the bottom of the screen. The title and names appear to be placed at the bottom of the frame so as not to disturb the picturesque setting.

The opening theme is shot in black and white. While low in contrast, the light and shadow suggest it is late afternoon. The shadows of the man and boy blend with those cast by the trees, creating a harmonious relationship between the pair and nature and, also, a harmonious balance in the composition generally. Although the last season of the show was shot in color, the composition of colors retained the calm, pastoral temperament. The cool, muted shades of blue, green and cream effect a composition of light and shadow very like that of the black and white version.

Accompanying the visual theme is the sound of bouncy, upbeat whistling and finger snapping. After the first two bars, the whistling is paired with the easy strumming of an acoustic bass guitar. The music is indicative of Andy and Opie's relaxed and happy temperament, the bounce in their step, the leisure of fishing and the harmonious ease of the late afternoon rural setting. According to Rasof, many folk musicians use a guitar to compose and accompany their songs. The guitar then references a folk element in the show and is directly linked to Andy's character who, in many episodes, sits on his front porch and strums his guitar as he sings from his repertoire of mountain folk tunes.
In the closing theme, the whistling and finger snapping recur while the visual imagery alters. The backdrop consists of a white screen with shadows falling across it. The names of the production staff fill the center of the screen. At the bottom right of the screen is a small picture or painting of a lake surrounded by trees. The painting serves as a synecdoche for the picturesque life of small town America, an idyllic place that perhaps never was.

As Javna explains, *The Andy Griffith Show* is a salute to a "part of America that has disappeared into the space age--the simple, unhurried life of a rural community where everyone belongs and where a little common sense is all you need to get through life" (46). In addition, the opening theme highlights the importance of family and particularly the relationship between father and son, and an attitude of engagement and respect toward others. Lastly, the theme advances Andy Griffith as the ethical center of the depicted world and community.

The visual content in the opening theme shows the viewer simple acts of bonding between father and son. Alone in the woods, the pair is unified by the similar path they take and the fishing poles they hold. Their proxemic pattern signifies intimacy. They walk side by side, nearly touching, and at one point Andy puts his arm around Opie's shoulder. They consistently acknowledge and support each other with smiles and other facial expressions. The absence here of the surrogate mother figure, Aunt Bee, and Andy's comic side-kick, Barney Fife, is significant since the two play substantial parts in the show and in Opie's upbringing. Aunt Bee's absence substantiates that the two are involved in a male bonding ritual, in no sense deliberate on the characters' part but, rather, implicitative of trans-cultural traditions where young boys are taught to be men by means of "masculine" outdoor activities, such as hiking, fishing and skipping stones. The ritual implication is further supported by Barney's absence in so far as the depicted action is coded as "both earnest and playful" or serious play (Turner 35). By enacting a "simple" stroll to the lake, the father passes on cultural knowledge to his son that conserves the social fabric and its
values. In this case, the apparent values are those of a rural culture, masculinity, civility, and good humor.

The importance of the bonding ritual to the rhetoric of the opening theme is further substantiated by how the shots are composed. The situation is closed and the camera and hence the viewer always remain at a social distance. Indeed, the camera never moves in for a close-up of the characters or their action but opts to reveal the scene in either extreme long shots or long shots. Also, Andy and Opie are not filmed full front but rather in quarter turns, or in profile, or with their backs to the camera as they walk along the path. The maintenance of distance between the pair and the viewer highlights the importance of the rural setting because the father and son are always viewed within and in terms of it. The forest is a place of harmony, peace, and outdoor play for the father and son and, in light of our remove from it, the forest also becomes a sacred place beyond prying eyes and the bustle and turmoil of the decade.

Since the typical content of the show concerns the humorous interactions between Andy, his family and the townspeople of Mayberry, the opening theme operates as a metaphor for small town life and its people. We might then understand that the pastoral forest represents Mayberry or the quality of life in Mayberry. Andy serves as the father, teacher, elder, sage of the town while Opie represents the innocent yet playful townspeople who take turns kicking at stones and stirring up the town's peaceful waters. In light of the intimate, respectful, and playful relationship between Andy and Opie, it appears that any in-town stone-kicking and water-stirring will be minor and resolved with relative ease by the town's father figure or peacekeeper.

Javna describes Andy's role in the town as "the voice of sanity in a sea of small town eccentricities" (42). However, as indicated by his behavior with his son Opie in the opening theme, Andy's "sanity" is constituted by a respect for the other characters' "eccentricities" and a relaxed ease when interacting with them. His practical and ethical redress of the weekly
disagreements that arise is anchored in and in terms of the community and its people. In fact, in
the first year or two of the show's run, the character of Andy is as "eccentric," rambunctious and
goofy, as those Javna describes. As the years progress, the more reserved character of authority
emerges and yet is ever informed by the town's basic character. Despite "growing up," Andy
continues to sit on his porch, strum his guitar and sing a mountain folk tune.

In the theme, Andy's position of authority in the town is signaled by what at first appears
to be an anomaly in the visual composition. While Opie is dressed in casual duds, Andy wears
his sheriff's uniform. Within the forest setting, the uniform signifies both work and play. It
confirms Andy's obligations to the town while it also implies he has the time or is willing to take
the time to be with his son. In essence, the uniform is indicative of Andy's responsibilities to his
immediate and extended Mayberry families.

In the theme of The Andy Griffith Show, the bard sings to our cultural values of family
and community bonding. These values reflect the rural, working class, and socially conservative
target of the show in the sixties, but I feel they also reflect values that many other people share
and have a stake in. While, in the early twenty-first century as well as in the 1960s, many
viewers may find the idyllic portrait of small town life and the privileging of white male
authority (in the home, legal and civil systems) problematic, the more basic idea of people
building communities based on respect for each other and a playful sense of humor is yet
regenerative. On the one hand, the familiar picture of guys goin' fishin' and the pleasant sounds
of whistling and finger-snapping provide us with an escapist dream world, seemingly ignorant of
and isolated from the pressing concerns of the nation and the world. On the other hand, knowing
that the agency is fictive, the bard crafts a sacred play space of "what if" possibility and, although
we may want to pepper our current play space with a more diverse populace, it seems to me that
the notion of respecting each other despite our "eccentricities" is an idea we may want to continue to play.

The homespun goodness of rural life is transported to California in *Gomer Pyle, USMC*. However, rather than Mayberry, the Ozarks, or Beverly Hills, the setting is Camp Henderson, a United States Marine base. A spin-off of *The Andy Griffith Show*, *Gomer Pyle, USMC* features the title character who leaves the peaceful town of Mayberry to join the Marine Corps. While enduring the rigors of boot camp, Gomer's "unquestioning love and trust of the world" proves to "warm up [his] platoon" and "melt the wrath" of his hard-boiled platoon commander, Sergeant Carter (Jones 172).

The opening theme of *Gomer Pyle, USMC* begins with a close-up of the Marine emblem, a large eagle with its wings spread, perched atop a small globe. This emblem is carved in the top of a stone archway. The camera tilts down vertically to reveal, in a long shot, four Marines in dress uniform marching side by side underneath the stone archway. The Marine on each end carries a rifle. The two Marines in the center carry flags. One flag is the flag of the United States, the other is the flag of the Marine Corps. The screen fades to a long shot of a platoon in fatigues, carrying rifles and marching across the Marine base. At this point, the show's title appears in block letters in the center of the frame as a booming male voice-over announces the title of the show. The title disappears as the camera zooms in for a close-up of one specific Marine. The name "Jim Nabors" appears in block letters across the Marine's chest as the voice-over announces, "starring Jim Nabors as Gomer Pyle." The announcement implies that the highlighted Marine is the main character, Gomer, and the show will revolve around him, not the Marines in general. Gomer has a big, clownish smile on his face as he looks around the base instead of staring straight ahead as do the other Marines. He then glances down at his feet with a playful look on his face as he falls out of step with the others in the platoon.
The camera pans to the right for a close-up of a Marine sergeant who is marching alongside the platoon. The name "Frank Sutton" appears across the sergeant's chest in block letters and the voice-over announces, "also starring Frank Sutton as Sergeant Carter." This announcement suggests that Gomer will share the spotlight with Sergeant Carter. The show, therefore, will most likely revolve around the relationship between these two individuals. Further, the relationship will be a site of conflict as is implied by the close-up shots that follow. The first shows Carter, presumably looking at Gomer, with grim dissatisfaction. The second depicts Carter and Gomer in the same frame. While Gomer wears a silly, resilient smile on his face, Sergeant Carter's expression is one of growing rage. Although we cannot hear what he is saying, Carter appears to be irritated at Gomer for taking the drill so lightly. He yells at and shakes his finger in Gomer's face. Gomer, however, remains undaunted by Carter's bluster. As the visual theme sweeps out for a long shot of the entire platoon and then fades to black, we are left to wonder who, of the pair, will prove more durable: the king or the clown (see Schechter 1-17).

The majority of the episodes are filmed in black and white while later shows are shot in color. Those filmed in color use the same muted blues, greens, and creams as in The Andy Griffith Show. The colors lend the peaceful and relaxing feeling of rural Mayberry to the tough and stringent military base.

The musical theme of Gomer Pyle, USMC is a lively military march played by a band consisting of drums, horns and cymbals. While the beat of the music supports the rigidity of the physical drill we see the Marines execute, the spirited melody re-inflects the everyday drill as a parade. In effect, the music seems to indicate Gomer's perspective on Marine life. As the other Marines in the platoon march in adherence to the strict Marine code, Gomer appears to hear a different drummer as his step is more of a skip than a march. In essence, the lively yet leisurely
whistling of the Mayberry tune seems to be cited within the military march due to the interpretive interaction between the music and the visuals, particularly Gomer's face and his light-hearted step.

The same march with different visuals is used in the closing frame of *Gomer Pyle, USMC*. The camera shows us a medium shot of the Marine barracks from the outside as the credits flash on the screen. There is no other action; the marching Marines, Gomer, and Carter are gone. Just as the still shot of the painting reinforces the peaceful small town life rendered in *The Andy Griffith Show*, the still shot of the barracks creates a calm and tranquil feeling, and also lends a sense of closure to the show. Whether in rural Mayberry or at Camp Henderson, it appears Gomer will live an unhurried, laid-back idyll. On the other hand, the lack of action is unsettling. Where did Gomer and Carter and the other Marines go? Given the decade, one possible answer is close at hand and, although the show never addresses Vietnam directly, its presence is felt in the absence of bodies in the closing theme.

As I understand the opening and closing themes of *Gomer Pyle, USMC*, they offer an extreme of Bakhtin's notion of double-voiced discourse (324). "Extreme," because the second stylistic line is so embedded within the first and prevailing line that it can be dismissed easily. The primary line of discourse clearly and, I believe, earnestly validates the traditions and values of the Marines and hence, given the time, supports U.S. military involvement in Vietnam. The straight-on camera angles celebrate the order and disciplined symmetry of the subject matter: the Marine emblem centered atop the symmetrical arch, the rank and file formation and drill, and also the reliable beat and balance of the lively march.

On the other hand, the celebration of military discipline is interrupted by the close-up of goofy Gomer, his silly smile and skip-in-the-step. As in *The Beverly Hillbillies*, the image of the displaced country bumpkin can be interpreted as "simplistically" foolish or intentionally foolish;
as jesting for or in opposition to the prevailing forces of the time and situation (Schechter 4). In the latter case, Gomer joins a long-standing tradition of fools, clowns and other tricksters who, aware of their powerless position and out of fear or threat of punishment, do not voice their opposition in a forthright manner. Rather, in Joel Schechter's terms, they "challenge...law and order with a pig and a cart," protected by and calling upon the foolish nature of their jests to disarm their more powerful opponents (6). The opponent or "king" in this case is represented by Sergeant Carter, the Marines, and our U.S. involvement in Vietnam.

By suggesting that the foolish figure of Gomer represents antiwar sentiments, I do not intend to imply the character, Gomer, necessarily holds these views. Gomer is no yippie. However, understanding the long and trans-cultural tradition of the king/fool code, it is available and it is being enacted at this time in U.S. culture, by the yippets for one. In other words, the character of Gomer serves as a social-cultural gesture, or gest, that covertly acknowledges antiwar sentiments. The gesture is further substantiated by the fact that, as coded in the show and theme, Gomer's background is indicative of the disproportionate number of youths who were being drafted for service. Gomer is young, of the working class, and without a college education. Lastly, in this and many cases, the two lines of embattled action and discourse, the king and the fool, are not divisible. Whether goofy Gomer were present or not, an image of the military is always and already embedded with its opposing voices, and vice versa: the jest of the fool always implicates its mark.

In the opening and closing themes, then, the cunning and cautious bard attempts to sing to the "culture at large" (Fiske and Hartley 5), while directly addressing the presumed views and values of the targeted market. Understanding that, at this time, the story of Vietnam was too volatile to relate in any way except by means of "nonfiction" reportage, the bard crafts a "peaceful" military base on which he places his questioning fool. The cautious bard then offers
an orderly and peaceful image of the military to reassure viewers that the soldiers (their children and boyfriends) are safe and being well cared for by the military establishment. The more cunning bard offers the foolish figure of Gomer as a gesture that acknowledges viewers who question or oppose our involvement in Vietnam. Lastly, on a humanitarian level, the bard offers the individual Gomer who, as Jones surmises, offers hope that in a hostile world, simple goodness may yet prevail (173).

One sitcom of the era that acknowledges, if obliquely, the women's movement is *Bewitched*. The basic format of *Bewitched* is one that the sixties audience became familiar with in the fifties, the domestic sitcom. However, *Bewitched* alters the traditional format by adding a dose of magic to suburbia. In *Bewitched*, a beautiful young witch named Samantha marries a mortal named Darrin. The show centers around Samantha's attempts to abandon her witchcraft in order to please her husband who insists she become a "normal" U.S. housewife; "a keeper of the suburban dream" (quoted in *The American Dream: The 50s* 58). Samantha's marriage to a mortal displeases her mother, Endora, who feels that Darrin's insistence limits Samantha's extraordinary abilities if not also her individuality. Therefore, Endora tries everything in her power, including casting various spells on Darrin, to persuade Samantha to abandon the marriage.

The opening theme of *Bewitched* exudes a magical quality in its visual and acoustic composition. Unlike the other themes I have discussed, the opening of *Bewitched* makes use of animated visuals. The animation permits Samantha's magical qualities to be highlighted. The animated Samantha is able to fly rapidly across the sky on her broomstick while creating words made of sparkling pixie dust. She also can shape-shift and appear and disappear with ease. The animated opening, which signifies a certain fairytale environment, clues the viewer to the fact that this domestic sitcom will contain an element of fantasy.
In the same fashion, the musical score is evocative of Samantha's magical powers. The musical composition includes bells and a xylophone. The sound of the ringing bells connotes Samantha's powers of witchcraft since the bell itself is frequently used by witches to create or cast a spell. The tinkling sound of the xylophone is used to accompany Samantha's famous nose twitch, an action she uses to summon her magic powers. The theme is lyric free which then concentrates focus on the visuals and the accompanying musical sounds.

The visual content of the opening theme contrasts Samantha's dual role of witch and housewife. The opening theme begins with an extreme long shot revealing an animated city skyline at the bottom of the frame. The upper two-thirds of the frame depict a beautiful night sky full of twinkling stars. A very large full moon is present in the upper right corner of the sky. Suddenly, an animated Samantha, perched upon her broomstick, flies across the sky. She is dressed in a black dress, black cape, and black pointed hat, clothing that has long been associated with "witch." As she flies closer to us, we get a quick glimpse of her profile. She flies over the tops of the buildings, making several loops on her broom to write the show's title, "Bewitched," in large cursive letters across the sky. The title glitters as if written with magic pixie dust. She sweeps across the sky once again, this time flying through the title and thereby disintegrating it.

The scene cuts to a medium shot of the animated Samantha, sans broom, standing at the lower left center of the frame. She has her hands on her hips and she is smiling. The words "starring Elizabeth Montgomery" appear to her right, written in the same sparkling magic dust. The name dissolves as she removes her hat. The camera moves in for a close-up of her face as she twitches her nose to the sound of the xylophone. At her nose twitch, the scene cuts to Samantha and Darrin standing in an animated kitchen consisting of a long counter that contains a stove and a sink. Samantha's black cape and hat have been replaced by a white apron which she wears over her black dress. She smiles as she places a frying pan on the stove. Darrin, dressed
in a shirt, pants, vest and tie, watches over her shoulder as she cooks. As Darrin leans in to kiss Samantha on the cheek, she disappears in a magical "poof." Darrin is left standing alone at the left center of the frame as the name "Dick York" appears in sparkling letters to his right. Darrin wears a confused expression as he looks about for the vanished Samantha. Finally, he notices a black cat sitting at his feet. The cat jumps into his arms and transforms back into Samantha. As Darrin holds Samantha in his arms, a dark cloud of smoke quickly rises from the pan that has been left on the stove and completely obscures the two characters. The words "and Agnes Moorehead as Endora" appear in the center of the smoke cloud. This name, unlike the other two, does not glitter.

For the most part, the opening theme uses a closed situation and the viewer is kept at a social distance, except for one fleeting and significant moment. When the camera delivers a close-up of Samantha, she looks directly at us as she takes off her hat and twitches her nose. In this brief moment, Samantha seems to metaphorically "wink" at us; that is, she seems to let us in on the secret that she will pretend to play the role of a "normal" housewife but, in reality, she will continue to call on her extraordinary powers. The illusion then is that of domestic "normality" while the reality is that she and housewives in general are extraordinary. In light of Samantha's secret wink to us and its possible meaning we tend to view the show from Samantha's perspective and empathize with her more than with Darrin.

In Bewitched, the bard addresses the conservative audience by maintaining domestic gender roles while simultaneously questioning the limitations implied by these roles. According to David Marc, Bewitched is part of a group of sixties sitcoms in which a white middle class male attempts to teach a magical "Other" the "profound satisfaction of simple life" (109). Other sitcoms in this group include I Dream of Jeannie, My Favorite Martian, and Mr. Ed. In each of these sitcoms, the magical Other is capable of, quite literally, making life easier by means of his
or her special powers. However, the mortal male will have none of it, insisting that worthwhile achievement comes about only through self-sacrifice and repression and, therefore, he forbids the Other to use his or her magical abilities. In *Bewitched*, specifically, Darrin is determined that Samantha enact the part of a contented suburban housewife despite her potentially liberating qualities. According to Marc, Samantha is treated as little more than "a contractual housekeeper who is to be kept safely locked away at home" (111). Darrin expects Samantha to cook, clean, and do the marketing in the "old-fashioned" way for no other reason than to "satisfy his incorrigibly puritanical vision" of what a marriage ought to be (Marc 112). Samantha, in turn, chooses to abandon her magical powers, not for her own pleasure but for the pleasure of her husband. In essence, both Darrin and Samantha are "esconded in a suburban conformist lifestyle" of the fifties (Javna 59). At the same time, however, *Bewitched* lays the groundwork for later shows that satirize suburban conformity. The opening theme for *Bewitched* includes many images that subvert the role of the suburban housewife, implying that many homebound women were dissatisfied with the "patriarchal dictates of traditional domesticity" (Jones 179), and that someone on the creative team of *Bewitched* (a fledgling bard perhaps) knew about it.

The contention between conformity and liberation is implied in the opening theme. The visual montage reveals three areas of conflict: Samantha and herself, Samantha and Darrin, and Samantha and Endora. First, Samantha is in conflict with herself. She is torn between her role as "witch" and her role as "housewife." Her conflict can be observed in the visual composition of the setting, in her choice of clothing, and in her actions. The physical setting is constituted by two locations, the sky and the kitchen. The sky setting is loosely framed, suggesting a space of unlimited freedom and possibilities. The kitchen setting, on the other hand, is tightly framed, signifying the confines of domestic life and connoting a sense of entrapment. In the sky setting, Samantha is dressed in her characteristic witch garments while, in the kitchen, she wears an
apron over her black dress. Her kitchen costume suggests some subversive play on Samantha's part in so far as she wears both her domestic and extraordinary garb simultaneously. Samantha's actions also signify the conflict she experiences as an extraordinary domestic. She is free to use her magical powers outside the confines of the kitchen. She flies around on her broomstick and twitches her nose to her heart's content. Inside, however, she must restrain herself. Yet, as she tries to behave like a "normal" housewife, by cooking her husband's dinner the "old-fashioned" way, she cannot help but resort to some kitchen magic. She shape-shifts into a cat and lands in Darrin's arms. Thereby, she recodes the kitchen as "romantic" rather than "puritanic." As Michel de Certeau might observe, by means of inventive alternatives, "ways of playing and foiling the other's game," Samantha learns to "make do" within the confines of the domestic space (18). In subtle, stubborn and pleasurable ways, she makes the kitchen "function in another register"; domestic "order is tricked by art" (de Certeau 32 and 26; emphasis in original).

A second area of conflict that arises in the theme is between Samantha and Darrin. The visual composition of the two characters in the kitchen signifies harmony and stability but the harmonious composition is disrupted when Samantha disappears. Although it is evident that Samantha can manage just fine on her own, as indicated by the huge smile on her face when zooming through the night's sky, when Darrin is alone he becomes upset and confused. According to Jones, Darrin's actions are a metaphorical plea from American men to American women to retain their traditional role as homemaker: "We know you'd be happier if you broke from domesticity and led the lives you secretly desire, but we'd be lost without you" (179). Darrin needs Samantha to stay and take care of him, not for her sake but for his own.

A third area of conflict is between Samantha and Endora. Although the character of Endora is not shown in the opening theme, her name appears in the dark cloud of smoke that fills the frame and covers Samantha and Darrin at the end of the opening theme. This image is a
visual metaphor that portrays Endora as a black cloud that hangs over the couple's relationship. Further, Endora's name does not glitter like the others, another visual signifier that Endora is capable of removing some of the sparkle from the marriage. According to Sackett, the "meddling mother-in-law" was a popular cliché, in the sixties (127) and, in this case, it appears that Endora not only meddles in domestic bliss but, in her interruptive cloud of black smoke, meddles with the very illusion of domesticity as represented.

In the theme for *Bewitched*, the bard speaks to the social conservative values of domesticity and yet cunningly subverts domestic roles by means of the "witch" signs and codes. As a result, a more general interpretation of the domestic-witch arises. Namely, domestic women have extraordinary powers. This interpretation supports both sides of the dispute and implies some wiggle room in-between. On the one hand, conservative viewers might argue that, as moral centers and nurturers of our youth, women in the domestic site indeed have extraordinary powers that are innate to their sex and gender. In short, Samantha should stay in her kitchen. More liberal viewers, particularly sixties' feminists, might argue that the domestic site constrains the extraordinary powers of women. Samantha should escape on her broom. The wigglers, perhaps more indicative of a twenty-first century viewpoint, might argue that women are extraordinary whether they are inside or outside the home. The more important point is to acknowledge the many extraordinary ways women have and continue to "make do" within the different "network[s] of established forces" they confront (de Certeau 1). In other words, Samantha's both/and tactic is wise. In this case, then, the bard carefully interweaves the accessible but seemingly contradictory signs of magic and domesticity. Along with the "hook" of animation, the integration of the familiar signs results in multiple meanings and possibilities.

The cunning bard also offers multiple meanings in the title of *Bewitched*, as we are left to wonder who is bewitched and who is doing the bewitching. The verb "bewitched" means "to
charm, fascinate, or cast a spell upon" and, as such, we might assume that Darrin is the one who
is bewitched by Samantha since he is kept off balance by her magical shenanigans. On the other
hand, Samantha appears to be charmed by Darrin in so far as she trades in her broomstick for a
saucenpan and enacts tricks that land her in his arms. And, perhaps, we the viewers are bewitched
too by watching the fascinating visuals appear and disappear before our eyes. **Bewitched** casts a
spell over us. Lastly, Endora may bewitch us all and further bewitch our bewitched-ness in the
manner of her famous antecedent, the biblical witch of Endor. Rather than cast the world in a
glitter of pixie dust, Endor/Endora uses her magic to prophesy a dour future, for King Saul in
Endor's case and, perhaps, for Samantha and Darrin in Endora's.

Another show to address the changing role of women in the sixties is **That Girl**. **That Girl**
is the first sitcom to depict a single, independent woman. The young woman in this case is Ann
Marie who leaves her small hometown of Brewster, New York, to search for success as an
actress in New York City. However, her "big breaks" consist of bit parts in plays or television
commercials and so, like many fledgling artists, Ann Marie resorts to a variety of odd jobs to
support herself, such as waitressing and retail sales. Very like the character of Lucy in the **I
Love Lucy** sitcom of the fifties, regardless of the job or acting role she performs, Ann Marie is a
ditz. By chance or choice, the character consistently enacts zany behavior that results in a
predicament she cannot resolve. Fortunately for her, either her father or her boyfriend is always
close at hand to rescue her.

The opening theme of **That Girl** actually begins with a teaser from the episode itself. In
the teaser, characters from the episode are shown having a conversation which always ends with
one of the characters pointing to Ann Marie, who is also present, and saying the words, "That
Girl." Simultaneously, the camera zooms in for a close-up of Ann Marie and the show's title
appears in bold yellow letters just below her face. For example, in an episode titled, "Don't Just
Do Something, Stand There," the show opens with two filmmakers talking about finding the right actress for their film. Filmmaker A explains to Filmmaker B that, "All we need is a cute girl who can take a punch." Filmmaker B asks, "But who can we get?" Filmmaker A replies, "That girl!" He points to Ann Marie, the camera zooms in for a close-up, and the show's title appears.

At this point, the recurring opening theme begins and with a long shot of a rural area viewed from the front end of a moving train, the tracks rambling on before it. The words "starring Marlo Thomas" appear in yellow block letters in the center of the frame, followed and replaced by "also starring Ted Bessell," in the same yellow block letters. Bessell plays Ann Marie's boyfriend, Donald, in the show. The visual theme then cuts to a double-exposure shot consisting of an extreme long shot of the Manhattan skyline and a close-up of Ann Marie's face. She is smiling as she looks up toward the sky.

The scene changes as the camera offers a long shot of Ann Marie on the steps of a building in New York City. She is dressed in patriotic colors, wearing a blue suit with red stripes on the sleeves, lapel, and hem of the jacket, white gloves and a white hat. She also holds a U.S. flag in her left hand. She smiles and looks up at the skyscrapers as the camera zooms in for a medium shot. A rapid montage of city shots follows. The Empire State Building, an unidentified skyscraper, and the Statue of Liberty are shown after which another rapid montage situates Ann Marie in the city. The camera follows her as she walks through the streets in her patriotic outfit, still smiling and looking skyward. Next, she decides to look in a store window and is caught by surprise as she sees a woman who looks exactly like her, standing in the window display. Wow! The mirror image however is dressed in a ball gown and tiara. Ann Marie smiles and waves at her double who, in return, smiles and winks at her. Apparently, good things are in store for Ann Marie.
The scene suddenly switches from daytime to nighttime. The camera follows Ann Marie as she runs through the theatre district. Her face is full of wonder and excitement as she looks up at the theatre marquees. Another rapid montage occurs in which close-ups of Ann Marie's face alternate with shots of various theatre marquees announcing *The Star-Spangled Girl*, *Cactus Flower*, and *Cabaret*.

In the next scene, it is daytime again and Ann Marie is shown running through Central Park in a blue warm-up suit. The camera pulls back to show the skyline rising above the trees behind her. The long shot also reveals that Ann Marie is flying a pink kite emblazoned with an image of her own face. At this point, the names of the producers appear in yellow block letters in the lower center portion of the frame.

The scene changes once again to a long shot of Ann Marie strolling through the theatre district in the daytime instead of at night. She is wearing a flowing, blue and pink flowered sundress and is holding an umbrella of the same pattern. She spins around and twirls her umbrella as she examines the show posters that have been placed on the sidewalk.

The final scene shows Ann Marie inside of what appears to be a dressing room. She is dressed in a yellow turtleneck sweater and is surrounded by costumes. She tries on a large straw hat and smiles. A rapid montage of medium shots follows as Ann Marie takes off the hat, smiles, and messes up her hair with her hands. The song ends with a frozen shot of her face as the narrator exclaims, "That Girl!"

The choice of music for the opening theme is "light and airy" with a "brassy jazz kick" (Burlingame 176). The pizzicato strings connote both lightheartedness and exhilaration while the sound of the brass horns signifies Ann Marie's spunk and her optimistic outlook on life. The lyrics reiterate the light, airy quality with isolated nouns such as "Daisies," "Snowflakes," and "Springtime." Ann Marie's cheerful optimism also bursts forth in words such as "Bluebirds" and
"Rainbows," while her dreams of sophistication and success find voice in "Diamonds," "Sable," "White Wine," and "Broadway." Grouped in threes, the pizzicato nouns serve as metaphors for Ann Marie who is otherwise called "That Girl" by the male narrator. Apparently quite taken with his "tinsel on a tree," the narrator also offers that "She's everything that every girl should be!" and, in conclusion, promises the audience that "If you find one girl to love / . . .Then she'll be That Girl, too."

The visual theme of That Girl tells a story of a young woman's rite of passage from her protective family space to independence in the big city. In the theme, independence is coded as an exhilarating exploration of New York City, dreams of success and wealth as a stage celebrity, and claiming one's unique personality. Independence apparently does not involve getting a job. Together, the codes suggest that Ann Marie pursues and achieves the American Dream which is explicitly marked by an iconic sign of patriotism, the U.S. flag. In sum, the little story the theme relates is that a patriotic pursuit of one's independence is a pursuit of self and individuality, wealth and popularity and, for women, femininity.

As noted, the patriotic code is overtly marked by the U.S. flag Ann Marie holds when she first arrives in the big city and is substantiated by the red, white and blue outfit she wears to explore the sites. The patriotic colors prevail elsewhere as does the color yellow. The bright value of the yellow stimulates the composition and evokes an upbeat energy and zest very like that of the rapid montages and, in content, Ann Marie's exhilarating runs through the theatre district and Central Park.

The theme's concentration on the unique individual is indicated by Ann Marie being the only character shown in the opening theme which also implies that she will be the central focus of the show. For the most part, the character is filmed full front and centered in the frame. The composition analogues her open and friendly disposition. The broad range of proxemic patterns
(e.g., long shots to close-ups, public to intimate distances), further substantiates that Ann Marie's personal as well as professional life will be portrayed in the show. While she receives a good deal of "eyeshot," Ann Marie's own perspective and temperament are offered too, particularly in the rapid montages of city sites and the low-angle shots geared upward to capture the dizzying heights of the skyscrapers.

In addition to highlighting Ann Marie's self-quest, three images also foreground her quest to become a wealthy and successful star. She sees an image of herself wearing a ball gown and tiara in a window display as she strolls through the city. Her image is emblazoned on the kite she flies in Central Park. And, in the brief closing theme, a caricature of Ann Marie's face is shown surrounded by cartoon-like, twinkling marquis lights. On the one hand, these images emphasize the importance of stage success and wealth to Ann Marie, they anticipate her realization of them, and they confirm that the actress who plays Ann Marie (i.e., Marlo Thomas) has already achieved them.

On the other hand, the images are unsettling because they suggest the social restraints that women in the sixties faced in their struggle to gain independence. In the first image, Ann Marie is placed behind a glass window, like "tinsel on a tree." By placing Ann Marie behind the glass window, she becomes an object upon which to be gazed. The objectification of the female body is reiterated in the overall construct of the theme itself. That is, Marlo Thomas is "made" to be displayed; in this case, as an object of ideal femininity. She smiles brightly while dressed in her patriotic suit. In the second image, Ann Marie's face appears on a kite. While a kite can attain a certain degree of freedom, the extent is controlled by the length of the string and the desires of the person who flies it. The image then recalls the "glass ceiling" that women, and other minorities, face in employment, promotion, and wage scale practices in the sixties if not also currently. The final image, which portrays Ann Marie as a marquee cartoon, reinforces the
idea that Ann Marie is ditz who is not to be taken seriously. In fact it suggests that a single, independent woman is endearing only if she is silly and superficial.

The bard also proves cautious in crafting the lyrics of the theme song. For one, the song is sung by a male voice who, then, proves to "authorize" the independent woman in this case. Further, in light of his direct address to the audience in the last four lines of the second stanza, it appears that the narrator sings to other men or, possibly, gay women who are looking for "one girl to love." In other words, in a show about an independent woman, the lyrics of the song ask women to view the show through a male perspective or, as noted, a gay one.

Although the narrator implies Ann Marie's career ambitions with the single word "Broadway," he does not reference her desire or need to work. Rather, he emphasizes romance, apparently between Ann Marie and himself. As in the scenarios of the show, it appears that if things do not work out for Ann Marie, the narrator will be waiting in the wings ready and willing to rescue her. The narrator's patronage of Ann Marie's life is confirmed in the line, "She's mine alone."

As I observed above, the narrator also uses a string of isolated metaphors to describe Ann Marie. Like pretty bobbles in a glass case, the conglomeration of nouns operates to fragment the corporeal presence of Ann Marie, quite literally object-ify her. And, it is this construct of idealized objects that the narrator advocates as the ideal independent woman. As he states, "She's everything that every girl should be!" On the other hand, a more unified subject is constructed in his recurring reference to Ann Marie as "That Girl." Commonly used to refer to a female child, the term "girl" diminishes Ann Marie's adult autonomy and self-sufficiency. Despite her aspirations, she is cast by her male voice as a helpless and dependent fledgling.

As I offer in the title to this chapter, a cunning and cautious bard constructs the theme songs of the sixties, well aware of the turbulent times and yet also aware of the targeted market
and, as perceived, its conservative social values. In almost all the cases I have discussed, the bard "sings" to the targeted market in an explicit way--i.e., on a primary line of signs and codes--while beneath this prevailing line the bard inserts a second line that questions and critiques the primary offering. In short, most of the sitcom themes I have addressed are more socially and politically sensitive and savvy than at first they may appear and I believe the veiled nature of their critique is intentional.

The bard's caution reflects concerns regarding the targeted audience of "heavy viewers." Understanding that the themes of the shows I have discussed were the top rated sitcoms of the decade and were marketed to this particular group, it appears that the collective identity that the bard celebrates is characterized by a small town or localized sense of community and culture rather than a cosmopolitan embrace. Also, the bard affirms the underdog status and savvy of the rural, working class, positioning the Clampetts, the Taylors, Gomer Pyle and even the small town Ann Marie as central to the depicted world. In addition, the bard confirms traditional gender roles and particularly the insistence that the man is the head of the family or, in the case of That Girl, the relationship. Also along gender lines, in Bewitched and That Girl, the highlighted female character is shown to be concerned with issues of individuality and independence while, in the sitcoms that highlight a clearly delineated male character, values of family and community bonding, hospitality, civility, and respect toward others are the promoted concerns. In staking a claim to independence, then, women appear to be divorced from a social or collective orientation and context, as if claiming female independence equates to selfishness. Perhaps it is for these reasons that I find the theme to That Girl so insipid. Lastly, in light of Gomer Pyle, USMC, the bard sings in support of the military if not also the particular war in which we were involved at this time.
Questions regarding many of the aforementioned values are implied in the themes I discussed, which is not to say that the values are denigrated. For instance, as I argued above, the theme of Gomer Pyle, USMC validates the Marines while it simultaneously questions war. Similarly, The Beverly Hillbillies affirms rural values, and hillbilly culture in particular, while it explicitly questions class distinctions. Bewitched conserves domestic gender roles and the suburban middle class lifestyle while it implies the existence of alternatives and as crafted by "extraordinary" women. That Girl allows the titled subject to explore her independence in the big city but also takes great care to authorize the "girl's" exploration and independence from a male perspective. In sum, the themes reflect the times, where social conservative views and values were intact and also were being questioned, in quite explicit ways, by the youth of the country and many others as well.

The one exception in the bard's questioning of social conservative values arises in the theme to The Andy Griffith Show. As I discussed, the theme affirms small town, rural life, family and community bonding, civility and respect towards others, and a male authority figure. In these ways, the theme and show offer viewers a temporary reprieve from the tumultuous events of the sixties. And, while this retreat is idealistic and problematic, it is also attractive.

One ironic aspect of the decade was that although racial tensions raged across the nation, the issue of race was ignored altogether in the sitcoms of the sixties. This was an issue that the viewing public was not ready to address. In fact, it was not until the end of the decade that a sitcom featured an African American lead character. Julia (1968-71), which featured Diahann Carroll as a widowed nurse whose husband had been killed in Vietnam, was considered a novelty at the time. Sitcoms would not become racially diverse until the 1970s.

In summary, the cultural bard of the 1960s delivered social and political messages in a cunning yet gentle style palatable to the wary and conservative targeted audience. The viewing
public would not be prepared to boldly confront the issues of Vietnam, racial strife, or women's liberation until the following decade. So, while a war raged and marginalized groups protested, the sitcoms provided a safe haven to address and view the problems with festive gaiety and double-voiced irony.

Notes

1 The popular show I Love Lucy, which spanned the decade from 1951 to 1961, was somewhat of an anomaly. In the show, a white, middle-class woman and a Cuban-American bandleader are married and live in an apartment in New York City. However, like their "real life" counterparts, the couple relocates to a suburb in the 1956 season.

2 The first Freedom Riders, seven blacks and six whites, left Washington, D.C., for New Orleans on May 4, 1961.

3 Although King delivered this speech on occasions prior to the March on Washington, it was here that the speech was actually recorded.

4 Prior to 1949, Vietnam was part of the French colony of Indochina. In 1949, Communist forces, termed the Vietcong or National Liberation Front and led by Ho Chi Minh, attempted to gain control of the territory. In 1950, President Harry Truman sent military aid and advisers to assist the French. This support continued under President Dwight D. Eisenhower. Approximately six hundred and fifty U.S. troops were stationed in South Vietnam until 1962 when President Kennedy increased the number to twelve thousand. Although sent to advise and train the South Vietnamese army, over the course of the sixties, U.S. soldiers increasingly engaged in direct combat with Vietcong.

5 "Populuxe" is a "synthetic" term evocative of and coined in the fifties that refers to the aesthetics and attitude of "the material objects of this [the fifties] materialistic age" (Hines 6 and 4).

6 Surprisingly, a whopping 28.4 percent of shows in the 1960s portrayed single-father households when, in actuality, the 1960s census reported that single fathers comprised just one percent of U.S. households (Bryant and Bryant 139-161).

7 The character of Darrin was played by Dick York for the first five seasons (1964-69). Dick Sargent took over the role of Darrin for the show's last three seasons (1969-72) and the animated likeness was changed to resemble Sargent rather than York. With the exception of this change, the opening theme remained the same.
CHAPTER THREE
THE 1970s: A TEASING AND TEMPERING BARD

What are you, in love with your problems?
I think you've taken it a little too far.
--Talking Heads, "No Compassion"

Historical Overview

While the 1960s was a decade of social upheaval and change, the 1970s appears to have been a decade of self-absorption. In his famous 1976 magazine article in New York magazine, social critic Tom Wolfe coined the label the "Me Decade" in reference to the seventies. He claimed that individuals had turned their attention from changing society to "changing one's personality" (quoted in Time of Transition: The 70s 147). Bruce Schulman agrees that the decade was "an era of narcissism, selfishness [and] personal rather than political awareness" (145). The apparent change in outlook was epitomized by a round, yellow smiley face which became the emblem for the decade. Invented in 1969 by Manhattan button manufacturer N.G. Slater, the emblem did not catch hold until 1971 when, as a lapel pin, it sold like hotcakes. Known as "Have a nice day" pins, over twenty million pins were sold and hence "Have a nice day" became part of the popular vernacular.

The "Me" orientation arose from a general feeling within the U.S. public that they were unable to control or impact what occurred on the international and national scenes, as evidenced by the Vietnam War, Watergate, and sky-rocketing inflation. As a result, individuals decided to concentrate on what they could control. As the rock group, Talking Heads ironically offered in 1977, "Be a little more selfish. / It might do you some good."

The view of the seventies as a decade of "personal rather than political awareness" offers but a partial view of the times, however. The decade was not without its social movements and improvements. The 1970s brought an end to the Vietnam War, the space race focused more on
camaraderie than competition, and the U.S. public became increasingly aware of their environment. Further, on the small screen, social issues that had been taboo in past decades were addressed in a forthright and bold manner, *All in the Family* being a case in point. In the second section of this chapter, I discuss some of the sitcom themes and shows that proved to handle controversial issues in different ways and a few that glanced toward the "Me" trend. First however I offer an overview of the key political and economic events of the decade, the main social issues and cultural trends.

Like the sixties, the seventies was a decade of political turmoil. Assuming the Presidency in 1969, Richard Nixon proved to be an adept foreign affairs strategist. Nixon worked diligently to reduce the number of troops in Vietnam, repair relations with China, and mend the gap with the Soviet Union.

By the end of the 1960s, the U.S. military presence in Vietnam had risen to 543,000 troops and more than thirty thousand Americans had been killed (*Time of Transition: The 1970s* 69). In 1970, President Nixon sent U.S. troops into Cambodia to destroy Vietcong bases and supply lines, planning in turn to activate his "Vietnamization" policy which would gradually turn over the ground war to the South Vietnamese Army. Although student protest rallies had been banned, on May 4, 1970, a group of students at Kent State University gathered to protest the invasion of Cambodia. The governor of Ohio ordered the National Guard onto the campus. The guardsmen fired tear gas into the group of protesters who countered by throwing rocks. The guardsmen, in return, opened fire, killing four students and injuring eleven others.

By the end of 1971, Nixon's Vietnamization strategy had effectively reduced troop strength in Vietnam to 175,000 troops (Axelrod 289). Anti-war protests in the U.S. were fewer as a result, although the troop reduction wreaked morale havoc among those still fighting in Vietnam. As Axelrod points out, those who remained saw themselves as "pawns in a lost cause"
By 1972, the U.S. had removed all its troops from Vietnam and, in 1975, Saigon fell to the Vietcong and Communist rule. Unlike the World War I and II veterans before them, Vietnam veterans were not welcomed home with victory cheers and parades; rather, they were regarded with guilt, suspicion and scorn, attacked as "baby killers," patronized as damaged goods, or simply ignored. According to Axelrod, many of the young men who had escaped physical wounds returned with psychological scars that made readjustment to civilian life "difficult if not impossible" (293). In 1977, President Carter, who recognized and empathized with the physical and emotional turmoil brought about by the war, granted an unconditional pardon to virtually all Vietnam era draft evaders. As the most unpopular and divisive war in American history, the Vietnam War severely undermined the U.S. public's faith in the federal government and its leaders.

Upon pulling out of Vietnam, Nixon strategized to repair political relations with China. On February 21, 1972, Nixon became the first U.S. President to visit the People's Republic of China. While in China, he met with Communist party chairman Mao Tse-tung to discuss the possibilities of creating world peace. The incentive for this summit was the growing antagonism between China and the Soviet Union. According to Glennon, the visit ended an era during which China regarded the U.S. as "the most ferocious enemy of the people throughout the world" (528).

Also in 1972, Nixon and Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev held the first summit meeting in Moscow. During this meeting, the two leaders engaged in Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) which resulted in an agreement that the two nations would limit their number of nuclear missiles and thereby curb the arms race.

The battle in space, however, persisted into the 1970s as the U.S. and the Soviet Union continued their race for dominance. The Soviets led the space race once again by launching the first space station, Salyut I, on April 19, 1971. Skylab, the first U.S. space station, was not
launched until May 15, 1973. Unfortunately, by the end of the decade, the seventy-seven ton Skylab broke apart and fell to the earth in a shower of scattered pieces. In 1975, a symbolic effort was made to mend the gap between the two nations by substituting camaraderie for competition in space exploration. Soviet and U.S. space crafts linked up with each other in space and, by means of a connecting tunnel, the two commanders, Aleksei Leonov and Thomas Stafford, met and greeted each other in Russian and English. They then boarded each other's vessels to compare notes and carry out scientific experiments. They even shared a meal together (Courtney-Thompson and Phelps 275).

On the domestic front, Nixon's presidential actions were far less adept; indeed, he was known for his secrecy and his title, "Tricky Dick," was well-deserved. Due to his participation in the Watergate scandal, Nixon was the first U.S. president to resign from office, his resignation arising from the very real threat of impeachment. The Watergate scandal began on June 17, 1972, when, under Nixon's instructions, five "plumbers" broke into the Watergate office building in Washington, D.C., and planted listening devices in the Democratic headquarters located there. The "plumbers" were subsequently arrested and placed on trial. During the televised hearings, it was revealed that Nixon was in possession of certain tapes containing White House conversations about Watergate. At first, Nixon refused to turn over the tapes, claiming "executive privilege" and, when he did release the tapes, over eighteen minutes had been erased. Nonetheless, the tapes revealed that Nixon had taken steps to block the FBI's investigation into the Watergate burglary. The House Judiciary Committee recommended that Nixon be impeached on charges of obstructing justice, abuse of presidential powers, and attempting to impede the impeachment process by defying committee subpoenas.

On the morning of August 9, 1974, Nixon officially resigned the office of the President of the United States and was replaced by Gerald Ford who eventually pardoned Nixon of his
crimes. Ford remained in office for the next two years and attempted to regain public confidence in the presidency with his sincere manner. Unable to alter the recessed economy and yet linked to the Nixon debacle, Ford lost his bid for re-election in 1976 to the Democratic candidate, James Earl "Jimmy" Carter.

Jimmy Carter was a former naval officer, Georgia peanut farmer, and self-proclaimed born-again Christian. As Schulman explains, Carter was "prepared to nurse an ailing nation's wounds" by pledging to run an open administration in touch with the common man and woman (121). To demonstrate his sincerity, Carter chose to walk in his inaugural parade rather than ride in a limousine. He also eliminated government cars for his staff, ended the practice of playing "Hail to the Chief" upon his arrival at political gatherings, and sent his daughter to public school. Ironically, many felt that Carter had too much humility for the nation's good. His apparent lack of forceful leadership skills came into play in two major crises that Carter faced during his administration. The first was an energy crisis at home, the second, a hostage crisis overseas.

On October 17, 1973, the U.S. was hit with an oil shortage. Throughout the 1960s, oil flowed abundantly and gasoline was cheap. In order to stabilize the price of oil, many Middle East nations such as Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia banded together to form the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). When war broke out between Israel and its Arab neighbors, members of OPEC imposed an oil embargo against the U.S. as a form of punishment for U.S. support of Israel.

As a result of the embargo, the price of crude oil increased dramatically. According to Axelrod, gasoline rose from 38.5 cents per gallon in 1973 to 55.1 cents by June 1974 (301). In turn, the cost of home heating oil and electricity rose as well. In densely populated areas, the shortages led to long gas lines at the pump and rationing. To conserve fuel nationwide, schools
and factories reduced their operating hours, the interstate speed limit was reduced to fifty-five miles per hour, and individuals began to buy smaller, more fuel-efficient cars. As a result of these fuel conservation measures, the U.S. succeeded in reducing its oil consumption by more than seven percent (Axelrod 308). For many, however, conserving oil was a sacrifice Americans should not have to bear, and they criticized Carter for failing to redress the embargo or seek alternative sources.

The U.S. public became further discouraged with the Carter administration during the Iran Hostage Crisis. In February 1979, the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini led a revolution against the Shah of Iran (Muhammad Reza Shah Pahlavi), who was a U.S. ally. The Shah was forced into exile and, when he became ill with cancer in October, he was granted permission to come to the U.S. for medical treatment. This action angered the Iranians who, in November, stormed the U.S. embassy in Tehran and took fifty-two Americans hostage. The hostages were kept captive for more than a year. On April 24, 1980, President Carter sent a U.S. military mission to rescue the hostages but the attempt proved to be a tragic failure. Two rescue helicopters crashed, killing eight soldiers, others suffered technical difficulties, and the rescue mission had to be aborted. The Ayatollah Khomeini deliberately delayed the release of the hostages until January 20, 1981, the day that Carter left the office of president and was succeeded by Ronald Reagan.

Due to the combined impact of Vietnam war costs, transitions to a peacetime economy, and oil shortages, the seventies incurred skyrocketing inflation, several recessions, and high unemployment rates. The U.S. entered a period of "stagflation" which was characterized by "a combination of inflation and recession" or "stagnant growth coupled with inflation" (Axelrod 308). Inflation rates soared as high as twenty percent and consumer purchasing power shrank dramatically. By the end of the decade, the dollar was worth only 43.3 cents (Time of
Further, during the seventies, the U.S. imported more goods than it exported and quickly lost ground to Western European nations and Japan which became increasingly competitive in electronics and automobiles. German and Japanese cars were far more fuel efficient than U.S. models and, given high gas prices, many U.S. purchasers turned to imports which in turn impacted U.S. car manufacturers and the economic network (e.g., of sub-industries) that relied on it.

As a result of the energy crisis, many Americans became aware of the social, economic, and political importance of natural resources and thus developed an increased awareness of the environment. By the early 1970s, seventy percent of all Americans thought the environment was the nation's most pressing problem (Harvey 361). On April 22, 1970, over twenty million individuals and community groups participated in Earth Day which, as Schulman describes, was a "nationwide Woodstock of recycling, trash collection, and consciousness raising" (65). Two months later, the U.S. government created the Environmental Protection Agency to help monitor and control elements that could be hazardous to environmental well-being. The government also passed the Clean Air Act which set standards for air quality. In fact, some thirty-five environmental laws took effect during the decade, including the Clean Water Act, the Endangered Species Act, and statutes to limit factory pollution, protect seacoasts, and remove the scars left by strip mining. Also, more than one hundred million acres of land were set aside for national parks, wildlife refuges, and wilderness areas (Harvey 361).

Of course, such environmental activism incurred opposition from those who perceived environmental policies as "a threat to the profit system or to the growth of technology in an engineered world" (Scheffer 9). These individuals consisted of manufacturers, corporate leaders, owners of extractive industries, and land developers. However, at least three major
environmental disasters occurred during the decade that substantiated the environmentalists' concerns and agendas: the erosion of the ozone layer, Love Canal, and Three-Mile Island.

In 1973, U.S. scientists claimed that fluorocarbons released into the atmosphere in large quantities were destroying the protective ozone layer that guarded the Earth against ultraviolet radiation. The progressive erosion was resulting in global warming and an increase in health problems such as skin cancer. Upon learning of these dangers, the public became concerned about the use of fluorocarbons in everyday household products. The government responded by requiring that official health warnings be displayed on all aerosol products, such as hairsprays and antiperspirants.

The public also became alarmed by the dangers of hazardous waste when, on August 2, 1978, President Carter declared the Love Canal, a residential area near Niagara Falls, New York, a disaster area because of its contamination by long buried toxic wastes. As Michael Gerrard explains, during the 1940s and 1950s, the Hooker Chemicals & Plastics Corporation deposited twenty-one thousand tons of liquid hazardous waste into its industrial dump which, in 1953, it abandoned (11). The area was then purchased by the city of New York, covered over with dirt, and a residential area and school built on top of it. By the mid-1970s, the area began to sink and give off a foul odor. Many residents found poisonous chemicals seeping into their basements. They also began to suffer from various illnesses. The miscarriage rate was abnormally high and many children were born with serious birth defects. Environmental studies revealed the presence of high toxin levels and, consequently, seven hundred and nineteen families were forced to evacuate their homes.

Yet another ongoing threat to the environment made itself known on March 30, 1979, when a nuclear reactor at the Three-Mile Island plant near Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, malfunctioned. According to Time of Transition: The 70s, a series of mechanical breakdowns
and human errors prompted the crisis. First, a crucial water pump failed to operate correctly. Second, the backup systems proved useless because workers had failed to reopen valves they had closed for maintenance. As a result, the uranium core overheated and a huge hydrogen bubble formed in the reactor and threatened to explode at any moment. Engineers struggled for twelve days to cool down the uranium core and dissolve the bubble while the public waited out the ordeal in fear. Afterwards, reforms were instituted for all U.S. nuclear power plants in operation (144). Nevertheless, by 1979, at least a thousand antinuclear groups had been established in the U.S., their lobby effecting the cancellation of all one hundred twenty-four plants scheduled for construction between 1974 and 1979.

On the popular front, environmental concerns transformed into health concerns as millions turned to physical fitness to improve their appearance and physical well-being. Individuals took up jogging, bicycling, swimming, aerobics, and cross-country skiing. Along with exercise regimens, many developed a passion for healthful food experimenting with a variety of fat-reducing diets, such as the grapefruit diet, the Scarsdale diet, and the Stillman diet. Others turned to organic meats and vegetables to eliminate pesticides and animal growth hormones from their systems. The number of health food restaurants, juice bars, and health food stores increased dramatically. Time of Transition: The 70s reports that in the mid-1960s, the nation had about five hundred health food stores. By 1972, the total had increased to more than three thousand (152).

The health craze extended to external applications as well. Millions of women decided against wearing makeup and washed their hair with herbs and enzymes instead of shampoo. Earth Shoes became very popular with both men and women. Created by Danish yoga instructor Anne Kalso, the shoes apparently enabled the wearer to walk "as nature intended you to walk" since their negative-heel design was based on "the perfect poise of Brazilizan Indians who
walked barefoot in the soft jungle" (Edelstein and McDonough 98). Along with Earth Shoes, running shoes became extremely popular. U.S. citizens' heightened interest in fitness turned running shoes into a status symbol. Likewise, jogging attire became acceptable wear in public places as well as in the gym.

Not only were positive strides made on the health and environmental fronts, but many hard fought battles of the 1960s began to pay off in the seventies. The Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) was finally passed by Congress in 1972 and sent to the states for ratification. It needed approval by three-fourths of the states to become a law. By 1977, the ERA was only three states shy of becoming part of the Constitution, but it did not succeed. Its failure was largely due to opposition from an organization headed by Phyllis Schlafly called STOP ERA. Schlafly was a conservative mother of six from Illinois. She and her supporters argued that the ERA would bring about "tax-funded abortions, homosexual marriage, the drafting of [women] into the army, and unisex toilets" (Time of Transition: The 70s 98).

Although the Equal Rights Amendment failed, other legislative initiatives did not. For example, Title IX of the Education Amendment passed in 1972. The amendment prohibited sex discrimination in federally assisted education and thereby enabled more women to have a chance at higher education. Between 1970 and 1975, the number of women attending college rose by forty-five percent. The number of women in medical school doubled, and female enrollment in law school increased fourfold (Harvey 381). In 1976, the country witnessed a number of female firsts: the first female Rhodes scholars, the first female enrollment in military academies, the first female television news anchor, Barbara Walters, and the first female governor, Ella Grasso of Connecticut. As the decade progressed, more women began to break into career roles typically dominated by men, such as those of corporate CEOs, airline pilots, railroad engineers, firefighters, and construction workers. However, the pay scales remained unequal. On average,
a woman with a college degree earned less than a man with an eighth-grade education. For every
dollar a man made, a woman made fifty-nine cents (Time of Transition: The 70s 104).

Women's Rights initiatives also influenced a landmark legal decision of the decade. In
the controversial Roe v. Wade case of 1973, the U.S. Supreme Court affirmed the rights of
women to control their own bodies and, should they so choose, pursue safe and legal abortions.²
As a result of this ruling, at least one million legal abortions were performed in the following
year.

Another result of the Women's Rights movement was that women became sexually
liberated. The number of unmarried couples living together tripled to an estimated 1.6 million
and extramarital, interracial, and same sex relations became more public and, to a degree, more
accepted too. It is reported that four-fifths of males and two-thirds of females had engaged in
sexual relations by the age of nineteen and, despite the debut of the birth control pill in the
1960s, the number of teenage pregnancies jumped to one million by 1978 (Time of Transition:
The 70s 88).

Perhaps the most "visible" expression of the sexual revolution of the 1970s was the brief
but brilliant streaking craze of 1974. "Streakers" removed all of their clothing and dashed
through public spaces in the nude. The fad first appeared on college campuses but soon spread
to other venues, such as sporting events and the Academy Awards. Although both men and
women participated in the craze, male streakers far outnumbered females. Further, according to
Schulman, streaking was less a form of protest than an attempt at frivolity and fun. He equates
the craze with the panty raids of the 1950s.³

The difficult and often violent civil rights struggles of the sixties came to fruition in the
seventies as the decade launched a wave of firsts for African Americans: the first African-
American admiral in the U.S. Navy, the first African American southerners elected to Congress
since Reconstruction, the first African American bishop in the Episcopal church, the first African American member of the New York Stock Exchange, and the first African American mayors in the cities of Atlanta and Los Angeles. Further, in 1974, the first African American model appeared on the cover of the major fashion magazine, Vogue.

By the mid-1970s, African American enrollment at colleges and universities across the country increased while the overall poverty level for African American households declined. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, black households with incomes exceeding fifty thousand dollars rose by more than four hundred percent. Numerous roadblocks remained however. Although public restaurants and hotels became largely integrated, schools and residential areas remained rigidly segregated. In the mid-seventies, the federal government made an effort to overcome segregated residential patterns and achieve a racial balance in schools by ordering the busing of students outside their particular school districts. Many fiercely opposed the idea and riots broke out in many northern cities such as Boston and Detroit. Furthermore, Schulman explains, although blacks were making economic progress, many private employers proved unwilling to hire African Americans. Thus, a disproportionately large number of African Americans made their living from government jobs (56).

The 1970s also saw an increase in the number of films with or about African American characters, although the portrayals were not always viewed in a positive light. From 1970 to 1974, a rash of so-called blaxploitation films were produced in Hollywood.\(^4\) Blaxploitation films comprised a new genre of action films featuring all-black casts, black slang, black settings, and black fashion. Most resorted to a successful, crowd-pleasing formula of "action, blood, tough talk, hot women, and a soul-drenched soundtrack" (Edelstein and McDonough 5). In the conclusion of these films, the black protagonists always eluded or outsmarted "Whitey" who "got his" in the end.
One of the most popular and successful blaxploitation films was *Shaft* which premiered in 1971. In the film, Richard Roundtree plays the title character who is a street-smart private detective hired to find a Harlem gangster's kidnapped daughter. *Shaft* set the standard for the many blaxploitation films that followed such as *Superfly* and *Blacula* in 1972, Cleopatra Jones in 1973, and *Blackenstein* in 1974 (Schulman 5-8). The films in turn generated controversy, particularly in the black community. The Beverly Hills-Hollywood chapter of the NAACP passed out pamphlets protesting the films. The pamphlets urged individuals not to expose their children to the films which "glorify black males as pimps, pushers, gangsters and super males with vast physical prowess, but no cognitive skills" (Edelstein and McDonough 6). The controversy eventually died down as blaxploitation films lost their momentum after 1974.

In 1977, a completely different portrayal of African Americans was presented to the public in the form of a twelve-hour, eighteen-part miniseries titled *Roots*. *Roots* would prove to be one of the most influential black films of all time. It was based on author Alex Haley's best-selling novel in which he traces his ancestors back seven generations to West Africa. The initial episode of *Roots* opened with the birth of Kunta Kinte (Haley's forefather) in West Africa in the year 1750. The following installments tracked Kinte's capture by white slave traders and his subsequent journey to the U.S. on a slave ship. *Roots* followed Kinte into adulthood as he married and had a child, Kizzy, who was sold to a brutal slaveholder. The series then recounted Kizzy's life and ended with the birth of her son, Chicken George.

Network executives had not expected *Roots* to take the country by storm. In fact, they were unsure whether white viewers would watch a miniseries that featured an African American family and their history of enslavement by whites. But the viewing public proved that intelligent stories and films about African Americans could be just as popular as not only blaxploitation films but also films and series that featured white characters. *Roots* generated an audience of
one hundred thirty million, nearly half the U.S. population, and it won nine of the thirty-seven Emmy awards for which it was nominated (Bogle 245-246). Unfortunately, Roots proved to have little effect on subsequent television and big screen programming in the seventies and thereafter. Roots did succeed however in generating immense interest in family genealogies. Hundreds of colleges across the country offered "Roots" courses and Donald Bogle reports that the National Archives in Washington, D.C., was flooded with requests by citizens seeking information on how to trace their family histories (240).

The "Me Decade" that Thomas Wolfe criticized in 1976 was epitomized by the "self-knowledge" and "cosmic awareness" trends of the seventies. The trends included activities such as assertiveness training, sensitivity training, primal scream therapy to release rage, Gestalt therapy for holistic thinking, and transcendental meditation (Time of Transition: The 70s 148). Also, many turned to religion to improve their mental and spiritual lives. Participation in Eastern religions thrived. Many individuals joined the International Society for Krishna Consciousness or the Unification Church headed by the Reverend Sun Myung Moon. Others turned to the Church of Scientology which was formed by science-fiction writer L. Ron Hubbard while still others turned to religious cults to find fulfillment. One such cult was the People's Temple established and led by the Reverend Jim Jones. Jones began his career managing church-based social service centers in California. In 1977, he relocated to the Guyana jungle where he established an agriculture commune called Jonestown. A short time later, California Congressman Leo Ryan received complaints that residents of Jonestown were suffering from slave labor, beatings, and sexual abuse. Ryan and eighteen others flew to Guyana to investigate. While there, Ryan was first attacked with a knife and when he and four others tried to escape, they were shot to death. Later, nine hundred and twelve members of Jonestown committed
suicide by drinking a cyanide-laced fruit drink. Jones then took his own life by shooting himself in the head.

Popular culture capitalized on the "Me" trends of the seventies by producing such items as mood rings and pet rocks. Mood rings were clear quartz stones filled with a liquid that changed color according to the wearer's body temperature. The color of the ring was supposed to reflect the mood of the wearer at any given time. For example, blue meant that the wearer was tranquil, green revealed stability, purple reflected happiness, and black indicated that the wearer was tense. The mood ring was the perfect accessory for individuals of the decade who were struggling to get in touch with their "inner feelings."

The pet rock was created by California advertising executive Gary Dahl. According to Edelstein and McDonough, the pet rock became one of the hottest Christmas gifts of 1975 (115). Each rock came packaged in its own individual cardboard carrying case and contained a manual that instructed the owner on the care and training of his or her rock. The manual claimed that the rock could be taught to "roll over, heel, and play dead" (Edelstein and McDonough 116). It also could be trained to attack. If a mugger launched an assault on the owner, the manual instructed the owner to "reach into your pocket and purse as though you were going to comply with the mugger's demands. Extract your pet rock. Shout the command: 'attack' and bash the mugger's head in" (quoted in Edelstein and McDonough 116).

Personality heroes became the embodied "pet rocks" of the decade as the mass media generated celebrity hype. People magazine, which offered personal stories behind the public images, became one of the most successful magazines of the decade. Sports figures were particularly popular as television generated a nationwide audience for a wide variety of athletic events including football, basketball, baseball, boxing, tennis, and ice skating. As a result of sports figures' increased popularity, the salaries of athletes skyrocketed. Some of the best-known
athletes of the decade included Jack Nicklaus, who won sixty-six golf tournaments plus $3,400,000 in prize money, Mark Spitz, who set seven world records in swimming at the 1972 Olympics, and Billie Jean King, who made a name for herself in tennis. *Time of Transition: The 70s* reveals that when King won her first Wimbledon singles title in 1966, her prize was a gift certificate for clothing whereas, in 1971, she won $100,000, more than any other U. S. tennis player that year, male or female (106).

In the area of fashion, two themes seemed to prevail: androgyny and flamboyance. As for the latter, Edelstein and McDonough sum up the scene by explaining that during the decade the "sexual and synthetic revolutions combined forces to produce some of the ugliest and most outrageous clothes ever seen"(95). Men's clothing seemed to outshine the apparel of women. The conservative navy or gray business suit gave way to bold, bright plaids and patterned linings. Neckties widened and sported bright floral patterns. The lapels of shirts were lengthened and fabrics included velvet and silk. Further, men co-opted several women's accessories such as gold chains, shoulder bags, chunky belts, and platform shoes.

Women, on the other hand, began dressing in men's clothing. This trend was popularized by Diane Keaton and the clothing she wore in the film *Annie Hall* which included baggy chinos, vests, oxford shirts, and wide neckties. On the other hand, the disco craze and culture popularized short, swingy jersey and wrap dresses. Body revealing pants suits and tight-fitting jeans with a designer label emblazoned on the back pocket were popular too. And, of course, for those of a more casual ilk, there was the "Levi" jean.

Many new musical styles emerged in the 1970s, including disco, rap, punk, and funk. The rock music of the sixties split into various trajectories, such as hard rock, soft rock, art rock and southern rock, which led purists to wonder "Is rock dead?" The rock scene further suffered from the untimely deaths of some of its top performers. In 1970, both Jimi Hendrix and Janis
Joplin died of drug related causes. They were each but twenty-seven years old. One year later, Jim Morrison, also twenty-seven, died from a heart attack thought to be drug related. Other rockers died as well during the decade from overdoses of valium, heroin, and prescription drugs (Edelstein and McDonough 137-141).

As youth oriented rock music became increasingly more "white, male, and macho" (Schulman 73), disenfranchised groups found other outlets for musical expression. Disco became one of the most popular alternative music genres of the decade, evolving as it did from a fusion of musical styles popular to gay, black, and Hispanic cultures. By combining rhythm and blues, soul, jazz, and swing with a synthesized syncopated Latin beat, disco appealed to a huge mass audience. The lyrics were lightweight and yet also tended to advocate gay liberation, female sexual assertion, and black pride. Donna Summer became a disco superstar and advocate for black female sexuality with her hits "Love to Love You Baby," "Bad Girls," and "Hot Stuff."

Likewise, The Village People, who parodied macho male stereotypes by costuming themselves as a cowboy, construction worker, military man, Indian chief, a leather-clad biker, and police officer, mainstreamed the gay underground culture with their hits "Macho Man," "In the Navy," and "Y.M.C.A."

According to Schulman, disco crossed both racial and cultural lines. It also fostered a gathering and sense of community through its dance-friendly beat and celebratory lyrics. This "shared ceremony of the dance formed a communal affirmation outside the church, the family, and other institutions" (Schulman 73).

Of course, not everyone appreciated or supported the integrated cultural product of the disco scene. Indeed, disco threatened many whites who found it too feminine, too black, or too gay. Many urban white youths adopted the slogan "Disco Sucks," and many clubs sponsored "disco sucks" nights, several of which ended in racial fighting. In addition, the Chicago White
Sox sponsored Disco Demolition Nite at Comiskey Park. Before the game with the Detroit Tigers, a mountain of disco records was placed on the field and detonated. Immediately afterwards, thousands of white teenagers flooded the field and began a riot which lasted two hours and resulted in many personal injuries and damage to the field. As a result, the White Sox were forced to forfeit the game (Schulman 74).

Rap, like disco, reached a mass audience but in a very different way. While disco promoted the idea of multiracial community, rap "mocked the melting pot" as it advocated cultural autonomy and isolation (Schulman 75). Rap music would not become a dominant music genre until the mid-1980s but it did surface from the black underground in the late seventies. Militant black rappers sang about the underground or gang world of violence and sex. The lyrics also highlighted an unbreachable gulf between the black, Latino, and white worlds. Ironically, rap's main audience consisted of young, white, middle class males who found the messages of autonomy, isolation, and segregation similar to their own beliefs and fears.

Punk music began in New York's East Village in the mid-1970s. Punk musicians vehemently opposed the appropriation and commercialization of rock by big business syndicates. The music was deliberately extreme and crude or, in punk terms, "short, exciting and good" (Edelstein and McDonough 178). In the manner of avant-garde experimentation, it had an anarchic sound which consisted of manic rhythms, thrashing instruments, and hoarse, screaming vocals. Some of the biggest punk hits included the Ramones' "Now I Want to Sniff Some Glue" and The Talking Heads' "Psycho Killer." Punk's popularity was confined mainly to the New York area until British groups began to mimic the style. With the emergence of British punk groups like the Sex Pistols, Elvis Costello, and Blondie, punk began to be accepted by a large portion of the U.S. market. Over the years, it continued to gain fans, becoming an acknowledged counter culture in the eighties and giving birth to "grunge" in the nineties.
While punk emerged from a white subculture, the antecedents of funk were black. *Time of Transition: The 70s* describes funk as "the sound of the inner city getting down" (121). Funk music was brash, assertive, and vaguely threatening. The sound was a fusion of pop, soul, and rock rhythms with a psychedelic collage of chants, shifting voices and instrumentation. With their so-called tribal rhythms, elaborate stage props, and flamboyant costumes, funk musicians insisted they were "saving dance music from the blahs" (*Time of Transition: The 70s* 120). Funk performers Kool & the Gang peaked in popularity in 1974 with their hit "Jungle Boogie." Likewise, funk musician George Clinton, who often emerged nearly naked from a hovering spaceship during his stage performances, obtained funk stardom with his album *Free Your Mind and Your Ass Will Follow*. Funk had such appeal that all white groups such as KC and the Sunshine Band adopted the style. Edelstein and McDonough explain that while most white music critics loved funk, white radio stations tended not to promote it. Thus, most funk music never crossed over into mainstream culture.

Like the music scene of the 1970s, the cinema offered richly varied styles evocative of the issues and concerns of the time. Along with the blaxploitation films of the decade and several Woody Allen comedies, including *Bananas* (1971) and *Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Sex (But Were Afraid to Ask)* (1972), the seventies offered such blockbusters as *The Godfather* (1972), *The Exorcist* (1973), and *Star Wars* (1977). One of the few dominant themes was the crazed or criminal protagonist. For example, in Stanley Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange* (1971), the protagonist, Alex, engages in gang fights, murder, robbery, and surrealistic pillaging. Jack Nicholson portrayed the "psycho as sane man" protagonist in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1975), and Robert De Niro offered up a psychotic New York City taxi driver in *Taxi Driver* (1976).
Television Trends

As for the small screen, television in the 1970s was undergoing a cultural revolution. Three distinct changes occurred in the sitcoms of the seventies in regards to content, character, and form. First, prevailing social issues, such as race relations, the women's movement, the antiwar movement, and the sexual revolution, were explicitly treated in sitcoms. The forthright address suggested that the nation was more willing to tell and hear these "stories" about itself than it had been in the sixties. Rather than approach controversial issues with caution, the bard proved to be quite bold. Of the thirty most popular sitcoms of the decade, twelve dealt with racial issues or ethnic diversity in the family home or workplace. These shows were *All in the Family*, *The Jeffersons*, *Good Times*, *Chico and the Man*, *Sanford & Son*, *Bridget Loves Bernie*, *Barney Miller*, *Taxi*, *Welcome Back, Kotter*, *What's Happening!*., *Diff'rent Strokes*, and *WKRP in Cincinnati*. Nine shows centered around issues related to the women's movement. The sitcoms in this group were *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*, *Rhoda*, *Phyllis*, *Maude*, *Alice*, *The Doris Day Show*, *One Day at a Time*, *The Partridge Family*, and *Laverne & Shirley*. The sitcom *M*A*S*H* advanced an antiwar message while *Three's Company*, *Soap*, and *Love, American Style* explored the sexual revolution.

Sitcom characters also changed during the seventies. For one, unlike their sixties counterparts, working class families were shown struggling to make ends meet. The representation of families in financial straits reflected both the reality of the times and a willingness on the part of the television industry and the U.S. public to talk and hear about such matters. Reflective of the "Me" trend, many sitcoms focused on a single character and, as anticipated by *That Girl*, many of the characters were independent working women, such as the aforementioned Mary, Rhoda, Phyllis, and Alice. Sitcom characters also became more three dimensional as compared to some of the "pasteboard" figures of the past. Various aspects of
their personalities were explored. For instance, a woman could be intelligent, witty, confused, sexy and pure as the driven snow, as was the case with Mary Richards, the main character in *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*. Sitcom characters also proved to become angry and depressed, have problematic relationships, divorce and, in a few cases, die. A sitcom that focused on the psychological problems of individuals was *The Bob Newhart Show*. Characters also were shown to have corporeal functions "just like real people." For instance, Archie Bunker in *All in the Family* became renowned for his belches and bathroom talk. According to Susan Sackett, the first flush toilet to be heard on television was that of Archie Bunker's.

As a result of multidimensional characters and relations, spin-offs became popular during the decade. For instance, *All in the Family* spun off *The Jeffersons* and *Maude*. *Maude* spun off *Good Times*. Likewise, both *Rhoda* and *Phyllis* were spin-offs of *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*. Finally, *Happy Days* spun off both *Laverne & Shirley* and *Mork & Mindy*. Spin-offs arose from parent shows that were so popular that producers felt confident in taking one of the characters and developing a new show around him or her. Because the characters in the parent shows were so well developed, they were substantial enough to stand on their own, in their own sitcoms. Producers relied upon character recognition and appeal to market the spin-offs, gambling that if viewers were familiar with and favorably disposed toward a character in the parent show, they would follow the character to the new show.

In addition to content and character alterations, a key aspect in the general format of many sitcoms changed in the seventies. Rather than offer a clearly delineated or happy conclusion to each episode, many sitcom episodes offered troubling conclusions or failed to resolve the depicted conflict. Many times, characters were as confused or disturbed at the end of the show as they were when it started. The alteration in form implied that, as in real life, problems cannot be resolved in a short thirty minutes. As with the changes in content and
character, the format change also reflected the times, as many families and individuals were faced with economic and other hardships that were difficult and not easily solved.

In the following section of this chapter, I describe and analyze themes from six sitcoms. Each sitcom reflects one or more of the prevailing social issues of the decade, race relations, the women's movement, the antiwar movement, and sexual liberation. The selections then speak to a collective understanding of ourselves at this time and hence they address a key bardic function. They also were extremely popular shows. Each experienced a long run and was ranked among the top ten shows at some point in its career. The sitcoms I have selected are All in the Family (1971-79), The Jeffersons (1975-85), Maude (1972-78), The Mary Tyler Moore Show (1970-77), M*A*S*H (1972-83), and Three's Company (1977-84). The lyrics of the theme songs and other related information are offered in Appendix B.

Analysis of Themes

All in the Family was an "Americanized" version of the British sitcom Til Death Do Us Part, which offered an uncensored look at British working class life through the eyes of a bigoted dockworker named Alf Garnett. Producer Norman Lear bought the rights to remake the sitcom for U.S. audiences. Lear wanted the show to comment upon important social issues of the time, specifically racial and ethnic prejudices. No sitcom up to this point had ever explicitly discussed racial issues. In fact, fearing repercussions from the viewing public, All in the Family opened with the following statement at its premiere: "The program you are about to see is 'All in the Family.' It seeks to throw a humorous spotlight on our frailties, prejudices, and concerns. By making them a source of laughter we hope to show--in a mature fashion--just how absurd they are."

In All in the Family, the main character, Archie Bunker, is a stubborn, loud-mouthed bigot. He uses racial epithets such as "spade," "spic," "hebe," and "coon." He has an adoring
and sensible yet sometimes scatterbrained wife, Edith, whom he often refers to as a "dingbat." Archie and Edith have a young, liberal daughter, Gloria, who is married to an ultra-liberal husband, Mike, whom Archie likes to call "Meathead." Archie and Mike constantly lock horns over political and social issues, arguing about everything from religion to affirmative action to the Vietnam War. Of course, Archie always believes his way of thinking is correct and that his "bleedin' heart liberal pinko atheist" son-in-law is forever in the wrong.

All in the Family was simultaneously praised and vilified. Ebony magazine accused the show of "giving new currency to arcane social slurs," and the Teamsters International protested the "unflattering portrayal of the American working man as a bigoted slob" (Waldron 187). Waldron agrees that All in the Family offered a startling departure from the "bucolic view of domestic life" that prevailed in most sitcoms (183). Waldron appreciates the departure, preferring Archie to the ideal Mr. Anderson of Father Knows Best fame. Lear substantiates that Archie is not the "'ideal,'" but rather "'the bigger-than-life epitome of something that's in us all, like it or not'" (quoted in Waldron 184). Javna agrees that by exaggerating the prejudices we all hold, All in the Family helped close the gap between sharply divided factions in the U.S. (76).

The show provided a forum in which the differences and similarities between men and women, blacks and whites, liberals and conservatives could be expressed. By providing a play space to air current views, All in the Family brought sophistication and intelligence to the sitcom genre and proved that audiences were ready to respond to topical issues and sophisticated humor. In fact, All in the Family remained the number one show for five consecutive years and "almost single-handedly revolutionized the creative community's attitude toward the medium" (Waldron 187).

However, the opening theme of All in the Family appears to play against its controversial renown. The introductory visual presents us with an image of a middle-aged couple sitting in
their living room, side by side at an old upright piano. The appearance of the couple and the decor of the living room connotes lower middle class. Edith is dressed in an orange and yellow polyester house dress with her hair in a simple style curled close to her head. Archie is a balding man who is wearing a graying white button-up shirt. The top button is undone, giving him a casual, relaxed appearance. The living room in which they are seated is a small space. The furniture appears to be old but not antique. We can see an easy chair with worn fabric in the background along with yellowing wallpaper on the walls. Inexpensive knickknacks are placed randomly about the room. A lace doily runner lies across the top of the piano.

Archie holds a cigar in his right hand while Edith plays the piano. Together they sing a song titled "Those Were the Days." The slow tempo and unadorned melody of the song connotes the slow pace and simple life of the past or, more precisely, our idealized notion of the past. Archie, in his nonchalant style, begins with the opening line, "Boy the way Glen Miller played." Edith follows with the second line, "Songs that made the hit parade." Archie answers, "Guys like us we had it made." Then, they join together with "Those were the days." The two continue to alternate in this fashion throughout the rest of the song. But, as Edith screeches the first line of the second verse, "And you knew who you were then," the scene fades from the interior of the living room to an exterior bird's-eye view of Manhattan. The title, All in the Family, appears center screen, superimposed on the Manhattan skyline. The title is written in white letters with curls at the end of the 'A' in "All" and the 'F' and 'Y' in "Family." These flourishes give the visual impression of letters on a needlepoint sampler. The image in turn lends a homespun feel to the song.

The title disappears in the next frame and gives way to the following montage. First, we are presented with a bird's-eye view of the suburbs. We see the roofs of tiny, tightly spaced houses. The camera is in a constant forward motion as if we are flying over the suburbs in an
airplane. Next, we see an eye-level view of a working class neighborhood, again in a constant forward motion as if we are viewing it through the window of a moving car or taxi cab. The houses continue to rush past, frame by frame, until we come to a stop at one particular house. The camera zooms in on the front door of the house. The frame then dissolves back into the living room with Edith and Archie sitting at the piano as they sing in unison the last line of the song, "those were the days." After the last line has been sung, the couple glance toward each other. Edith smiles at Archie as Archie puts the cigar in his mouth.

During the aforementioned exterior montage, the names of the actors, directors and producers appear on the screen, frame by frame, in white block letters. No titles or credits appear during the interior shots of the living room.

In effect, the opening sequence suggests that we are dropping in on the Bunkers for a visit, just as we would our parents, grandparents, or a favorite aunt and uncle. We fly into the city, as indicated by the bird's-eye view of the Manhattan skyline. We rent a car or take a taxi out to the suburbs, as indicated by the forward-moving shots of the houses. We arrive at the specified house, indicated by the still shot, get out of the car and walk up to the front door. As we zoom in on the door, we are "dissolved" into the living room and treated to a welcoming song by Edith and Archie.

In the couple's home, the theme is composed to create a feeling of familiarity and an atmosphere that is warm and inviting. It accomplishes this goal in many ways. To start, the theme features a common, everyday couple who author their own introduction; they sing their song by themselves in their own living room. Second, the song they sing and play is simple. It involves two voices and a piano, and is composed in an engaging AAAB rhyme form. The voices are ordinary and unspectacular, reminiscent of the quality of singing at family gatherings. And, yet, Archie and Edith appear quite pleased with their song, singing boldly and smiling.
fondly at each other. The relationship between the couple and the camera substantiates the sing-
along motif. Archie and Edith sit close together, side by side on the piano bench, facing the
camera and viewer at a close, personal distance. Although the situation is "closed," their open
position and close proximity draw the viewer into the scene, as if we are part of the family
gathered around the piano for a sing-along. Indeed, we complete the circle their positioning
implies; our relationship to the screen like theirs to the camera; our relaxed living room
mirroring theirs. A palette of oranges, reds, and browns reinforces the cozy atmosphere of the
living room and the open and hospitable "aire" of the Bunkers.

The Bunkers' homey space and sing-along is contexted, however, within the larger frame
of the city (and the world) that lies just outside their front door. In the theme, the difference
between the interior and exterior worlds are revealed in the composition of the shots. In contrast
to the warm interior colors, the exterior shots make use of the cool colors, blue and gray, making
the outside world appear remote and impersonal.

As indicated by the lack of motion in the interior shots, the Bunkers' world seems to have
come to a leisurely halt, while the exterior world is shown in constant forward-progressing
motion. Further, the movement and editing of the exterior shots condense time while the inside
shots retain regular time or, when coupled with the lyrics and close proximity of the camera, they
evoke a time frame that has stopped. The juxtaposition of summary time and "in scene" or
descriptive time suggests that while the exterior world moves forward, the Bunkers' world does
not. For Archie and Edith, their living room is a place of familiarity and safety while the outside
world is moving in unfamiliar and perhaps threatening directions.

The song that Archie and Edith sing substantiates this point. Sitting together on the piano
bench, they sing about a past they shared as youths. In the song, the couple remembers "the way
Glen Miller played, / Songs that made the hit parade." They recall that "Girls were girls and men
were men," and they "Didn't need no welfare state" because "Everybody pulled his weight." The couple also pine for Herbert Hoover and their old LaSalle that "ran great."

While Archie and Edith seem quite pleased with their sentimental recall of the past, the lyrics are ironic, in themselves and within the context of the show and decade. During the early 1930s, Herbert Hoover was not praised but scorned by most Americans and many directly blamed his administration for the Great Depression. In fact, the term "Hoover blankets" referred to the newspapers that the homeless would use to cover themselves to keep warm while "Hoover flags" were empty pockets turned inside out. Further, "Hoovervilles" described the vacant lots in which the homeless would gather and build shelters for themselves. The song also claims that, unlike the present, we "Didn't need no welfare state" in the past which, given Roosevelt's "New Deal" programs of the 1930s, is bit of a nostalgic stretch on the part of the lyrics. Lastly, in seeming criticism of the women's rights movement of the 1960s on, Archie and Edith sing of a time when "Girls were girls and men were" and, as a result, "You knew who you were then."

The opening theme operates then in a double-voiced way. On the surface, the theme offers a homely song and activity led by a charming, everyday couple. Beneath the surface however the song comments on its own partial recollection of the past and thereby the couple's nostalgic view too. In this way, the song anticipates the conflicts that arise in the show, especially between the reactionary Archie and the radical Mike. The pleasant sing-along activity is coded as ironic too then since the show typically erupts into heated debates about current social and political issues. Rarely do we see the family gather around the piano for a friendly sing-along. The opening theme is a bit of a "trick" on the part of the show's creators. While it introduces us to Archie and Edith, their working class home, and the history that informs their views, it also serves as a nostalgic "straw man" used in ironic contrast to the pressing social issues voiced in the show itself. In sum, the safe and familiar world of sentiment that Archie and
Edith try to construct in the song is constantly interrupted by the current rush and tumble of sentiments just outside their front door.

The closing theme of *All in the Family* is similar in style to that of the opening. The last scene of the show fades into a full shot of the house from the outside. Applause is heard. Like the laughter throughout the show, the sound of the applause interrupts the "real life" illusion of the Bunker family in their home, insisting on the constructed reality of the show and as taped before a live studio audience. The audience also serves as a synecdoche for the television viewing audience, the one like the other watching, thinking, laughing, and comparing their opinions to those that have been aired on the show.

In the final portion of the closing theme, the camera positions us in our "car" for the journey home. The visual trip that we took at the beginning of the show is repeated in reverse order. We see the same houses roll past in the opposite direction and then the bird's-eye view of the roofs and, finally, the overview of Manhattan. The contrast between the still shot of the Bunkers' home and the moving shots of the city reiterates the tension introduced at the beginning of the show. The nostalgic desire to hold on to a past that perhaps never was faces stern competition from that very past and from the currency and pressure of the present tense.

And, yet, even as we speed past the homes and take flight over Manhattan, an old time tune, "Remembering You," is heard, played on what sounds to be a player piano. Particularly popular between 1900 and 1930, player pianos were a main source of entertainment back then and the tinky-tonky sound reminds us of Edith and Archie singing to us about their shared past, when they were young and full of spunk, and perhaps gathered around just such a player piano to sing some then old tunes with their families and friends. The image humbles me. It urges me to remember the opening theme as something more than a nostalgic "straw man" used in service to
the concerns of the present. What is in the image of a middle aged couple singing a song in their
living room that eludes my grasp?

The opening theme of *Maude* uses the same camera techniques as the opening theme of *All in the Family*. *Maude* begins with a bird's-eye view of Manhattan. The show's title appears center screen, superimposed over the skyline. The large white letters are in the style of an artist's broad, sweeping brush strokes. The style suggests that Maude will be a larger than life, original work of art.

The camera is in constant motion as it pans across the skyline. This scene is followed by a montage of eye-level shots, taken from the point of view of a passenger in a car. We watch the cityscape fly by as we drive across a bridge into the suburbs. However, this neighborhood appears to be more upscale than the neighborhood we drive through in the opening theme of *All in the Family*. The houses are larger and spaced farther apart. Then, as in the *All in the Family* theme, the camera zooms in for a full shot of a particular house and then zooms in for a close-up of the front door. But, instead of a dissolve to the interior of the house, Maude opens the door and greets us with a smile.

Maude's greeting is followed by a montage of full shots of Maude inside her home. Unlike the cramped quarters of the Bunkers' living room, Maude's home is large and spacious and the upscale decor suggests upper middle class. There is an ample staircase leading from the living room to the upstairs portion of the house. A carpet runner lies down the center of the staircase. Instead of dingy wallpaper, the walls are painted a soft blue. We can see a shiny brass coat rack in the corner. Two polished end tables, one on the first floor and the other on the landing, are each topped with a bouquet of flowers in a glass vase. Maude's appearance signifies an upper middle class status as well. As she glides across her living room or ambles about her
kitchen, she wears long, flowing jackets or nicely tailored pants suits with a scarf tied around her neck.

The interior montage is followed by a rapid montage of close-up shots depicting Maude in a variety of everyday activities such as drinking a cup of coffee, talking on the phone, and blowing her nose in a tissue. Accompanying these still shots are lyrics that describe Maude as "uncompromisin', enterprisin', anything but tranquilizin'." While the lyrics send one message about Maude, the visuals seem to send another. Visually, Maude appears to be a well-off suburban woman who engages in everyday, ordinary activities and functions. She also seems to have a lot of time on her hands.

As noted, the musical theme tells us another story about Maude. Unlike Archie and Edith, Maude does not sing her own theme song. The song, "And Then There's Maude," is sung by an African American male singer with African American female backup. The gospel style song is accompanied by a piano and an organ. The use of the organ carries religious connotations in our culture since most people hear organ music in a church. The organ sound and gospel style operate to endow Maude with an upbeat reverence or piety; "soul" perhaps.

The lyrics are divided into four stanzas. The first two occur during the exterior montage I described above. The lines highlight four well known women of the past. "Lady Godiva," who rode nude through the streets on horseback, "was a freedom rider" who "didn't care if the whole world looked." "Joan of Arc with the Lord to guide her" is described as a "sister who really cooked." "Isadora," who shocked U.S. audiences with her scandalous dancing at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, "was the first bra burner." And, "when the country was fallin' apart / Betsy Ross got it all sewed up." Following this line, the third stanza begins which consists of the line, "And then there's Maude," repeated six times. The first line is voiced when Maude opens her door and the others accompany the interior shots of Maude in her home. The
final stanza is short and covers the rapid montage of close-ups. The singer exclaims, "That uncompromisin', enterprisin', anything but tranquilizin' / Right on, Maude!"

While the visual theme introduces us to Maude in her suburban home, the lyrics attempt to clarify that Maude is an outspoken advocate of liberal causes, including female rights. The lyrics connect Maude with Lady Godiva and Isadora, female icons of sexual liberation, and also Joan of Arc and Betsy Ross, icons of political freedom. The recurring line, "And then there's Maude," implies that Maude is a sexual and political liberator too and, by means of sheer performative repetition, it transforms her into a female icon as well, or so that is the attempt.

Further, in the lyrics regarding Joan of Arc and Betsy Ross, the words "cook" and "sew" are recontextualized by the African American voice and thereby additional meanings are generated. In the lyrics, we learn that "Joan of Arc. . .was a sister who really cooked" and "Betsy Ross. . .got it all sewed up." While "cook" might be a grotesque reference to Joan's means of execution, in African American "jive," it is a slang term meaning "to do well or excel at something," while to have it "all sewed up" is slang for "insuring a victory." By recontexting these terms, the "mundane" domestic activities of cooking and sewing become metaphors for success. Right on, Maude!

The seeming contradiction between the visual and acoustic theme is partly explained by the fact that Maude was a spin-off of All in the Family and it may have been presumed that viewers would call on their prior knowledge of Maude to interpret the opening theme of her show. In All in the Family, Maude is Edith Bunker's cousin and a nemesis of Archie's. Unlike Archie, Maude is ultra-liberal and wealthy; like Archie, she is "uncompromising" and expresses her views forcefully. She advocates affirmative action, equal rights for women, and sexual freedom. Significantly, while Archie's ramblings are constructed as ideologically incorrect, Maude's views are inflected as "politically correct." In Maude, we learn that the character has
been divorced three times and is currently in her fourth marriage. She also battles with manic depression and, in one episode, has an abortion. The character of Maude is a good example of the more complex character types I mentioned earlier and, in light of prior sitcom housewives, her aggressive verbal character offers an alternative model for the domestic female.

Reflecting, perhaps, the differences between views on cultural politics in the 1970s and the early twenty-first century, Maude's politically correct persona is, for me, problematic. For one, in an effort to substantiate Maude as "liberal," the theme song calls on the services of African American voices and gospel music. Further, the highlighted voice is male which, given the feminist aim of the theme and the immense popularity of black female gospel singers, seems rhetorically misdirected. In other words, on the front stage of the lyrics, a black male (voice) is used to perform a white female icon of (her and, as she presumes, his) liberation while, as usual, the black female (voices) is kept back stage.

In Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class, Eric Lott discusses the tradition and politics of white performers "attempt[ing] to 'master' the power and interest of black cultural practices" and, as constructed by whites, the sexual allure of black male bodies by appropriating them for their own usage (106). In order to control the subversive power of citing black performance within one's own, white performers had to carefully craft their imitation so that the "'blackness' [would] flicker on and off" (109); that is, the power of black performance and the black male body would benefit the user and not the used. In the musical theme of Maude, the gospel song and male voice operate in this way. They empower Maude as a liberal icon and advocate of progressive racial and sexual politics and the black citation is crafted to "flicker on and off" by eliding the black performers' corporeality and emphasizing Maude in her lovely home.
Significantly, the creators and producers of *Maude* seem to be aware of the "politically correct" irony of the theme and show, as evidenced by the relationship between Maude and her black maid, Florida. In the various episodes, Maude attempts to democratize her relationship with Florida by insisting that Florida use the front rather than the back door, take her meals with the family, and have a cocktail with them every afternoon. Florida, however, refuses to "flicker on and off" in this way. Instead, she tells Maude that the back door is closer to the kitchen and hence more convenient for her. She enjoys eating alone and she doesn't drink in the middle of the day. As substantiated by the blockbuster miniseries of the decade, *Roots*, Florida does not need Maude to author her story for her and she also does not appear to be interested in serving as a secondary, backup character in Maude's story of the liberal white female.

The lyrics also reflect the prevailing feminist perspective of the time. By collapsing the differences between the five women who are referenced in the song, an essentialist view of women is promoted. Basically, an essentialist feminist perspective erases the differences between women, links them in biological or archetypal terms, and positions them as a unified front in opposition to the oppressor, a unitary white male patriarchy. This view informed the politics of the popular feminist magazine of the late seventies, *Ms.*. The rhetoric of the magazine assumed that by covering the high profile achievements and agendas of liberal, white, educated, middle and upper class women who were making strides in the workplace, they were addressing the struggles of all women.

The basic rhetoric of *Ms.* helps me better understand the rhetoric of the *Maude* theme in that it resolves what appeared to be a contradiction between the visual and acoustic elements. Racial politics aside, the lyrics advocate an Essential Woman as the representative of a unified feminist front while the visual theme clarifies the market for and agency of the message. The
Maude theme is a "Ms." theme, reflecting the efforts of women in the seventies learning how to
tell their story in more forceful ways.

The opening theme of The Jeffersons depicts an African American businessman "moving
on up" the economic ladder into a "deluxe apartment" of his own. However, his move is
carefully controlled in so far as we are not shown the struggles he experienced or the tactics he
devised to achieve success in white corporate America. Further, George and his family are
depicted within the safe, domestic confines of their home.

In the opening shot, a taxi pulls up in front of a high rise apartment building. George and
his wife, Louise, are seated in the back. They exit the taxi and walk through the building's front
door which is held open by a doorman. George swaggers as he and Louise walk back to the
elevator. This scene is followed by an exterior shot of the high rise, photographed with a low-
angle vertical shot upwards that reveals the extreme height of the building. The "deluxe
apartment in the sky" thus becomes an image of power in the opening theme and a subsequent
metaphor for the upward mobility of the Jeffersons. The exterior shot is followed by an interior
montage of George and Louise engaged in various activities inside their apartment such as sitting
on the sofa or interacting with their neighbors. The activities change each television season, but
the basic content and form remain the same. The montage begins and ends with shots of George
and Louise alone with each other. The closeness of the couple is reinforced with the line, "As
long as we live, it's you and me baby / There ain't nothin' wrong with that."

The appearance of both the Jeffersons and their apartment are encoded as upper class.
George is always dressed in a three-piece suit, either with or without the jacket. Louise wears
either a nice dress with a rhinestone pin or an evening gown, and her hair always appears as if
she has just come from the beauty salon. Likewise the apartment is nicely furnished. A large
wooden bookcase stands against one wall, green plants line the entryway, and a large painting of
a seascape hangs above the desk. The apartment has a magnificent view which can be seen through the sliding glass doors which open out onto the balcony.

The lyrics coupled with the visual images express the Jeffersons' change in economic class. The theme song begins and ends with the same stanza. An African American gospel choir sings, "We're movin' on up / To the east side / To a deluxe apartment in the sky. / We're movin' on up / To the east side / We've finally got a piece of the pie." Sandwiched in between the framing stanzas is an eight line stanza that summarizes the Jeffersons' success story. The first two lines contrast the sweet (American) "pie" they have achieved with their former life of "fish" and "beans." The latter, in particular, references a lower class status since beans are cheap and, for many, eating beans is associated with folks who lack the funds for finer foods. Further, the beans are not described as simmering in a seasoned broth but burned, which implies the struggles the Jeffersons experienced in their prior life. These struggles are acknowledged in the next two lines, "Took a whole lotta tryin' / Just to get up that hill." The words indicate that success did not "just happen." Rather, the couple had to work hard to achieve their goals. Deeply embedded in these lines is the long history of racial struggle of African Americans generally. However, the stanza moves quickly to announce the couple's improved social standing with the lines, "Now we're up in the big leagues / Gettin' our turn at bat." The baseball metaphor functions to represent the couple's financial success which is further specified as a dual effort in the final lines of the stanza, "As long as we live, it's you and me baby / There ain't nothin' wrong with that."

Bogle states that the last thing on the sitcom's mind was social issues or "the state of Black America" (212). However, the sitcom does show us how African American success was handled at this time in a popular medium. In other words, The Jeffersons depicts "the state of Black America" as represented in the pop cultural marketplace of the times. While, in the second stanza, the lines acknowledge the effort it takes to climb the social-economic ladder,
"Took a whole lotta tryin'/ Just to get up that hill," the song devotes only two brief phrases to the struggle. Also, the visual elements do not show the struggle taking place at all. In short, the social reality of blacks claiming a piece of the American pie is elided. In addition, the visuals contain the couple in their domestic home which is located within the white neighborhood of the upper east side of Manhattan. Of course, as individuals, George and Louise have every right to "stay home," just like Edith and Archie, and also every right to live wherever they would like. However, as constructed characters that represent an upper class black family in business, an African American success story in American Dream terms, the domestic containment seems more insidious than not. Who gains by this representation? As with the citation of black performance in the Maude theme, the reality of black struggle and power is made to flicker on and off in this case.

The flickering is substantiated by the lyrics which use familiar metaphors or clichés regarding African Americans. The "struggle" is associated with kitchen metonyms and metaphors related to the labor of working class black, and also white, women, "Fish don't fry in the kitchen / Beans don't burn on the grill." "Success," on the other hand, is associated with sports metaphors related to the high paid labor of very few African American men, "Now we're up in the big leagues / Gettin' our turn at bat." Because they are familiar, these metaphors permit viewers access to the meaning of the lyrics but they also perpetuate the myths regarding success for African Americans.

However, while the content of the lyrics elide, individualize, and mythologize the reality of African American struggle and success, the gospel chorus that sings the song insists on an African American collective coding of the Jeffersons throughout. As Lawrence Levine asserts, African American gospel singers reach out to their listeners in a dialogue that embraces familiar topics of concern, reminds everyone of their roots, and that they "didn't always have it easy"
(Black Culture and Black Consciousness 187). Traditionally, it was in this manner that gospel singers "invoked a strong sense of communality and helped to perpetuate tradition among a people who had recently uprooted themselves in pursuit of a dream" (Levine, Black Culture and Black Consciousness 188).

The opening theme of The Jeffersons is then double-coded. Intentional or not, the very use of a gospel chorus to celebrate the success of the Jeffersons sends a message of collective black power to members of the black community while the lyrics and visuals assure white viewers who need assurance that the success is well contained, specific to the individuals, George and Louise. The significance of sending a collective message to the black community is supported by the criticism The Jeffersons received. Generally, white viewers liked the show and while black critics appreciated the fact that George was rich and successful, they objected to him being portrayed as a "scheming, self-serving, braggart." They would have preferred a portrait that acknowledged and encouraged the black community from which "he drew his strength and knowledge" in order to move up and claim a piece of the pie (Castleman and Podrazik 257).

In the opening theme of All in the Family, the bard hooks the viewer with the pleasing image of a middle-aged, working class couple leading a sing-along around their piano. The familiar, if also nostalgic, signs of this particular family ritual invite the viewer into the Bunker home to join the sing-along. The nostalgic hook analogues the similarly nostalgic song that the Bunkers sing. It also contrasts the rush of opposing views that lie outside the Bunkers' front door and, in the show proper, enter with force. The nostalgic hook then operates in ironic terms, simultaneously advancing and commenting on itself. The invitation to the sing-along implicates the viewer in and as part of the U.S. home and family represented in the theme. And, in light of the ironic contrast in the theme, it appears we can choose to sing with, upon or against the ultra-conservative through radical views we hear expressed in this/our "family" home. The important
thing, it seems, is that we sing. In light of the more forthright address of social issues in cultural expressions in the seventies (sitcoms in particularly), it appears that the All in the Family bard addresses our collective need and desire to do exactly this; to sing if not in harmony with Archie, at least as boldly.

As I discussed above, the seeming contradiction between the visual imagery and the lyrics in the Maude theme are explained if we understand that the bard sings a "Ms." song and thereby directly addresses a prevailing ideology in the women's movement at the time. The lyrics call on familiar female icons to promote Maude as an essentialist feminist and outspoken advocate of sexual and political liberation for women. The visuals of Maude in her upscale home clarify the class and race of the women who are apparently at the forefront of the struggle. However, while the "Ms." theme explains the contradiction, it does so in "Ms." terms. Understanding that the bard seeks a broader audience and set of terms, it appears that the bard indeed addresses the women's movement but takes and tweaks the "Ms." codes of class and race so as to assure others that the reach of the seventies feminist is well contained. The theme, in fact, is ironic. The white, middle to upper class, well educated Maude is shown in her lovely suburban home doing very little at all; she is un-enterprising, tranquil, and compromised. In short, the bard hooks some viewers with the currency of the woman's movement, the citation of familiar female icons, and the liberal coding that Maude's "got soul." The bard hooks other viewers by domesticating these very signs in the safe confines of the individual woman and her home, where there is nary a "soul" in sight except Maude, who appears to have little interest in the feminist work of cookin', sewin', bra burnin', and freedom ridin'.

A similar domestication of potentially threatening activity arises in The Jeffersons theme. On the one hand, the bard celebrates the success of an African American couple who realize the American Dream. Thereby the bard addresses the black civil rights movement and its increased
acknowledgment and acceptance in the seventies. On the other hand, the bard controls the Jeffersons' performance by citing it in the individual couple and their home, a "deluxe apartment in the sky" isolated in the white, upper crust neighborhood of the east side. In this way, "blackness" is made to "flicker on and off" (Lott 109). However, as Lott also explains, the very citation of black performance can potentially subvert the flicker (107). As I discussed above, the use of the gospel choir operates in this way, insisting that the Jeffersons' success be understood in terms of the black community and culture(s). Lott's observation also prompts a re-reading of the domesticated space. While for some viewers the Jeffersons' home may assure them that the successful black family in white America is being carefully controlled, for others it may suggest that racial territories and their policing have indeed been breached. Others may be confused by the seeming anomaly of the Jeffersons' success and pursue a more thorough understanding of the varied texture of race and class in the U.S. while others may find the questions I ask here reflective of the deeply embedded nature of our racial prejudices and fears.

While the shows and theme songs for All in the Family, Maude, and The Jeffersons encouraged us to question our beliefs and opinions regarding diverse social issues, The Mary Tyler Moore Show urged a more specific inquiry of the "independent woman." Javna asserts that The Mary Tyler Moore Show "did more to establish the women's movement and bolster the spirits of people who were trying to live out its ideals than a lot of serious feminist efforts" (80). Without shedding its "veneer of sweetness" or its "relentless optimism" (Javna 80), The Mary Tyler Moore Show introduced the modern independent woman to the small screen.

As Jones describes her, the character of "Mary Richards" was the traditional "nice girl" who was "groomed to be June Cleaver," and then was "suddenly required to be an independent adult" (201). We can surmise that, as a thirty year old middle class woman, Mary was born and raised during the late forties and early fifties when there were reactive sentiments regarding
women of her class and race holding jobs that "belonged" to the returning World War II veterans. She was raised to run the home. However, by the time Mary is in her twenties, it is the 1960s and such sentiments are being publicly questioned by means of the women's movement and the sexual revolution.

Many women could relate to the character of Mary Richards because, in both broad and specific ways, her situation was very similar to their own. She represented a generation of women who were limited in terms of female roles and identities, only to find those they did possess called into question in the sixties and seventies. Also, the episodes of the sitcom relied on everyday premises that were familiar and recognizable to many. Mary's highbrow humor, evocative of her education and intellect, was showcased within realistically rendered scenes. As Sackett explicates, Mary never "tramped out wine grapes with her bare feet" or did other "zany things" just to get laughs (193).

The opening visual elements of The Mary Tyler Moore Show theme set the tone for the rest of the theme song and the sitcom itself. To start, we are shown a bright blue screen. The words "Mary," "Tyler," and "Moore," all in bright yellow block letters, fly into the frame from different points of origin, creating the title "Mary Tyler Moore" in the center of the screen. The yellow letters on the bright blue background remind me of the sun shining in the bright blue sky. Then, the blue background turns black while the title multiplies and rainbows out to fill the screen in the colors of orange, red, pink and blue. The movement and colors of the visual display suggest a fragmented sense of self to start. This self eventually coheres, in the center of the screen, and then moves to engage diverse (multi-colored) roles and responsibilities without however losing the coherent or unified sense of self.

After this opening title sequence, the "Mary Tyler Moore" in the center of the screen becomes transparent, revealing, within the letters themselves, a realistic scene. The camera
zooms in so that the name disappears and we focus on the depicted scene. The scene shows the front of a white car moving down an empty two-lane highway. The camera zooms in for a close up of an apprehensive-looking Mary who is behind the wheel of the car. The opening lyrics begin. The music is slow and soft as a male voice gently sings, "How will you make it on your own? / This world is awfully big and this time girl you're all alone." Coupled with the opening visuals, the lyrics underscore Mary's "rite of passage" situation. As Jones offers, it was rare enough ever to see a sitcom woman in a car. To use that particular shot as the opening image was "almost shocking" for viewers of the seventies (195).

A superimposed image follows which helps to clarify that Mary is striking out on her own. The superimposition depicts a farewell party. A wall banner reads "Good Luck Mary" and a gathering of people applaud her as she enters and extend gifts, flowers, and friendly kisses. As Mary exits, she turns and waves good-bye. The superimposed scene disappears as the male voice sings, "It's time you started living. / It's time you let someone else do some giving." While the receiver of Mary's "giving" is ambiguous, the lines suggest that Mary has been living in terms of the gender norm that women are "givers" or nurturers in relationships and that such behavior is no longer satisfying to her.

In the next frame, we see a long shot of the car in profile as Mary continues her journey down the highway. A sign appears at the upper left corner of the screen announcing the cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul. Mary chooses the direction of Minneapolis as the camera shows us a long shot of the car from behind. Mary arrives in Minneapolis and the isolation of the opening car shot is dissolved as Mary ventures into her new surroundings. Simultaneously, the music turns upbeat as the voice proclaims, "Love is all around, no need to waste it. / You can have the town, why don't you take it." These words are accompanied by a visual montage of several long shots of Mary as she walks down busy city sidewalks, glances up at buildings, walks beside a
lake, and strolls through a park. It is the dead of winter, but Mary seems to be warming to her new life.

In the final montage, the camera zooms in on Mary who is wearing a black coat and blue beret. The montage is shot in slow motion as Mary smiles and spins around. The male voice encourages, "You might just make it after all." At this statement, Mary throws her beret in the air. The camera catches her in a freeze frame. In contrast to the opening depiction of Mary, this visual shows that her journey has brought her confidence and a sense of personal achievement, as implied by the arm raised in victory and the upward glance of the eyes. Further, the frame freezes while the beret is still in the air. The image suggests that Mary has no where to go but up. She has shed her former life and is celebrating her new one.

Mary does indeed find happiness as an independent woman. In later seasons of the show, the opening theme is altered to reflect Mary's success. The second version of the opening theme depicts Mary, not alone in her car, but standing by an elevator in a busy building, likely the one in which she works. Instead of being isolated, she is surrounded by a group of individuals. Instead of having an apprehensive look on her face, Mary smiles as she brushes the hair from her forehead. The male voice no longer inquires, "How will you make it on your own?" Instead he asks, "Who can turn the world on with her smile?"

The city montage is somewhat different as well. Scenes of Mary touring the city in an attempt to acquaint herself (and us) with it are replaced by a montage that indicates Mary's adjustment to the city. She shops for groceries, strolls confidently by the lake, and hugs her coworkers in the newsroom. Also, rather than winter, it is spring. Leaves are on the trees, the flowers are in bloom, and Mary has shed her heavy coats for white pants suits or, in one scene, a light blue pants suit with a white sweater tied around her shoulders. The change in seasons and
clothing substantiates the success of Mary's awakening or rebirth. In short, Mary has transformed into a new version of herself.

Two elements remain similar in both versions. The first is the symbolic use of the color white as it is reflected in Mary's car, the snow covering the ground, and the clothing that Mary wears. In each case the use of white symbolizes purity and innocence. In the first version, the "virginal" Mary is about to embark on her new life. By isolating Mary inside the white car, Mary is both protected from and unsullied by the outside world. Although Mary leaves the protection of her car, she remains as "pure as the driven snow" as she walks through the city. In the second version, the visuals suggest that Mary has gained experience as an independent woman and yet also retained her purity, as indicated by the white clothing.

Second, the ending visual montage is the same in both versions. However, in the second, new meanings arise due to an alteration in the lyrics. Rather than the male voice cautiously encouraging Mary that "You might just make it after all," the voice proudly announces, "You're gonna make it after all." Thus the upward flight of the hat no longer indicates the path that Mary must take in order to achieve her success (i.e., she has nowhere to go but up), but serves as a visual metaphor for the success she has already achieved. She has triumphed.

The first opening theme offers a forward moving narrative about a woman who leaves an unfulfilling situation in search of one that is more satisfying. By the end of the theme, it appears that she has found what she desires. Thus, the theme offers a full story, with conflict, that ends happily rather than tragically. In this way, the theme anticipates the plot of each episode. As noted above, the theme also operates as a "rite of passage" in which Mary leaves one social role, that of a dependent or co-dependent woman, so as to learn about and accept a new social role, that of an independent woman. The first theme concentrates on the transitional or liminal phase of the passage, showing the novice, Mary, betwixt-and-between well defined roles and
performing "tests" of independence. Between cities (and roles), she drives alone on an empty highway, navigates a course of direction, and enters a cold, winter city armed only with her heavy duds. It is in this way that the first theme of The Mary Tyler Moore Show is quite different from its antecedent theme, That Girl. Whereas Mary is shown experiencing the trials that prepare her to be independent, Ann Marie is not. Or, perhaps more accurately, her test appears much easier. After the opening shot from the front of the train, which implies Ann Marie's passage from her childhood home to the big city, she is shown experiencing independence without apprehension, well armed with the icons of patriotism, individualism, celebrity success, and paternalism. With these reinforcements, her change in social status is immediate; at the end of the theme, she appears no different than when we first saw her. In other words, we might say, Ann Marie cheated on her test of female independence, or perhaps she did not take it at all.

The second opening theme of The Mary Tyler Moore Show focuses on the reintegration phase of Mary's rite of passage or what her change in social status entails. In light of the imagery, it appears that being an independent woman involves going to work, shopping for necessities, maintaining a healthy body and, as with most of the "independent woman" sitcoms, wearing good-looking clothes. In Mary's case, it does not entail a husband or children; rather, it appears her co-workers are her family. The emphasis on the relationship between Mary and her co-workers will set the stage for the many "workplace" sitcoms that will follow in subsequent decades.

As with That Girl and Maude, in The Mary Tyler Moore Show theme, a male voice sings the opening theme song which appears to indicate an understanding that the male voice carries more power than the female voice and that if a male voice validates the female character's independence, the public will accept it too. However, as indicated by the show's title, it is the
"real life" professional woman, Mary Tyler Moore, who introduces the show and thereby the narrator. Drawing on the celebrity power and appeal of her name, Mary Tyler Moore authorizes the male narrator to recount the story of the character, Mary Richards. Further, since it is Moore's name that is cited, her story becomes inflected through that of the character's. As compared to pretty baubles in a case or an Essential Woman, the story Moore authorizes is more of a personal narrative, which then is socialized by means of two familiar conventions: the rite of passage theme and the third person omniscient narrator, a male in this case. The first "hooks" the many female viewers who could relate to Mary's apprehensive rite of passage toward independence. The latter draws on the power of the male voice and also the hint of romance to simultaneously validate and temper the claim to advancing a her-story to the public about female independence in the workplace and also the home.

In addition to these strategies and tactics, the Moore bard chooses to retain the codes and conventions of femininity. Like Ann Marie, Mary Richards is depicted in an assortment of fashionable clothing appropriate to the workplace or the fitness exercises she enacts. She is always well made-up. In light of the changing times, she carries a double-code of sexual purity and experience. She appeals to her male co-workers as a friend and is eternally optimistic. In these ways, Mary Richards is the "Happy Face" of the decade.

Although between 1971 and 1975, the U.S. effectively pulled out of Vietnam, the experiences and aftershocks of the war did not disappear. Rather than gloss over the horrors of war, as did the military sitcoms of the sixties, one sitcom of the seventies, M*A*S*H, found a way to talk about the controversy of battle. Although technically M*A*S*H dealt with the Korean War, producer Gene Reynolds confesses that "a lot of our stories were Vietnam stories" (Waldron 249). In short, M*A*S*H (an acronym for Mobile Army Surgical Hospital) was written with Vietnam in mind. As Javna explains, the producers were trying to make a statement
about Vietnam, about "the horror of combat" and, above all, about "the resilience of the men and women who manage to retain their humanity through the worst experiences" (84). Critics immediately predicted failure when M*A*S*H premiered. How could a sitcom set amidst the blood, death, and sorrow of war have any comedy?

Unlike the military sitcoms of the sixties where the comedy derived from the characters' innate foolishness or savvy (i.e., unrelated to war), M*A*S*H grounded its comedy in characters trying to find ways to "make do" within the constraints of war, to survive with a sense of human decency and hope despite their circumstances. As a result, the characters in M*A*S*H act crazy in order to keep from going crazy in the insane world in which they reside. In this way, the show recalls the post World War I tactics of Dada, where nonsense was used to critique the "nonsense" of rationality or that which instigates and sustains a nation's involvement in war. In M*A*S*H, the fun-loving, wise-cracking surgeons and staff drink and party until incoming choppers deliver the wounded and maimed from the front lines of the war. They then end their hijinks, scrub up for duty, mend the wounded soldiers, and return them to the front lines where they are wounded again or perhaps even killed.

In M*A*S*H, the featured character is Hawkeye Pierce who is the epitome of the complex, three-dimensional character that emerges in the sitcoms of the seventies. Hawkeye is a wisecracking womanizer who drinks too much for his own good and is also a responsible and competent surgeon. He is at once intelligent and irreverent, sensitive and sarcastic. In fact, most of the characters in M*A*S*H are contradictions. Margaret "Hot Lips" Houlihan and Frank Burns are both conservative, no-nonsense, by-the-book rule followers yet they carry on a public sexual affair. Maxwell Klinger is sane enough to scheme for an insanity discharge by wearing women's clothing. The contradictory characters of M*A*S*H reflect the social contradictions of the time, an era of both "Happy Faces" and Watergate. The double-sided characters also reflect
the double-sided horror of war. Not only do the characters contend with the outward horrors of battle such as wounded and dying men, they also face the inner horrors of loneliness and sorrow which result from their prolonged exposure to human suffering. The double-sided characters, in essence, reflect the need of returning Vietnam vets to tell their stories and the need of the nation to hear them. M*A*S*H also depicts the ironic battle between life and death. The government authorizes killing in the name of national security and democracy while it also authorizes the repair of those wounded in battle.

In the opening theme of M*A*S*H, the visual montage can be divided into three sections: the arrival of the choppers, the landing of the choppers, and the unloading of the wounded from the choppers. The first section begins with an extreme long shot. We see the back of a man standing in the foreground of the frame. He is watching military choppers fly in over a group of high, heavily forested hills. We are placed to view the choppers from this unidentified and isolated man's perspective. He represents the viewer and, as a result, we become attached to the situation and sense the man's feelings of isolation and futility.

The scene changes with a close-up of the choppers. It is at this point that we hear the sounds of the helicopter blades. This visual-audible combination indicates that the choppers will not pass by. They are an integral part of life at the M*A*S*H unit.

In the next shot, the camera switches perspectives to that of the M*A*S*H pilots flying the helicopters. By means of an unsteady, slightly circling shot from above, the camera shows us a bird's-eye view of the M*A*S*H unit below. The hospital is denoted by the red cross emblem that appears on the roof of one of the makeshift buildings. From this high angle view, we see individuals dressed in army greens moving back and forth between the tents and buildings. The frenetic movement coupled with the great distance and bird's-eye view creates a visual image reminiscent of an ant hill after it has been disturbed.
The second section of the montage begins with a close-up of the choppers. We see the word "M*A*S*H" painted on the sides of the choppers. Then, in a series of eye-level long shots, we see a group of women and then a group of men, all dressed in army greens, run toward the choppers from opposite directions. The camera switches to a full shot as one of the choppers lands on the ground.

In the third and final section of the opening theme, the group of men and women rush to the chopper. There is a close-up of the face of one particular man who stands out from the drab green crowd. He is dressed in a white and blue Hawaiian print shirt. A low angle close-up shot is used and it seems to imply the perspective of a wounded soldier looking up at the man in the shirt. A cut to an extreme long shot reveals the men and women unloading the wounded from the choppers. The opening theme ends with a bird's-eye shot of two army jeeps loaded down with stretchers, slowly rolling into the M*A*S*H unit.

The visual imagery in the opening theme highlights the ironic battle between life and death in wartime situations. Both the helicopters and the surgeons are double-coded. The helicopters are government sanctioned machines of war and yet they retrieve the wounded from the frontlines and carry them to safety. Likewise, the surgeons are the saviors who repair and heal the wounded, making them well enough to return to the battle front again. As indicated by the multiple perspective shots, the helicopters and M*A*S*H unit are intimately connected, the one impacting the other. In metaphoric terms, the helicopters are like the messengers in classic drama. They are the bearers of "bad news" from sites of tragedy. Since the "news" bears directly on the M*A*S*H unit, on their significance as a community in an insane situation, they listen to it, have a stake in it, in the soldiers the helicopters bear to them.

For the most part, the theme validates the interdependent relationship between the M*A*S*H choppers, surgeons, staff, and wounded. The multiple perspective shots reveal and
interweave these various positions. To start, the audience is taught to view the situation from inside the frame, as prompted by the backside of the man (an embodiment of the camera eye), who urges the audience to view the situation as he does. Having thus positioned the viewer, the perspectives of the pilots, the surgeons and staff, and the wounded soldier are presented in an integrated manner. Due to the interrelationship of the perspectives, the public distance from which the characters and the choppers are viewed, and also the uniform green color of the mise-en-scene, the opening theme highlights a unified collective where individuality is secondary to the cooperative workings of the community, in this case directed toward the care of the wounded.

However, there is one visual element that interrupts the collective perspective. Out of the sea of green emerges a man in a Hawaiian print shirt. The man is Hawkeye Pierce, the featured character in the show. Since Hawkeye's face is revealed in the one close-up shot of the theme and from the perspective of a wounded soldier, the theme bestows Hawkeye with an individuality, intimacy and humanity not afforded the other characters. His loud, leisure time shirt substantiates his individuality and introduces an element of subversive play into the theme, anticipating the humor in the show. By wearing the shirt, Hawkeye breaks with military protocol and thereby critiques the war effort of which he is a part. As is revealed in the various episodes, the role Hawkeye plays in the theme proves to be the "social" role he plays in the M*A*S*H community and the show itself. That is, Hawkeye falls in line with the long-standing romantic tradition of the rebel artist or thinker who critiques the profanities of society (e.g., its industrialization or, in this case, militarization), by insisting on individual freedom in thought and expression. A mainstay of U.S. political, economic and social thought, individual freedom and/as critique operates here as the marketing hook. The code is embedded in the visual of Hawkeye who simultaneously references and benefits from the hook of the well-known actor
who plays him, Alan Alda. The Hawkeye/Alda visual assures the audience of a well-known
celebrity, a rebel hero, humor, and individuality while the rest of the theme insists on the
collective operations of M*A*S*H units during wartime.

The music of M*A*S*H also offers significant contrast. In light of popular culture war
flicks, we might expect the visual images of incoming choppers and people running with
stretchers to be accompanied by fast-paced, adrenaline-pumping music. Instead, the theme
interrupts this expectation by using slow-paced, melancholy guitar music, reminiscent of antiwar
folk music during the sixties, such as that of Arlo Guthrie, Joan Baez, and Simon and
Garfunkel. The visual-acoustic contradiction functions to defamiliarize the two main elements
and thereby prompts the audience to view the situation more critically. The music also reminds
the audience of the sadness that results from the loss of life.

The closing theme of M*A*S*H uses the same music as in the opening theme, but plays
it in double-time. The increased speed evokes a more upbeat and optimistic quality. The music
is accompanied by a series of selected still shots from the episode that has just aired. These still
shots appear in a montage as the closing credits flash on the screen. The display of the still shots
is akin to looking at photographs of moments that are now in the past. Coupled with the upbeat
music, the photographs suggest that the characters have survived another day of conflict and will
relax and play for awhile—until they hear the sound of choppers call them to action once again.

In the opening theme of M*A*S*H, the bard appeals to our collective sense of self by
telling a story that the community needs to tell and is finally ready to hear. Rather than recount
Vietnam from the front line soldier's point of view, the bard situates the story in the military
medical community where there are pockets of time for leisure and play and where comedy is
appropriate. As discussed above, the theme hooks the audience by drawing on a tradition of
values that are key to U.S. society and its understanding of itself. The individual-as-rebel
enables the critique of war and is substantiated by the recall of antiwar folk music. Simultaneously, the bard offers imagery of a humanitarian military collective that validates, if not the war, the people who served in it and their families at home.

While *M*A*S*H* can be considered the first antiwar sitcom, *Three's Company* can be considered a sitcom symbolic of the sexual revolution. It reflected the country's contemporary ideas regarding male and female relationships, sex, and living arrangements. The show played to conservative assumptions that men and women who live together must be involved in an intimate relationship while playing to youth's understanding that that is not always the case. During the seventies, increased numbers of people opted to live together, without marrying, and for platonic and financial reasons as well as intimate ones.

*Three's Company* is set in Santa Monica, perhaps because, in the popular imagination, Southern California is associated with a free-loving, fun-loving way of life. The premise of the sitcom is simple: two single females share an apartment with their single male roommate. Their relationship is strictly platonic. To disarm their straight-laced landlord, Mr. Roper, the two women, Janet and Chrissy, tell him that their male roommate, Jack, is gay.

The opening theme of *Three's Company* teases the audience by offering an ironic contradiction between the visual imagery and the lyrics of the song. The theme uses funky, feel-good music to underscore a visual montage that shows the three roommates involved in innocent, fun activities, such as cruising in a sailboat on a lake, playing games at a carnival midway, and riding a tram at the San Diego Zoo. A series of comic mishaps are shown too. In one scene, Jack rides his bike past a group of scantily clad women. He turns around to look at them and subsequently falls off his bike. In another scene, while watering plants on a windowsill, Janet overshoots the plants and accidentally pours water onto Chrissy who is sunbathing outside beneath the sill.
Like the visuals, the lyrics are playful and inviting. They also are loaded with sexual innuendo. When heard in tandem with the visuals, they imply a "menage a trois" between the three roommates. However, since the lyrics are sung by just two voices, a male and a female, who urge us to join them, it also appears that the viewer might "fill in" for the absent third or, possibly, "add in" as a fourth. Who knows? The numbers are not clear. What is evident is that "Three's company," not a crowd. This inversion of the old cliche, concludes each of the three short stanzas and thereby reiterates the title and its teasing trick.

To start, the singers beckon us to, "Come and knock on our door. / We've been waiting for you." Should we agree to the invitation, we will enter a "loveable space that need [our] face" and engage in a "rendezvous," which suggests less a place of residence and more a tryst between people. At the rendezvous, we are promised "kisses" that are "hers and hers and his," a "dance on [the] floor," and "laughter." The upshot of all this good time activity is that we will learn to "Take a step that is new" and "see that life is a ball again." In short, it appears we are being encouraged to reconsider our traditional ideas regarding relationships and to try something different.

While the depicted imagery is quite innocent as regards to sex, the lyrics are not. But, then, are they? Are the lyrics sexual? Or is the reading of sexual promiscuity a misunderstanding on our part? This titillating "are they or aren't they" dichotomy is the hook of the opening theme and carries through in the episodes themselves. The common scenario depicts the three roommates involved in some innocent task, such as hanging a shower curtain or baking a cake. Due to a comic mishap that typically results in intertwined bodies, the activity is misunderstood by others (usually Mr. Roper) as a sexual orgy.

Many critics denounced Three's Company as mindless escapism or "brain candy" (Mann xiv). It is true that Three's Company did not offer three-dimensional characters but relied instead
on traditional stereotypes, such as the dumb sexy blonde, the brainy brunette, and the effeminate "homosexual" man. In addition, the humor arose from slapstick comedy and the use of double entendres. However, Chris Mann argues that the genius of *Three's Company* lay not in its socially significant plot lines, or lack thereof, but in its "deep understanding of misunderstanding" (xv). Although the situations always appear "sinful," nothing ever happens. In essence, *Three's Company* is "titillation at its tamest, innuendo at its most innocent, safe sex at its safest" (Mann xv).

Likewise, the opening theme teases viewers by offering them visuals that imply friendship and lyrics that imply otherwise. Thereby, the theme is simultaneously safe and sexually titillating, the bard addressing changing attitudes toward sex while also safeguarding the show from criticism. The opening is also potentially critical in that it urges us to question our own assumptions regarding relationships and sexual activity and also how such assumptions are produced and perpetuated by means of a tease such as "three's company, too."

While the images and lyrics in the theme songs of the sixties were cautious in expressing the social realities of the decade, the theme songs of the seventies engaged the social problems and contradictions with vigor. *All in the Family*, *Maude*, and *The Jeffersons* addressed the changing face of race, class and gender relationships and views. The opening theme of *All in the Family* made use of an ironic contrast to both validate and question the song the Bunkers sing. Thereby, the theme invited us to join the "all in the family" sing-along, understanding that divergent opinions and views are allowed and will be expressed in this/our family home. The theme to *Maude* introduced us to the politically and sexually liberated woman of the seventies while it also controlled the reach and impact of her voice. In *The Jeffersons* theme, the economic success of a black couple in white America was celebrated in terms that validated the individual struggle while, on an implied line of discursive activity, the collective power of black
America was confirmed. In addition, the theme for The Mary Tyler Moore Show offered us a version of a woman's rite of passage from a dependent role to an independent one. The theme for M*A*S*H brought images of the injustice of war to the screen and allowed us to see that war is not simply a battle between nations, but a battle between life and death. Finally, the theme for Three's Company reflected the sexual revolution. Instead of keeping sex behind closed doors, Three's Company encouraged that the doors be opened. It offered fresh air on how we view and talk about sex, casting prurient assumptions back on those who make them.

Most importantly, the opening themes of the sitcoms of the seventies urged the audience to think. All in the Family, Maude, and The Jeffersons made us laugh at our racial prejudices and political biases and, in doing so, permitted us to examine the validity of our views. The Mary Tyler Moore Show permitted us to empathize with the plight of the independent woman and, in the process, allowed women viewers to feel less alone in their own struggle. M*A*S*H, unlike the military sitcoms of the sixties, did not treat war simply as an amusing game, but instead allowed us to experience its accompanying sadness as well. Lastly, Three's Company permitted us to shed our inhibitions about the changing nature of relationships and realize that a lot of problems, especially between young and older generations, are simply the result of misunderstandings.

Notes

1 A West Point graduate returning from the Vietnam War recounted, "I will never forget flying home and being cursed and spit on and called baby killer by a crowd of kids my own age at the airport. I could not believe this was my country" (quoted in Time of Transition: The 70s 74).

2 This case was based on two anonymous appellants, "Jane Roe" in Texas and "Mary Doe" in Georgia, both of whom had borne unwanted children after being denied abortions.

3 At the University of Georgia several students parachuted naked out of a plane; at the University of South Carolina, a number of students biked naked through Columbia; at Harvard, a group of students wearing only surgical masks dashed through a classroom where other students were taking an anatomy exam; at the University of Colorado, twelve thousand students streaked
at one time, earning a place in the Guinness Book of World Records; and at the 1974 Academy Awards ceremony, Robert Opel, a thirty-eight year old advertising executive, streaked across the stage during the live televised event. Five days later, Ray Stevens wrote and performed a song titled "The Streak." It hit #1 on the Billboard charts. See Schulman (116-117), and Glennon (543).

4 Melvin Van Peebles' X-rated Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song premiered in 1970 and kicked off the cycle of blaxploitation films. Van Peebles wrote, financed, and directed the film himself. The film depicts a black pimp who kills two policemen who beat up a black militant. The pimp uses his street-wise survival skills to elude his pursuers and escape to Mexico. Critic Jim Craddock refers to the film as "racist, sexist, and violent" (699).

5 Jones' followers actually traveled to Guyana in 1974 to begin building the commune. Jones joined them there three years later after reporters began investigating him for misuse of congregational funds. For further details, see Time of Transition: The 70s (140).

6 Mood rings were invented in 1974 by Joshua Reynolds, a New York law student. In 1975, over twenty million rings were sold for prices ranging between $2.98 and, for a fourteen carat gold version, $250 (Edelstein and McDonough 114-115).

7 Dahl bought two and a half tons of rock from a beach in Mexico and shipped between three and six thousand pet rocks a day to retailers like Bloomingdale's, Macy's, and Lord and Taylor.

8 In 1973, King played fifty-five year old tennis champion Bobby Riggs in a match known as "The Battle of the Sexes." This match was watched by a TV audience of fifty million. King defeated Riggs in three straight sets, thus acquiring new respect for female athletes. For complete details, see Time of Transition: The 70s (106-107).

9 Four sitcoms I do not address in my overview were anomalies in comparison to the other sitcoms of the decade. There were two uncommon couple sitcoms, The Odd Couple and Mork & Mindy; a blended family sitcom, The Brady Bunch; and the very popular Happy Days, which offered a nostalgic look at family life in the 1950s.

10 In M*A*S*H, Henry Blake died in a plane crash; in Good Times, James Evans, the father of the family, was killed in a car accident; and Edith Bunker, from All in the Family, died from a stroke.

11 The TV sitcom was based on Robert Altman's 1970 film M*A*S*H. The film, in turn, was based on the novel by Dr. Richard Hornberger who wrote under the pseudonym Richard Hooker.

12 The original lyrics of the song express antiwar sentiments very like the antiwar folk music of the sixties. The lyrics were used in the film version of M*A*S*H but not in the sitcom.
"'Cause the boy with cold hard cash is always Mister Right."
--Madonna, "Material Girl"

Historical Overview

Greed is good. This was a prevailing belief in the 1980s. The decade was a time of great financial boom and of crippling unemployment. While many shopped till they dropped, others fought to keep a roof over their heads. It seemed the rich became richer and the poor became poorer. To borrow a line from Charles Dickens, "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times. . . .We had everything before us, we had nothing before us" (3).

In this section of the chapter, I offer an overview of the key economic, military, environmental and morality-based policies and events that marked Ronald Reagan's eight year tenure as president of the U.S. and hence the state of the nation during the 1980s. I also survey the key social issues and problems and cultural trends of the decade. In the second section of the chapter, I discuss two of these trends, cable television and VCR production and consumption, and their impact on the production and marketing of sitcoms. I then analyze five sitcom themes. My discussion is informed by the social-cultural history I offer below and, hence, the functioning of the theme songs as bardic utterances is undertaken too.

The political scene of the 1980s was dominated by Ronald Reagan who held the office of the presidency from 1980 to 1988. The differences between the Carter and the Reagan administrations were distinct and extreme. While Carter told Americans that they had to tighten their belts and weather problems that had no simple solutions, Reagan approached the American public with upbeat optimism. From the start, his leadership style stressed confidence and a positive outlook as evidenced by his extravagant inauguration ceremony. Unlike Carter's scaled-
down version, the Reagan event included "the biggest fireworks display; the most celebrants at the most glittering balls; the most stars of stage and screen performing, partying, and creating the worst traffic jams of the most limousines ever seen in Washington" (Pride and Prosperity: The 80s 50).

During his term in office, Reagan received the highest popularity ratings of any president since the 1930s. He was known as the "Great Communicator" because of his relaxed speaking style and his ability to relay complex ideas in simple terms. Often he would illustrate his points with colorful anecdotes from his life and films. Reagan was also called the "Teflon president" because "the bad slid off him with ease" (Axelrod 316). Criticism rarely stuck to him and the people continued to support him no matter what he did.

On March 30, 1981, after just two months in office, Reagan was shot in the chest in an assassination attempt as he left the Washington Hilton Hotel after delivering a speech. The bullet, which lodged in his lung and failed to explode, was removed in an emergency operation. Reagan survived the assassination attempt, which increased his popularity with the American people. As Kallen points out, the event advanced the "public image of a man who could not be stopped by bullets" (A Cultural History. . .The 1980s 18).

In his administration, Reagan focused on three major policies: 1) a reduction in government regulation of commerce and industry; 2) aggressive budget cutting; and 3) aggressive tax cuts for the wealthy and for large businesses. The keystone of Reagan's economic plan was called supply-side economics. Critics often refer to this theory as "trickle-down economics" or "Reaganomics" (Kallen, A Cultural History. . .The 1980s 16). Instead of focusing on government spending to stimulate the economy, supply-side economics is based on the idea that if corporations and the wealthy are taxed less, they will spend more money which will in turn stimulate the economy. Those with lower or no incomes will benefit from the creation of
additional jobs and the availability of cheaper goods. In other words, the benefits given to the wealthy will "trickle-down" to the less fortunate.

As a result of Reaganomics, large companies indeed benefitted. More than twenty-five thousand mergers (many hostile takeovers) occurred and some were the largest and most profitable in recorded financial history (Kallen, A Cultural History... The 1980s 51). The "trickle-down" effect did not prove to play out however. The mergers resulted in lay-offs and, coupled with high interest rates and factory automation, laborers across the nation and specific industries were hit hard. For instance, Kallen reports that between 1981 and 1987, the machine industry laid off 400,000 people, the steel industry, 235,000 and the oil, gas, and mining industries, 200,000 people (A Cultural History... The 1980s 64-65). In 1981 alone, the automobile industry cut twenty-five percent of its workforce and, in 1982, another 50,000 workers lost their jobs (Marty 266). Construction companies fared little better as high interest rates discouraged building. Likewise, high interest rates and also falling prices forced 150,000 farmers into bankruptcy, their land or livestock snapped up by and merged into large agri-corporations. Kallen reports that the U.S. farm population plummeted from nine million in 1975 to five million in 1987 (A Cultural History... The 1980s 66).

As stimulated by Reaganomics, the newly created jobs for the unemployed were largely in low-paying service industries such as retail trade and fast food. The resulting impact on household budgets was dramatic as personal bankruptcies doubled during the decade. In fact, during the 1980s, the middle class shrank dramatically and, by the end of the decade, the maldistribution of income had reached a point where "one-tenth of Americans controlled two-thirds of the nation's wealth" (Pride and Prosperity: The 80s 28). In sum, as Kallen reports, the average family income for those in the poorest fifth of the population declined by 6.1% from
1979 to 1987, while family income for the highest paid Americans rose by 11% during the same period (A Cultural History. . .The 1980s 62).

To make matters worse, in 1981, Congress passed Reagan's Reconciliation Act which reduced the budgets of 212 federally-assisted programs, most of which benefitted the working poor. According to Kallen, the welfare reform package resulted in the following budget cuts: 13% in Aid to Families with Dependent Children (ADFC), 11% in food stamps, 28% in child nutrition programs, 25% in student financial aid, and 28% in fuel assistance to the poor. By 1982, 660,000 children had lost Medicaid, one million people had lost food stamps, 365,000 families with dependent children had lost their monthly checks, and 3.2 million children no longer participated in the school lunch program (Kallen, A Cultural History. . .The 1980s 20).

Another result of the economic policies was an increase in the estimated number of homeless people. In 1986, a record high was reached, New York reporting 10,000 individuals and 5,500 families as homeless. In Chicago, the number was between 9,000 and 22,000. Philadelphia reported 13,000 homeless while Los Angeles topped the charts with 40,000 (Marty 269). The homeless came from all walks of life. Many were blue-collar workers, now unemployed. Others were families who had suffered cutbacks in their federal housing assistance. Still others were homeless due to the shrinking number of rental properties and subsequent increase in rent prices. Many were Vietnam veterans and a good number were former psychiatric patients who lost their homes in hospitals and halfway houses due to Reagan's "deinstitutionalization" policy, a part of his social reform package.

While Reagan's administration showed little interest in the poor and homeless, concern was demonstrated for the savings and loan institutions (S & Ls). On October 15, 1982, Reagan signed the Garn-St. Germain Bill which freed the nation's S & Ls from restrictive federal regulations. The bill allowed S & Ls to branch out from home and car loans to high-risk, high-
yield investments. In turn, the bill insured S & Ls depositors' accounts for a maximum of $100,000 rather than $40,000. Imprudent investments and fraud on the part of S & L owners resulted and, by the end of the decade, twelve hundred S & L institutions required federal assistance to bail them out of trouble. In other words, U.S. taxpayers shouldered the bill for the failed investments and fraudulent activities. The savings and loan collapse became one of the greatest financial scandals in U.S. history (Kallen, A Cultural History. . .The 1980s 59-60).

Impacted by the aforementioned financial matters, the Dow Jones average plummeted 508 points on October 19, 1987. Known as Black Monday, the day showed the largest decline in the stock market since 1914 and was almost double that of the 1929 crash. Kallen explains that many stock-buying services use computers that automatically sell chunks of stock when the Dow Jones average begins to fall. On Black Monday, as nervous investors sold stocks in mass volumes, the computerized selling accelerated as well. Soon computers all over Wall Street "were selling stock at blinding speed" (A Cultural History. . .The 1980s 56). The resulting plunge represented a loss of five-hundred billion dollars. While causes for the crash were numerous, analysts pointed to one factor above all: "the deplorable state of the U. S. economy" (Glennon 628).

Meanwhile, Reagan made defense spending a top priority, arguing that the "evil empire" of the Soviet Union had surpassed the U.S. in military might. To protect the U.S. from nuclear attack, Reagan budgeted $108.3 billion for defense over a six year period to fund a project called the Strategic Defense Initiative, or Star Wars (Kallen, A Cultural History. . .The 1980s 23). Axelrod describes Star Wars as "the most spectacular, ambitious, elaborate and expensive military project in world history" (322). The idea was to create an orbiting weapons system in space that would destroy incoming intercontinental missiles before they began their descent.
Reagan reasoned that if the U.S. wanted to persuade the Soviet Union to reduce its arsenal, the U.S. must first increase its own to a size of greater strength.

The Star Wars project produced few demonstrable results however, and critics' complaints were numerous. Many felt that Star Wars was a violation of the 1972 Antiballistic Missile treaty. Others felt that it tempted nuclear war because it suggested that people could survive it, as in the "duck-and-cover" illusion of the sixties. Still others objected to the staggering cost of the program, claiming that it would "permanently cripple the nation's economy." Some critics believed that the Star Wars system could never be made to work while others believed that the entire program was an "elaborate decoy" designed to dupe the Soviet Union into spending its resources on a Star Wars system of its own (Axelrod 322). In addition to these criticisms, huge antinuclear protests broke out across the country. On June 12, 1982, more than 550,000 protesters rallied in Central Park in New York City while thirty thousand demonstrators gathered in San Francisco. Smaller nuclear freeze protests were held in several other cities from Boise, Idaho, to Augusta, Maine (Kallen, A Cultural History...The 1980s 24).

On December 8, 1987, Reagan and Prime Minister Gorbachev met and signed the INF Treaty which called for the destruction of all intermediate-range missiles (i.e., missiles that can hit targets from 300 to 3,400 miles away) held by both countries. By the end of the decade however the Soviet Union had dissolved and no longer posed a threat to the United States.

In dramatic anticipation of the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Berlin Wall was torn down over a three day period in November 1989. The wall had been erected by the Soviets in 1961 to separate East and West Berlin and isolate the latter within the Soviet block of East Germany. In November, thousands gathered with hammers, chisels, sledgehammers, and crowbars to destroy the structure, symbolically marking the end of the Cold War and the reunification of Germany.
During the 1980s, the U.S. realized it faced a different kind of enemy altogether in the form of terrorist hijackings, hostage takings, and bombings. The most severe of these occurred in Lebanon on October 23, 1983. On August 20, the U.S. sent eight hundred Marines into Beirut to oversee the withdrawal of Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) members. Early on Sunday morning, October 23, a pickup truck loaded with explosives crashed into the Marine barracks at Beirut's airport where three hundred marines were sleeping. The truck exploded "with the force of six tons of TNT" collapsing the four-story structure and killing 241 Marines (Pride and Prosperity: The 80s 59). This terrorist bombing represented the biggest U.S. military loss since Vietnam.

Likewise, the Iran-Contra scandal that broke in 1986 was a result of the problematic, often inconsistent, foreign policy of the U.S. in the Middle East and elsewhere. In November 1986, rumors developed that the U.S. had sold arms to Iran which, at the time, was in a conflict with Iraq. The U.S. hoped that Iran might be able to obtain the release of U.S. hostages being held by Islamic militants in Lebanon. Profits from the arms sales were then diverted to the Nicaraguan Contras, or "freedom fighters," as Reagan referred to them. The Contras rebels were fighting against the Sandinista regime which Reagan strongly opposed because he believed it posed a leftist threat to U.S. interests in South America. The arms sale not only violated a long-standing U.S. policy of not negotiating with terrorists for the release of hostages, it also violated an embargo on arms sales that had been in place since the Iran hostage crisis.

At the center of the scandal was Oliver North, a member of the National Security Council. North was called upon to testify before the Iran-Contra committee. In the televised hearings, North implicated the president, the attorney general, and the director of the CIA and refused to apologize for his own actions since, as he argued, he was following his superiors' orders. Because any direct involvement by Reagan would be an impeachable offense, Reagan
never admitted guilt or innocence. He simply claimed he could not remember the alleged arms
sale (Glennon 624). North was tried in April 1989. For his involvement in the affair, he
received a light sentence which he appealed and, after the trial, the charges against him were
dropped altogether.

As regards to the environment, Reagan's position supported his economic program. In
short, when Reagan took office, he proposed reducing the budget of the Environmental
Protection Agency by fifty percent by the end of 1984 (Marty 314). Reagan believed that it was
too costly for industries to adhere to the strict regulations regarding the disposal of hazardous
waste products, and EPA standards put an unreasonable curb on industrial expansion.
Environmentalists, on the other hand, lobbied for higher standards than those already in place.
Reagan sided with big business and established a freeze on all new federal regulations regarding
the environment.

Environmentalists were particularly concerned with acid rain and the depletion of the
ozone layer. According to Marty, acid rain occurs when sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxide gases,
the product of fossil fuels, become sulfuric and nitric acids in the atmosphere and fall to the earth
in rain or dust. Acid rain is capable of harming waterways, trees, crops, and buildings, as well as
human beings (314). Canada alerted the U.S. of the problem when it charged that pollution from
the northeastern U.S. had killed all the fish in the Ontario lakes and was depleting salmon stocks
in Nova Scotia. Glennon observes that the dispute grew into a "diplomatic brawl" when Reagan
delayed addressing the problem and the Canadians charged him with "foot dragging" (600). No
U.S. action was taken on the matter until 1988 when Congress ratified a UN protocol freezing
nitrogen oxide emissions at 1987 levels.

Along with acid rain, depletion of the ozone layer was verified as an international
concern when, in 1985, a hole in the ozone layer was discovered in the atmosphere over
Antarctica. Scientists had first suspected a problem as far back as 1977 but had not pressed the point until the evidence was indisputable (Glennon 616). Scientists discovered that chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) are the main culprits in the destruction of the ozone layer. While the use of CFCs in aerosol sprays had been banned in 1978, they were still being used in refrigerators, air conditioners, and industrial solvents. Further, CFC use continued, unchecked, in other countries.

The use of CFCs was also a prime factor in the "greenhouse effect" which occurs when solar heat is trapped by a layer of airborne pollutants. The resulting shield of pollution prevents the earth's heat from escaping into the atmosphere which results in global warming. Scientists predicted that global warming would cause the earth's average temperature to rise by as much as eight degrees which in turn would cause the polar ice caps to melt, raise ocean levels, and flood coastal cities (Glennon 616). In 1987, fifty-three industrial nations signed the Montreal protocols, an agreement to eliminate CFC use by the year 2000. Elsewhere, however, CFCs continued to be produced.

A third environmental alarm sounded on March 24, 1989. On this date, the Exxon Valdez tanker ran aground in Alaska's Prince William Sound, ripping open its hull and spilling eleven million gallons of crude oil into the water. Over the next several months, the oil spread across eighteen hundred square miles, destroying wildlife and, in turn, commercial fishing. Human error was the appointed cause of the accident. Apparently, the captain of the Valdez, Joseph Hazelwood, had drunk too much and turned the helm over to an unqualified third mate who ran the tanker off course. The Coast Guard failed to notify the ship of its perilous position and it ran aground. After the accident, Hazelwood was brought up on charges of navigating while intoxicated and several counts of criminal mischief, but was acquitted in 1990. The Exxon oil company was ordered to pay a $100 million fine, spend $2 billion on cleanup, expend $900
million to cover civil suits, and pay $5 billion in punitive damages to Alaskan fishermen (Glennon 644).

Another tragedy occurred on January 28, 1986, when the U.S. space shuttle Challenger exploded in mid-air just seventy-three seconds after lift-off and at an altitude of less than ten miles. All seven crew members were killed, including Christa McAuliffe, a New Hampshire school teacher who had won the nationwide "Teacher in Space" contest. McAuliffe was the first private citizen to fly on a shuttle mission. The cause of the explosion was linked to a set of faulty gaskets called O-rings which seal the joints between rocket booster sections. Since the shuttle lift-off was televised, millions of Americans watched in horror as the disaster suddenly unfolded before them. According to Glennon, the replaying of the event on television stations proved to "etch" the event "into the nation's collective memory" (622). The incident sparked public debate on whether the U.S. should continue to develop its space program. Many claimed that NASA knew there was a problem with the O-rings but failed to correct it before shuttle lift-off. Glennon reveals that, after the accident, several astronauts became angry that their safety was being compromised and left the program (622). NASA suspended all shuttle flights for the next two years and decided that civilians would no longer be permitted on shuttle crews.

Reagan's conservative policies were not only economic and military but also moral. Reagan's presidency empowered the ultra-conservative "moral majority," many of whom held militant Christian views regarding moral behavior which then informed their lobbies and legislation. In addition to ongoing efforts to overturn the Roe v. Wade decision, moral majority efforts in the eighties were oriented toward music, pornography, and the arts generally.

In 1984, the Parents Music Resource Center (PMRC) was founded by the wives of several U.S. Congressmen. The PMRC believed that rock music contributed to the increase in rapes and teenage suicides. The women pressured record companies to put warning labels on
records that contained "offensive" lyrics. The PMRC defined "offensive" lyrics as those that glorified the use of drugs and alcohol, were sexually explicit, or excessively violent. In September 1985, the PMRC received a congressional hearing before the Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation. After the hearing, twenty-two record companies agreed to place parental warnings on products that contained "offensive" material, realizing that the recordings that had been quoted during the hearings had experienced a boost in sales.

In 1986, Attorney General Edwin Meese joined the moral bandwagon when he chaired a Justice Department commission on pornography. The Meese Commission, as it was called, urged stringent action against the pornography industry, claiming that pornography incited violent behavior against women and children. The Commission put pressure on convenience stores to remove magazines like Playboy, Penthouse and Hustler from their shelves so that they would be less visible and hence less a temptation to consumers.

In 1989, a Congressional debate arose regarding whether the National Endowment for the Arts should fund so-called "offensive" art. During the debate, an exhibition of photographs by Robert Mapplethorpe was slated to open at Washington, D.C.'s, Corcoran Gallery of Art. Certain politicians objected to the gay S&M themes of some of the photographs and, due to the heated controversy, the exhibit was canceled.

Ironically, the moral majority movement was plagued by its own "immorality." At the end of the decade, three scandals made the news. Two involved religious leaders and, the third, a politician. In 1987, the Reverend Jim Bakker resigned from his PTL ministry after admitting to an extramarital affair with church secretary Jessica Hahn. Bakker also was convicted of embezzling fifty-two million dollars from ministry funds. He was sentenced to forty-five years in prison, but the sentence was later reduced to four and a half years. One year later, the Reverend Jimmy Swaggart confessed to his congregation that he had sinned, after being caught
in the company of a local prostitute. Also, in 1988, Gary Hart, the leading contender for the Democratic presidential nomination, admitted to having an extramarital affair with model Donna Rice. As a result, Hart was forced to drop out of the political race. These three "falls from grace" seem to demonstrate that whether conservative or liberal, Republican or Democrat, we all can fall victim to human frailties.

During the eighties, those of the moral majority as well as others across the country were concerned with three key social issues: changes in the family; the increase in violence and drug use; and the insurgence, tragedy, and unfortunate politics associated with AIDS. Due to the ongoing impetus of the women's movement and the unstable economy, women joined the workforce in unprecedented numbers in the seventies and eighties. Many women wanted to work while others needed to work to support their families or supplement their husbands' earnings. The pay scale for women improved during this period due to a 1981 Supreme Court ruling that sanctioned suits against employers regarding "comparable worth." In sum, the ruling stated that men and women who do the same kind of work should receive the same wages. While unequal pay scales persisted, there was an improvement. According to Kallen, in 1979, a woman made sixty-two cents for every dollar earned by a man and, by 1987, the figure had risen to seventy cents per dollar (A Cultural History. . . The 1980s 67)

For many, the downside of the increase in working women was the corresponding increase in young children with working mothers. Between 1970 and the end of the eighties, working women with children under the age of six nearly doubled, reaching about sixty percent. In other words, ten million preschool children had mothers who were employed outside the home (Marty 250). Many felt this alteration posed a threat to the development of young children and to the health of the family unit.
Traditional family roles were further challenged by the rising divorce rate of the decade. In 1970, single parent families, headed largely by females, made up thirteen percent of the total. In 1980, the number of single parent families jumped to twenty-two percent and, by 1987, the number was twenty-seven percent (Kallen, *A Cultural History...The 1980s* 67). Marty further explains that many single parents had given birth as teenagers. Nearly half of all the babies delivered by white teenage mothers in the mid-eighties were born out of wedlock while, for black teenage mothers, the figure was ninety percent (248). Also, the number of unmarried couples living together increased from around half a million in 1970 to almost two million in 1985. About thirty percent of the unmarried couples had children under the age of fifteen living with them (Marty 249).

The alterations in traditional family and parenting roles were highlighted in 1987 with the landmark "Baby M" case. The case concerned a New Jersey couple, William and Elizabeth Stern, who hired Mary Beth Whitehead as a surrogate mother. Whitehead was artificially inseminated and carried the baby to term, the contract being that when the child was born, she or he would belong to the Sterns. However, after the baby girl was born, Whitehead changed her mind and sued for custody of the child. At the time, no laws existed to cover the practice of surrogacy. A judge ruled in favor of the Sterns, denying Whitehead visitation rights but, one year later, the New Jersey Supreme Court granted Whitehead generous parental rights and declared surrogacy contracts illegal. According to Glennon, surrogate contracts had existed in the past but none had ever been tested in a court of law (630). The Baby M case raised questions regarding the ethics of buying and selling unborn children, the strength of the mother-child bond, and the nature of the family in general.

Of further concern to the U.S. public in the eighties was the increase in violent crimes and drug abuse. While the two were often related, the availability of guns, economic strife, and
the apparent dissolution of the family were noted factors too. In the 1980s, the annual murder rate in the U.S. was more than twenty thousand victims, the world's highest, and at least half were the result of gunshot wounds. According to Kallen, the number of guns in public possession continued to rise each year "approaching 100 million in a nation of 227 million people" (A Cultural History... The 1980s 72). Many of the deaths arose from drug use and the control and trafficking of the "hot" new drugs, cocaine and crack.

According to Pride and Prosperity: The 80s, twenty-two million Americans had tried cocaine by 1982 (28). Coke was smuggled into the U.S. by Columbian drug cartels that realized profits of about eight billion dollars a year (Kallen, A Cultural History... The 1980s 72). Cocaine was extremely expensive to purchase and became the recreational drug of choice among Hollywood celebrities, athletes, and the upper class generally. An inexpensive, smokable form of cocaine, crack, ruled the streets. Kallen estimates that, once crack was introduced, the number of Americans using cocaine/crack jumped from six to ten million (A Cultural History... The 1980s 72). Because crack was cheap and easy to acquire, its trade was typically handled by inner city youths or teenage gangs who, upon realizing quick and immense profits, battled with each other over the control of drug territories and trade. By 1985, the impact of drugs and drug trafficking on upscale as well as inner city neighborhoods, families and individuals was so extreme that the federal government launched a "war on drugs." First Lady Nancy Reagan instigated her own anti-drug campaign geared towards the nation's youth with a slogan that urged teens to "Just Say No" to drugs.

While foremostly a medical concern, AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) was first viewed and treated by many in the U.S. as a social and moral problem. The devastating disease surfaced in central Africa in the mid-1970s and eventually spread to the U.S., carried by a homosexual male who unknowingly infected his partners. Hence, the disease ravaged
homosexual populations first, largely in New York City and San Francisco. Although the
disease reached epidemic proportions, the initial political and public reaction to it was
indifference or a grim satisfaction. In both cases, people assumed it was a gay disease; in the
latter case, the religious ultra-right termed it a "gay plague" and a just "punishment from God for
homosexuality" (Kallen, A Cultural History...The 1980s 105). Reagan's administration
assumed indifference and was slow to respond. Although the first case was reported in 1981,
Reagan did not make public mention of the disease until 1987 and adequate research funds were
denied until the disease proved indiscriminate in its claims on victims. While AIDS
organizations such as the Gay Men's Health Crisis (GMHC), the AIDS Coalition to Unleash
Power (ACT UP), and the NAMES Project Quilt mobilized efforts to pressure the government,
educate the public, and raise money for research, mass public sentiment was not aroused until a
thirteen year old adolescent, Ryan White, contracted the disease through a blood-clotting
treatment he received to battle his hemophilia. The media blitz on White's story proved to
personalize the disease for the public. As a result, people gained a clearer understanding of the
disease, concern for one's self, and compassion for others.

The public's awareness of the disease was further heightened in July 1985 when actor
Rock Hudson announced that he too was suffering from AIDS and had contracted it through
sexual relations with other men. The revelation that a so-called "macho" leading man was a
homosexual forced the public to reevaluate gay stereotypes as well as acknowledge the plight of
infected gays. When Hudson died in October 1985, he left $250,000 to an AIDS research
foundation to help the many sufferers of the disease. According to Epstein, by the end of the
decade, over 106,000 cases of AIDS had been reported and over 61,000 Americans had died of
the disease (213).
AIDS had a tremendous effect on the sexual behavior of the eighties. Safe sex education increased and condoms became standard equipment for casual sex. By the end of the decade, condoms were sold more openly in supermarkets and drugstores and, in 1987, the first condom commercials appeared on television.

While many individuals and special interest groups of the decade focused on educating the nation's youth on the dangers of drug use and unprotected sex, many U.S. youths concentrated on refashioning themselves. Three youth counter cultures emerged during the decade: the yuppies, the preppies, and the punks. Yuppies, or young urban professionals, referred to upscale individuals whose primary concern appeared to be accumulating wealth and material possessions. Yuppies were usually white men and women between twenty-five and thirty-five years of age who had or were seeking law or business degrees. As constructed, yuppies wore power suits, ate power lunches in trendy restaurants, and worked out in chic health clubs which offered racquetball courts, Nautilus rooms, saunas, tanning beds, and special treatments involving herbal wraps, mud baths, and aromatherapy. The upscale yuppies benefited from Reaganomics and held fast to the belief that "greed is good." Some favorite yuppie items were Rolex watches, Cuisinarts, BMWs, and Jacuzzis.

Preppies were the adolescent version of yuppies. They were high school or young college students who concentrated their efforts on developing an upscale, successful self-image as signified by the "right" clothing. Preppie fashion consisted of a college prep look. Preppies wore button-down Oxford shirts, cardigan sweaters, or shirts imprinted with specific icons such as the Izod alligator. During the short-lived preppie phase, sales for Brooks Brothers, LL Bean, and Ralph Lauren's Polo Sport clothing increased significantly.

Birthed in the seventies, punk was the third youth counter culture of the decade. Punks were both males and females, typically between thirteen and twenty-one years of age. In a sense,
they were walking critiques of the yuppies and preppies. Like the hippies of the sixties, the punks rejected what they saw to be materialistic and hypocritical lifestyles and values. Rather than express their criticism from within the established system, they constructed and enacted a cultural vernacular that clearly opposed it. They wore grungy "found" clothing, sported radical hairstyles spiked with bold colors such as red, green, pink, or blue, and tattooed or pierced their bodies in ways that defamiliarized the material body and its display. In short, punks used what others perceived as shocking or distasteful to express their criticism of what they found shocking and distasteful.

Two evolved music styles, rap and hip-hop, impacted the country's youth during the decade. As I discussed in Chapter Three, rap took root in the seventies and came of age in the eighties. It "evoked the urban black experience" (Pride and Prosperity: The 80s 152), and consisted of strongly syncopated rhythms, aggressive rhyme schemes, and lyrics that were spoken rather than sung. As with punk culture, rappers refused to sanitize their content for the mass market and hence rap was controversial to start and became even more so with the emergence of "gangsta" rappers who filled their songs with obscenities and images of rage, female degradation, and violence against "da Man."

Hip-hop was a cleaner version of rap. Hip-hop music was achieved by using multiple turntables and mixers to combine songs. The techniques of "scratching" (rotating records forwards and backwards) and "sampling" (repeating selected fragments) also were used to produce the hip-hop sound. DJs accompanied the music with a "syncopated spoken patter" (Pride and Prosperity: The 80s 74).

Hip-hop influenced dance, fashion, and art. Breakdancing, which was a popular dance style during the decade, was a product of hip-hop music. Breakdancing combined African and Caribbean dance techniques which included head spins, one-armed rotating handstands, and
jump splits. Hip-hop also had its own sense of fashion. Men wore hooded sweatshirts, oversized jeans, baggy shorts, and caps worn backwards. In addition, breakdancers wore protective gloves and elbow pads. For women, the hip-hop look included athletic jackets, African-style caps, body suits, tights, or bathing suits worn under oversized jackets or shirts. Fused with street gangs, hip-hoppers used graffiti to express their culture and claim territory. They also created "personalized" works of art by shaving designs into their hair.

Two dominant figures of the pop music scene were Michael Jackson and Madonna. Pride and Prosperity: The 80s calls the two the "prom king and queen of the 80s" (141). In 1982, Michael Jackson's album, Thriller, sold more than forty million copies and won an unprecedented eight Grammy awards. It was the most successful recording in history. In November 1984, Jackson had become so popular with the U. S. public that People magazine devoted an entire issue to him. Madonna also had an incredibly popular album, Like A Virgin, and her hit song, "Material Girl," summed up the creed of the decade.

In 1981, the music scene broadened its scope when Warner Amex Satellite Entertainment Company introduced the first twenty-four hour television channel devoted to music. MTV (Music Television) offered its viewers a mix of music videos, concerts, and studio interviews with musicians. According to Glennon, MTV was a pioneer of "narrow-casting" (596). Typically, a television network's goal was to reach as broad an audience as possible. MTV, however, targeted a narrow audience of twelve to thirty-four year olds. This strategy proved successful as, at its inception, MTV had 2.5 million subscribers, a number that tripled in just over a year. MTV helped launch the careers of many musicians of the decade including the aforementioned Michael Jackson and Madonna.

Fashion of the 1980s was strongly influenced by the musicians and pop stars of the decade. First, a flamboyant, sexual ambiguity was popularized through the cross-gendered
costumes of Boy George, the purple velvet frills of Prince, Michael Jackson's sequined jackets, and Annie Lenox's mannish-looking, close-cropped hair. Madonna also influenced the fashion sense of female teens with her bustiers, torn fishnet stockings and crucifix jewelry. Fashion was further affected by television and film. Many men and women opted for the Miami Vice look popularized by Don Johnson. Johnson's character wore T-shirts and baggy, beltless pants under loose-fitting pastel sports coats. Johnson's character also sported permanent facial stubble, which, for men, signified a rough "macho" appeal reminiscent of the Marlboro Man. Many young women aped Jennifer Beals' look from the film Flash Dance. The look consisted of tight-fitting pants and leg warmers and visible tank tops worn under oversized sweaters or ripped sweatshirts.

Computer technology evolved rapidly in the eighties and the personal computer became a common fixture in offices, homes, and schools. Personal Computers, or PCs, had been manufactured since 1977 but the market demand was low until 1981 when IBM produced a smaller version of the PC. Sales of PCs stood at 1.4 million in 1981, doubled to 2.8 million in 1982 and, by 1988, had almost hit the ten million mark (Marty 303; and Kallen, A Cultural History...The 1980s 97). The personal computer had become so immensely popular with the nation that, in January 1983, Time magazine broke its fifty-five year tradition of featuring the "Man of the Year" on its cover by giving the honor to the PC as the "Machine of the Year."

The smaller sized and more popular PC was made possible by technological improvements in the microchip. In 1970, a typical microchip cost one hundred dollars and contained fifty transistors while, in 1980, it cost only five dollars and contained fifty thousand transistors. To clarify the impact of this improvement on technology and its consumption, Glennon offers the example of the pocket calculator. The first pocket calculator, which came on the market in 1971, weighed more than two pounds and cost two hundred and fifty dollars. By
1980, the pocket calculator weighed only a few ounces and cost ten bucks (580). In the 1980s, microchips were not only used in computers and pocket calculators but in wristwatches, appliances, and automobiles. They became such an icon of the times that they were worn as jewelry and photographed as art.

Television Trends

As for the medium of television, it experienced major changes of its own. When the eighties began, sitcoms declined dramatically in popularity. From 1980 to 1983, only three of the top twenty-two shows were sitcoms (Jones 261), and, by the 1983-1984 season, only one sitcom, Kate and Allie, appeared in the Nielsen top ten rated shows (Morreale 209). Television was populated instead with police dramas, such as Cagney & Lacey and Miami Vice, and detective shows, such as Magnum, P. I., Moonlighting, Simon & Simon, and Murder, She Wrote. Prime time soap operas with naughty, upscale characters were also popular, such as Dallas, Dynasty, Falcon Crest, and Knots Landing. It was not until The Cosby Show premiered in 1984 that sitcoms began to regain popularity. It would not be until 1986, however, before sitcoms would once again be in vogue, holding down seven out of the top ten positions in the Nielsen ratings (Sackett 266).6

Also, over the course of the eighties, sitcom categories became diverse and fragmented. Three major reasons account for the early decline in popularity and the diversity of subject matter. The first was the appearance of cable television which offered a myriad of channels, each of which offered specialized content such as cartoons, sports, animal life, and women's programming. According to Epstein, 56.4 percent of U.S. homes were hooked into cable by the mid-eighties (213). As a result of the increased channel offerings, all three major networks lost viewers to small independent stations. Second, in 1987, a fourth major network, Fox Television, emerged which further decreased the number of viewers for ABC, CBS, and NBC. Third, VCRs
became a popular staple in U.S. homes. Viewers' options were no longer limited by the networks' schedules as they could record programs to watch at a later date or rent prerecorded movies. In Critiquing the Sitcom, Morreale explains that faced with declining viewership, the networks resorted to narrow-casting or "producing shows for small but specific demographic segments of the viewing population" (209). As a result, audiences were defined more precisely in terms of race, class, age, and gender. The overarching themes of network sitcoms reflected the diverse viewing population.

The many and varied categories of sitcoms in the 1980s included the male buddy sitcoms, Bosom Buddies and Perfect Strangers; the female buddy sitcoms, Kate & Allie, My Sister Sam, Designing Women, and The Golden Girls; the military sitcoms, Private Benjamin and Major Dad; the domestic help sitcoms, Mr. Belvedere, Who's the Boss, Charles in Charge, and Gimme A Break; the white parents raising African American children sitcoms, Webster and Diff'rent Strokes; single fathers raising children sitcoms, Full House, Empty Nest, and Silver Spoons; the orphan sitcoms, Punky Brewster and Sister Kate; the school-centered sitcoms, Head of the Class, The Facts of Life, Square Pegs, A Different World, and The Wonder Years; the workplace sitcoms, Dear John, Newhart, Benson, Night Court, and Cheers; the African American sitcoms, 227 and Amen; the traditional nuclear family sitcoms, Growing Pains, Family Ties, The Cosby Show, and Family Matters; and the anomalies, Oh, Madeline, Filthy Rich, Love, Sydney, and It's Garry Shandling's Show. Again, the noted categories are not exclusive and overlap does occur. For instance, Designing Women is a female buddy show that is set in the workplace and The Cosby Show features a traditional nuclear family that is African American.

their complete form is offered in Appendix C. I selected the indicated shows because of their immense popularity and hence their significance to the decade. While diverse in subject matter, each show reflects our idea of ourselves and culture at this time. Three of these shows, The Cosby Show, Cheers, and The Wonder Years offer cross-market appeal. The Cosby Show offers a mediation of race by appealing to both African American and white viewers. Cheers offers a mediation of class by addressing both the upper and working classes, and The Wonder Years offers a mediation of age, engaging both young viewers and the baby-boomer generation. The Golden Girls focuses on the lives of elderly women, a segment of our population which, up until this time, had been ignored or stereotyped by television sitcoms. Finally, It's Garry Shandling's Show engages in technical experimentation and reflexive play, paving the way for similar experiments in the sitcoms of the nineties.

Analysis of Themes

The Cosby Show renewed audience interest in sitcoms in the mid-1980s. As I stated earlier, sitcoms on the whole had been in a state of decline during the early part of the decade. The Cosby Show, however, shot to number one in the Nielsen ratings and remained there from 1985 until 1988. The format of The Cosby Show was not new or innovative. Rather, it revived the domestic sitcom format of the 1950s, patterned after such shows as Father Knows Best, Leave it to Beaver, and Ozzie and Harriet. What was innovative about The Cosby Show was that it marked television's first depiction of an upscale African American upper couple who were rearing young children and who were an integral part of the community. Although African American families were depicted in the sitcoms of the seventies, the shows relied mainly on ethnic stereotypes. Much of the humor of The Jeffersons, for instance, centered on George enacting the "fool" while Good Times offered a "jive-talkin'" family from the Chicago projects who lived by "scratchin' and survivin'" (Bogle 290). Likely, the representations tell us more
about the cultural politics of the decade then they do the artistic abilities of the creators of the shows and characters. Indeed, The Cosby Show uses social types but these types are more reflective of class terms generally rather than African Americans specifically. The family enjoys financial success and security without losing their African American history and culture.

The Cosby Show features the Huxtable family who live in an attractive brownstone house in New York City. Cliff is an obstetrician who has his office on the ground floor of the home. His wife, Claire, is an attorney who is both a cool and self-assured professional and a loving wife and mother. Cliff and Claire have five children. Sondra, the eldest daughter, attends Princeton University. Denise is a teenager with an artistic flair. Theo, the teenage son, is always getting into some sort of mild mischief. Vanessa is the adolescent know-it-all tattletale, and Rudy is the four year old baby of the family. The Huxtable family mirrored Cosby's real life family. Cosby, like Cliff, was married to a professional woman and together they had four daughters and a son.

Although Cliff and Claire have successful and busy careers, they still manage to find time for each other and their children. Further, their home is always immaculate and, unlike the Jeffersons or Maude, they do not require the services of a maid to cook and clean for them. They manage to balance their careers and domestic responsibilities with a minimum degree of effort. The Huxtables are living the dream life of the eighties with enough money to live comfortably and enough leisure time to relax and enjoy themselves.

The music for the opening theme of The Cosby Show was co-written by Cosby and Stu Gardner. It is a simple, upbeat, bopping instrumental piece with jazz-like undertones. Jazz musician Branford Marsalis remarked that the theme is "easy to sing" because it consists of "basically three notes" (TV Guide: 50 All-Time Favorite TV Themes). The saxophone is the primary instrument used in the opening theme, most likely as a tribute to the jazz great Charlie Parker (1920-1955) who was known for his fresh and innovative saxophone improvisations.
Parker's style paved the way for the bebop music of the 1940s and early 1950s. Cosby himself is a great fan of jazz music in general and of Charlie Parker's sound in particular.

In seven of the eight seasons that the show aired, the opening visuals of The Cosby Show theme depict Cosby, as Cliff Huxtable, dancing with the members of his TV family. Each family member dances with "dad" alone and sequentially, according to age. Generally, the dancing is lively, improvisational, and fun. The backdrop, the costuming, and the tone of the music change from season to season and below, I discuss what I believe to be the four most significant versions of the theme in terms of expressing social-cultural values.

In the theme from one of the earlier seasons, the Huxtable family dances against a plain gray background, a seeming mediation of black and white. The Huxtable men are dressed in black pants and brightly striped sweaters. The women wear different styles of clothing that reflect their personalities but are unified by the color red with accents of yellow and blue. In contrast to the gray backdrop, the bright colors serve to bring the family members into sharp focus and evoke a happy mood. The tempo of the music is fast and upbeat. Accompanying the music are improvised vocals from jazz singer Bobby McFerrin. McFerrin was as well known for his extraordinary vocal range as Parker was for his incredible saxophone playing. McFerrin could "impersonate a radio (complete with static), impersonate an entire bebop combo, sing delicate Bach airs and sing counterpoint with himself" (Glennon 639). In the popular marketplace, McFerrin was probably best known for his feel-good ditty of the 1980s, "Don't Worry, Be Happy." The inclusion of McFerrin's vocals underscores the happy temperament of the opening theme.

In a following season, the backdrop changes to a bright blue suggestive of the sky and ocean. The music is reflective of the African American symphonic sound of composer Alvin Singleton who blends scored passages and jazz inflected improvisation. The Huxtables wear
tropical island clothing in bright, flowing fabrics, a seeming citation of Caribbean fabrics and fashion. They also dance barefoot. The dancing is largely improvisational and reminiscent of Alvin Ailey’s free-spirited and earthy, modern dance style.

In yet a later season, the backdrop consists of a black and white sign for the Apollo Theater that reads, "Apollo Presents." The Huxtable family dances across the stage in their finest evening wear as if they are going to or coming from the theater. Cliff wears a black tuxedo with a yellow shirt, a bright yellow scarf, and an African print bow tie. Claire is dressed in a floor-length black evening gown complemented by a long, flowing, sheer yellow jacket. The Huxtable children are also dressed in formal attire of a neutral palette with yellow accents. The music for the opening has a heavy jazz inflection and background voices can be heard cheering, whistling, and calling out, "Hey!" or "Oh, yeah!"

The "Apollo Presents" sign that fills the background of the set refers to Harlem's famous Apollo Theater. The Apollo was the most important venue for black performers from the 1930s through the 1970s. In the thirties and forties especially, it offered black jazz bands a place to showcase their talents. It also was famous for its weekly Amateur Night in which unknown performers had an opportunity to perform for the notoriously critical Harlem audience. The Apollo was closed in 1977 but was declared an historical landmark in 1983 and later reopened its doors during Harlem's 125th street renewal. As used in the opening theme of The Cosby Show, then, the Apollo Theater sign references the historical and cultural significance of the establishment to the African American community. It celebrates the Apollo's newly acquired landmark status and it links the talent of the present day The Cosby Show actors with the great African American performers of the past.

The Apollo Theater sign also highlights the "stage" setting in which the Huxtables and Cosby performers dance in all versions of the theme. Unlike most domestic sitcom openings, the
characters are not contexted within their private home. Rather, they are "presented" as performers on a stage. The site emphasizes the importance of the performing arts to the public at large and the African American community in particular. In turn, the public aspect of the space highlights the importance of community to the individual and the individual family. It suggests that our domestic lives are not isolated from the social world and community that surrounds them. Understood in presentational terms, these choices imply the fictive nature of the Huxtable family, characters, and plots. In this case, the acknowledgment of the family construct does not function to critique the construct as much as advocate that we can build happy and healthy lives for ourselves. This point is substantiated by the characters' use of an open situation in all versions of the theme. As the family members dance across the various stages, they look directly into the eye of the camera and thus directly at the viewing audience. The direct eye contact indicates that they are aware of the presence of the audience and their role as performers. Likewise, at the end of all the versions, the camera zooms in for a close-up of Bill Cosby/Cliff Huxtable who acknowledges the audience with either a hand gesture, a tilt of the head, or a movement of the eyes. Coupled with the friendly temperament, the open situation invites the viewer to engage the action, as if he or she were a family member or performer too. Most importantly, all these choices insist on the presence of the black performers on a stage of their choice and making. "Blackness" and the power of the black family and community do not "flicker on and off" in this case.

In the eighth and final season of The Cosby Show, the opening theme makes manifest the key themes of the show. In this version, the saxophone music takes on a rap rhythm and is accompanied by the syncopated beat of a drum. The rap temperament is neither harsh nor violent; rather, it is cheerful and upbeat. The intricate backdrop depicts a brick wall overlaid with a long, painted mural. Each frame of the theme focuses on a different part of the mural. In
the first frame, we see images of young black children playing baseball in front of brightly colored tenements. Some of the windows in the building are painted in the shape of hearts instead of squares, suggesting that although the residents may not be wealthy, they have a lot of love. Off to the right of the children is a traffic signal with the lighted words "Schomburg Center" and a green "go" direction arrow.

In the next frame, the camera moves along the mural to focus on two young black males. One wears a white T-shirt with an outline of a large red heart on the front. Inside of the heart are the letters "TLC," an acronym for "tender loving care." The second youth sports a tall black afro and is holding a notebook in his hand. A stack of eight books is painted beside him. The top book is open, as if someone just stopped reading or studying from it. To one side of the stack of books is a white chalk outline of a youth with a syringe at his side. A large red "X" has been painted across the chalk outline. The camera then zooms in on an African American boy who has a baseball glove in one hand and a baseball in the other. He is smiling brightly.

The third frame of the opening theme depicts Cliff Huxtable and the other members of his family dancing one by one in front of the painted brick wall. As they dance, we continue to view the painted mural behind them. We see colorful tenements along with painted images of black families dancing in the street. The composition resembles a large, festive block party. Off to the left of the Huxtable family is a painting of a young African American mother and father who are holding hands. Their young son sits atop the father's shoulders. To their right is an image of an elderly African American woman holding hands with two very young African American children. Numerous pink hearts are drawn around her and the name "Mother Hale" is written in an arch above her head.

The opening theme of the final season of The Cosby Show clarifies the aim of the show and the previous seasons' themes. Both the show and the theme versions highlight the
importance of family and quality education generally and as they pertain to African Americans specifically. Also, the show and themes engender pride in and educate viewers as to African American history and culture. As co-creator, co-producer, executive consultant, and star of the show, Cosby had a significant influence on the direction of the show. Calling on his doctorate in education from the University of Massachusetts, Cosby inflected the content of the show with his theories on education and child rearing. He also used the show to enlighten and instruct white and black audiences in antiracism (Lewis and Stempel 59). As Alison Gwinn explains, when Bill Cosby invites us into his living room, he asks us "to check our stereotypes at the door" (67). Cosby also hired Alvin Poussaint, an African American psychiatrist, as a consultant to read every script (Real, "Structural Analysis 1: Bill Cosby and Recoding Ethnicity" 239). If Poussaint found anything in the script that could be perceived as a negative commentary on African American life, Cosby would change the material or drop it altogether.

In the final version of the theme, positive images of family and child rearing are represented in the painted visuals of the young family and festive family block party. The abundant use of pink and red hearts, heart-shaped windows and hand-holding suggests supportive and loving environments and behavior. The most explicit citation of positive child rearing is the painted image of Mother Hale, a nickname for Clara Hale who was an African American humanitarian. During her lifetime (1905-1993), Clara Hale served as a foster mother for over five hundred children of diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds at her establishment called Hale House. She was commonly referred to by the children as "Mother Hale."

Like the improvisational dancing in all the themes, the simple plots of the show stress family activities relevant to all yet specified to African Americans. Typical scenarios focus on activities such as helping a child with her homework, dealing with the loss of a pet goldfish, taking a group of children to a museum, listening to jazz recordings, or reminiscing about a
college football game. Although low-key, the incidents are familiar to most families. As Bogle explains, The Cosby Show "expressed the significance of a basic family experience in terms that both the general white audience and the specific African American one could identify" (298). For instance, in one episode, Theo gets his ear pierced to impress a girl at school. Cliff finds the ear piercing ridiculous and Theo is ashamed until Cliff's father tells Theo that when Cliff was Theo's age he straightened his hair to impress Claire. Cliff, in turn, is embarrassed until his mother tells the story of how Cliff's father got a tattoo across his chest to impress her when they were young. Regardless of race, all viewers can identify with the situation of a young man trying to impress a young lady. Simultaneously, African American viewers can relate specifically to the action of straightening the hair. With scenarios such as this, The Cosby Show indicates that cultural experiences are not identical but they do share similarities. In essence, The Cosby Show reveals the "connective tissues" between the different racial and ethnic experiences (Bogle 293).

Just as Cosby remains present, on stage, throughout the various themes, the African American father of the Huxtable family retains a forceful presence in the various episodes. Thereby, Cosby attempts to dispel the stereotype of the absent black father. According to Bogle, in the late seventies and early eighties, many sociologists and psychologists argued that there was "no such thing as a Black father," that he was "either missing from Black households or irresponsible" (302). Good Times reinforced this notion when actor John Amos left the show due to personal conflicts, leaving the Evans family without a father. Cosby, however, portrays Cliff as a traditional male figure who heads the Huxtable household and delights in his fatherly responsibilities. The portrayal was, according to Bogle, "rather radical within America's color scheme" (302). In a decade in which family and family values were highlighted for various

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social reasons, it is significant that the most famous and respected father figure on television was African American.

Along with the multiple signifiers regarding healthy families and positive child rearing, the final version of the theme and show affirm the importance of education. In the theme, education is stressed through the visual images of the stack of books and the African American boy with a notebook in his hand. The most conspicuous image however is the Schomburg Center "go" signal. Located in New York City, The Schomburg Center is a national research library devoted to African American culture. It exists for the scholarly community as well as for the general public. The library houses five research divisions: general research, art and artifacts, rare books and manuscripts, moving image and recorded sound, and photographs and prints. Each of these divisions is devoted to preserving and providing access to resources relating to African American experiences in the United States and throughout the world.

By affirming the value of education, The Cosby Show challenges the stereotype of young blacks as poorly educated, high school dropouts. Episodes of Cosby focus on homework assignments, the importance of getting good grades, and planning for college. In fact, all of the Huxtable children, after completing high school, attend college. Sondra is a graduate of Princeton, Denise attends Hillman, and Theo studies at New York University. The final episode of The Cosby Show centered entirely upon Theo's college graduation.

By means of the jazz underscoring, costume elements, the Schomburg Center and Hale citations, the show celebrates African American history and culture and as elemental to family and individual identity. The show also affirms black pride by including many African American signs and references. For example, Cliff often wears T-shirts or sweatshirts emblazoned with the names of African American colleges or universities, or listens to recordings of great African American jazz musicians. Also, African American artwork adorns the walls of the Huxtable
home, and posters of Frederick Douglas and Martin Luther King, Jr., decorate the walls of the childrens' bedrooms. Further, many African American celebrities such Lena Horne, Stevie Wonder, and Sammy Davis, Jr., make guest appearances. Finally, when Sondra gives birth to twins, she names them Nelson and Winnie in tribute to Nelson and Winnie Mandela of South Africa.

While *The Cosby Show* emphasizes African American identity, it harmonizes the black experience by coding it as part of U.S. history and culture. The show includes a variety of ethnic representations. For example, Rudy's playmates and Cliff's patients are white, Asian, Latino, and African American. The advocation of harmony is clearly demonstrated in a particular episode where Cliff's son, Theo, accepts the Physician of the Year award on Cliff's behalf. Unable to attend the banquet, Cliff gives the notes for his acceptance speech to Theo and Theo reads them to the audience at the banquet. The speech ends with Theo stating that Cliff has asked for everyone in the audience to stand up and hold hands. The audience, which is composed of blacks, whites, and Latinos, follows Cliff's instructions. Theo then reads the last sentence of the speech: "I am an American and this [indicating the racially diverse audience] is my American family."

Not everyone was pleased with *The Cosby Show* however. Many criticized the show for offering an unrealistic representation of African American family life. In short, while some African American families were well-educated and wealthy, many were not. According to Bogle, a two-hundred page study conducted by two University of Massachusetts professors claimed that the Huxtables' affluence desensitized white Americans to the plight of inner-city blacks and alleviated white guilt over the social and political problems facing African Americans in the eighties. They claimed the show sent an erroneous message to the public that blacks could overcome their hardships if they simply applied themselves; if they did not succeed it was their
fault (294). Other critics argued that *The Cosby Show* was "too soft and safe" (Bogle 294). It "comforts the afflicted" more than it "afflicts the comfortable" by implying that the country has solved its divisive racial and cultural problems and that we all live together in a "color blind" community devoid of residual racial rage (Real, "Structural Analysis 1: Bill Cosby and Recoding Ethnicity" 237).

It is true that *The Cosby Show* never deals with such contemporary urban ills as racial violence and discrimination, high unemployment rates, the increase in crime and drug use among the young, or even marital discord. Rather, as indicated in the final version of the opening theme, the show transforms "negative" expressions or experiences into positive ones. In the theme, rap music is validated but also transformed from an expression of rebellion and rage to an expression of joy and celebration. Rather than graffiti, images of the neighborhood are painted on the tenement walls and the images encourage group participation and sportsmanship. Education replaces drug use as indicated by the contrast between the student with the notebook in his hand and the chalk outline of a figure with a needle at its side. Lastly, families reclaim the streets from the drug pushers and gangs in a joyful block party.

In these ways, it might be argued that *The Cosby Show* "cleans up" or domesticates the cultural expressions and activities common to African American as well as white subcultures. In essence, *The Cosby Show* functions much like the "moral majority" by implying that graffiti and rap music are faulty forms of expression. Thereby, the show ignores the many cultures across the nation that express *their* history and community by making aggressive claims on territory and in creative ways. In other words, many may ask how Cosby's highbrow "graffiti" and "rap" are any better than those of other subcultures.

In its defense, however, the purpose of *The Cosby Show* was not to investigate the prevailing social and political issues of the decade, as was the goal of many sitcoms in the
seventies such as *All in the Family*. Instead, the purpose of the show was to offer a role model for U.S. families, regardless of class or race, on how to raise children in a tolerant and loving environment.

The opening themes of *The Cosby Show* celebrate a healthy, happy and wealthy African American family and pay tribute to the black community and culture of which the family is a part. Although the signs are specific to African American culture, the more general social codes, such as education and equality, apply to all individuals and their communities. In this way, the bard speaks to a broad collective about the values of positive child rearing, cohesive families, education, and respect for cultural traditions and histories. As compared to past decades, the bard does not temper the images of black social performance. Blackness does not flicker on and off in the themes and show. What does flicker is class and class factors as regards to black experience in the eighties. While wealth affords the privilege "to dance" on the stage of one's own choice and making, the Cosby bard does not individualize the privilege. Rather, he imagines an ideal community where wealth is shared, education is stressed, and families reclaim the streets.

The sitcom *Cheers* is set in a Boston bar of the same name. The opening shot of the theme reveals the facade of bar in contemporary times. Hanging over the entrance is a sign that says "Cheers." Beneath the name is the phrase, "EST. 1895." We watch as modern day automobiles drive down the street that runs in front of the establishment and people in contemporary apparel stroll down the sidewalk that runs in front of the building. Piano music begins to play. All of a sudden the image freezes, and then it transforms into a drawing of the past. The car becomes a horse-drawn buggy and the pedestrians' clothing transforms into Victorian era garb. We have been transported back into the late 1800s, most likely to the year
1895 when Cheers was first established. Curiously, however, the facade of Cheers remains unchanged.

The theme's opening lyrics, "Making your way in the world today takes everything you've got," highlight the struggle of those in the 1980s workforce. The unstable economy coupled with rising unemployment and increasing personal debt left many individuals feeling overwhelmed and concerned about their future. In the song, the soothing male voice, lyrics, and second person point of view operate to commiserate with the viewers, as if they are part of the community of disillusioned workers. The song continues with the line, "Taking a break from all your worries sure would help a lot." Then, the male voice gently asks, "Wouldn't you like to get away?" Of course, the unheard answer to the question is a resounding "yes." The musical underscoring is a slow tempo "Tin Pan Alley" tune that evokes a certain weariness and reinforces the attitude and temperament of the lyrics.

As the lyrics are added in, a montage of black and white drawings is shown. The first set of drawings depict various individuals standing on the sidewalk in front of the bar. In the line that follows, "Sometimes you wanna go," the tempo becomes more upbeat and there is fuller musical accompaniment with the addition of drums, bass guitar, and background vocals behind the lead male voice. In visual support of the tempo change, the camera eye moves inside the bar, revealing a pictorial montage of male and female customers from the early part of the century enjoying drinks together. In all of the drawings, the patrons raise their glasses in a toast, which references the bar and the show's title, Cheers. The title appears at this point in the center of the frame, written in ornate cursive letters in the color of polished brass. The color echoes the sheen of the railing along the bar itself. The color red is added to the liquid inside the glasses to call attention to the libation. Color is added as well to the faces and clothing of certain individuals to give them focus and add warmth to the drawings. The visual and acoustic combination defines
Cheers as *the* place to escape the weariness and dreariness of the outside world. The change to a more upbeat tempo connotes Cheers as a happy place where "they're always glad you came."

The use of color within the black and white drawings also suggests that when we are feeling drained by the cares and worries of the world, spending time at Cheers can replenish our energy and make us feel rosy again. Finally, the use of color indicates that although we may be just one of the crowd in the work-a-day world, inside Cheers we become a distinct individual.

Two changes that occur after the title is shown are a medium switch from drawings to still photographs and the time period seems to advance slightly, perhaps to the early 1900s.

There are several clues to indicate the alteration in time. First, the dresses of the women become shorter and less ornate and the top hats worn by the men in the previous drawings are replaced by straw hats, which were common in the early part of the twentieth century. Second, there appears to be more women in the bar. During the war years (1914-1918), many women entered the workforce to replace the men who were in the military overseas. It was common to see women in bars enjoying a drink after putting in a full day in the factories, on the railroads, or in the coal mines. Lastly, in one shot, a man is holding up a newspaper with the headline, "We Win!" emblazoned on the front page. In all likelihood, the headline refers to World War I which came to an end in 1918.

The advancement of years, from 1895 to the present day, and the corresponding shift from drawings to photographs to live action (i.e., when the show begins), indicates the longevity of Cheers. Cheers has served to comfort the troubled through a long history, and it is still around today. Although the generations may change, Cheers itself remains unchanged, as indicated by the unchanging facade of the building.

Friendship is an important element inside the bar. In each drawing or photograph, the individuals interact at an intimate distance. Although they are in a public space (which, granted,
lends itself to close interactions in this case), the individuals do not maintain isolated groups. Instead, they are shown with a hand on their neighbor's shoulders, giving a pat on the back, or raising their glasses together as a group. The physical closeness of the individuals suggests a strong group cohesiveness in the bar. They are not simply customers or patrons, they are friends. As such, Cheers offers an alternative understanding and enactment of "family," implying that family consists of a group of individuals who pull together to offer comfort and support.

And apparently the viewing audience is invited to join the family, as indicated by the use of second person narration in the lyrics. Also, the photo used in the final shot of the opening theme depicts a group of men and women facing full front with their glasses raised. It is as if they are toasting the viewer. In these ways, the theme attempts to bridge the gap between the past and present, and the fictive family in the bar and the viewers at home.

As I have demonstrated above, the opening theme constructs Cheers as a friendly place that co-mingles past and present, social and individual, fact and fictive codes of representation. It also mediates between high, middle and lowbrow class distinctions. In the photographs, for instance, some of the female patrons are dressed in ornate dresses and large, frilly hats while others wear plain pinafore-style dresses with simple, upswept hair. Similarly, while some of the male customers sport long coats and top hats, others are garbed in unassuming buttoned-down shirts and pants with suspenders. Also, many of the men are clean-shaven while others sport beards or handlebar mustaches, both of which were upscale status symbols of the era. The apparel, however, is the only indicator of class distinction. Inside the bar, high, middle, and lowbrow individuals raise their glasses together and enjoy one another's company.

In Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America, Lawrence Levine observes that it was at this time, between 1895 and 1918, that the term "culture" was redefined in the U.S. In the early part of the nineteenth century, culture referred to the act of
tilling and preparing the soil for crops. By the latter part of the century, however, culture also meant "the state of being cultivated" or "the refinement of mind or manners" (224). It was also during this period that the terms "highbrow" and "lowbrow" came into use. Levine affirms that "highbrow" was first used in the 1800s to describe "intellectual or aesthetic superiority" while "lowbrow," first used shortly after 1900, referred to "someone or something neither 'highly intellectual' nor 'aesthetically refined'" (221-222). As Levine explains, both terms derive from the nineteenth century practice of determining intelligence by measuring cranial patterns, that is, the higher the brow, the more intelligent the individual (222).

During this time in history, the working class was largely composed of immigrants and migrant blacks who were considered by sectors of the economic elite (and cranium-measuring social scientists) to be of inferior intelligence. The upper class sought to distinguish itself from the working class by categorizing cultural expressions or "tastes." Thereby, they distinguished between high and lowbrow culture and classes, accentuating the former by deeming its expressions as worthy of display in museums, study in universities, and high-end ticket prices. For example, opera, once a commonly shared form of music, became highbrow entertainment reserved for the monied elite while dance hall music was relegated as cheap and amateur entertainment that appealed to the lowbrow masses.

As Hilmes points out, both Cheers the bar and Cheers the show invite us to laugh at our own "quality aspirations" and to "revel in the very 'mass-ness' of the experience" (223). At Cheers, the tension between high and low culture is dissolved. Indeed, producers intended Cheers to be marketed to diverse classes. According to Hilmes, the network wanted to "win back" the young, affluent, well educated, and high culture audience from cable television (218). But, as Hilmes continues to explain, the appeal to an "upscale" audience had to be made without alienating TV's "mass" audience (218). Cheers had to become, as Jones describes it, "a meeting
area with doors on both sides of the cultural divide" (265). Although class distinctions continue to exist, at Cheers they are accommodated and celebrated in an atmosphere of relaxation and acceptance.

Class mediation is very much a part of the show itself as reflected in the characters who work at or frequent the bar. Sam Malone, the owner of Cheers, bought the bar when his struggles with alcoholism forced him to abandon his career as a professional baseball player. Likewise ironic, Sam hires his ex-baseball coach, Ernie "Coach" Pantusso, as the bartender. Coach is a soft-hearted man who is absent-minded and dull-witted. In later seasons, Woody Boyd, an intellectually naive Indiana farm boy, takes over as bartender when Coach dies unexpectedly. Carla Tortelli, the bar's razor-tongued waitress, is a single mother of eight children. Diane Chambers also is a waitress at Cheers. Unlike Carla, she is a prim and proper English literature graduate student who takes the job at Cheers after being abandoned there by her fiancé, a literature professor. There are two Cheers regulars. Norm Peterson is an overweight accountant who constantly complains about his job and wife, and Cliff Claven is a mail carrier who over-exaggerates the importance of his job and constantly shares useless bits of trivia with the Cheers staff and customers.8

As I noted above, class distinctions and mediation inform the characters, their actions and interactions. The character of Diane represents the highbrow end while Coach and Woody stand in for the lowbrow. Hilmes offers an example of Diane's highbrow attitude by citing a scene in which Diane chides Sam for offering to call in a con man to help Coach settle a debt with a card shark. She tells him it's like "'calling in Spinoza to settle an argument between Nietzsche and Schopenhaur.'" Coach replies, "'She's got a point there, Sam'" (quoted in Hilmes 220). Diane's reference to the philosophers engages the intellectual viewer while Coach's response is in line with those viewers who, like Coach, have no idea what Diane is talking about but choose to play
along anyway. The resulting humor of the situation helps to alleviate any discomfort brought on by a self-perceived lack of knowledge.

In another example, Woody's father insists he return home because he feels Woody is being corrupted by Boston's "big city" ways. The Cheers family want Woody to stay so they decide to make a video to show Woody's father that they are a good influence on him. Unfortunately, Diane takes control of the project and transforms the low art video into a high art film by integrating "meaningful artistic images." When Woody's father sees the film, he insists Woody return home. Diane is severely disappointed that Woody's father was not emotionally moved by her project. Sam explains to her that her "fancy imagery" would mean nothing to an "old Hoosier farmer," to which Woody replies, "Yeah and, besides, he said it was too derivative of Godard." Again, high culture viewers who are familiar with Godard will understand that Diane has used anti-illusionistic conventions in the film. Yet, by giving the Godard reference to Woody, or more specifically to Woody's father, the high art reference loses its pretentiousness and its power to separate the classes. Even viewers who know nothing about Godard's cinematic techniques are able to laugh at the incongruity of highbrow language being delivered by a lowbrow representative. On the other hand, assumptions regarding the intellectual breadth of the lowbrow characters are called into question. Perhaps Woody and his father know all about Godard and the French New Wave.

While The Cosby Show offers a mediation of culture and race, Cheers delivers a mediation of culture and class. Cheers is the first sitcom to address the "large and growing group searching desperately for love and companionship in the cold 80s" (Javna 108). During the Reaganomics era, yuppies as well as blue-collar workers needed to escape the stress and strain of making a living during high/low economic times. Not everyone felt good in the "feel good" decade. In the opening theme of Cheers, the bard offers a reassuring sense of self-worth to the
viewing audience by means of the familiar hooks he uses. The song, sung by a soothing male voice, acknowledges the physical and emotional impact of the work-a-day world while the pictures and drawings assure the viewer that, regardless of class, they are welcome at Cheers. The familiar setting of the community bar further substantiates that Cheers and Cheers is a good place to relax and unwind.

The closing theme for Cheers repeats the musical score of the opening without the lyrics. The tempo is much slower and a horn has been added to the piano music. A single visual image fills the frame, a shot of the empty bar. The lights have been dimmed and all the patrons have gone home. The closing credits appear on the screen as the music plays. The sound of the slow tempo piano music combined with the lone horn suggests that the evening is over. As I imagine it, the bar's piano player is playing one last tune while the bartender sweeps the floor. A horn, in the distance, offers echoes of "taps" at the close of the day. The celebration is over for now, the Cheers gang dispersed into the world of cares and worries, until tomorrow when they need, once more, to get away to a place "where everybody knows your name."

While Cheers acknowledges the struggles of "making your way in the world today," The Wonder Years recognizes the stress involved in navigating through puberty. The sitcom focuses on Kevin Arnold, a twelve year old, white, middle class suburban boy as he confronts the problems of coming of age. The Wonder Years examines Kevin's relationship with his family and his friends. Kevin learns the importance of family by interacting with his sometimes gruff and disapproving father, Jack, his doting stay-at-home mother, Norma, his older teenage brother, Wayne, and his older sister, Karen. Wayne lives to tease and torment Kevin at every opportunity while Karen, who is involved in several social protest movements, causes much dissatisfaction and grumbling among her parents. Kevin also faces the horrors of junior high school. Fortunately, he "gets by with a little help" from his best friend, Paul, who is the school nerd and
his occasional girlfriend, Winnie, who is literally the "girl next door." Together, they confront the adolescent trials of the first date, first kiss, and acne.

The opening theme for The Wonder Years reinforces the importance of friendship with its use of the Beatles' hit song from the sixties, "With a Little Help From My Friends." The lyrics of the song continually reaffirm, "I'm gonna get by with a little help from my friends." The accompanying musical score is played by an acoustic guitar, an instrument that was widely used in the folk rock music of the sixties. Like the music, the visuals have a dated temperament too. The visual theme is a montage of home movie clips shot, so it seems, with an old 8 mm camera. The film montage is projected onto a solid black frame, the resulting effect suggesting that the home movie is being cast on to a projection screen in a family living room or den. The subtle "clicking" sound of the film reel can be heard throughout the opening.

The montage begins with a shot of Kevin, dressed in a green T-shirt and jeans, holding a baseball bat. He is apparently playing a game of baseball in the street with some of the kids from the neighborhood. He releases his grip on the bat long enough to smile and wave at the camera. The second shot depicts Jack and Norma standing beside a barbecue grill in their backyard. Jack is busy cooking hot dogs and hamburgers on the grill while Norma, holding a paper plate, stands beside him. Jack wears a gray plaid shirt and gray pants while Norma wears a floral print halter top and miniskirt and white plastic-rimmed sunglasses. Jack, with the barbecue utensils still in his hand, smiles and gestures to the camera. In the third shot, Norma carries the food over to the picnic table which is covered with a white tablecloth. Buns, ketchup, and several bottles of soda are on the table while Kevin, Wayne, Karen, and Paul are seated around it. Norma points to the camera and the kids look up and wave.

The fourth clip of the montage focuses on Kevin and Wayne as they roll around wrestling on the front lawn. When they become aware that they are being filmed, they stop wrestling and,
for the camera, playfully hug each other. The scene cuts to a shot of Kevin and Winnie who are standing on the street in front of Kevin's house. Winnie hands a football to Kevin. The ball seems to have gone astray from the group of guys who are standing in the street. Winnie shakes her head at Kevin as he retrieves the ball and runs back to join the game. This interaction anticipates the next shot of Kevin and his friends playing a game of football. Kevin's friend, Paul, spotting the camera, runs up to it and waves.

The final shot in the montage depicts the entire Arnold family standing at the edge of their driveway. The neighborhood consists of small, similar houses with tiny yards. The area is reminiscent of the "ticky-tacky" suburban neighborhoods of post World War II. The Arnolds smile and wave to the camera. At this point, the film reel runs out and the center image reveals nothing but the light from the projector.

As I observed above, the opening visual theme denotes an amateur home movie. The images are unsteady and tilted at times, the editing is rough and unpolished, and the film shows signs of age as various lines and stray black spots appear in the various frames. The opening theme then has a documentary feel to it. The home movie technique creates the illusion that what we are seeing is real life, rather than fictive, action. The illusion is enhanced by the depiction of the everyday life activities of an everyday life middle class family.

The home movie appears to have been filmed in the sixties. There are several clues in the theme that indicate this particular time period. The miniskirt outfit worn by Norma and the hippie garb worn by Karen are indicative of clothing from the sixties. Also, the Beatles' song, "With a Little Help from my Friends," was a popular song of the decade. Lastly, the home movie is shot not with a video or digital camera but with an 8 mm. camera, a medium used during the sixties.
The composition of the title and credits imply a past reference as well, or a tension between past and present. Before the film montage begins, the show's title appears in the center of the black screen. The title is not the title of the home movie as it is part of, rather than framed by, the black screen. Thereby, it indicates a time frame other than that of the movie itself. The three words, "The Wonder Years," are written in block letters and stacked on top of each other. The word "The" is written in yellow, the word "Wonder" in red, and the word "Years" in blue. The use of the primary colors connote the feeling of childhood while the words suggest the period of time between childhood and adulthood. As the film montage rolls along, the names of the actors appear below the film clips, on the black frame that surrounds the central home movie image. The names indicate the present day actors who apparently play the characters we see in the home movie. Although there is a tendency to get caught up in the present tense illusion of the home movie, the black frame around the film and the subtle "clicking" sound of the film reel reminds us that we are watching images from the past.

Indeed, the theme is about the sixties home movie. The home movie visually depicts the happy moments shared by family and friends, such as playing baseball and having a backyard cookout. Likewise, the music reinforces the importance of family and friends with the repetition of phrases such as, "I get by with a little help from my friends" and "All I need is my buddies." What the home movie does not depict, however, is the turmoil of the decade. We are never shown clips of race riots or Vietnam War protests. Instead, the decade is depicted with images of a warm and loving family environment.

The theme not only omits the turmoil of the sixties, it also neglects to depict the key element in the show itself. What makes The Wonder Years different from other kid centered sitcoms of the decade is the fact that it is told from the point of view of an adult Kevin twenty years in the future. In the show, the adult Kevin, in voice-over narration, looks back on his
adolescent and teen years and reminisces with the audience about the events he experienced and the lessons he learned while growing up. Although we watch the young Kevin grapple with the problems of his youth, the show is more about the adult narrator who, in recalling his youthful experiences, attempts to fully understand and make sense of them. The only indication of the adult Kevin in the theme is the dual time frame. Although the voice of the adult Kevin is heard only during the show itself, his presence is implied by the framing screen on which the home movie is projected. Since, in the show, the adult Kevin narrates what we see, we can assume that he also is the one playing the home movie we watch in the opening theme.

In essence, The Wonder Years theme depicts the adult Kevin's longing for the past. Kevin's longing for his "happy" past is understandable since memories are selective and there is a tendency to remember the good times over the bad. Shannon Jackson describes nostalgia as "a longing for what is lost" (280). Susan Stewart amplifies that "nostalgia, like any form of narrative, is always ideological: the past it seeks has never existed except in narrative" (23). Kevin's home movie does seem to focus on the ideal, which is again understandable since we typically photograph or videotape happy occasions. The pleasant family gatherings are remembered over the turmoil of the decade.

In Kevin's narrative, family and community are important. Kevin, his family, and friends are always smiling and shown in close intimate or personal proxemity to each other. Their physical comfort with each other suggests close emotional ties of caring and support. Also, whenever the characters run up to the camera, they smile and wave, an indicator of friendship rather than hostility.

All of the opening shots take place outside, either in the Arnolds' backyard or in the street that runs through their neighborhood. The use of the semiprivate or semipublic space indicates the importance of community to Kevin and his family. The activities in which they engage, such
as playing baseball or football or enjoying an outdoor barbecue, are social not solitary activities. As the accompanying lyrics continually repeat, "I get by with a little help from my friends," friendship is an integral element in the life of the Arnold family. They believe that an individual needs the support that friendship provides in order to weather life's hardships. A friend will stick by you through thick and through thin, even if you "sing out of tune."

Like Archie from All in the Family, Kevin longs for "the good old days" and, like Archie's longing for the Hoover years, Kevin's longing for the sixties is ironic since the decade was full of political and social turmoil. Yet, like the content of Archie's song, the content of the home movie suggests that Kevin's "wonder years" were happy. In Kevin's present decade of materialistic greed, the bard makes the point that family and friends are what really matter in life. Although money can buy material possessions, it cannot buy emotional satisfaction or happiness. Unlike The Cosby Show and more like Cheers, The Wonder Years bard offers us a means of temporarily escaping the construct of the eighties with its economic hardships and struggles by engaging in a past decade depicted by the home movie. Yet the home movie allows us to escape the social construct of the tumultuous sixties by offering an idealized vision of the decade.

The home movie frame, along with the adult narrator, is also a savvy marketing tool. As I discussed earlier, many sitcoms concentrated their efforts on appealing to a small segment of the eighties audience. In The Wonder Years, however, the blending of the past and present enables the show to appeal to both adults and children. In a decade of narrow-casting, The Wonder Years captures the interest of young viewers who can relate to the twelve year old Kevin's experiences while it also appeals to the baby-boomer generation of the sixties who can relate to the adult Kevin's memories. In effect, The Wonder Years theme offers the audience a commercialized nostalgia.
While Kevin longs to recapture his wonder years, the characters of *The Golden Girls* are busy enjoying their golden years. Unlike any sitcom in television history, *The Golden Girls* was the first sitcom to concentrate on the lives of senior citizens and the first sitcom to feature an all female cast. When *The Golden Girls* premiered in 1985, almost thirty-seven percent of the U.S. population was forty-five years or older and there were approximately ten million more people over the age of fifty than ten years earlier (Javna 116). The show, a product of narrow-casting, attempted to attract the older market by depicting the "golden girls" as lively and diverse individuals with rich and busy lives rather than limiting their identities and possibilities to that of "wacky grandparents."

*The Golden Girls* features the characters of Blanche, Rose, Dorothy, and Sophia who share a home in Miami, Florida. Blanche, the home's owner, is a sex-crazed Southern Belle who, after the death of her husband, takes in the other three women who pay rent and help out with the household finances. Rose is a lovable but somewhat dim-witted woman. Dorothy is a sharp-tongued substitute teacher and her mother, Sophia, is an equally sharp-tongued octogenarian who moves in with the other women after her retirement home burns to the ground. The four women show us that despite their age they are "regular" folks who hold down jobs, engage in hobbies, occasionally travel, and enjoy friendships and romance. While *The Golden Girls* draws on some female stereotypes (e.g., Blanche is a "flirt" and Rose is a "dingy blonde"), as Javna points out, the stereotypes are not typically associated with older women (116). By appropriating stereotypes commonly aligned with younger women, *The Golden Girls* resists the portrayal of elderly women as hags, senile grandmothers, or sexless matrons.

*The Golden Girls* portrays aging in a positive light as the women face the challenges of aging head on. They are not afraid to deal with issues such as Alzheimer's disease, menopause, or death. They discuss the subjects openly and honestly and with a sense of humor. The humor
helps them to neutralize their fears and confront the issues with a degree of ease. In addition to the challenges of aging, the women also deal with facing the world as single women. Blanche, Rose, and Sophia are widows while Dorothy is divorced from her husband, Stan. In various episodes, the women realize that they do not have to rely on men for their security as they prove to provide each other with the necessary comfort and support. In effect, the four women function as a family unit, offering a viable alternative to the traditional family model.

The opening theme of *The Golden Girls* begins with a shot of a plane coming in for a landing. The sky surrounding the plane is a rich bittersweet orange with a brilliant round sun in the center. As the plane approaches its destination, a woman's voice sings, "Thank you for being a friend. / Travel down the road and back again." The orange color of the sky along with the setting sun is representative of the golden years of life. The image suggests that even though the summer years of life are fading, the autumn years hold glorious possibilities. While the descending plane may indicate that life's journey is near its end, it also signifies an arrival: the golden years are the beginning of a new stage of life. The lyrics emphasize the importance of friendship throughout life's journey. The aforementioned lines imply that a good friend will stick by one through the ups and downs of life.

The next frame of the opening depicts the coastal section of Miami as seen from an aerial perspective. High rise hotels and smaller houses dot the strip of land surrounded by the blue water below and the blue sky above. The show's title appears in the center of the frame. The white letters of the title are ornate and antiquated. The shot establishes the setting for the show and informs the meaning of the title in so far as Miami is a well-known mecca for senior citizens. The title itself, *The Golden Girls*, is ironic. It combines the concepts of both old and young. The term "golden" references a fifty year mark while the term "girl" typically refers to a young
female. The juxtaposition of the two terms serves to identify the women as senior citizens full of youthful energy and aspirations.

Following the two initial shots, the visual theme offers a montage of medium shots of the women interacting with each other inside their home. The home of the "golden girls" is no retirement home. Rather than bleak and sterile, it is warm, tropical and inviting. The wicker furniture is topped with floral-print, apricot cushions. Sunny yellow walls brighten the home while beautiful green plants enrich it. The floors in the living room are a polished dark wood which balances the brightness of the other furnishings and adds depth to the design. Large sliding glass doors at the back of the living room open out onto the patio which is enveloped in luscious green foliage. In effect, the space is more akin to our image of an upscale beach house than our preconceived image of a home for four senior citizens. The environment is simultaneously relaxing and pleasantly stimulating.

Inside the home, the women are shown giving each other a group hug, huddled together comically as they walk through the living room, seated side by side on the sofa, conversing around the small kitchen table, and singing together around the piano. The intimate proxemic pattern in each of these situations suggests close emotional ties between the women. Further, in each shot, one of the women is either holding the hand of another, putting a hand on a shoulder, or hugging one or more of the other women.

The scenes in the aforementioned montage are interspersed with close-up shots of each woman as the name of the respective actress appears on the screen. While the group shots suggest the women can function as a collective, the close-up shots insist on their individuality. They also assure viewers that they will get to know the characters on a personal level. Lastly, the portraits function as a marketing hook in so far as the actresses' names and faces are well-known.
The opening theme ends with Rose, Blanche, and Dorothy sitting side by side on the outside patio. Rose is seated between Blanche and Dorothy, her arms outstretched to either side to gently embrace her friends. Dorothy and Blanche reach across Rose to hold each other's hand. The closing shot solidifies the affection the women feel for each other. Their physical contact links them as friends and identifies the women as pillars of strength and support for each other.

The one aspect that is missing from the environment is men. Although, in the show, the women often talk about men and sex, no man appears at any point in the opening theme. The visual absence of a male figure indicates that the women do not need to have a man in their lives in order to survive. All they really need is each other.

Men, or a male voice, are absent from the theme song as well. The lyrics are sung by a female voice which functions to strengthen the female agency advanced in the show. The lyrics of the song stress the importance, not of romance, but of friendship: A friend's "heart is true" and a friend is both "a pal and a confidant." Also, the song uses the word "gift" as a metaphor for friendship: "And if you threw a party / Invited everyone you knew / You would see the biggest gift would be from me / And the card attached would say Thank you for being a friend." These lines suggest that if we took inventory of all the people we knew, our friends would top the list; friendship is the "biggest gift" we can give or receive. As with the Cheers theme song, the theme song for The Golden Girls uses the second person point of view throughout, as in the line, "Thank you for being a friend." The use of the second person insists that the viewer is considered a "friend" too and thereby the song attempts to bridge the mediated distance between the viewer and the depicted circle of friends. While the visual montage shows the women in a closed situation, the direct address to the audience by the female singer functions to open the situation. Also, the use of eye-level shots and realistic conventions make the viewer feel
comfortable. There are no unique camera angles or distortions of movement to alienate or distance the audience.

The musical accompaniment for the lyrics is provided by a simple combination of drums and electric bass guitar. The drums provide the rhythm for the song while the bass guitar fills out the musical score. Strings are added at the very end for a final celestial flourish. The musical accompaniment signifies the development and growth of friendship. As indicated by the drumbeat, friendship starts in the heart and, if nurtured, proves to enrich our lives, as indicated by the addition of the bass guitar. As a result, our lives become quite lovely or "heavenly," as indicated by the final flourish of strings.

In the opening theme of The Golden Girls, the cultural bard overturns the "little old ladies" stereotype and also challenges the myth that people are doomed to grow old alone. Friendship is not something that is reserved for the young; it spans a lifetime. Further, the opening theme equates friendship, and specifically female friendship, with family. The theme validates the women's collective and as a viable alternative to the traditional family. Blanche, Rose, Dorothy and Sophia function as a unit in much the same way as the Cheers and The Wonder Years families function. Each family provides its members with emotional support, comfort and caring.

In the opening theme of The Golden Girls, the bard speaks to the target audience by presenting a positive image of older women. The bard hooks the viewing audience by offering four examples of happy, attractive, lively women accompanied by a soothing and uplifting song about friendship. To reinforce the positive image, the bard relies on the familiar domestic conventions of fashionable dress and furnishings. In light of these conventions, the theme seems to imply that a middle-aged to elderly person needs a good deal of money in order to be happy like the "golden girls." However, the show covers this potential glitch by offering a clever
financial tactic for the elderly if not all generations. Rather than maintain nominal single-person homes, the women pool their economic resources in order to live in a really nice house. Along with supporting each other financially, they support each other emotionally. In de Certeau's terms, the women "make do" within the constraints of the economic system, proving to find creative, playful alternatives to the "established forces and representations" (18).

While *The Golden Girls* was innovative in its portrayal of the lives of female senior citizens, perhaps the most unique sitcom of the decade was *It's Garry Shandling's Show*, a reflexive sitcom that offered a blending of performance and real life. What *The Cosby Show* did for the domestic sitcom in particular, *It's Garry Shandling's Show* did for the sitcom format in general. The show restored interest in the sitcom by exposing and calling attention to the elements involved in composing the traditional sitcom. According to Brooks and Marsh, all three major networks rejected the show because it was too "unconventional" and thus would not appeal to a mass audience (497). Consequently, the show premiered on the Showtime cable channel and was later purchased by Fox where it proved popular.

Although creative, the show's use of a reflexive format was not new. In fact, *It's Garry Shandling's Show* drew directly on the format of *The George Burns and Gracie Allen Show*, a reflexive sitcom of the 1950s in which George Burns played "himself," watched sections of the show on an "offstage" television set, and commented on the action to the audience. Like *The George Burns and Gracie Allen Show*, *It's Garry Shandling's Show* revolves around the personal life of a comedian, in this case Garry Shandling, who plays himself or rather a fictitious version of himself. In the show, Shandling is a neurotic, insecure man who struggles to cope with the world around him. Whereas, in *Burns and Allen*, George is the only person aware of the cameras, in *It's Garry Shandling's Show*, all the characters/actors acknowledge the fictive frame.
It's Garry Shandling's Show uses numerous reflexive devices to call attention to the artifice of television. The use of these devices, in turn, urge the audience to examine the formal elements common to the sitcom tradition. The reflexive devices "lay bare the devices of art" (Stam 166). For example, Garry pokes fun at traditional character types when he introduces the members of the cast in the first episode. In a vocal delivery that emphasizes or "quotes" the type, he tells us, "This is my 'platonic friend,' Nancy" and "This is my best friend Pete's 'intellectual young son,' Grant." Garry then explains that he is unable to introduce Pete's wife, Jackie, because "We haven't cast her yet." By revealing to the audience that one of the roles has not yet been cast, Garry exposes the illusion of the sitcom world: sitcom characters are actors who play roles. Further, the roles they play are broad social types or constructs that are familiar to us and easy to access.

Garry also draws attention to the use of background music in sitcoms. Typically, background music is used to create or reinforce a mood, foreshadow events, or accompany action and, typically, sitcom characters are not aware of it. In It's Garry Shandling's Show, the familiar use of music is defamiliarized. For instance, in one episode, Garry is babysitting a child who is accidentally hit in the eye by an opening door. Gary tells us, "I knew something was gonna happen 'cause all during that doorbell sequence there was no background music whatsoever. It was way too quiet. Way too quiet." By means of Garry's commentary, the audience is made aware of how music is an artificial, rather than natural, element in sitcoms and also how it functions to send messages to the audience, in this case a message of foreshadowing and suspense.

Garry also calls attention to standard action sequences. In the show's first episode, Garry moves into his new apartment and has his furniture stolen shortly afterwards. Midpoint in the episode, Garry reviews the plot with us, explaining that we have seen the scene where he moves
his furniture into his new apartment; we saw how nice it looked once it was in place; it then was stolen; and now he has to do the scene where he deals with the cop.

The artificial nature of the set is also highlighted. During one particular episode, Garry is to fly to Las Vegas to attend a friend's wedding. While waiting for takeoff, Garry remarks to the woman sitting next to him in the plane that it is very hot inside the cabin. He asks her if she would mind if he adjusted the air. She tells him to go ahead. The camera follows Garry's movements as he reaches up to adjust the air controls. He continues to reach but his efforts are in vain and he finally has to stand up. When he does, the camera reveals that Garry is not in an actual plane. Rather, he is on a small set constructed to look like the inside of a plane. The studio behind and the stage lighting above the "fake" plane are visible. To punctuate the visual joke, Garry remarks to the woman beside him, "Gee, you'd think it would be a lot cooler what with no top on the plane."

Garry also makes constant reference to the fact that the show is being filmed. Sometimes he will tell the cameraman to film the shot from a different angle or, if a technical aspect goes awry, Garry will walk off the set to complain to one of the cameramen or lighting technicians. Occasionally, the other characters will scold Garry for paying too much attention to the cameras and not enough attention to the "plot" of the show.

Even the title of the show is a reflexive parody of sitcom titles. Instead of using the article "the" in the title, as in The Garry Shandling Show, the pronoun "it" is used instead. Whereas "the" indicates a generic product, the "it's" or "it is" indicates Garry's personal possession of the product. In other words, the title makes explicit what is politely implied in other sitcoms with similar titles, such as The Cosby Show or The Mary Tyler Moore Show.

As a result of the reflexive play, It's Garry Shandling's Show can be read on two levels: the representational reality of Garry's sitcom world and the presentational reality of making the
sitcom. On one level, the presentational reality of It's Garry Shandling's Show winks at the audience by overtly flaunting the artifice of the sitcom genre. The show offers the sitcom as something to be constructed or deconstructed instead of passively observed. On a second level, humor is provided by the representational reality of Garry's world which constantly falls apart around him, whether due to his disastrous relationships with women, his abundant supply of insecurities, or his numerous mishaps in creating his "TV show."

As the show itself operates on two levels, so too does Garry's theme song. "Before" the theme song begins, Garry greets the studio and viewing audience and welcomes them to the show. He briefly introduces the plot of the episode we are about to see and then invites us to listen to the opening theme. On the surface, the theme is used to open the show and orient the audience. Yet, on a second parodic level, the reflexive nature of It's Garry Shandling's Show spills over into the show's opening theme, aptly titled "It's Garry Shandling's Theme." Even the opening line of the theme is reflexive, as the singer identifies the theme as such: "This is the theme to Garry's show." The opening theme calls attention to the fact that a theme song does not, as most sitcoms would have us believe, just happen; it must be created. The opening theme constantly reminds the audience of its construction, or what Stam refers to as the "process of production" (71).

Unlike the other opening themes I have discussed, Garry's opening theme does not use any special visual images. Instead the musical theme underscores whatever activity is called for at the start of each episode. For example, in the first episode, we watch Garry move furniture into his new apartment as the theme song is played. In another, the theme song plays while Garry ambles around his living room in his bathrobe. We recognize the living room as the "character" Garry's living room and yet it also is an exact replica of the actor Garry's real life
living room (Brooks and Marsh 497). Further, the presence of the cameras, stage lights, and studio audience specifically denotes the living room as the official "set" for the show.

Garry's theme reflects upon its own production process when the singer of the theme confesses, "Garry called me up and asked if I would write his theme song." The singer of the theme continues to comment upon the song's construction as he sings it. For example, at the song's midpoint, he announces, "I'm almost halfway finished." A little later, he remarks, "We're almost to the part of where I start to whistle." At the end of the song, the singer declares, "This was the theme to Garry Shandling's show."

"It's Garry Shandling's Theme" directly acknowledges the presence of the audience by using an open situation. The male singer asks the viewers for their opinion of the theme with the line, "How do you like the theme to Garry's show?" This acknowledgment of the audience by the theme song's singer is a continuation of the open situation that Garry himself creates in the preliminary portion of the show. Garry's theme song highlights the fact that most people simply take theme songs for granted; they overlook them as "the music that you hear as you watch the credits." In addition, theme songs are usually acknowledged by the viewer only, not the sitcom characters. However, the characters in *It's Garry Shandling's Show* are aware that the theme song is being played. In fact, from time to time, one of Garry's neighbors will drop by to inform him that his theme song is being played too loudly and is disturbing the rest of the neighborhood.

The only visual element that is a constant from opening to opening is the use of the show's title which, once again, references the show's construction. The title appears in quotation marks with a period at the end and looks as if it has been typed on a manual typewriter. It resembles a title as it would appear on the first page of a show's script.

The closing theme for *It's Garry Shandling's Show* uses the same music as the opening theme but without the lyrics. The tempo is increased slightly and the musical score is rounded
out with the addition of a saxophone. The visual format is similar to that of the opening. Garry bids good night to the audience, the music starts to play, and the closing credits roll as Garry continues to perform action pertinent to the episode. For example, at the close of the second episode, Garry is playing basketball with two of his friends. He stops long enough to thank the audience for tuning in for the episode and invites us to watch the closing credits while he finishes the game.

Sometimes the technical crew rolls the credits before Garry is ready for them. At the end of the first episode, for instance, Garry is scolding a cast member for coming late to the show. Garry tells him that he can't be in the episode because it's already over. At this point, the credits begin to roll and Garry yells, "You wanna hold the credits!" The credits stop and then roll in the reverse direction until they have cleared the frame. Garry's acknowledgment of the credits calls our attention to an aspect of television shows we usually ignore. While the closing credits remain more or less inconspicuous in most TV sitcoms, It's Garry Shandling's Show makes them strikingly obvious, once again serving as a reflexive device that makes evident the process of production. The closing theme continues to play until the score reaches its end. At the conclusion of the song the male voice addresses the audience a final time with the line, "I hope you enjoyed It's Garry Shandling's Show." This line serves to close out the episode and reference the completion of its construction.

It's Garry Shandling's Show along with its theme deconstructs reality by fragmenting it into representational and presentational modes which results in at least two readings. On the one hand, the representational mode offers the illusion of the real life comic and the trials of putting together his show. On the other hand, the presentational mode, with its reflexive attitude and conventions, offers a parody of the representational mode and reflects the postmodern
understanding that reality is constructed. In other words, there are multiple conventions to make or remake reality.

On a broader level, the theme deconstructs the notion of given master narratives. Thereby, the bard speaks to those in the U.S. who are skeptical of master narratives and believe there are a variety of perspectives from which to view the world. While the master narrative of Reaganomics insisted that the economy was in great shape and jobs were plentiful, many in the nation knew this was not a reality for all. By hooking the viewers with the parodic and reflexive language and visuals of the opening theme, the bard addresses and reassures the postmodern audience that culture itself is fragmented; it cannot be mastered but it can be made in creative ways.

Of all the themes I have discussed above, It's Garry Shandling's Show offers the most explicit critique of reality. The other themes seem to evade reality in one way or another. They do, however, offer us fictive "what if" alternatives. For instance, The Cosby Show implies that our culture is free of racial prejudices and inequalities. The theme, while reinforcing African American history and culture, informs us that we are all a part of a large family composed of the community in general. Cheers suggests that class differences do not really matter. Whether upper, middle, or lower working class, the bard instructs us that we can get relief from our fears and worries by escaping to a place "where everybody knows your name." The Wonder Years offers a youthful Utopia where no matter how tough life may get, we can always "get by with a little help from [our] friends." Finally, The Golden Girls suggests that old age is wonderful and, for the most part, worry free. The bard presents us with an alternative strategy for surviving the golden years with the simple message, "Thank you for being a friend." In effect, these shows project images of things as they should be rather than how they are.
Like *It's Garry Shandling's Show* however, these themes do offer presentational and/or innovative techniques. *The Cosby Show* incorporates a presentational dance style into its theme. This technique is reflexive in that it calls attention to the act of performers performing for an audience. *Cheers* relies on drawings and photographs instead of shots of its well-known actors. By favoring the drawings and photos over the hook of celebrity appeal, the theme is able to relate to the general viewing audience, making us feel a part of the created environment. Lastly, *The Wonder Years* makes use of the home movie. This visual device serves to separate the past and the present. It also permits the show to speak to young viewers as well as their parents.

While the sitcoms of the 1980s were not as controversial as those of the 1970s, they were media savvy. In a decade of narrow-casting, *The Cosby Show, Cheers, and The Wonder Years* captured viewers from each side of the cultural spectrum. *The Cosby Show* appealed to both African American and white viewers, *Cheers* spoke to both highbrow and lowbrow viewers, and *The Wonder Years* provoked interest among the young viewers of the eighties and the baby-boomers of the sixties. In short, while *The Cosby Show, Cheers, The Wonder Years* and *The Golden Girls* present us with an upbeat and positive vision of everyday life, *It's Garry Shandling's Show* implies that everyday reality is a construct. "Hey, look!" the show says, "it's all an illusion." *It's Garry Shandling's Show* reveals to us that the quixotic life presented to us in sitcoms is created entirely with smoke and mirrors. And, just as we can "re-make" a show, we can also re-make reality. The show's efforts to expose the artifice of the sitcom world and, in turn, the artifice of reality in general will come to fruition in the following decade where shows will take a more critical look at their surrounding social and cultural environments, offering commentary on how to survive in an imperfect world rather than live in a perfect one.
Notes

1 Others wounded in the assassination attempt included Secret Service agent Timothy J. McCarthy, Washington police officer James Delahanty, and White House Press Secretary James S. Brady. Brady was shot in the head and sustained severe brain damage. The shooter, twenty-five year old John Hinkley, Jr., was found not guilty by reason of insanity. He had attempted to kill the president in an effort to gain the attention of actress Jodi Foster.

2 Reagan won massive support for handling the ordeal with his sense of humor intact. In the hospital, Reagan quipped to his wife Nancy, "Honey, I forgot to duck!" and before going into surgery, Reagan joked with surgeons by remarking, "I hope you're all Republicans" (Glennon 594).

3 Including Christa McAuliffe, the seven crew members of the Challenger were Commander Francis Scobee, Navy pilot Michael Smith, veteran mission specialists Ellison Onizuka, Ronald McNain, Judith Resnick, and Gregory Jarris.


5 A transistor is a compact electronic device that controls information or current flow. Glennon defines a transistor as "a quirk in a crystal of silicon" (580).

6 The seven sitcoms in the Neilsen top ten rankings during the 1986-87 season were The Cosby Show (#1), Family Ties (#2), Cheers (#3), The Golden Girls (#5), Night Court (#7), Growing Pains (#8), and Who's the Boss (#10) (Brooks and Marsh 1255).

7 In the first season of The Cosby Show, time lapse photography was used to depict the Huxtable family emerging, one by one, from the family's minivan.

8 In later seasons three other main characters are added: Dr. Frasier Crane, an uptight, lonely psychologist who begins to hang out at the bar after being jilted by Diane; the frigid and humorless Dr. Lilith Sternin, also a psychologist, who eventually marries Frasier; and Rebecca Howe, the insecure business manager of the bar.

9 The theme song for Phyllis (1975-77) is one exception to this rule as Phyllis hears and reacts to the theme's singer who describes her in the song.
CHAPTER FIVE
THE 1990s: A DIVERSE, DIGITAL AND REFLEXIVE BARD

yo'del: sing with alternation between ordinary voice and falsetto.
--American Webster Dictionary

Historical Overview

The 1990s was a decade of acknowledged diversity and digital technology. As the following two examples illustrate, if the U. S. public did not immediately grasp the ideological and technical intricacies of these two aspects, they were able to "grasp" them in commodity form. According to The Digital Decade: The 90s, over the course of the decade, Internet use increased dramatically as the price of personal computers fell and, correspondingly, the number of computers in homes rose. In 1990, only 25.4 percent of U.S. households had access to a personal computer whereas, by the decade's end, the figure had increased to over sixty percent. By 1998, 102 million people worldwide could visit some 1.8 million web sites (101, 103). Introduced in 1991, the World Wide Web altered how the nation and world communicated, worked and played. By surfing the web, individuals could gain access to a wealth of information on a plethora of topics. They also could use the net to facilitate business transactions, pay their bills, take a shopping trip, air opinions, and chat with family and friends. The Internet seemed to be a democratizing force in so far as individuals across the country and the world had access to the same information regardless of age, race, gender, education and, to a degree, financial status.

One of the many products individuals could purchase on-line was the ever-changing Barbie doll. In the late eighties, a line of ethnically diverse Barbies foreshadowed the variety offered in the nineties. Barbie stepped into the computer age with the "Talk to Me Barbie," her chat powered by a tiny computer and CD-ROM that were sold with the doll. "Cool Shoppin'
Barbie" contributed to the boom in commerce with her tiny MasterCard and credit card scanner. Barbie's physically challenged friend, "Becky," in a swinging pink and purple wheelchair, was an acknowledgment of the 1990 landmark law that forbade discrimination against disabled persons in employment, public accommodations, and transportation. And, as Bill Clinton proved to do in his 1992 campaign for the presidency, Barbie acknowledged and embraced the gay community when one of her Ken friends came "out of the closet." "Earring Magic Ken" sported a purple mesh top and an earring and, perhaps not a surprise and not unintentional, he proved more popular with gay men than with little girls (Epstein 223).

In this chapter, I once again offer an overview of the social-historical and cultural highlights of the decade, focusing on events and trends in the U.S. While diversity and digital technologies are not apparent in all the events I survey, they do play a consistent part in the sitcom themes I have selected to describe and analyze in the second section of the chapter. In addition to diversity and digital artistry, reflexivity also surfaces as an important element in the themes. Together, these traits suggest how postmodern notions of reality as a constructed and constantly changing entity are at work in popular culture and the sitcom themes in particular. As I offer later, this bardic song we sing of ourselves is viewed and treated in critical, nihilistic, and celebratory ways in the themes, the diverse attitudes reflexive of the postmodern "song" itself.

When George Bush assumed the presidency in 1988, he discovered that his campaign promise of "no new taxes" was wishful thinking as he faced a federal budget deficit of four trillion dollars. To address the problem, Bush signed a budget reform bill that would reduce the budget by $492 billion over a period of five years. The bill included $140 billion in new taxes. As a result, financial belts were tightened across the country and a staggering number of layoffs occurred. For example, General Motors reduced its workforce by seventy-four thousand, AT&T by forty thousand, and IBM by sixty thousand. By 1992, the unemployment rate reached 7.5
percent which equated to ten million Americans being out of work. In turn, between 1991-1992, over two million people lost their health insurance benefits and the number of uninsured individuals rose to 37.4 million (Kallen, A Cultural History... The 1990s 13). The Reagan legacy of an increasing gap between the rich and poor continued to widen as the number of U.S. citizens living below the poverty line hit its highest level in thirty years, 14.5 percent (Kallen, A Cultural History... The 1990s 14). In light of middle class and middle management downsizing, the economic future of young adults looked bleak. Unlike prior generations, those born between 1963 and 1977 generally assumed that they would not do as well as (much less better than) their parents (Axelrod 328). In mass cultural vernacular, this generation of young people was dubbed Generation X. According to Axelrod, they were typically college educated, "chronically pessimistic" about the future, and "vaguely dissatisfied" with their career possibilities (63). Their cynicism, ambivalence, or simply their understanding of the economic system and its affect on social identities also resulted in Generation X individuals being sensitive to social and cultural differences. They understood themselves and others as "less cohesive" and the American "melting pot" as more of a "polyglot" of divergent ethnicities, cultures and experiences (Kallen, A Cultural History... The 1990s 71). In short, they understood themselves and the world as "postmodern," a perspective they, and others, would enact in diverse ways over the course of the decade.

While Bush earned low approval ratings for his management of the U.S. economy, his popularity soared in response to his handling of the Persian Gulf War. The conflict began on August 2, 1990 when, under Saddam Hussein's leadership, Iraq invaded the oil rich country of Kuwait. The presumed reasons for the invasion were that Hussein wanted Kuwait's oil and its Persian Gulf coastline which then would facilitate Iraqi oil exportation. It also was believed that, from Kuwait, Hussein planned to stage an invasion of Saudi Arabia that if successful would give
him control of twenty percent of the world's oil production. In response to Hussein's move, an international coalition was formed to liberate Kuwait and safeguard oil production (and prices) from Hussein's unreliable grip.

The coalition was headed by the U.S. and, on August 8, 1990, Bush initiated Operation Desert Shield which positioned thousands of U.S. troops and weapons in Saudi Arabia. On November 29, 1990, the Security Council approved the use of military force against Iraq if it did not withdraw its troops from Kuwait by January 15, 1991. Hussein refused to back down and, on January 16, Bush declared war on Iraq. He unleashed Operation Desert Storm, a combined air and ground attack, on Iraqi forces in Kuwait. Two generals, H. Norman Schwarzkopf and Colin Powell, were assigned to lead the 300,000 U.S. and 200,000 allied troops. Operation Desert Storm was broadcast live, via satellite, into U.S. living rooms. For the next five weeks, U.S. viewers watched the Iraqi capital of Baghdad "light up under a hail of anti-aircraft fire flashing across the night sky" (Kallen, A Cultural History... The 1990s 38). Ground forces moved in on February 24 in an attack that lasted exactly one hundred hours and, by February 27, the Persian Gulf War was over. U.S. troops suffered 148 casualties while an estimated 100,000 Iraqi soldiers died and another 300,000 were wounded.2

The positive impact of Operation Desert Storm on Bush's popularity proved to weaken as the economic "storm" of the eighties and nineties continued. Further, as the 1992 presidential election approached, Bush faced strong competition from two opponents. The Democratic candidate was five-term Arkansas governor, William "Bill" Clinton, and the surprisingly popular Independent candidate was Texas businessman and billionaire, Ross Perot. Perot's strategy was to voice, as he saw it, the public's mass dissatisfaction with the Republican and Democratic parties. He told Americans that they were the "owners of the nation" and that it was "about time that they derived benefit from such ownership" (Axelrod 328). Clinton focused on the economy,
displaying sympathy for the working and middle class families who had not benefited from Reaganomics. According to Kallen, Clinton won immense public approval for knowing the price of a loaf of bread while George Bush clearly demonstrated otherwise, expressing surprise at an electric price scanner which implied he had not shopped for his own groceries in some time (A Cultural History...The 1990s 16). Clinton also was popular because of his politically central platform. Like most Republicans, Clinton supported free trade, fiscal conservatism, and welfare reform and, like most Democrats, he believed in universal healthcare, help for the working poor, and a woman's right to choose abortion. He also promised that the ethnic and gender makeup of his administration would resemble that of the nation itself. Clinton's strategies proved successful and, in 1992, he garnered forty-three percent of the popular vote while Bush claimed a close thirty-eight, and Perot came in third with an astounding nineteen percent (Axelrod 328).

Under Clinton's leadership, the state of the economy did improve. The unemployment rate fell to 4.3 percent, the lowest in twenty-nine years, and the economy experienced the longest period of expansion in the nation's history (The Digital Decade: The 90s 70). Clinton aided the working class by increasing the earned income tax credit, inaugurating a domestic version of the Peace Corps called AmeriCorps, and creating a twenty-four billion dollar Children's Health Insurance Program to provide medical coverage for up to five million children. In line with Republican agendas, Clinton imposed time limits and work requirements on mothers in the welfare system. He also aided public safety and education by allocating federal dollars for one hundred thousand new police officers and the same number in school teachers. Lastly, Clinton honored his campaign promise to diversify the White House by appointing more women and minorities to government positions.

For the most part, U.S. citizens were pleased with the "moderate Democratic president" who carried out a "moderate Republican agenda" (Kallen, A Cultural History...The 1990s 24),
and, in 1996, Clinton became the first Democrat to be reelected to the presidency since 1936. The country also reelected the Republican Congress. As Kallen points out, the voters sent a strong message that the people of the U.S. "didn't trust either party enough to let them run the country without opposition" (A Cultural History...The 1990s 24).

Although Clinton's approval ratings were good, his presidency was not flawless as evidenced by two scandals regarding sexual misconduct. First, in 1994, Paula Jones, a former Arkansas state employee, accused Clinton of sexually harassing her in a hotel room in 1991 when he was governor of Arkansas. Clinton did not admit to the charges but, in 1998, he agreed to settle the case for $850,000 (The Digital Decade: The 90s 73). Second, while investigating a shady real estate venture called Whitewater, special prosecutor Kenneth Starr revealed Clinton's more recent affair with Monica Lewinsky, a twenty-one year old White House intern. Starr's lengthy and prurient report was publicly aired in newspapers and on the Internet and, as a result, "the office of the presidency was brought to one of the lowest points in history" (The Digital Decade: The 90s 28). While, in general, the U.S. public felt that Clinton's misconduct was too eagerly spectacularized by an overzealous press, the Republican Congress felt otherwise. On December 19, 1998, the House voted on four articles of impeachment. Two of the four were passed by the House but neither received the required two-thirds majority vote in the Senate. Clinton, therefore, continued his second term as President although his credibility was severely damaged.

Sexual scandal also rocked the 1991 Senate confirmation hearings of Supreme Court Justice candidate Clarence Thomas. During the hearings, Anita Hill, a law professor at the University of Oklahoma, accused Thomas of sexually harassing her when they worked together at the Department of Education and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. As would be the case with the Clinton scandals, media attention sparked intense public interest for the
details of the alleged harassment. Despite Hill's persuasive testimony, Thomas was confirmed as a Supreme Court Judge, slipping through on a 52-48 vote, the lowest approval ever of a successful candidate. Hill's testimony was credited with shedding light on sexual harassment in the workplace and, after the Thomas-Hill hearings, claims of sexual harassment skyrocketed (Kallen, A Cultural History...The 1990s 75).

On a more clearly positive note for women, Clinton named Janet Reno the first female U.S. Attorney General and appointed Madeline Allbright to the post of Secretary of State, another female first. Air Force Colonel Eileen M. Collins became the first female commander of a space shuttle flight and Carly Fiorina became the first female CEO of a Fortune 500 company. She headed up Hewlett-Packard, the world's second largest computer company.

During his campaign, Bill Clinton told the gay community, "I have a vision for America and you're part of it" (The Digital Decade: The 90s 82). Clinton's acknowledgment and acceptance appeared to reflect, if not also inform, the public's general sentiments toward homosexuals. During the nineties, eleven states banned discrimination against homosexuals, and corporations, from Disney to Xerox, extended benefits to same-sex domestic partners (The Digital Decade: The 90s 82). Gay Pride parades took place around the country and, in 1993, an estimated 750,000 marched in Washington, D.C. in support of gay rights.

On the other hand, when Clinton attempted to lift the ban on homosexuals in the military, a "don't ask, don't tell" policy was instituted instead. In effect, homosexuals were allowed to enlist in the armed forces as long as they did not identify themselves as homosexual. Another setback arose in 1996 when Clinton signed the Defense of Marriage Act which gave authority to individual states to disregard same sex marriages performed in other states. The act also denied gay married couples the federal benefits enjoyed by straight married couples.
The state of gay rights in the U.S. received a tragic telling in 1998 when Matthew Shepard, an openly gay student at the University of Wyoming, was tied to a fence and pistol-whipped for being a homosexual. The assailants were two young men in their early twenties, Russell Henderson and Aaron McKinney. After the beating, the pair left Shepard tied to the fence where he was later discovered and rushed to a hospital. Shepard lay in a coma for five days before he died. As news of the crime spread, vigils were held across the country. Some gathered to oppose such acts of violence against homosexuals while others gathered to affirm that Shepard got what he deserved. The divided response clarified to advocates of gay rights that the equal rights and social acceptance of homosexuals was yet a long way off.

The state of African Americans, and particularly young males, also was clarified when statistics revealed that the average life expectancy for black men was sixty-five years of age as compared to seventy-three years for white males. The main cause of death for young black men was murder, and nearly one in three black men between the ages of twenty and twenty-nine were in prison or on probation. Many blacks felt that their problems were due to social injustices and that the country needed to change before they could change. Others, such as Louis Farrakhan, felt the reverse.

In October 1995, Farrakhan, a Nation of Islam Leader, organized the "Million Man March" which brought four hundred thousand black men to Washington, D.C., to pledge their solidarity to each other and to their community. According to Kallen, the marchers made the following pledge: "I will strive to improve myself spiritually, morally, mentally, socially, politically, and economically for the benefit of myself, my family, and my people" (A Cultural History... The 1990s 82). Farrakhan, who was the keynote speaker at the rally, urged the men to help bring an end to "black-on-black" crime, to renew their belief in the importance of the family, and to become more politically active. Farrakhan's prompting followed directly on the
heels of two events that highlighted the nation's divided opinions on race, race relations, and how they play out in the legal system if not also the mass media.

On March 3, 1991, Rodney King, a young unarmed black motorist, was pulled over for speeding on a California freeway. The arrest was videotaped by bystander George Holliday. The eighty-one second video showed three police officers knock King to the ground and beat him with batons. Another officer shot King with a stun gun. The officers then tied King's hands and feet together and kicked at him while shouting racial epithets. Holliday took his tape to the local police station to file an assault report and, when no action was taken by the police, Holliday resorted to a Los Angeles TV station, KTLA. The station aired the footage which was picked up by CNN and shown across the country. The police officers were put on trial and promptly acquitted by an all white jury. After the verdict was announced, three days of rioting, arson, and looting erupted in the city's predominately black neighborhood of South Central Los Angeles. The riots left fifty-one people dead and caused an estimated one billion dollars in property damage (Courtenay-Thompson and Phelps 672). During the rioting, Reginald Denny, a white truck driver, was on his way to warn a black friend about the violence. As he drove through the crowded streets, he was pulled from his truck and beaten by four black youths. Two of the assailants were convicted of assault. In light of the police officers' acquittal, the convictions further substantiated, for the black community and many whites too, that the legal system enacted a double-standard in its treatment of whites and blacks.

Another legal incident that tested race relations was the trial and acquittal of O.J. Simpson, a black celebrity and ex-football player. On June 12, 1994, Simpson's ex-wife, Nicole Brown Simpson, and her friend, Ron Goldman, both white, were murdered outside of Nicole Simpson's home. O.J. Simpson became the prime suspect and, on June 17, was charged with two counts of murder. On January 25, 1995, the so-called "trial of the century" (Biddle 233) of the
so-called "most sensational crime of the decade" began (The Digital Decade: The 90s 26). As Epstein observes, the media blitz, which included nonstop television coverage, turned the trial into a circus. Everyone, from the lawyers to Judge Ito himself, "seemed to be playing to the cameras" (234). Prosecutors Marcia Clark and Christopher Darden painted a picture of Simpson as "a control freak who had previously stalked and beaten Nicole" whereas Simpson's "dream team" of Johnnie Cochran, Robert Shapiro and F. Lee Bailey argued that their client was "the innocent victim of either the sheer incompetence of the L. A. police department" or a "massive conspiracy masterminded by racist LAPD officer Mark Fuhrman" (Epstein 234). In light of these charges, it appeared that the L.A. legal system was on trial too and, despite ample evidence against him, Simpson was acquitted on October 3, 1995, by a jury of nine blacks, two whites and one Hispanic.5

Kallen reports that when the verdict was publicly announced, television cameras captured blacks cheering and clapping their hands while whites around the country were shown "shaking their heads in disbelief" (A Cultural History . . .The 1990s 85). Polls taken immediately after the trial revealed that seventy-eight percent of blacks thought Simpson was innocent and seventy-five percent of whites thought he was guilty (The Digital Decade: The 90s 26). Further, eighty percent of blacks felt that Simpson had received a fair trial while only fifty percent of whites thought the jury was "fair and impartial" (Kallen, A Cultural History . . .The 1990s 85). As in the Rodney King case, the trial of O.J. Simpson revealed a deep national divide among racial lines while it also called into question the role and influence of the media on how the trial played out and on public opinion generally.

Violent crimes, in general, became an increasing concern in the nineties as the number of deaths by handguns in the U.S. far outnumbered those in other countries. For instance, in 1990, handgun deaths numbered 10 in Australia, 13 in Sweden, 22 in the United Kingdom, 68 in
Canada, 87 in Japan, and 10,567 in the U.S. (Courtenay-Thompson and Phelps 648). Handgun violence was becoming such an epidemic that, on November 30, 1993, Clinton signed the Brady Bill which required a five day waiting period and background check for anyone purchasing a handgun.\textsuperscript{6}

The most violent crimes in the U.S. were committed by young men between the ages of fifteen and nineteen, a statistic that was amply demonstrated in the rash of shooting incidents that occurred in schools in 1998 and 1999 (Epstein 231).\textsuperscript{7} The most extreme case occurred on April 20, 1999, at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado. Two Columbine students, eighteen year old Eric Harris and seventeen year old Dylan Klebold, were apparently obsessed with the Nazis and, on Hitler's birthday, they staged their attack. Armed with four firearms and thirty homemade bombs, the two boys shot their schoolmates one by one, killing twelve students and a teacher. Another twenty-three students were wounded. After the assault, Harris and Klebold turned the weapons on themselves and took their own lives.

While inner-city youth crime had been tolerated, once it erupted in the largely white suburbs of the nation, a more concentrated (and publicized) search for reasons and redressive measures was pursued. Many blamed gun control laws which they felt were not stringent enough. Others blamed the parents for not knowing what was going on in the lives of their children. Video games came under fire too, such as the popular "Mortal Kombat" which contained a "finishing move" that allowed players to rip out the heart of their opponent (Epstein 227). The violent content of prime time television shows was faulted also. Feeling the pressure, the major television networks agreed in 1996 to establish a ratings system to help parents monitor their children's viewing of violent programs. A "TV-Y" rating meant that the show was suitable for all young viewers while, at the other end, a "TV-M" rating was assigned to programs intended for mature audiences only.
Still others took a close look at the possible influence of militia groups, particularly in regard to the school shootings perpetrated by white rural or suburban, middle to working class students. The theory was that such students shared a similar demographic and ideological base as many militia members and hence were susceptible to militia propaganda. Understanding themselves to be "patriots" and the U.S. government, an enemy of the people, militia groups typically argue that, as written, the U.S. Constitution sanctions their actions to "overthrow a tyrannical [U.S.] government by "any means necessary" (The Digital Decade: The 90s 52).

Members stockpile weapons, ammunition and war supplies that can be used to carry out their aims and, as of the nineties, hundreds of militia groups further their cause by means of internet home pages (The Digital Decade: The 90s 52). The sites allow militia members across the country to voice their dissatisfaction with the U.S. government, raise money, and rally others to join them.

One such militia member was Ted Kaczynski, better known as the Unabomber. Contrary to the aforementioned use of technology by militia groups, Kaczynski's specific aim was to highlight the negative effect that technology had on society and the environment. To accomplish his goal, Kaczynski mailed bombs to individuals who worked in high tech fields. His first bombs were mailed to university and airline employees; and hence he derived his nickname, the UN(iversity) A(irline) bomber. He also mailed bombs to advertising executives, scientists, and computer experts. Kaczynski's sporadic attacks occurred over a period of eighteen years, during which he killed three people and injured twenty-three others. The FBI finally caught up to and arrested him in 1996.

The FBI confronted another and quite different member of the militia three years earlier in Waco, Texas. Thirty-four year old David Koresh believed he was the second Messiah. He and over a hundred followers or "Branch Davidians" lived in a rural compound called the "Ranch
Apocalypse" where, it was learned, they were stockpiling weapons to be used in an "apocalyptic battle" against nonbelievers. When FBI officers made a move on the compound in February 1993, the Davidians opened fire. Four agents were killed and Koresh himself was wounded in the exchange. A fifty-one day standoff followed, the FBI siege ending on April 19 when government tanks stormed and pumped tear gas into the compound. Moments later, the compound buildings caught fire. In the end, more than eighty people, including twenty-four children and David Koresh, died.

As with some of the events I have discussed above, the initial attack, siege and tragic explosion of the Branch Davidian compound was taped, in this case by TV news crews, and broadcast to millions of viewers across the nation. On the one hand, the presence of the media allowed the public to scrutinize the actions of their government and debate the rights of both parties. On the other hand, the framing rhetoric of the media and its commodification of the event gave rise to questions regarding the ethics of such coverage and its impact on the event and public opinion.

A third event that arose from the actions of a militia-related individual was the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Office Building in Oklahoma City. On April 19, 1995, Timothy McVeigh, a disgruntled Gulf War veteran, concealed a homemade bomb in a Ryder rental truck which he parked and left at the building. The truck exploded at 9:02 a.m. when the building was filled with governmental workers. The bomb devastated the nine-story building which housed the local offices of the Department of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, Secret Service, Social Security Administration, Veteran's Affairs Bureau, and Drug Enforcement Administration. The section of the building that was hit the hardest was the day-care center on the second floor which was located directly above the blast. The explosion killed 169 people, including nineteen children, and left 614 wounded (The Digital Decade: The 90s 26).
At first, it was suspected that foreign terrorists were responsible for the bombing. However, within days, McVeigh and his accomplice, Terry Nichols, were charged. McVeigh was convicted on eleven counts of murder and conspiracy and sentenced to die by lethal injection. Nichols was found guilty on one count of conspiracy to use a weapon of destruction and eight counts of involuntary manslaughter of federal agents. According to Courtenay-Thomson and Phelps, "the death toll, extent of destruction, and psychological impact upon the nation" rank the Oklahoma City bombing with other "nation-binding tragedies," such as the assassination of John F. Kennedy and the bombing of Pearl Harbor (686).

Foreign terrorists were responsible for the bombing of the World Trade Center in 1993. On February 26, a van loaded with explosives detonated in the parking garage of the World Trade Center. The explosion killed five people, injured over a thousand, and caused $705 million in damages. One year later, four men who were followers of Egyptian sheikh Omar Abdel Rahman were convicted in the bombing. The group had tried to blow up the World Trade Center "to protest U.S. policy in the Middle East" (Courtenay-Thompson and Phelps 676).

The violence of the decade spilled over into the world of sports as well, giving rise to three rather curious events. On April 30, 1993, tennis champion Monica Seles was stabbed in the back at a tennis tournament in Germany. Seles' attacker was a deranged fan of Seles' opponent, Steffi Graf. The fan admitted to stabbing Seles so as to insure that Graf would be the world's number one female tennis player.

The competition was equally brutal in the world of figure skating. In 1994, U.S. figure skater Nancy Kerrigan was clubbed on the knee after a practice session five weeks before the Olympic games in Lillehammer, Norway. It was discovered that the assault was planned by Kerrigan's competitor, U.S. skater Tonya Harding, and three associates including Harding's
husband. Kerrigan eventually recovered from the attack and Harding was banned from Olympic, world, and national competition for life.

The third event occurred in the boxing ring when former heavyweight champion Mike Tyson bit off a part of Evander Holyfield's right ear in Round Three of their 1997 WBA match. Tyson was disqualified moments later when he bit into Holyfield's left ear lobe.

But not everyone was a bad sport in the nineties. A number of on-field triumphs occurred without tangential violence. In 1997, twenty-one year old golfer Tiger Woods won the Masters Tournament by a record twelve strokes and thereby became the youngest Masters champion and the first African American to win any one of the four major professional tournaments. In 1998, fifteen year old U.S. figure skater Tara Lipinski became the youngest person ever to win the Olympic gold medal in figure skating. In 1999, U.S. cyclist Lance Armstrong won the rigorous Tour de France less than two years after battling testicular cancer. Lastly, in 1998, baseball players Mark McGwire and Sammy Sosa both broke Roger Maris' 1961 record of sixty-one home runs. Sosa topped out his season with sixty-six homers while McGwire finished with an incredible seventy-one home runs.

On the field of amateur sports, in-line skating replaced jogging as the most popular form of exercise in the U.S. Other trendy sports included snowboarding, mountain biking, and mountain climbing. The latter could be performed on an actual mountain or on artificial climbing walls located in- or outdoors. Also in the nineties, a subculture of "adrenaline junkies," who were constantly on the lookout for "novel, exciting, and often dangerous physical challenges," created an area of sport called "extreme sports" (The Digital Decade: The 90s 80). Extreme sports included sky surfing, street luge, and bungee jumping. Sky surfing involved sky diving with a board strapped to the feet while, in street luge, participants lay on a roller sled without brakes and hurtled downhill at extreme speeds. The most popular extreme sport of the
decade, however, was bungee jumping. Bungee jumping involved leaping from a great height, usually off a bridge or tower, with an elastic cord attached to the ankles. The cord kept jumpers from crashing to the ground while allowing them to bounce back up in the air like a yo-yo.

A less extreme but no less trendy "rush" of the decade was caffeine and, in turn, coffee houses. During the nineties, the nation's nearly seven hundred coffee houses suddenly multiplied into ten thousand (The Digital Decade: The 90s 94). Coffee bars such as Starbucks were especially popular with college students and young professionals. Cybercafes, which combined coffee and computers, also increased in number.

On the music scene, The Digital Decade: The 90s describes the decade as "the age of everything" (141). While this may be true, in quantitative terms, pop music in diverse forms came to the forefront. Hip-hop remained popular and Latin pop entered the mainstream thanks to Puerto Rican born singer Ricky Martin. Teen pop, such as that performed by The Back Street Boys, had an enormous appeal among preadolescents and also their parents as the group sported a clean-cut look and style. The wholesome image carried over into country music which began to sound a lot like pop. According to The Digital Decade: The 90s, Garth Brooks' 1991 album Ropin' the Wind had "little in common with the drinkin' and cheatin' tunes" typically associated with country music (146). Brooks' album became the first ever to reach the top of both the country and pop charts. Billy Ray Cyrus, also a musician of the pop-country craze, started a line-dancing revival with his song, "Achy Breaky Heart." Similarly, the image of the tainted trod-upon female country artist was transformed by pop-country singers Faith Hill and Shania Twain. Faith Hill, who had both double- and triple-platinum albums during the decade, brought "high fashion" to country with her "cover-girl" looks (The Digital Decade: The 90s 146). Likewise, Shania Twain emphasized her femininity in her appearance and lyrics.
On the opposite end of the music scene was "grunge" which derived its name from its corresponding look as much as from its music. Grunge consisted of rock's disgruntled youth who strove to counter the pop trends of the decade with their "litanies of youthful despair." By incorporating elements of punk and heavy metal, grunge groups, such as Nirvana, Soundgarden, and Pearl Jam, "howled the pain of a new generation" (The Digital Decade: The 90s 142). Their "howl" proved popular and, somewhat ironically, was appropriated into the pop mainstream that the groups had so vehemently rejected. Likewise, the grunge look became a fashion staple as many young people outfitted themselves in torn jeans, ripped flannel shirts and knit caps. The grunge look was complemented with either Doc Martens or combat boots and unkempt hair.

Youths also traded so-called "black" and "white" fashion elements as many white kids began to wear twisted braids, dreadlocks, and the hi-tops (of the fifties) re-popularized by African American hip-hop artists. In turn, blacks and also whites adopted the low-on-the-hips-baggy-butt-show-your-boxers pant style of white rapper Marky Mark. Tattooing and body piercing also were popular among youths. Along with tattooing ankles, shoulders, backs, and buttocks, young men and women pierced their noses, navels, nipples, and eyelids.

While fashion in corporate America was less liberal, it was at least more relaxed than it had been in the eighties. "Casual Fridays" became popular. The Digital Decade: The 90s reports that nearly seventy-five percent of the Fortune 500 companies allowed "business casual" at least one day per week. The idea was that, given the increased number of younger employees, a more casual, comfortable dress code would boost employee productivity and morale (88).

Movies in the 1990s portrayed a wide range of subjects and themes. Quenton Tarantino's Pulp Fiction (1994) explored the drug culture in a fusion of styles. Ethan and Joel Coen presented a bizarre and amusing tale of murder in Fargo (1996), and Steven Spielberg offered a stirring evocation of the Holocaust in Schindler's List (1993). During the nineties, Tom Hanks
starred in a total of ten films and won two best actor Oscars in a row, one for his portrayal of an AIDS victim in *Philadelphia* (1993), and the other for his performance of the endearing title character in *Forrest Gump* (1994).

Several films of the decade came under fire for their extremely violent or highly erotic content. The films included Spike Lee's *Malcom X*, Paul Verhoeven's *Basic Instinct*, and Quentin Tarantino's *Reservoir Dogs*, all released in 1992. Aware of the increasing violent and sexual content in films, the Motion Picture Association revised its rating system to include the rating NC-17 which meant that no one under age seventeen would be admitted to the show. Wanting wide public exposure, many directors edited certain scenes from their films so as to earn the more audience-friendly "R" rating.

The decade's most popular movies made use of new computer technology to create spectacular special effects. Industrial Light & Magic (ILM), founded by George Lucas, became the world's largest digital production facility. Lucas founded ILM to help him create his first *Star Wars* film in 1977. In the nineties, Lucas used digital imagery to create the dinosaurs in *Jurassic Park* (1993), and ninety percent of the images in *Star Wars: Episode 1 - The Phantom Menace* (1999). The latter film included the first all-digital principal character, Jar Jar Binks. Other films of the decade that relied upon digital technology included *Armageddon* (1998), *Independence Day* (1996), *Twister* (1996), and *Titanic* (1997). Respective to each film, digital technology was used to create a gargantuan earthbound asteroid, enormous alien space ships, flying cows, and a spectacular sinking ship.

As I noted at the beginning of the chapter, advancements in digital technology transformed the way the nation and the world communicated, worked, and played in the nineties. In addition to the increase of PCs in homes and Internet access, laptop computers became hugely popular as they made it possible for individuals to work almost anywhere. Personal Digital
Assistants (PDAs), such as Palm Pilots, came on the scene in 1992. PDAs allowed users to track and alter addresses, phone numbers, and personal to-do lists in a portable, pocket-size instrument. The cellular phone, which was an anomaly in the 1980s, became so popular in the nineties that by the end of the decade, over seventy million people in the U.S. had cell phone service (The Digital Decade: The 90s 108). Digital or "virtual" pets enjoyed favor too. By the push of a few buttons, owners were able to feed, walk or play with their tiny companion although, if neglected, the virtual pet would virtually die.

Many in the U.S. relied upon computers for their shopping needs as e-commerce, the selling of goods and services over the Internet, became popular. By the end of the decade, consumers were using their computers to purchase airline tickets, order books, shop for groceries, buy clothing and accessories, and even purchase cars and houses. Traditional retailers scrambled to establish their own websites as e-commerce business totaled more than one hundred billion dollars (The Digital Decade: The 90s 24).

Computer technology also played a significant role in two scientific breakthroughs of the decade. The first of these was gene splicing. Gene splicing enabled scientists to repair or alter the body's cells by using any of the estimated one hundred billion genes present in human DNA. In short, genetic information from a healthy gene could be spliced into a defective gene where it would replicate and thereby repair the faulty gene. Gene therapy trials got under way immediately for cancer, AIDS, cystic fibrosis, and other diseases in which gene splicing may prove beneficial.8

The second scientific breakthrough concerned cloning. Like gene splicing, cloning consisted of manipulating DNA. In 1997, researchers at the Roslin Institute in Edinburg, Scotland, created a cloned sheep named Dolly by extracting DNA from a single cell of an adult ewe. Dolly excited an ethical controversy in the scientific and other communities. Advocates
argued that cloning would prove useful in the field of medicine for regenerating damaged spinal cords, heart muscles, and brain tissue. They also asserted that agriculture and, in turn, the world's population would benefit because high producing breeds of stock could be created and replicated. Detractors argued the same point but in the negative, claiming that such experimentation would lead to a like delineation of "supreme" and "inferior" DNA stock in people. Opponents also claimed that the natural process of reproduction would be defiled with the possibilities of virgin births and parents producing exact replicas of themselves.

In addition to ethical worries, a potential technical glitch in the use of advanced technology troubled the world as the turn of the century approached. Termed the Y2K bug, the worry was that the two-digit computer dating system would treat the rollover into the year 2000 as if it were 1900. Many believed that the moment the clocks hit midnight on December 31, the world's computer systems would cease to operate correctly. Doomsayers predicted that accounts in banking systems would disappear, water supplies would be cut off, airplanes would crash due to air traffic control failures, electrical blackouts would occur around the world, and nuclear weapons would be accidentally launched. These and other predictions succeeded in causing widespread panic across the U.S. and the world. In fact, Courtenay-Thompson and Phelps report that an estimated seventy-two percent of Americans stayed home on New Year's Eve because of uncertainty regarding what would happen at midnight (710). Fortunately, the fear began to fade and celebrants began to relax as city after city around the world rang in the year 2000 without incident.
Television Trends

Advancements in digital technologies also impacted television production, programming, and viewer habits in the nineties. As individuals discovered the Internet, an increasing number chose to spend their time at their computers rather than in front of their television sets. Not only did the net offer them news and entertainment, it allowed the user to control, if not the precise content, the selection, amount, sequencing, and speed of information they consumed. In short, the net and its multifarious links allowed consumers to become co-producers of the information they accessed.

Of course, digital programs and systems facilitated television production too. Cable networks, in particular, benefited. By 1993, they were able to program and send ten channels in the space once occupied by a single channel (Sackett 330). Viewers then had immense options as regards to what they accessed and watched on TV and, in this way, cable programming imitated the allure of the Internet.

Although, throughout its history, television news programming had marketed itself as offering viewers the most up-to-the-minute and on-the-spot coverage of an event, digital taping, editing, and broadcasting greatly facilitated such offerings. They enhanced the range of events, the speed of broadcast, and the efficiency of editing. One result of these benefits was an increase in programming that featured "real life" events or what came to be known as reality TV or "infotainment." Like a good bit of entertainment, infotainment tended to highlight the intense conflict, emotional drama, and spectacular aspects of the featured situation. In other words, infotainment edited "real life" footage so as to create an image of real life that looked very like a conventional fiction film or TV drama. In many cases, the result was programming where "good taste, considerateness, and respect [fell] by the wayside" (The Digital Decade: The 90s 26).
As I mentioned above in my overview of the nineties, the real life events of the Clinton-Lewinsky scandal, the Thomas-Hill hearings, the Branch Davidian tragedy, and the Rodney King and O.J. Simpson cases were closely followed and influenced by the media. In the latter case, the nonstop television coverage of the trial was made even more "entertaining" by supplementary programs that featured, for instance, biographical footage that showed aspects of O.J.'s or Nicole's or the couple's life, interviews with people directly, indirectly, and not at all involved in the case, and legal experts debating the evidence. Generally, the rhetorical aim of this infotainment-blitz was to highlight the prurient and spectacular aspects of the case and, also, to emphasize the crisis or side-taking behavior of those involved and the public generally. In short, the infotainment privileged the crisis rather than redressive stage of this particular social drama and thereby informed or at least substantiated crisis behavior in the public at large.

Related to infotainment was the rash of made-for-TV docudramas that were produced in the nineties. The Branch Davidian tragedy became a movie within months of the actual event. A docudrama of the Lyle and Erik Menendez case was aired on TV before the actual trial was over.10 Lastly, the story of Amy Fisher, a sixteen year old teen who shot her older lover's wife, was treated in not one but three TV docudramas during the 1992-1993 season. The movie titles suggest how "real life" was rendered in each case: ABC premiered with The Amy Fisher Story. CBS countered with Casualties of Love: The "Long Island Lolita" Story which NBC transformed into Lethal Lolita--Amy Fisher: My Story. While the cases I have noted above seem ripe for infotainment or docudrama treatments, more mundane subjects were made to fit the genre too. The wardrobes, dates, jobs, homes, pets, and marriages of everyday "real life" people provided producers with ample material for infotainment shows, the vast supply being met by the vast demand of the cable networks.
Generational demographics also influenced television programming in the nineties. According to Kallen, there were almost thirty-one million teenagers in the U.S. in 1998 and the number continued to increase steadily thereafter (A Cultural History... The 1990s 87). Since teens proved to be the largest consumer group of media and media-related products, many television programs were directed toward their interests and concerns. Morreale reports that since cable networks were not bound by the same standards as the national networks, it was easier for them to gear their programming toward the "younger, more cynical audiences" (248).

As discussed above, digital technology, the Internet, cable production, the genre of infotainment, and demographics impacted the sitcoms of the nineties in a number of ways. First, the eighties' strategy of narrow-casting continued due to the teen factor I mentioned above, the perceived diversity of the U.S. public, and also to compete with the multiple content options offered on the Internet. Second, digital artistry was integrated into the shows, particularly in the opening and closing themes and the transitions between scenes. Third and related, digital editing allowed easy alterations to be made in the recurring elements of the shows, such as the opening and closing themes. Fourth and in turn, such alterations addressed the general understanding that, in order to compete with the Internet and cable programming, network shows needed to strategize ways to capture and retain their audience's interests. By altering recurring elements (e.g., altering the theme) each week, producers hoped to pique their audience's curiosity and their involvement in the show. Fifth, as in infotainment, many sitcoms integrated "real life" footage of the production process, resulting in reflexivity and, in some cases, a critical deconstruction of sitcom conventions. Similarly, as in docudramas, a good many sitcoms attempted to render content so that it looked authentic to "real life" or, more precisely, looked more like the "real life" of their targeted audience.
In addition to these factors, sitcoms were influenced by the social-historical and cultural events and trends of the decade(s), and the formats and conventions of the sitcom tradition. Reflective of the increasing number of both men and women in the work force, economic concerns, and the emphasis on material gain (and loss), the vast majority of the 1990s sitcoms were workplace sitcoms. Further, most featured young, white, unmarried, urban, upscale characters. The shows were *Spin City*, *The Drew Carey Show*, *Frasier*, *Cybill*, *Veronica's Closet*, *Love & War*, *Suddenly Susan*, *Murphy Brown*, *Doogie Howser, M.D.*, and *Will and Grace*. The working lives of young, white, urban, upscale and also married couples were featured in *Mad About You* and *Dharma & Greg*. A few sitcoms featured young, middle class or blue-collar characters. *Wings* dealt with the employees of a struggling commuter airline. *Grace Under Fire* followed the life of a divorced mother who worked in an oil refinery. *Coach* focused on a college football coach while *Hangin' with Mr. Cooper* explored the life of a high school basketball coach. Lastly, *The Nanny* took a look at an ex-sales clerk turned caretaker for the children of a Broadway producer.

As with most of the workplace sitcoms, the buddy sitcoms of the decade featured young, white, unmarried, urban, upscale characters. The shows were *Seinfeld*, *Ellen*, and *Friends*. These three sitcoms and a good handful of others also integrated the Generation X attitudes and quandaries I discussed in my overview. One network sitcom, *The Fresh Prince of Bel Air*, focused on a black rapper from a tough Philadelphia neighborhood who was sent to live with his wealthy relatives in Bel Air, California. The remaining network sitcoms focused on the nuclear family and its ability, or not, to handle typical family conflicts and, in light of the times, financial strife, changing gender roles, and teens with Generation X world views. The shows were *Home Improvement*, *Roseanne*, *Married...With Children*, *3rd Rock from the Sun*, and *Everybody Loves Raymond*. 206
In addition to these offerings, cable networks produced a number of digitally animated sitcoms targeted directly at the younger market. The Simpsons, The Family Guy, and King of the Hill focused on the nuclear family while Beavis and Butt-Head and South Park were buddy sitcoms. Cable networks also offered sitcoms that centered on the lives of young African American male characters, such as Martin and Roc.

My selection and discussion of the sitcom themes of the nineties fall into three main sections. First, I analyze three themes from the domestic sitcoms Roseanne (1988-97), Married...With Children (1987-97), and The Simpsons (1989-). All three shows deconstruct the idealized nuclear family common to the sitcom tradition. As Mayerle offers, they take issue "with the sanitized family unit," offering divergent views of family roles and relationships (112). The shows also reflect the financial concerns of families in the nineties who did not benefit from Reaganomics. Further, all three families include Generation X teens. However, despite their similarities, the postmodern song each sings is quite different, ranging from nihilism to criticism to guarded celebration.

In the second section, I discuss the theme of Home Improvement (1991-99), which in terms of sitcom categories fuses domestic and workplace formats. In the show itself, the postmodern understanding of constructed realities is handled in a subtle and savvy way, the various episodes implying that improvements to family and home do not just happen; they need to be "worked on" or "built" in consciously chosen ways. The opening theme is more direct in its celebration of constructing healthy homes and families. It also makes use of computer-generated graphics, crafting this bardic aspect of the 1990s in an inventive way.

In the third section, I describe and analyze the theme of Dharma & Greg (1997-2002), covering how it reflects our nineties' "idea of ourselves." As a result, aspects of diversity, digital artistry, and reflexivity arise. To close, I focus solely on one of these bardic norms of the
nineties, diversity and variety, in the themes of Everybody Loves Raymond (1996-), Frasier (1993-), and The Drew Carey Show (1995-). A list of these theme songs in their complete form can be found in Appendix D.

Analysis of Themes

The sitcom Roseanne centers around the Conners, a blue-collar working class family who constantly struggle to pay their bills and put food on the table. The Conner family is comprised of a Mom, Dad, and three children. Dan Conner, the father, is a large sensitive man who works as a small-time subcontractor and dry waller. His wife, Roseanne, is large too and holds down a variety of dead-end jobs to help supplement the family income. The oldest daughter, Becky, is attractive and intelligent and likes to spend time with her sleazy boyfriends. The middle daughter, Darlene, is the brooding, artistic type with a cynical outlook on life, a classic example of the Generation X youth culture. The youngest child and son, D.J., is a gullible underachiever and the brunt of his sisters' teasing. The family is rounded out by Roseanne's sister, Jackie, who serves as Roseanne's ever-present confidante and Dan's annoying thorn in the side.

The opening theme of Roseanne is loosely structured in its visual and acoustic elements. The "raw, rural, earthy" sound of the music is created by a tenor sax, harmonica, acoustic guitar, bass drums, and piano (Burlingame 196). The blues music underscores the visual theme which consists of the camera "panning" around the Conner family as they sit at their dinner table in the kitchen. Although the specific content of the family meal changes from season to season, the basic format remains the same. The camera always begins with a medium shot of Roseanne and then, in a continual clockwise motion, it reveals the other family members in medium shots as they eat and interact with each other. The name of each actor appears in white letters as the corresponding character comes into focus. As the camera moves around the table, it also offers a tour of the small, cluttered kitchen. On one wall, an open pantry exposes a stash of canned
goods and cereal boxes. On another, bronze jello mold pans hang on the wall like photographs. The kitchen windowsill is crowded with knick-knacks and the refrigerator is covered with haphazardly arranged drawings, photographs, and magnets. In the corner, a white plastic trash can lined with a white plastic trash bag (perhaps a metaphor for "white trash") is filled to overflowing. Both the laundry room and the living room are visible from the kitchen, emphasizing the small, cramped layout of the house. The camera completes its circle by returning to Roseanne who throws back her head and laughs.

In the first season of *Roseanne*, the family is assembled around the table, playing poker. A large blue bowl of popcorn sits on the table, a little off from the center. Dan has a can of beer in front of him while the remaining family members drink cans of generic root beer and grape soda from red plastic glasses. The "pot" at the center of the table consists of popcorn pieces and pretzel sticks. The camera begins on Roseanne who is shown holding her cards. The camera then pans around the table showing each family member as he or she plays the cards and munches on the snacks. The camera makes a full circle, returning to and stopping to focus on Roseanne who reaches across the table with both hands and swoops the pot toward her. She then throws back her head and laughs.

In a following season, the poker game and snacks are replaced by pizzas in cardboard boxes. Dan still has his beer while Roseanne drinks a generic root beer and the kids guzzle generic grape soda. The camera begins on Roseanne who takes a slice of pizza from one of the boxes and places it on the plate in front of her. The camera then pans clockwise as the other family members eat their slices of pizza and pass around a container of grated Parmesan cheese. The camera completes its circle once again, coming to a halt on Roseanne who, with her mouth full of half-chewed pizza, tosses back her head and laughs.
In yet another season, the pizza is replaced by Chinese food in take-out containers. Again, the camera begins on Roseanne, pans around the table, and returns. Roseanne opens her fortune cookie, reads her fortune, and tosses the slip of paper aside. She then reaches across the table and grabs Dan's slip of paper from his hands. She reads his fortune silently and then throws back her head and laughs.

The closing theme for *Roseanne* is the same in each season. The frame freezes on the last shot of the week's episode. The credits, written in white letters, flash over the frozen scene accompanied by improvisational blues music played on a harmonica.

In the opening theme, the bard deconstructs the idealized nuclear family common to the sitcom tradition. The bard extends his critique through the Conner family of the nineties, highlighting the elements of family cohesiveness, the domestic environment of the blue-collar working class, and the image of the mother figure.

Not unlike domestic sitcoms of the past, the family unit in Roseanne is shown to be a close-knit group of loving individuals despite their differences. In the theme, the cohesiveness of the group is implied by the presence of the entire family at the table eating dinner or playing a game together. The family's presence around the dinner table signifies that despite hectic work schedules they still manage to assemble for a meal and some quality time together. The circular shape of the table and pan of the camera are significant too. There is no "head" to the table and, although the camera begins and ends on Roseanne, indicating her position of authority, the circular arrangement of the family and the subsequent movement of the camera indicates that each member is equally important. Also, the family appears to be happy despite the blues music that underscores the scene. They smile and laugh as they interact with one another. Although life is not always smooth sailing in the Conner household, the family members support one
another through thick and thin and, as the initial and end frame suggests, Mom succeeds in holding her family together.

The setting for the opening theme is always the kitchen of the Conner home. The kitchen setting seems to support Roseanne's authority in so far as rooms in domestic settings are gender coded, in U.S. culture generally and in their representation in domestic sitcoms. The kitchen is mom's domain while the living room or den is dad's territory. Typically, in sitcoms, we may see the family eat breakfast or lunch in the kitchen, but dinner is usually taken in the dining room. For example, the middle class Cleavers, the Andy Taylor family, the *Home Improvement* Taylors, and the upper middle class Huxtables all eat dinner in the dining room. Even the blue-collar Bunker family tends to eat around a table in the dining room. Thus, the Conner family's gathering in the kitchen for dinner and family activities suggests that Roseanne's kitchen domain is the central, cohesive vortex of the family and home. In this way, the gendered space of the kitchen is revised since it is used and shared by the entire family. The kitchen setting also suggests an attempt to more accurately imitate the "real life" situations of most U.S. lower and middle class families who eat their meals in the kitchen, reserving the dining room for special occasion dinners or holidays.

The theme also includes visual and acoustic codes and signs of the blue-collar working class. The Conner family represents those who did not benefit from the Reagan and Bush economic policies. Pooling their resources, Dan and Roseanne just manage to scrape by on their dead-end jobs. Their economic situation is signified in the opening theme by the visual appearance of their domestic space. Their home and to an extent their food suggests that they are a working class family. The kitchen is small, cluttered and haphazardly "decorated." The dining set is not made of ornate, polished wood; rather it consists of a small fold-up table and inexpensive chairs. The cans of generic soda that litter the table suggest budgetary restrictions
and care in abiding by them. Within the context and tradition of domestic sitcoms, Dan's can of beer indicates the working class too, in so far as upscale dads either do not drink or do not drink beer at the family dinner table. Further, the abundance of pre-packaged and take-out food implies that the Conners lack the time or desire to prepare home cooked meals which, in the show proper, is substantiated by the long hours they work. In short, they have little time for culinary finesse.

While representing lower economic class families is not rare in the sitcom tradition, it is not as common as depicting middle class families. The Conners' economic situation is more in line with that of the Bunker family. Unlike the Bunkers, however, the Conners must rely on two incomes to make ends meet, a situation reflective of family financial realities in the eighties and nineties. In the show itself, Roseanne uses her humor to deal with the family's monetary woes. For instance, after Dan's motorcycle shop goes under, Roseane remarks, "I knew we shouldn't have gone into business for ourselves; there's no one to steal from." When Dan laments, "The biggest day in the history of the shop and the best I can do is not lose my house," Roseanne quips, "The nineties. Who knew?" Roseanne's response reflects the feelings of many who, after nearly a decade of Reaganomics, thought economic conditions would improve in the nineties. Although Clinton focused on the economy and displayed sympathy for the working and middle classes, most economic situations were slow to improve and many families continued to live from paycheck to paycheck.

In the theme, the return of the camera to focus on Roseanne suggests that she, not Dan, is the head of the family. Her claim to authority revises the traditional family roles and responsibilities as represented in domestic sitcoms, contrasting, for instance, the sitcoms of the fifties where "father knew best," the sixties emphasis on single father households, and the eighties return to father-centered sitcoms with the popularity of The Cosby Show.
The return of the camera along with the laughter highlights the actress, Roseanne Barr. The character of Roseanne Conner is based on the "domestic goddess" persona Barr created in her stand-up comedy routines. Thus, Barr is inflected through Connor. Since Roseanne is the producer and artistic director of the show, it is her persona, politics, and sense of humor that prevail in the sitcom. As producer and artistic director, Roseanne calls on the momentum of the women's movement and our growing grasp of divergent views to craft a sitcom mom who deconstructs the traditional "domestic goddess."

Roseanne parodies the traditional sitcom mom by exposing what Kathleen Rowe describes as the "tropes of femininity" or the "ideology of 'true womanhood'" (Rowe 206). The perfect wife and mother served as the nurturer of the family and provided the strong moral center that held the family together. Such an ideal is exemplified in the middle and upper class sitcom moms Margaret Anderson, June Cleaver, Samantha Stevens, and Claire Huxtable who not only are moral nurturers, but also have trim bodies, wear fashionable clothes, keep their homes neat and tidy, and are soft-spoken and articulate. In the show and theme, Roseanne interrupts and defamiliarizes the domestic ideal of femininity and also offers a regenerative alternative to it. In short, Roseanne promotes the image of the "unruly woman" (Rowe 206) by means of the excess of her body type, slipshod domestic skills, and unrestrained language style.

First, Roseanne is fat. Her corporeal excess is evident in the opening theme. In each version of the opening theme, Roseanne is shown eating at the kitchen table. Also, given the food displayed in the various versions of the opening theme, Roseanne has no interest in eating healthy or dieting. The table is filled with fattening foods such as pizza, corn chips, and soda. Roseanne makes no effort to eat daintily, rather she stuffs the food into her mouth and chews with her mouth open. Roseanne, however, is not a tangential character, a "fat girl" we can easily dismiss. She is the authorizing figure who deconstructs the prevailing cultural idea of the perfect
feminine body. In our culture, any actual or represented image of female corporeal excess is embedded with the opposite and prevailing code and expectation of thinness. We associate thinness with health, youth, and sexuality whereas corporeal excess is associated with unhealthiness, unattractiveness, and physical weakness. By claiming the authority to recode "fat" as perfectly acceptable, Roseanne calls into question the thin code and its multiple associations. Roseanne's quotation of corporeal excess offers an excellent example of how an artistic or performed gest, a fat woman as authority in this case, can call attention to and critique the social laws or codes in terms of which the gest behaves (Brecht 86, 104). However, in this case, the gest quite literally resists the code. It is not an implied critique; it happens through the material corporeal presence and acceptance of a fat female body as a goddess.

Second, in the opening theme, Roseanne's domestic skills boldly contrast those of the traditional sitcom mom. As described by Sackett, the entire house "looks like it should be hosed down" (323). Roseanne's house is far from immaculate as evidenced by the pile of dirty dishes in the sink and the overall clutter of the kitchen. The kitchen clutter is an extension of Roseanne's corporeal excess; it overflows the boundaries of Betty Crocker good taste. Also, Roseanne's culinary skills equal those of her talent for housework. Due to financial as well as time constraints, dinner, as represented in the theme, usually consists of pre-packaged or take-out meals and cans of generic soda.

Third, unlike many verbally reserved sitcom moms, Roseanne brandishes a loud mouth with a tell-it-like-it-is attitude. Roseanne's verbal excess is signified by her loud cacophonous laughter at the end of the opening theme. On the one hand, her laughter represents pleasure. It is an indicator that she enjoys the time she spends with her family. On the other hand, her laughter is ironic. It stands in bold contrast to the melancholy blues music that underscores the visual theme. Aside from the music, it is the only sound we hear. During the opening theme we can
see that the family members are speaking to each other but their voices can not be heard over the music. At the end of the theme, however, Roseanne rises above or disrupts the literal and metaphoric blues by breaking through the music with the sound of her laughter. Roseanne is a character with great inner strength and she draws upon that strength to overcome her economic hardships and laugh in the face of adversity. The sound of her laughter is a strong acoustic indicator of her triumph.

In the show and theme, Roseanne critiques the prevailing representation of domesticity and offers a regenerative alternative. In this way, Roseanne offers a celebration of postmodern diversity and change in domestic constructs rather than presenting a nihilistic critique of domesticity. However, there is the possibility the audience may dismiss the critique because of the working class factor. In our culture, fat, sloppy women who cannot cook and are sarcastic are equated with "white trash." Potentially, then, Roseanne perpetuates this social code and also denigrates poor women who are not sloppy, cook good meals for their families, and are not verbally sarcastic, despite having to work all day. Yet, by dismissing Roseanne as "white trash," we return to the traditional domestic codes of valuing tidy homes, good meals, and soft-spoken moms, as facilitating healthy, happy families.

Roseanne acknowledges the possibility that the audience will perceive her as "white trash" and, as with her recoding of "fat," claims the authority to recode "white trash" as socially acceptable. Roseanne offers both visual and vocal recodings of "white trash." In the theme, the white garbage bag, filled to the brim with refuse, is prominently displayed in the kitchen. Further, in an episode of the show titled, "White Trash Christmas," Dan and Rosanne receive a flyer from the neighborhood association, or as Roseanne refers to them, the "mow your lawn people." The flyer asks residents to restrict their outside decorations to simple white lights "in order to avoid eyesores such as last year's faded plastic santas and three-legged reindeer." After
reading the flyer, Dan remarks, "They've singled us out, honey. We're the tackiest house in the whole neighborhood." Roseanne thinks for a moment and replies, "Well, this year I say we go for the national title!"

In essence, as de Certeau would offer, Roseanne is "making do" within the constraints of the economic and gender systems. She "resists" the systematic norms by claiming authority over a domain that she can control, her home. She makes "new" rules for family behavior that support her reign as "queen" of her domain. She must deal with financial situations that are not always perfect and children who do not always behave. Roseanne has learned that sometimes you have to laugh to keep from crying. Her laugh is indeed loud and boisterous and her sense of humor enables her to keep going day after day, regardless of the curve balls that life throws her way.

*Married...With Children* offers a more biting and cynical approach to nuclear family life than does Roseanne. The show revolves around the Bundy family which consists of Al, a pathetic shoe salesman, his wife Peg, a lazy couch potato, their daughter, Kelly, a teenage tramp, and, Bud, their sexually frustrated son. While Roseanne offers a regenerative alternative to the prevailing representation of the sitcom mom and domesticity generally, *Married...With Children* satirizes the conventions used in sitcoms to represent the ideal family.

The opening theme to *Married...With Children* begins with a long shot Buckingham Fountain in Grant Park in the foreground and the Chicago skyline in the distant background. The word "Married" flies out of the fountain in an arc and hits the front of the screen. The background immediately turns black while the word "Married," written in large blue capital letters, glistens like pristine water. All at once, a green bile-like slime appears at the top of the letters and begins to ooze over them until they are completely covered. Next, the words "With
Children," printed in bright yellow letters enframed by a bright yellow box, are diagonally stamped beneath the word "Married."

The next frame reveals an extreme long shot of cars driving into and out of the city with the Chicago skyline visible in the distance. It appears to be rush hour; everyone is driving home to the suburbs after a long day of work. In the frames that follow, the major characters are introduced, one by one. As each character is revealed, the name of the actor appears in the bottom center of the screen. All of the names are written in stenciled yellow letters.

The first frame depicts a full shot of Al who, with a resigned and glassy stare on his face, sits on his living room sofa in front of the television set. The living room is furnished with tacky, worn-out furniture as evidenced by the sofa on which Al sits. It is upholstered in a garish pattern of large orange and yellow flowers. Al holds the remote control in his right hand and his left hand is shoved inside the top of his pants. He is casually dressed in a light blue shirt and brown pants.

The next frame finds Peg standing at the kitchen counter, smoking a cigarette and tossing a salad. She is dressed in a tight blue blouse and an equally form-fitting black skirt. Her bright red hair is teased high on her head. The kitchen itself is dark and cheerless, with muddy brown cabinets and brown and cream wallpaper.

The next two frames introduce the Bundys' neighbors, Steve and Marcy. The first shot depicts Steve standing outside the Bundys' opened front door. He holds an ice bag to his forehead with his right hand and holds up a baseball in his left. The second shot focuses on Marcy who is seated at the Bundys' dining room table, eating the salad that Peg prepared in the earlier scene. Marcy sticks her fork into the bowl of salad and retrieves Peg's cigarette butt instead of a lettuce leaf. She looks at the butt with disgust.
The two frames that follow introduce the Bundy children. In the first shot, Kelly, dressed in black tights, thigh-high black boots, a short denim skirt, and a tiny red tank top, paints her nails as she lies sprawled on the sofa. In the next shot, Bud is shown talking on the phone. From the stupid-looking smile on his face, we can assume he is talking to a girl. All at once the cord connecting the receiver to the base pops out and cuts off his conversation.

The next frame offers a long shot of the exterior of the Bundy house. It is a large, two-story home with a massive amount of garbage piled at the curb (perhaps another "white trash" reference as in Roseanne's opening theme). The words "Executive Producers," written in bright blue letters with the names enclosed in a bright yellow box, appear on the frame while the Bundy house is still visible in the background. The Bundy house dissolves back into the shot of the fountain and Chicago skyline. We hear the sound of a heavy steel door slamming shut and watch as green slime appears at the top of the words "Executive Producers," and oozes down over the scene.

Set against the visual theme of Married. . .With Children is the familiar song, "Love and Marriage." The very simple, tick-tocky lyrics of the song reference a traditional view that "Love and Marriage, Love and Marriage / Go together like a horse and carriage, / This I tell ya brother, you can't have one without the other." Frank Sinatra's 1955 recording of the song is used and, while there is some irony in his delivery (i.e., you can't get sex without getting married), Sinatra's cheery tone and the elegant sound of the full orchestra generally extol the virtue of the lyrics. In light of the song's application in this case, the song also references the domestic sitcoms of the 1950s and their idealized view of marriage and family life. The song, then, functions as an ironic counterpoint to the opening visuals. The family life we see is not picturesque and Al and Peg are spatially, if not also emotionally, isolated from each other. In this union, it appears that love and marriage do not go together.
This idea is substantiated by the final sound we hear in the opening theme. The slamming shut of a steel door equates marriage, and marriage with children, with prison. Once individuals enter the institution, the door slams shut, stripping them of their former freedoms and entrapping them in its restrictive embrace. In short, *Married...With Children* presents marriage as life without parole.

The closing frame of *Married...With Children* uses a still shot of Al and Peg sitting side by side on their sofa. They are not cuddled close together but instead are seated about a foot apart. The closing credits roll while the song "Love and Marriage" is repeated without the lyrics. Further, the romantic sound of the full orchestra is replaced by the deep, low vibrations of a tuba and the loud clanging sound of cymbals. Frank Sinatra's cheerful voice has been silenced and the musical score, influenced by the Bundy mentality, takes on a harsh, dissonant sound and feeling.

Overall, the theme of *Married...With Children* suggests that marriage, and marriage with children, is a lousy institution. The theme equates marriage with prison and green slime. As such, the theme uses a parodic-travestying discourse. It offers distorted imitations that defile both the imitator and imitated. In particular, the sitcom aims to distort and defile sitcom conventions, such as those used in *The Cosby Show*. According to Marc, the sitcom's pilot was produced under the working title, "Not The Cosby Show" (191). In order to achieve its goal, *Married...With Children* uses and simultaneously parodies and degrades the sitcom conventions of the happy family, the respectable Mom and Dad, the wholesome, well-bred children, and the nice house in the suburbs.

First, the theme mocks the convention of the happy family. Unlike the Connors, the Bundys are not depicted together. Rather, each family member is shown separately, going about his or her own business. The visual pattern indicates that, in the Bundy family, the mentality is
everyone for him or herself. In other words, Peg, Al, Kelly, and Bud, do whatever pleases them regardless of the effect their respective actions may have on the other members of the family. Married. . .With Children illustrates that family love, as it is portrayed in traditional domestic sitcoms, is not always a given. While the Conner family trades insults and put-downs, it is apparent that they love one another. The Bundys, on the other hand, sabotage each others' attempts at happiness. They seem to despise one another and stick together only out of a "resentful observance of convention" (Jones 266).

Second, the theme parodies-travesties the conventional roles of Mom and Dad. Although we find Mom in the kitchen, she is not preparing a wholesome family dinner. Rather, Peg spoils or defiles the meal with her unhealthy cigarette. She is dressed in a tight-fitting skirt and blouse which are more suggestive of an immoral woman than the virtuous domestic mother figure. Her appearance defamiliarizes her domestic role. Also, her appearance references the impracticality of the clothing worn by her predecessors, such as the tight-waisted, full-skirted dresses, pearls, and high heels worn by sitcom moms of the 1950s. Unlike traditional sitcom moms, Peg is not a selfless woman who will do anything to help her husband and nurture her children. Instead, she is sarcastic and idle. Her greatest joy is to remind Al of his failure as the family breadwinner, and she would much rather smoke cigarettes, read magazines, and watch television than care for her children.

Similarly, Al has his own share of disagreeable "sitcom dad" characteristics, especially when it comes to his view of women. He loves to spend his free time at the local "nudie bar" or relax in his living room with the latest copy of his favorite porno magazine, Big 'Uns. In the theme, Al is shown in the traditional male domain of the living room but, unlike other sitcom dads, Al does not express pleasure when relaxing in his space. Instead, he sits on the tacky sofa with his hand shoved under the waist of his pants, an action Jones refers to as a small, sad,
"pathetic gesture of privacy" (266). In addition, Al's vacant and apathetic stare suggests his lack of initiative in achieving his goals and his lack of joy in life generally.

Married. . . With Children also parodies and degrades the conventions of sitcom kids. Kelly and Bud are the inverse of the chaste children in traditional domestic sitcoms. Kelly strives to earn a reputation as the town slut. Her quest is evidenced in her physical appearance in the theme. Like Peg, Kelly wears immodest clothing. Further, she is completely consumed by the activity of painting her nails as she lies on the sofa. In the sitcom itself, Kelly attracts the attention of every guy she meets while Bud has no luck at all with the ladies. In the theme, Bud's unsuccessful pursuit of women is suggested by the disconnected telephone cord he holds in his hand.

In addition to the parodic-travestying of the family unit, Married. . .With Children also offers a critique of class as depicted in the sitcom form. The Bundys' spacious home in the suburbs contradicts other content elements offered in the show that suggest they cannot afford it. Al holds down a job as a shoe salesman, a position he refers to as "a minimum-wage paying slow death" while Peg has no work ethic at all. She whittles away the hours lying on the sofa, eating candy, and watching television. She has no desire to engage in the domestic activities of cooking and cleaning, let alone find a job outside the home. The home in the suburbs then is a convention of sitcoms that the show "obeys" and then mocks as an idealistic illusion for the working class. In these ways, the spacious home calls attention to itself as "strange," outrageous, or impossible and thereby it extends the critique to class factors that inform the convention and its use.

An additional critique of class is offered by the Bundys' next door neighbors, Steve and Marcy, who serve as an ironic contrast to Al and Peg. Steve and Marcy live in a fairytale existence that, over time, becomes shattered through their repeated interactions with the Bundys.
The disillusionment of Steve and Marcy is evidenced in the theme by the stray Bundy baseball that hits Steve in the head and Peg's cigarette that makes its way into Marcy's salad. Steve and Marcy become the "butt" of the joke in the theme, as they are portrayed as social snobs with a naive view on the way the world really works. Steve and Marcy are happily married without children, well-educated, and upwardly mobile. They fall in line with the character demographics of most of the nineties' workplace sitcoms which feature young, white, childless, upwardly mobile characters. Due to their idealistic view of the world, Steve and Marcy are incapable of understanding the Bundys or their situation.

_Married. . . With Children_ offers an "amoral cosmology" where relativity reigns (Marc 191). Unlike _The Cosby Show_, Roseanne, and _The Simpsons_, which I discuss below, _Married . . . With Children_ offers no redeeming character who serves as a moral or ethical center for the fictive world. There is no inherent sense of right or wrong in the Bundy household. The Bundys possess a nihilistic postmodern view where, because all is relative, there is no Truth. Hence, any "criticism" or degradation of constructs, such as marriage or children, on the Bundys' part does not lead to regenerative possibilities and alternatives. It is all isolated tuba and cymbal dissonance with no one stepping forth to find ways to get the instruments to "play together" despite their differences.

While _Roseanne_ simultaneously confirms and deflects the blues undertone of the decade and _Married. . . With Children_ denigrates Sinatra nostalgia with the sour dissonance of a tuba and cymbals, the creator of _The Simpsons_, Matt Groening, chose to open his sitcom with "a big fanfare of swoops and swooshes" (Burlingame 257). Groening's aim was to capture and critique the quotidian rush of U.S. life and families as well as their sitcom construction. Thus, the animated opening is super fast paced with full orchestration and a rapid-fire montage of images, very much like the frantic and frenzied chase sequences in cartoons.
The Simpson family consists of the father, Homer Simpson, a paunchy, balding man who works as a safety inspector at the local nuclear power plant. His wife, Marge, is a stay-at-home mom with an enormous blue beehive hairdo. The children include their ten year old son, Bart, an obnoxious, spiky-haired brat, their intellectual, saxophone playing daughter, Lisa, and Maggie, the baby of the family who crawls everywhere with a pacifier in her mouth.

The opening theme begins with a shot of a cloudy sky. The clouds float away to reveal a blue sky behind them. A choir of angelic voices sing the show's title as it emerges through the parting clouds. The title, printed in bright yellow letters, suggests the sun as it comes shining through the clouds. The title continues to advance toward us until we are swallowed up by the center of the letter "P" in "The Simpsons." As we visually shoot through the letter "P," we are met with a bird's-eye view of the Simpson's hometown of Springfield. At first, the town appears to be idyllic. We see a park, a mall, and a school. And then, we notice a prison, a mountain of burning tires, a toxic waste dump, and a nuclear power plant. The image of an isolated idyll is destroyed.

Following the introduction to the town, the rest of the theme concentrates on the quotidian ritual in U.S. life of returning home after a long day at work or school. The montage begins with a shot of Bart who has been kept after school for misbehaving. He is alone in the classroom as he writes a sentence over and over on the chalkboard. The sentence Bart writes changes from week to week but generally it references a contemporary social issue or cultural trend. In the past, Bart has written, "I did not invent Irish Dancing," "SpongeBob is not a contraceptive," and "This school does not need a 'regime change.'" When the school bell rings, Bart dashes out of the classroom.

The next sequence alternates scenes of Marge shopping at the grocery store (where she inadvertently places Maggie on the cash register's conveyor belt), Lisa playing her saxophone
during her school band practice, and Homer getting ready to leave work. Before Homer walks out of the door, a piece of green, glowing, radioactive material falls into his pocket. He discovers the stray piece of toxic waste on his drive home and casually tosses it out of the car window.

The series of shots that follow capture the Simpson family as they return home. Homer recklessly drives his car into the garage, narrowly missing Bart who skateboards over the top of Homer's car. Homer gets out of his car and is nearly run over by, in some openings, Maggie on her tricycle or, in other openings, Marge in her car returning from the grocery store. Homer screams and runs into the house where he and the rest of the family gather together on the living room sofa in front of the television set.

The final section of the opening is known as the "couch gag" scene (Burlingame 257). It changes from week to week but typically it shows the Simpson family unit in an altered artistic or crafted form. For instance, in one couch gag, the Simpsons take the form of a large, shapeless, green shrub. A gardener walks into the living room and clips the shrub into the shape of the Simpsons sitting on their sofa. In another opening, the Simpsons become decorated gingerbread cookies sitting on their gingerbread sofa. The gingerbread Homer leans over and takes a bite of the gingerbread Bart's head. Another couch gag begins with a close-up shot of a "Sketch-A-Etch," the show's version of an Etch-A-Sketch. A set of hands appear and begin to turn the knobs, sketching an etching of the Simpson family sitting on their sofa in front of their TV. After each couch gag, the camera zooms in for a close-up of the blue TV screen in the Simpson's living room where the opening credits, written in white letters, appear. The closing theme for The Simpsons consists of the show's credits, written in yellow letters, flashing on a black screen while the theme music is repeated.
The couch gag offers a good understanding of the show's interest in reflexivity and constructed realities. The couch gag scene uses visual metaphors to call attention to the family's "creation" by those involved in the show's production. The Simpsons are portrayed as a shrub that is shaped, as decorated cookies, and an etching. In short, the family and show are constructions that are made and remade each week. On the one hand, the gag functions in a reflexive manner, since the show and characters are quite literally created through digital animation. On the other hand, the anti-illusionistic strategy also serves as a tactic to comment on the construction of sitcom families through the television medium and its production codes. In turn, the impact of such a construction on "real life" families is intimated by showing the Simpson family being constructed as they watch television, their living room mirroring our own.

In addition to reflexivity and deconstruction, the theme and show also call upon intertextual citations to extend the critique of the sitcom tradition. The Simpsons is set in the town of Springfield, the "mythic Holy Land of sitcoms since the 1950s" (Marc 194). According to Jones, Groening chose the setting as an ironic reference to Father Knows Best, which was also set in the town of Springfield. Homer Simpson, like Jim Anderson, has a nice house in the suburbs, a wife, a son, and two daughters but that is where the similarities end. In The Simpsons, father definitely does not know best.

The angelic voices that we hear coming through the clouds at the beginning of the opening theme belie the nature of the town below. The blue sky and the singing choir connote a heavenly paradise until the camera swoops down upon the town to reveal the reality of present day suburbia with its prison, burning tires, toxic waste, and nuclear power plant. Thereby, the opening theme cites eighties environmental disasters and environmental concerns generally. Also, in the theme, the Simpsons appear unaware of the dangers to their welfare and environment. Marge allows Maggie to be scanned and bagged with the groceries, Homer
nonchalantly tosses away a piece of radioactive material as if it were a piece of scrap paper and, upon their return home, the family gathers to bathe in the glowing blue light of the TV set for the remainder of the evening. Such imagery suggests that industrial and technological dangers surround this little family and the larger U.S. and world families too.

The quotidian rush home from work cites two popular animated shows of the sixties, The Jetsons and The Flintstones, and other sitcoms generally in which the characters are shown arriving home and relaxing after a hard day at work. The depicted action also cites and critiques the quotidian action itself. Apparently, we rush home from work to become a "couch gag." Homer epitomizes the catch-22 of the quotidian ritual of money-getting for no gain but the palliative of television.

Homer offers a cynical and satirical critique of blue-collar life in the nineties. He is employed as a safety inspector at a nuclear power plant, a dangerous dead end job that wears him down. Homer does not experience joy in his work. Rather, as Jones describes, his spirit has been "worn to a dull sheen by existence" (267). In fact, in one episode, Homer thinks he is terminally ill. When he finds out he is not going to die, he vows to live his life to the fullest which, for Homer, involves watching TV, drinking beer and eating pork rinds. According to Jones, Homer is a direct reference to the character of "Homer Simpson" in Nathaniel West's novel, Day of the Locust, who "destroys himself in his ignorant gropings toward contentment" (267).

Similarly, Bart Simpson is a citation of the nineties "Generation Xers" who had the song, "Loser," as their anthem, complained about their "McJobs," and were "content, it seemed, to party on in a Wayne's Netherworld, one with more anti-heroes. . . than role models" (Hornblower 28). Bart, who would rather be "cool" than smart, lives by his slogan, "Underachiever and Proud of it!" Bart's two most popular catch phrases, "Don't have a cow, man!" and "Eat my shorts,"
capture the cynical tone of the decade. In fact, Bart's catch phrases caught on with real life Generation Xers. In a reflexive case of life imitating art, or art reflecting life, Bart's sayings were decontextualized, packaged, and sold to the public on T-shirts, baseball caps, bumper stickers, and coffee mugs. According to Henry, Bart's ubiquity also had profound social ramifications as school officials in a number of states condemned Bart Simpson as "a poor role model for school children" and banned the wearing of T-shirts depicting any of Bart's sayings (267).

Many of the recurring characters on The Simpsons are parodic citations of characters from pop culture. The character C. Montgomery Burns, the class nemesis of Homer, owns the Springfield Nuclear Power Plant. Mr. Burns is a composite of oil tycoon John D. Rockefeller and the character of Henry Potter, "the richest and meanest man in the county," who appears in the 1946 classic movie, It's a Wonderful Life. The character carries additional citations according to Groening. The "C" in his name stands for Charles, specifically Charles Foster Kane in another classic film, Citizen Kane (1941). "Montgomery" represents the department store Montgomery Ward, and "Burns" is used in honor of an historic log cabin that was located in Groening's childhood neighborhood and burned to the ground (Rhodes 18). As many of his citations suggest, Mr. Burns is indeed the richest and most despised man in Springfield. He is, as described by Groening, "the embodiment of corporate greed" (Rhodes 18). In one episode, C. Montgomery Burns is shot but, alas, survives just like the character and as in the show this particular episode parodied; namely, the infamous J. R. Ewing in the serial Dallas and, specifically, the "Who Shot J.R.?" episode.

Another regular character, Krusty the Clown, is a grotesque reflection of Bozo the Clown, the long-standing host of The Bozo the Clown Show on Chicago's WGN station. Krusty is the inverse of the Bozo ideal. He drinks alcohol excessively, chain smokes, and is addicted to
drugs. Further, instead of peddling innocent cartoons, he endorses shoddy products such as the Lady Krusty mustache removal system.

In addition to intertextual and reflexive characters, The Simpsons contains musical quotations from film and television scores. Burlingame cites three examples of musical quotations that function in a parodic manner. First, the theme from Ben Casey is used in an episode dealing with Homer's hospitalization. Second, the theme from the movie The Great Escape is used to underscore Maggie's adventures in day care. Third, the theme from Raiders of the Lost Ark is used to accompany a scene where Homer chases Bart through their house (257). Finally, celebrities, such as Elizabeth Taylor, Bob Hope, Dustin Hoffman, and Meryl Streep, have joined the intertextual circus by providing the voices for the show's guest characters.

As in Roseanne, the Simpson women offer a moral center and regenerative potential to the family. While the Simpson men are boorish, lazy, sloppy, and irresponsible, the women are intelligent, reasonable, honest, and capable. Lisa is a straight-A student and a talented improvisational jazz musician whereas Bart is content to be an underachiever. Marge is a gentle, caring woman and the family peacemaker. She provides stability for the family. Marge's moral and nurturing actions offer validate the conventional domestic Mom whereas Homer's experience in the work force mocks the family provider role of the traditional sitcom Dad. Homer is grossly unqualified for his job as a safety inspector and carelessly tosses radioactive material out of his car window on his way home from work. Although the women's abilities are undervalued by the men in the show, they provide moral stability in the unstable world and enable the family to "make do" in a society "full of corruption, voracious consumerism, and moral decay" (Henry 265).

On the level of the show's construction, the play of animation as critique is a powerful regenerative force. The animated theme is creative, interactive, and fun. The bold, bright colors
are visually stimulating, and the fast-paced movement, though connoting a sense of peril, also lends an air of exhilaration to the theme. The animated visuals add to our enjoyment and make the environment appear less threatening, yet they still extend the critique. We are made aware of the dangers of our society in an accessible and entertaining artistic form. We are not affronted by the message of moral and environmental decay because it is presented in a visually engaging manner.

*Roseanne*, *Married...With Children* and *The Simpsons* each deconstruct the idealized nuclear family common to the sitcom tradition. Further, all three shows depict blue-collar working class families hit hard by Reagan and Bush economic policies. Yet the song that the bard sings in each is different. In *Roseanne*, the bard offers a family learning to "make do" by means of the revision and diversification of gender roles, particularly the role of "Mom." The regenerative potential lies in the mother character, Roseanne Conner, and also the celebrity, Roseanne Barr. In the theme of *Roseanne*, the bard offers a critical postmodern view that deconstructs gender and class and celebrates alternatives to the traditional constructs of femininity and the blue-collar workforce. In the opening theme of *The Simpsons*, the bard makes use of animation and an intertextual "citation" game that urges the viewer to participate in the production of the critique. The theme offers a guarded celebration of critical postmodernism because the theme, with its intertextual references, depends on us for its critical joke. Lastly, *Married... With Children* offers a nihilistic postmodern view of the domestic situation. There is no moral center, just oozing green slime. With the absolute refusal of Truths in the theme, the bard urges the audience to question, critique, or perhaps even search for their own social and domestic truths.

*Roseanne*, *Married... With Children*, and *The Simpsons* offer a glimpse at a society or culture in which our "families," especially lower working class families, are undervalued as
"workers" and are the ones who are suffering the drawbacks of Reaganomics. The rash of young, white, urban, upscale workplace sitcoms of the nineties seems to imply a sitcom construction of U.S. society where our valued workers are young, white, unmarried, urban, and upscale. *Roseanne, Married...With Children,* and *The Simpsons* offer a double-voiced or embedded critique of our social world as constructed by sitcom programming. Together, the themes of these three sitcoms represent, either critically or nihilistically, the social-economic reality which is reflective of many U.S. families in tough economic times.

While the prior three sitcoms address lower working class families, *Home Improvement* focuses on the upper-middle class domestic life of the Taylors. The family consists of Tim Taylor, the father, his wife, Jill, and their three sons, Brad, Randy, and Mark. *Home Improvement* also integrates the workplace of the father and as a literal and metaphoric agency for building the family and home. Most episodes include scenes that show Tim at work as the host of a home improvement show called *Tool Time.* The *Tool Time* show is a citation and also a parody of Bob Vila's actual home improvement show, *This Old House.* The good-natured parody arises from Tim "The Tool Man" Taylor proving to be fairly inept and dangerous in his display of home improvement skills whereas Vila is known for his expertise and competence. Tim's clumsy but enthusiastic efforts on *Tool Time* are analogous to his efforts at home when family problems arise and need "improving."

In fact, Tim needs the help of others on the domestic front as well as in the workplace. At home, it is Jill who shows forethought and patience in raising the boys, which include Tim himself. Jill attempts to temper Tim's macho behavior and his constant search for "more power" by channeling Tim's enthusiasm in more sensitive directions. In short, she helps him build his more feminine side, prompting him to engage in conversation, listen to others and, as needed, express his feelings. Tim also receives assistance in understanding relationships and solving
family problems from his next door neighbor, Wilson. Wilson, whose face is always partially obscured by the backyard fence, willingly offers Tim his philosophical viewpoint on whatever predicament Tim faces. For example, in one episode, Wilson imparts the following words of wisdom, "I'm afraid that reality as we know it is someone else's dream." Wilson's abstract counsel is intentional on his part. He leaves it to Tim to figure it out for himself just as viewers are urged to fill in the gaps of Wilson's partially obscured face. Although Tim usually distorts the actual words Wilson offers, his application of the wisdom is typically earnest and successful.

In the workplace, Tim's Tool Time assistant, Al, proves more competent than Tim in home construction, repair and safety. Whenever Tim attempts to fix something or give it a greater power boost, it explodes, falls apart, or catches fire.

The opening theme for Home Improvement is unusual and unique in both its acoustic and visual content. As for the music, the creators and producers wanted "something primitive and visceral" which would complement Tim's persona of a "grunting, tool-obsessed Macho guy with little understanding of women" (Burlingame 196). Thus, tool sounds and ape-like grunt noises are used in the theme. According to Burlingame, the soundscape interweaves at least fifty tracks of various sound effects, such as jackhammers, drills, breaking glass, screeching wheels, and crashing trains. The sound effects are combined with an upbeat melody produced by an electric guitar, organ, and bass harmonica. Finally, a flute track is added to represent Tim's wife, Jill. The high-pitched and delicate flute lends a "feminine" note in the otherwise "male" inspired soundtrack and thereby implies Jill's influence in Tim's life. The musical score is fast-paced and fun, connoting Tim's childlike energy and enthusiasm while the sounds of the tools and machinery enhance the overall theme of playful construction.

The theme's visual elements integrate computer-generated images and scenes with live footage of the characters. The shots in the opening are presented in rapid succession and
typically one shot morphs into the next. To clarify the progression of images, I have divided the theme into four sections. The first section deals with the construction and deconstruction of the family's house. This section begins with a computer-generated shot of the top of a wooden table. The shot fills the entire frame. A second later, a blueprint appears and unrolls itself across the top of the table. The scene then cuts to an outside area featuring a yellow-green lawn, a white fence, and an orange sky with fluffy white clouds. Suddenly, without warning, the word "Home," shaped like a roof, pops out of the ground. It immediately transforms into a two-story blue and purple house which then quickly morphs into the show's title, "Home Improvement."

The "Home Improvement" house bops back and forth in time to the music for a few short moments until an oversized Tim emerges from behind the house and climbs on top of it. He stands on the roof for a few seconds, appearing proud of what he has built, before losing his balance and falling off. In the next frame, Tim grabs onto a board that has been used to construct the house. He hangs there for a brief moment before he loses his grip and falls.

In the next frame, Jill walks through a white door that leads inside the house and enters a cartoon sketch of a laundry room where she loads clothes into a crudely drawn washing machine. The following shot catches up with Tim as he continues to fall through the air. He waves his arms like a bird in an effort to fly. Then we see Jill racing across the lawn with a wheelbarrow. She maneuvers it into just the right spot to catch Tim before he hits the ground.

The following frame finds Tim in his backyard playing with a remote-controlled bulldozer while talking with his next door neighbor, Wilson, who is standing behind the fence. Tim loses control of the bulldozer and it crashes into the house. The house collapses into a pile of loose boards which fall to the ground in such a way as to spell "Home Improvement" once again.
In the second section of the opening theme, the house is transfigured into a video game. The screen is divided into four parts: A bathroom is located up right; a stairwell, up left; a kitchen, down right; and a living room, down left. The words "Player 1" appear at the upper left corner of the screen while the words "Player 2" appear at the upper right corner of the screen. Player 1 has a score of 203069 while Player 2 has a score of 038251. The bottom center of the screen informs us that we are on Level 2 of the game and that the high score is 947807.

This video game section of the theme is used to introduce Tim's three sons. Each son, in turn, is shown in a full-front medium shot with the video game house behind him as a backdrop. The middle son Randy is introduced first, followed by the oldest son Brad, and Mark, the youngest son, completes the game. One by one, each son pops up from below, smiles at the camera, and then is transported into the video game. Within the game, Randy is chased through the house by a remote-control mouse and Brad runs away from an out-of-control hammer. Mark, however, wins five-hundred points and the game when he successfully jumps over the mouse that foiled Randy.

The third section of the theme focuses on Tim's TV show, Tool Time. The section begins with a shot of a cartoon drawing of a television set. The title, "Tool Time," appears on the set's screen, immediately followed by static and intermittent images of Tim and Al. Al reaches his hand through the fake TV screen and adjusts the knob until the static clears.

In the fourth and final section of the theme, Tim stands beside his new and improved "Home Improvement" house which has been constructed of heavy steel. The house advances toward him like a military tank. Tim runs to get out of its path but all at once the house explodes. The explosion fills the frame. When the smoke clears, the words "Home Improvement" appear imprinted on a cracked brick wall.
The entire opening theme runs no longer than forty-five seconds and, overall, it stresses digital artistry, play, and construction over realistically rendered content. The camera eye does not appear to move. Rather, like images on a computer screen, the imagery transforms within a single frame. Also, unlike the animation in the opening themes of *Bewitched* and *The Simpsons*, the *Home Improvement* theme transposes shots of the live characters into the computer-generated settings with which they then interact. The theme then is presentational in mode, reveling in its display of digital construction and creativity. It also extends its reflexive play to reference how "construction" operates in *Home Improvement* and in improving homes and families generally.

The opening theme stresses that building and improving families is a process of construction. The "Home Improvement" house that Tim builds serves as a metaphor for the family unit. All of the Taylor family members work together to ensure that the "house" functions properly. Also, as suggested by the video game played by the Taylor children, the construction process is interactive and fun. Lastly, the process of construction can lead to mishaps and a helping hand is always appreciated. When Tim falls from the roof of the house, Jill is there to catch him in the wheelbarrow. The theme suggests that families and gender roles within families are made and, to nurture and improve them, the family members have to work together.

*Home Improvement* not only uses computer-generated graphics in its opening theme but also in the show itself, usually as "wipes" between the scenes. A "wipe" is a technical term for an editing device where an image, such as a vertical line, "travels across the screen 'pushing off' one image and revealing another" (Gianetti 518). In *Home Improvement*, the computer-enhanced opticals make inventive "wipes" possible. For instance, a paintbrush that Tim holds in one scene might leave his hand and paint the next scene onto the screen. Or, a tool Al uses might
jump from his hand and end up in the next scene, the tool's movement through the air effecting 
the wipe. In another wipe, a scene might literally fold up on itself and then unfold into the next 
scene. Or, perhaps, the first scene will shatter like a piece of glass and as its pieces fall out of the 
frame, they reveal the scene beneath.

These computer-enhanced wipes reflect Tim's fascination for state-of-the-art technology 
and also his propensity for mishaps. They also call attention to Tim's and our own lack of full 
control over any construction process, whether it be digital or relational. The computer-
enhanced wipes also reinforce the playful cartoon nature of the show, interrupting any tendency 
on our part to completely give into the illusion of a "real life" Taylor world and family. 
Although many scenes prompt us to empathize with the characters and their situation, by means 
of such devices as the wipes, the show consistently and playfully urges us to understand that the 
characters are constructions that, as in real life, can be made and re-made in potentially 
productive and inventive ways.

The closing theme for Home Improvement also references the process of production. 
From week to week, the end frame showcases the out-takes, or "bloopers," from the shown 
episode. The compiled blooper reel is shown alongside the show's closing credits. As with the 
wipes, the bloopers call attention to the show's construction. For one, the viewers are made 
aware of the technical aspects of the show. For instance, by showing the out-take of an actor 
struggling with a door that failed to open, the artifice of the set and the rehearsing of the show 
are acknowledged. Likewise, the actors behind the characters are recognized. Should the out-
take be of Tim Allen, the actor who plays Tim Taylor, then an additional resonance results. The 
actor's blooper reflects back on the mishaps of his character while the character's mishaps 
anticipate the inevitable bloopers of the actor.
The use of the weekly blooper reel is also an ingenious ploy to arouse the audience's curiosity and investment in the show. The bloopers function as a "tease" to the audience, promising that if they stick around until the end of the show, they will be able to see the actors mess up, see them as they "really" are; that is, as imperfect people in an imperfect world.

Although *Home Improvement* was one of the first and only shows to use a blooper reel as its closing theme, it became a common practice for sitcoms in the nineties to provoke audience curiosity by integrating variety and change in their opening and closing themes. In the next section, I discuss how the theme of *Dharma & Greg* uses aspects of diversity and reflexivity to reflect our nineties idea of ourselves. Then, I focus solely on one of the bardic norms of the nineties, diversity and variety, in the themes of *Everybody Loves Raymond*, *Frasier*, and *The Drew Carey Show*.

*Dharma & Greg* explores the relationship between two very different individuals, highlighting the idea that opposites attract. Dharma, a free-spirited yoga instructor, marries Greg, a conservative attorney, on their first date. The show follows the couple's relationship as they attempt to adapt to each others' different views on life and conduct. For instance, Dharma likes to live life spontaneously and act on impulse whereas Greg considers each move carefully, calculating the pros and cons of each action. Even their names signify their differences. The name "Dharma" is derived from the Buddhist doctrine of universal truth. According to Buddhist beliefs, life is a continuous cycle of death and rebirth. Dharma thus believes that life should be lived to its fullest. The name "Greg," on the other hand, means "vigilant." Greg feels that it is his duty to keep a watchful eye on situations and stay alert for any signs of potential trouble.

Not only are Dharma and Greg polar opposites but so too are their respective families. Greg comes from wealthy, blue-blood parents who like to frequent country clubs while Dharma's Bohemian parents enjoy growing their own marijuana and painting in the nude. In a sense, the
sitcom, *Dharma & Greg*, re-inflects the establishment/anti-establishment theme of the sixties in nineties' terms.

The opening theme of *Dharma & Greg* capitalizes on the two opposing forces. Although the opening theme is extremely brief, lasting only fifteen seconds, it is filled with a myriad of intriguing images. The opening frame depicts a pool of blue water. The title of the show swirls around in the pool creating a spiral effect, like the vortex of a hurricane. In the center of the vortex Dharma appears in a full-shot. She is dressed in pink capri pants and a pink tank top imprinted with wine-colored roses. She is sitting in a lotus position and waving her arms in a flourish of flowing movements. Behind her is a bright orange backdrop with a faint paisley pattern embedded in it. The title spins around her until it finally disintegrates. The camera moves in for a close-up of Dharma who picks up a bubble wand and blows out a stream of bubbles which float across the frame and over to Greg who appears in a full-shot. Greg, dressed in black pants and a wine-colored sweater, stands reading a newspaper. The shot cuts to a close-up of Greg as he watches the bubbles float past him.

The next frame offers a long shot of Dharma and Greg, standing face-to-face in silhouette with the bright orange, paisley-imprinted background glowing behind them. A series of word pairs appear as shadows on the orange background. The word pairs are "Sugar & Spice," "Sun & Moon," and "Yin & Yang."

In an abrupt cut, the next frame depicts Dharma and Greg in front of a bright blue background with the same paisley imprints. Greg is dressed in a tuxedo and Dharma is wearing a short black cocktail dress. Greg stands holding Dharma who sits in his arms with her arms around his neck. Greg spins Dharma around in a circle while more bubbles float around them. This scene is followed by two rapid shots of Dharma and Greg kissing. The title, "Dharma &
Greg," appears in the center of the frame in translucent, bubble-like letters as if they also have been blown from the bubble wand.

In the final frame, the two distinct sections of the Japanese yin-yang symbol briefly spin alone before they lock together to form a complete circle. The blue background fades to black while the bright orange yin-yang symbol continues to spin.

The music of the opening theme also serves to represent the differences and the connection between Dharma and Greg. The music is fast paced and lyric free, and it blends computer-synthesized music with new age and folk music sounds. The combination of folk and new age music represents Dharma's diffuse and free-spirited manner of expression. As Meyer points out, each folk culture has its own unique style, but all folk music reflects the musician's own "creative personality" (212). Also, folk and new age orientations are similar in that they articulate counter cultures that reject modern industrial society in favor of respecting and living in terms of the earth, its nature and cycles. Further, both emphasize the spiritual in the material. These are fundamental beliefs and principles that are upheld and practiced by the creative Dharma.

Greg's personality and values are represented by the computer-synthesized sound of the music. Because the music is generated by a machine instead of a human being, it is more closely linked with scientific progress and materialism than with earth cycles and spiritualism. The fusion of the folk, new age, and computer-synthesized music in the theme suggests that, like yin and yang, Dharma and Greg balance each other by sharing their complementary traits. Dharma keeps Greg grounded in the beauty of nature and nourishes his spiritual side while Greg helps Dharma organize her expressive energies and focus them in a positive, forward-moving direction.

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The concept of yin-yang is also represented by means of visual metaphors throughout the opening theme. The female aspect of yin is depicted by the full shot and close-up of Dharma. Yin represents the earth and its low-to-the-ground environments such as valleys and streams. Yin also is represented by the earthy color orange. In the first frame of the theme, these aspects of yin are represented in Dharma as she sits on the ground in front of an orange background, moving her arms in a wave or ripple like manner.

The male aspect of yang is supplied by the full shot and close-up of Greg. Yang represents the elevated portions of the environment such as mountains and the sky. It also is represented by the color blue. In the theme, Greg stands beside a chair. His height associates him with the elevated environment. In addition, the background behind him is blue.

Dharma and Greg's relationship is also represented by means of yin-yang metaphors. The colors of yin and yang are reflected in the alternating orange and bright blue colors of the backdrops. The paisley pattern embedded in the orange background denotes Dharma's zeal for embellishment. Her artistic nature spills over into Greg's world as indicated by the recurrence of the paisley pattern in the blue background. Further, the bubbles, composed of the yin-yang complements of water and air, are created in Dharma's watery world but float over to Greg's airy, intellectual space, thereby both defining and balancing it. In addition, the opposing yet complementary word pairs that appear on the background scrims (e.g. "Sun & Moon," "Sugar & Spice," and "Yin & Yang") serve as metaphoric substitutes for Dharma & Greg. In this relationship, one partner complements the other by supplying those elements which may be lacking in the other. Dharma and Greg, like the sun and the moon, sugar and spice, or yin and yang, counterbalance each other. Together they form a complete and strong unit. At the end of the theme, the two separate entities of yin and yang (i.e., Dharma and Greg) become intertwined, forming a complete circle. This complete circle is visually represented by Dharma and Greg
spinning around together. Their spinning is ultimately transformed into the visual image of the yin-yang symbol itself.

In the closing frame of *Dharma & Greg*, the bard relies upon diversity and change to provoke the audience's curiosity. In the closing frame, the show's creator and producer, Chuck Lorre, displays his weekly "vanity card" which is a print message of black writing on a white background or sometimes the reverse. The message, which changes each week, expresses Lorre's views on a wide range of subjects, such as God, jazz, dreams, DNA, levels of consciousness, fear, anger, inspiration, and interesting facts about *Dharma & Greg*. For the complete texts of the vanity cards I discuss below, see Appendix D.

The vanity cards serve as an interactive game between the show's creator and audience members who choose to play along. While the opening theme of *Dharma & Greg* uses a closed situation, the vanity cards excite an open interaction between the show and the viewer. In the first vanity card of the series, Lorre thanks the audience "for videotaping 'Dharma & Greg' and freeze-framing on my vanity card." In this way, Lorre acknowledges viewers who have taped the episode and are watching it at a later time. He also acknowledges the fact that, in order to read the longiloquent vanity card which remains on the screen for just a brief second, the viewer must tape the show and also must pause the tape on the final frame. At the end of the first vanity card, Lorre encourages the viewer to "be sure to tune in again to this vanity card for more of my personal beliefs," hoping that the viewer's curiosity will be piqued and thus the weekly freeze-frame activity will become a fun game that the viewer wants to play.

In the content of the vanity cards, Lorre uses parody and sarcasm to satirize the social customs, trends, and vernacular of particular cultures and also mass culture generally. For instance, in his first vanity card Lorre satirizes the world of show business by rewriting three common phrases: "Good things happen to good people," "What doesn't kill us makes us
"stronger," and "If you can't find anything nice to say about someone, don't say anything at all."

To alter the first phrase, Lorre first calls on the Buddhist principle of Karma. Karma is the belief that all actions have consequences. In Buddhist philosophy, we suffer for our bad actions and are rewarded for our good actions. Lorre informs us, however, that "the Laws of Karma do not apply to show business where good things happen to bad people on a fairly regular basis." Show business then appears to be so far removed from the spiritual world that it is not affected by its spiritual laws.

In regard to the second phrase, Lorre disagrees with the saying that "What doesn't kill us makes us stronger." He argues instead that "What doesn't kill us makes us bitter." The substitution of the word "bitter" for the word "stronger" challenges the Judeo-Christian belief that we become wiser and more vigorous as we battle and overcome our difficulties. However, as Lorre implies, battles within the world of show business do not build character but resentment.

Lorre alters the final phrase by adding to it. He writes, "I believe that if you can't find anything nice to say about people whom you've helped to make wildly successful and then they stabbed you in the back, then don't say anything at all." Lorre's additions comment on the thankless and sometimes insidious nature of those in the entertainment business.

In Vanity Card #6, Lorre becomes parodically reflexive by commenting on the process of stating one's beliefs. He expresses that he has shared his "personal beliefs" so many times that he is not going to "scrounge" around for new beliefs to share. Further, he tells us that he refuses to fill his vanity card with a lot of "mindless aphorisms," and then continues to do just that. He proclaims, "I believe that sex with multiple partners in a moving vehicle isn't all it's cracked up to be," and "I believe we are better than the animals because we're capable of reading in the bathroom." He ends the vanity card by exclaiming "once again" that he has "no beliefs to share with you this week" and then offers one last opinion. In effect, Lorre ironically expresses his
beliefs in a vanity card in which he continually refuses to express his beliefs and, thereby, he parodies the convention of self-expression as well.

Lorre also uses his vanity cards to enlighten the audience on various aspects of Dharma & Greg. One of the early vanity cards discusses how the show's concept was developed and, in another card, Lorre tells us about the time he first met Jenna Elfman who plays Dharma. Toward the end of the series, Lorre uses Vanity Card #73 to inform us that the show's ratings are down and to plea for our help. He tells us that they "work really hard on this show" and when the ratings dip, "it just plain hurts." He then asks us to "call twenty friends and encourage them to watch the show."

Lorre's vanity cards at the end of Dharma & Greg are just one example of a popular trend that emerged in sitcom themes during the 1990s. Sitcoms in general faced stiff competition from cable television, the Internet, and also VCR film rentals. Shows had to quickly capture and retain audience attention and interest. As a result, many network sitcoms began to reduce the amount of time devoted to opening themes. Many sitcom openings were pared down from the traditional thirty to forty-five seconds to fifteen seconds or less. In some instances, shows dispensed with an opening theme altogether opting for a brief closing theme instead. The reason behind the elimination of the opening theme was the belief that, because the theme was repeated each week, the audience would have already seen it and, thus, in watching the theme yet again, they would lose interest in the show before it began. If the show started cold, the viewer would get hooked by the new story and would less likely switch the channel. Thus, many sitcoms flashed their opening credits during the show's initial scene or chose to roll all of the credits at the end of the show.

Regardless of whether a sitcom chose to use an opening and/or a closing theme, efforts were made to vary and change the theme each week in order to provoke the audience's curiosity,
involvement, and attention. As I discussed above, Home Improvement uses a blooper reel for its closing theme while Dharma & Greg uses the vanity card of the creator-producer of the show in its closing frame. In a similar fashion, Everybody Loves Raymond uses a weekly "Where's Lunch" segment at the end of the show. The setting for this segment is a close-up of a table, viewed from the perspective of a person sitting at the table waiting for his or her lunch. The table is covered with a red and white checkered tablecloth. A basket of fresh-baked rolls and salt and pepper shakers are visible at the upper right corner of the table. A glass of water sits at the upper left corner. A white place mat with the words "Where's Lunch" written in blue letters sits on the table directly in front of the diner (viewer). A knife and spoon are located at the right edge of the place mat while a fork on a red napkin is located at the left edge. Once the scene is established, a pair of hands place a plate of food on the place mat, covering up the words "Where's Lunch." While the setting and composition of the closing frame remains the same each week, the specific food items, or "lunch," change. One week the hands serve a chef salad and another week, a plate of spaghetti. Other lunch items include a bowl of vegetable soup, a ham and cheese sandwich complete with potato chips and a pickle spear, and a lovely green bean salad topped with crumbled bacon and feta cheese.

The "Where's Lunch" segment in the closing theme of Everybody Loves Raymond references one particular aspect in the show itself. The sitcom is about Raymond, his wife, three children, and Raymond's intrusive Italian family which includes his mother, Marie. Marie's main concern in life is that everyone is well fed and everywhere she goes she is sure to bring along a pan of lasagna or a plate of homemade cannoli. Further, whenever someone enters her home, regardless of the hour, she always asks her favorite question, "Are you hungry?"

Like Dharma & Greg and Everybody Loves Raymond, Frasier, a sitcom about a Seattle radio show psychologist, integrates variety and change too, and in its opening as well as closing
The lyric-free opening theme, which lasts approximately three seconds, consists of a thick white line that first appears at the center left edge of the black screen after which it moves across the screen creating a crude outline of the Seattle skyline. The show's title appears in bold orange-yellow letters beneath the skyline. The musical accompaniment is the light, airy sound of brushes hitting against the cymbals of a drum.

Each week the outline of the skyline alters by the addition of an extra visual element. For example, in one opening, a crescent moon rises over the skyline. In another, a series of fireworks explode overhead. For the show's Christmas episode, the Space Needle is decorated with a strand of Christmas lights. And, in yet another opening, a series of radio transmission signals are emitted from the Space Needle as a visual reference to Frasier's radio talk show.

In the closing theme of Frasier, a light and quirky song is sung by the character of Frasier. The musical accompaniment for the song is a subtle combination of a single drum and guitar that underscores and lends focus to the lyrics. The simple lyrics consist of metaphors and metonyms that Frasier uses to refer to the emotionally mixed-up patients who call in to his radio show. To start, he sings, "Hey baby, I hear the blues a-callin', / Tossed salad and scrambled eggs." Frasier sounds a little unstable himself as he laughs, "Ha, ha, ha, ha!" and inserts asides such as "Quite stylish!" into the song. And, just as Frasier is never quite sure what his callers will say, the viewers of the show are never quite sure how he will end the song. At the end of every closing theme, Frasier yells a different line over the final guitar lick. For instance, he might yell, "Thank You!," or "Frasier has left the building!," or "Scrambled eggs all over my face. What is a boy to do?"

Like the other shows that I have discussed in this section, The Drew Carey Show also incorporates variety and change into the theme. Specifically, the show has changed its theme song three times over the course of its run. In 1995-1996, it used "Moon Over Parma." In 1996-
1997, "5 O'clock World" was used and, from 1997-2002, "Cleveland Rocks" prevailed. Each song illustrates a different aspect of Drew Carey's character. "Moon Over Parma" illuminates Carey's personal life. In the song, Drew asks the moon to "bring my love to me tonight." Although Drew is constantly searching for his true love, he has great difficulty finding her. He instructs the moon to "Guide her to Cleveland underneath your silvery light." Drew also sings, "We're going bowlin', / So don't lose her in Solon." The references to the small Ohio towns of Parma and Solon and the activity of bowling implicate Drew's upbringing and his respect for small town life and modest pleasures. The visual that accompanies the opening song is a simple line drawing of Drew's head and shoulders. It appears as if the drawing is singing the opening theme. The elementary style of the drawing along with the simple rhyming lyrics of the song further suggest Drew's unassuming personality.

In the second season of The Drew Carey Show, the emphasis shifts to Drew's professional life. Drew works in the personnel office of a large Cleveland department store. Like a lot of workers in the nineties, Drew is stuck in a small cubicle for eight hours a day working for a thankless boss. The opening song, "5 O'clock World," illustrates Drew's frustration. The male singer expresses Drew's views on work as he sings, "Up every morning just to keep a job / I gotta fight my way through the bustling mob." Drew spends his hours slaving away until "another day goes down the drain." The visual setting for this opening begins in Drew's house as he gets ready to leave for work and ends with Drew and his co-workers at their place of employment. The only happiness and excitement comes at 5 O'clock "when the whistle blows" and "No one owns a piece of [their] time." Drew and his co-workers join together in a celebratory dance to recognize the end of the workday. Instead of simple and unadorned, this opening is a large and lavish production number similar to that of a Hollywood musical.
In the third season, the opening theme changes to "Cleveland Rocks" and focuses on Drew's social life. This opening also features a large production number. The theme opens with a shot of Drew and his friends withdrawing money from an ATM machine after which the scene cuts to the same group tailgating outside a football stadium. The repeated line, "Cleveland Rocks," refers once again to the setting of the show and suggests that, despite popular belief, there is a lot of fun to be had in Cleveland if you know where to look and have fun friends with whom to party.

When *The Drew Carey Show* reached its 2002-03 season, it made use of all three songs, alternating them on a weekly basis. The sitcom further integrated variety by having the songs performed by different musical groups with antithetical musical styles. For example, one week the song, "Moon Over Parma," was performed by the Squirrel Nut Zippers, a contemporary swing revival band with a hybrid style of jazz music and punk rock. Another week, "5 O'clock World" was performed by Trick Pony, an alternative country-western group. And, in yet another week, the Cleveland Pops Orchestra lent its musical talents to the song "Cleveland Rocks," giving the punk rock song a big band sound.

In general, the cultural bard addressed the nineties' audience with digital artistry, diversity and variety, and reflexivity. Media sources such as cable television, VCRs, and the Internet created stiff competition for network television. In order to lure viewers from the content options offered by the Internet, many shows, such as *Home Improvement*, integrated digital artistry into their themes. Also, aware of computer technology's influence on viewers' desires for fast paced, push-button information and entertainment, sitcom themes in the nineties rarely took the time, as they had in the past, to tell a complete story or to describe a character in great detail. Further, the feared loss of viewer interest prompted many sitcoms such as those I have discussed to diversify the content in their opening or closing themes on a weekly basis.
While a typical viewer may disregard a routine opening or closing, if the opening or closing changes from week to week, the viewer may attend to it and hence be more involved in the show too.

Finally, television sitcom themes in the nineties became more reflexive of "real life." Viewers of the 1990s became more cynical about the world as they became disillusioned with Reaganomics, material gain, and the conservative insistence on so-called "family values." The reality of low wages, disappearing or non-existent benefits, and the seeming fragmentation of the family caused many Americans to question the prevailing ideology of family life and the American Dream. Shows such as *Roseanne*, *Married. . .With Children*, and *The Simpsons* deconstructed the idealized nuclear family common to the sitcom tradition and reflected the financial concerns of families in the nineties who did not benefit from Reaganomics.

In short, the cultural bard respected the mature and intellectual audience who valued a variety and complexity of representations. In turn, reflexive sitcoms of the nineties revealed reality as a social construct permitting viewers to become critical observers, participating in as well as celebrating the construction of reality.

Notes

1 The World Wide Web was invented by British software developer Tim Berners-Lee. For complete details, see *The Digital Decade: The 90s* (22).

2 The U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency cautions that the Iraqi numbers could be of as much as fifty percent (Kallen, *A Cultural History. . .The 1990s* 42).

3 Article One accused Clinton of lying under oath about his affair with Monica Lewinsky. Article Two claimed that Clinton had committed perjury in the Paula Jones trial. Article Three charged Clinton with obstructing justice by having his secretary lie about his relationship with Lewinsky. Article Four stated that Clinton abused the power of the presidency by refusing to clearly answer all of the questions put to him by the House Judiciary Committee. The House passed Articles One and Three.

4 Two of the officers were convicted later in a second trial on federal civil rights charges (Axelrod 332).
5 In a civil trial in 1997, a Santa Monica jury found Simpson liable in the deaths of Nicole Brown Simpson and Ron Goldman.

6 The bill was named for James Brady who was seriously wounded in the 1981 assassination attempt on Ronald Reagan.

7 Within a period of several months in 1998, five separate shooting incidents occurred in U.S. schools. In Springfield, Oregon, fifteen year old Kip Kinkel killed his parents one night and shot up his school the next morning. In Pearl, Mississippi, sixteen year old Luke Wodham stabbed his mother to death and then took a rifle to school where he killed two students and wounded seven. Two separate incidents in the month of December, one in Kentucky and one in Arkansas, involved fourteen year old boys. Michael Carneal of Kentucky and Joseph Todd of Arkansas both brought guns to school and opened fire. Finally, in Jonesboro, Arkansas, thirteen year old Mitchell Johnson and eleven year old Drew Golden opened fire on a school yard after pulling a fire alarm. Four students and one teacher were killed and ten others were wounded.

8 In September 1990, a four year old girl suffering from ADA deficiency (a disease that results from a defect in the gene that instructs cells to produce adenosine deaminase, an enzyme that prevents the buildup of toxins lethal to the immune system) became the first recipient of gene therapy. Doctors W. French Anderson, R. Michael Blaese, and Kenneth Culver, of the National Institute of Health in Bethesda, Maryland, gave the girl bimonthly infusions of T-cells that contained the genetically engineered ADA gene. As a result of the therapy, the girl's immune system was soon functioning normally (Courtenay-Thompson and Phelps 657).

9 For details on the precautions that were taken to safeguard the country and the world from a Y2K glitch, see Courtenay-Thompson and Phelps (710).

10 Brothers Erik and Lyle Menendez admitted to murdering their parents with a shotgun in order to inherit their parents' fourteen million dollar estate. The brutal crime remained unsolved for nearly four years until the brothers confessed to the killings.

11 Frasier is a spin-off of the 1980s sitcom, Cheers.
CHAPTER SIX
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

As Leonard B. Meyer explains, meaning and communication "cannot be separated from
the cultural context in which they arise." If the social situation is removed, excluded or ignored,
then "there can be neither meaning nor communication" (vii). Thus, in order to fully understand
the cultural relevance of the bard's message or song, I have investigated the social and historical
environment of the culture at the time of the bard's constructed message.

This study has shown that in television sitcom theme songs, the bard does indeed reaffirm
the prevailing culture's identity, which includes advancing social and political messages relevant
to the culture at specific times throughout its history. Amidst the social upheavals of the sixties,
the bard offered conservative viewers gentle and palatable provocations regarding prevailing
issues of the decade. The Beverly Hillbillies affirmed rural values while explicitly questioning
class distinctions. Gomer Pyle, USMC validated the Marines while questioning the act of war.
Bewitched upheld traditional gender roles while hinting at alternatives to the confines of
suburban domesticity, and That Girl explored the idea of women's independence from a safe,
male perspective. Lastly, The Andy Griffith Show upheld the values of rural life, male authority
figures, mutual respect among individuals, and a sense of community. In short, the cautious and
cunning bard of the sixties presented us with social and political questions in a manner in which
we could comfortably respond. Understood as a conservative audience, we were not yet ready to
have problematic issues expressed directly in our popular fictions (e.g., sitcoms). Thus, the bard
confirmed our idea of ourselves while subtly questioning the values that we held.

In the seventies, the bard's song became bolder. Issues such as race relations, women's
rights, the Vietnam War, and the sexual revolution were addressed more openly in the theme
songs. In the themes, the teasing and tempering bard permitted us to examine not only the values
The themes of All In the Family, Maude, and The Jeffersons urged us to question our racial prejudices and political views while keeping our sense of humor intact. The Mary Tyler Moore Show permitted us to understand the insecurities and triumphs of women struggling to gain personal independence. M*A*S*H allowed us to experience the multiple perspectives at work in a combat situation. We experienced the sadness of death, the fear of isolation, and the joy of saving lives. We also were exposed to the irony of war: in a M*A*S*H unit, lives are saved so that they may return to battle. Lastly, in the theme to Three's Company, the bard playfully teased us with sexual innuendos and thereby prompted us to examine our sexual mores, constraints, and freedoms.

In the eighties, the mediating and moderate bard advanced the message that no problem is too big to conquer if we all work together. The themes of The Cosby Show, Cheers, The Wonder Years, and The Golden Girls projected an ideal image of ourselves in the decade. Social ills such as racial, class, and generational prejudices were presented as problems that could or had already been solved through the support of family and community. It's Garry Shandling's Show, however, offered a different outlook on life. The sitcom's theme featured a more critically reflexive attitude toward life and art, urging us to consider that just as a sitcom reality is an illusion or construct, so too is life. As such, we can deconstruct and reconstruct it to our specifications.

It's Garry Shandling's Show set the tone for the diverse, digital, and reflexive bard of the nineties. As, in general, U.S. society became more critically sensitive toward ideological constructs of capitalism, gender roles, and family values, the bard's message altered to reflect the questions and alternatives that were being generated. The themes to Roseanne, Married. . .With Children, and The Simpsons deconstructed the idealized nuclear family and reflected the economic concerns of the blue-collar work force. Home Improvement also examined the family
structure, offering the message that family is what you make it. We must participate in its
construction in order to build families that are happy and healthy. In addition, Home
Improvement offered viewers a taste of digital artistry in its opening theme and in the wipes
between scenes. It also used out takes in its closing theme. Similar strategies of digital play,
reflexivity, and variety were used in the themes of Dharma & Greg, Everybody Loves Raymond,
Frasier, and The Drew Carey Show in order to address the impact of digital technology on
viewer expectations and also their representations as complex constructions.

The bard's message, or song, changes over time as our society and culture changes. In
particular, this study revealed that the song of women altered as the contemporary women’s
movement asserted and variously adjusted itself over the decades. In the fifties, themes for The
Donna Reed Show and Leave it to Beaver depicted the female role as that of a well-clad middle
class mother figure who hands out bag lunches and kisses to her as they leave for work or school.
In the tradition of domestic feminism, she remains at home, preparing the domestic setting for
her family’s return and thereby safeguarding the moral codes of home, family, and her own
gendered role as protector and purveyor of moral values. While the “second wave” of
contemporary feminism has revised and revalidated our understanding of domestic labor and
feminism, in the 1960s through the mid eighties, the “first wave” sought to free women from the
confines of the home. The independent woman was a woman who worked outside the home, her
own as well as those of others.

The role and song of the independent woman altered and matured from the 1960s through
the 1990s. In the sixties, the theme for That Girl depicted Ann Marie’s independence as
occurring without much struggle and qualified by a male perspective and patronage. Likewise in
the Bewitched theme, Samantha adjusted her extraordinary powers so as to meet the expectations
of her husband and the middle class domestic setting. In the seventies, the song of the
independent woman became overt. Unlike the theme for *That Girl*, the theme of *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* was very much about a woman’s struggle to gain independence. The opening theme showed Mary’s rite of passage, complete with hopes and fears, as she made the journey from a female role of dependence to that of self-sufficiency. Also, in the seventies, the *Maude* theme drew on the social construct of the Ms. Feminist to assert the rights of women vocally while, visually, it questioned (perhaps even parodied) the Ms. Type and its class and race politics. In the eighties, the mother figure of Claire Huxtable in *The Cosby Show* theme was depicted as interacting with her family outside of the domestic setting. Claire’s improvisational dancing suggested the freedom of the eighties woman to retain the moral center of the family while simultaneously engaging in activities outside of the home. The theme for *The Golden Girls*, on the other hand, depicted four women inside the domestic setting. However, the theme focused on the women functioning together as a supportive family unit without the traditional elements of a husband and children. In the nineties, the domestic setting of the fifties returned, but the mother figure role was revised and revalidated. In *Roseanne*, for instance, Roseanne is of the blue-collar class. She remains in the kitchen in the opening theme (although she does in fact work outside of the home), yet she is the central figure of the family. She actively engages with her family as they sit around the kitchen table. It is she who holds the family together. Her role reflects the second wave of feminism where women are valued regardless of their work, race, class, or body type. Lastly, the theme for *Married. . .With Children* offered a parodic interpretation of the mother figure and, thus, urged the audience toward a critical evaluation of the traditional or ideological feminine domestic role as well as the idea of domestic truth.

As themes such as *The Beverly Hillbillies*, *All in the Family*, It’s Garry Shandling’s *Show*, *Roseanne*, and others illustrate, sitcom themes not only reflect issues and values circulating in our culture, they also have cultivate them. In other words, the bard not only
confirms what we apparently believe but, many times, attempts to nudge ideas and values into place. Of course, the bard exercises caution in the advancement of alternative ideas by urging the audience in specific directions without being bombastic or heavy-handed. In *Bewitched*, the bard hints that women are extraordinary beings who are limited by the confines of domesticity. In *All in the Family*, the bard implies that Archie's views on social issues are skewed and outdated. In *The Cosby Show*, the bard celebrates African American culture, economic success, and family stability while also implying that the underlying values are common and relevant to all, regardless of race or class. Lastly, in *Roseanne*, the bard urges a validation of the working class family, drawing on and rearticulating "white trash" clichés to provide a more complex picture of such characters and their culture.

The visual, vocal, and musical content of the theme is important to the rhetoric of the show itself. In effect, the overall construction of the theme sets the agenda of the show. For instance, in *The Andy Griffith Show* theme, the leisurely stroll of father and son down to the fishing hole suggests to the viewer that the point or purpose of the show is to highlight the importance of family bonding, particularly the bonding ritual of father and son. The nostalgic theme of *All in the Family* signals the viewer that Archie's view of the world is distorted and that conflict will likely arise due to his longing for the way things used to be, or rather the way he remembers them. Although slightly different each season, *The Cosby Show* theme depicts a joyful family dancing to upbeat music. Thereby, the theme forecasts the importance of family interaction and cohesiveness that the show itself highlights. In *Married. . .With Children*, the contrast between the song, "Love and Marriage," and the visual depiction of the Bundys indicates that the show will offer an ironic twist on the happy sitcom family.

As I discussed in Chapter Five, beginning in the nineties, many shows chose to abandon or greatly reduce the opening theme due to marketing concerns. Although such strategies allow
more time to be devoted to the content of the show or commercials, it seems to me that the show suffers in the long run. Not only do the themes function as bardic utterances, they also have commercial implications. Just as an advertising jingle helps us remember a product, a repeating theme helps us remember a show. The musical theme offers a mnemonic link which triggers the memory of the visuals and, in turn, keeps the show fresh in the minds of the viewers. For instance, the line "Here's a story of a lovely lady who was bringing up three very lovely girls" immediately conjures up the image of nine squares, each depicting a smiling member of the Brady family from the sitcom *The Brady Bunch*. Similarly, it is nearly impossible to hear the familiar whistling and finger snapping of *The Andy Griffith Show* theme without visualizing Andy and Opie strolling down to the fishing hole.

In fact, throughout the history of sitcom theme songs, many were so well liked and well received by audiences that they reached the top 60 on *Billboard* magazine's top pop singles chart. "The Ballad of Jed Clampett" from *The Beverly Hillbillies* reached #44 on the charts in 1962 while, in 1971, "Those Were the Days" from *All in the Family* reached #43. In 1976, the themes for *Happy Days* and *Welcome Back, Kotter* claimed spots on the pop singles chart at #5 and #1, respectively.

An area that I did not address in the study concerns themes for television dramas. Does the bard operate in dramatic themes and if so, do the content and form of the messages differ from those in sitcom themes? Since television is our current cultural bard, I am confident that the bard operates in dramatic themes as well as sitcoms themes. Yet, because the functions of sitcoms and dramas differ, the bard's messages likely differ as well. As Marc asserts, sitcoms depend on "familiarity, identification, and redemption of popular beliefs" in order to communicate with the audience (20). Since sitcoms are structured to speak to the culture at
large, the bard's messages within the themes likewise address the prevailing values and beliefs of the culture.

On the whole, sitcoms reflect and cultivate the value of "family" as it prevails among U.S. audiences generally. The content of sitcoms feature a family or family type grouping, the family’s ups and downs and, depending on the show and its market, conservative, liberal, or hybrid family values. Dramas, on the other hand, usually focus on individual characters and, typically, in work-related settings. Although there are family dramas, the three most popular drama categories are police dramas, courtroom dramas, and medical dramas. The predominant emphasis in these dramas is on each character’s relationship to the job instead of his or her family or colleagues. While sitcoms such as Murphy Brown and Designing Women are work-centered shows, the main focus is on the characters' relationships with each other. The business of the newsroom or the design firm is secondary.

Also, most sitcoms portray lower working to middle class characters while most dramas focus on upper middle to upper class characters. Since the majority of Americans are from the working and middle classes, viewers tend to relate more closely to characters in sitcoms than to characters in dramas. Since most dramas concentrate on a smaller, more specific segment of U.S. society, the bard’s message in dramatic themes is likely to change in content and form. Yet, how and to what extent the message differs is beyond the scope of the current study and requires further investigation.

In this study, I have shown that situation comedy theme songs are bardic utterances that, through their performance, reaffirm our culture's collective self. As our society and culture(s) change, so too does the construction and performance of the cultural bard's song. In the study, my specific interest was to investigate how the songs function as complex social-cultural texts
that identify, represent and, in many cases, interrogate or question the prevailing beliefs and values of U.S. mass culture.

Popular culture is a reflection of the people who create and enjoy it. Given that television is a central part of popular culture in the U.S., and that situation comedies and theme songs comprise a significant amount of television air time, it is important to understand their relationship to culture and culture making. To date, very little scholarly attention has been paid to the area of television theme songs although they are significant to the show and to the culture at large. As this study has shown, situation comedy theme songs are embedded with social meaning and values. Television sitcom theme songs do indeed function as a cultural bard, a singer of songs and teller of tales, for "the culture at large and all the individually differentiated people who live in it" (Fiske and Hartley 85). The bard constructs the messages while taking into account the values of the culture and the culture's idea of itself at a given point in time. The bard then functions to confirm and reinforce the culture's idea of itself by hooking the targeted audience into the song by means that are familiar and accessible.

In sum, the study asserts that television sitcom theme songs are culturally relevant. Through the performance of these visual and musical texts, the bard delivers socially significant messages that reaffirm and, at times, question our cultural values. From the sixties through the nineties, the bard has articulated the cultural consensus, affirmed prevailing values, and upheld a sense of community.

How will the bard construct messages for viewers in the upcoming decades? Since the nineties, the television audience has become fragmented. Viewership has become a more individualized experience. As Bogle asserts, the days when the country, in extraordinary numbers, would tune in to witness the birth of Lucy's baby or the concluding episode of M*A*S*H are disappearing. As Jones claims, viewers who once "stared into the screen hoping
to see themselves mythologized" now stare into it "in order to see themselves staring back as
critical observers" (269).

Our idea of ourselves is changing and, judging from the current onslaught of reality TV
programs, our present idea of ourselves seems to highlight the exhibition and critique of “real
life” people and their personal experiences. Activities such as dating, marriage, home
improvement, and adjusting to new or foreign environments are played out on the television
screen in front of the home-viewing audience. It seems the culture revels in watching, first hand,
the surprise, humiliation, survival or defeat of "ourselves," as stars in our own shows.

Of course reality TV is but another construct of reality which we either seem to want to
ignore (in search of some sort of authentic truth) or accept as reflective of reality. In either case,
as I see it, the problem with reality TV lies in the uninflected nature of its “real life” rhetoric.
Whether understood as authentic or mediated, reality TV assumes a spontaneous a-critical point
of view. Even in the latter case, the mediating agents and agencies forego the craft of cultivating
a position, seeming to assume that advancing reality as a construct is enough “postmodernism”
for the popular audience. As a result, no one holds themselves or others responsible for the
depicted construct of real life as a construct. It just is. This anti-modern, a-critical
commercialization of real life contrasts the rhetorical operations in the sitcom themes I have
discussed in this study. In the sitcom themes, reality is clearly constructed and inflected within
the vocal, visual, and musical texts. In addition, there is an adept crafting of a position or
argument which reaffirms or questions the reality. The themes as well as the bard’s message
within the themes admit that reality is indeed a constructed concept to be investigated and
evaluated. Having admitted as much, the sitcom bard then moves on to conserve and/or cultivate
a position regarding the show and its social-cultural traditions, issues and concerns.
Notes

1 For a complete listing of all of the theme songs that have reached the top 60 on
Billboard magazine's top pop single chart, see Brooks and Marsh (1279-1280).

2 The episode of I Love Lucy in which Lucy gives birth to little Ricky drew fifty-four
million viewers when it aired on January 19, 1953 (Sackett 25). The final episode of M*A*S*H,
titled "Goodbye, Farewell, Amen," aired as a two and a half hour movie on February 2, 1983,
and drew an audience of one hundred and twenty-five million (Javna 86).
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_The Simpsons_. FOX. 1989-.


APPENDIX A:

SELECTED SITCOM THEME SONGS
OF THE 1960s
The Beverly Hillbillies

"The Ballad of Jed Clampett"

Bluegrass music performed by Lester Flatt and Earl Scruggs

Lyrics by Paul Henning

Sung by Jerry Scoggins

Opening Theme

Come an' listen to ma story 'bout a man named Jed
A poor mountaineer, barely kept his family fed
An' then one day, he was shootin' at some food
An' up through the ground come a bubblin' crude.

Oil, that is. Black gold. Texas tea.

Well, the first thing ya know ol' Jed's a millionaire
The kinfolk said, "Jed, move away from there"
They said, "Californy is the place ya ought to be"
So they loaded up the truck and they moved to Beverly.

Hills, that is. Swimmin' pools. Movie stars.

The Beverly Hillbillies!
Closing Theme

Well now it's time to say goodbye to Jed and all his kin
An' they would like t' thank you folks fer kindly droppin' in.
You're all invited back next week to this locality
To have a heapin' helpin' of their hospitality.

Hillbilly, that is. Sit a spell. Take yer shoes off.

Ya'll come back now, y'hear?
The Andy Griffith Show
"The Fishin' Hole" by Everett Sloane, Earl Hagen
and Herbert Spencer

Gomer Pyle, USMC
Theme by Earle Hagen

Bewitched
Theme by Howard Greenfield and Jack Keller
Diamonds, Daisies, Snowflakes,
That Girl.
Chestnuts, Rainbows, Springtime

Is That Girl.
She's tinsel on a tree.
She's everything that every girl should be!

Sable, Popcorn, White Wine,
That Girl.
Gingham, Bluebirds, Broadway...

Is That Girl.
She's mine alone, but luckily for you,
If you find one girl to love,
Only one girl to love,
Then she'll be That Girl, too.

That Girl!
APPENDIX B:

SELECTED SITCOM THEME SONGS
OF THE 1970s
"Those Were the Days" by Charles Strouse and Lee Adams

Piano music played by Charles Strouse
Sung by Carroll O'Connor and Jean Stapleton

Opening Theme

Boy the way Glen Miller played,
Songs that made the hit parade,
Guys like us we had it made,
Those were the days.

And you knew who you were then,
Girls were girls and men were men,
Mister we could use a man like Herbert Hoover again.

Didn't need no welfare state,
Everybody pulled his weight,
Gee our old LaSalle ran great,
Those were the days.

"Remembering You" by Roger Kellaway and Carroll O'Connor

Closing Theme: No lyrics
Maude

"And Then There's Maude" by Dave Grusin and Andrew Bergman

Lady Godiva was a freedom rider
She didn't care if the whole world looked.
Joan of Arc with the Lord to guide her
She was a sister who really cooked.

Isadora was the first bra burner
Ain't you glad she showed up. (Oh, yeah)
And when the country was fallin' apart
Betsy Ross got it all sewed up.

And then there's Maude.
And then there's Maude.
And then there's Maude.
And then there's Maude.
And then there's Maude.
And then there's Maude.
And then there's Maude. . .

That uncompromisin', enterprisin', anything but tranquilizin'
Right on, Maude!
The Jeffersons
"Movin' On Up" by Jeff Barry and Ja'net Dubois

We're movin' on up
To the east side
To a deluxe apartment in the sky.
We're movin' on up
To the east side
We finally got a piece of the pie.

Fish don't fry in the kitchen.
Beans don't burn on the grill.
Took a whole lotta tryin'
Just to get up that hill.
Now we're up in the big leagues
Gettin' our turn at bat.
As long as we live, it's you and me baby
There ain't nothin' wrong with that.

Well we're movin' on up
To the east side
To a deluxe apartment in the sky.
We're movin' on up
To the east side.
We finally got a piece of the pie.
The Mary Tyler Moore Show
"Love is All Around" by Paul Williams

Version I

How will you make it on your own?
This world is awfully big, and girl this time you're all alone.
Well it's time you started living.
It's time you let someone else do some giving.

Love is all around, no need to waste it.
You can have the town, why don't you take it.
You might just make it after all.

Version II

Who can turn the world on with her smile?
Who can take a nothing day, and suddenly make it all seem worthwhile?
Well it's you girl and you should know it.
With each glance and every little movement you show it.

Love is all around, no need to waste it.
You can have the town, why don't you take it.
You're gonna make it after all.
"Suicide is Painless" by Johnny Mandel

Note: The lyrics of this song were used in the film version but not in the opening theme of the sitcom.

Through early morning fog I see
Visions of the things to be
The pains that are withheld from me
I realize and I can see that...

CHORUS:
Suicide is painless
It brings on many changes
And I can take or leave it if I please.

I try to find a way to make
All our little joys relate
Without that ever-present hate
But now I know that it's too late and...

[Chorus]

The game of life is hard to play
I'm gonna lose it anyway
The losing card I'll someday lay
So this is all I have to say.

[Chorus]

The only way to win is cheat
And lay it down before I'm beat
And to another give my seat
For that's the only painless feat.

[Chorus]

The sword of time will pierce our skins
It doesn't hurt when it begins
But as it worked its way on in
The pain grows stronger, watch it grin, but . . .

[Chorus]

A brave man once requested me
To answer questions that are key
"Is it to be or not to be?"
And I replied "Oh why ask me?" [Chorus]
Three's Company

"Three's Company" by Don Nicholl and Joe Raposo

Come and knock on our door. (Come and knock on our door.)

We've been waiting for you. (We've been waiting for you.)

Where the kisses are hers and hers and his,

Three's company, too.

Come and dance on our floor. (Come and dance on our floor.)

Take a step that is new. (Take a step that is new.)

We've a loveable space that needs your face,

Three's company, too.

You'll see that life is a ball again

Laughter is calling for you.

Down at our rendezvous, (Down at our rendezvous,)

Three's company, too!
APPENDIX C:

SELECTED SITCOM THEME SONGS
OF THE 1980s
Making your way in the world today
takes everything you've got.
Taking a break from all your worries
sure would help a lot.

Wouldn't you like to get away?

Sometimes you want to go

Where everybody knows your name,
And they're always glad you came.
You wanna be where you can see
Our troubles are all the same
You wanna be where everybody knows your name.
The Wonder Years

"With a Little Help From My Friends" by the Beatles

Sung by Joe Cocker

What would you do if I sang out of tune?
Would you stand up and walk out on me?
Lend me your ears and I'll sing you a song
I will try not to sing out of key.

Oh, baby I get by with a little help from my friends
By with a little help from my friends.
All I need is my buddies
By with a little help from my friends.
I said I'm gonna get by with a little
By with a little help from my friends
Whoa oh oh oh oh
Said I'm gonna make it with my friends
By with a little help with my friends.
Whoa oh I'm gonna keep on trying
By with a little help from my friends.
Thank you for being a friend.

Travel down the road and back again.

Your heart is true; you're a pal and a confidant.

And if you threw a party
Invited everyone you knew
You would see the biggest gift would be from me
And the card attached would say
Thank you for being a friend.
It's Garry Shandling's Show

"It's Garry Shandling's Theme"

Music by Joey Carbone

Lyrics by Garry Shandling and Alan Zweibel

This is the theme to Garry's show,
The opening theme to Garry's show.
Garry called me up and asked if I would write his theme song.
I'm almost halfway finished,
How do you like it so far?
How do you like the theme to Garry's show?

This is the theme to Garry's show
The opening theme to Garry's show.
This is the music that you hear as you watch the credits.
We're almost to the part of where I start to whistle
Then we'll watch "It's Garry Shandling's Show."

[Whistling.]

This was the theme to Garry Shandling's show.
APPENDIX D:

SELECTED SITCOM THEME SONGS
OF THE 1990s
Roseanne

"Theme to Roseanne" by Dan Foliart and Howard Pearl

Married. . .With Children

"Love and Marriage" by Sammy Cohen and Jimmy Van Heusen
Sung by Frank Sinatra
1955 Recording

Love and Marriage, Love and Marriage,
Go together like a horse and carriage,
This I tell ya brother, you can't have one without the other.

Love and Marriage, Love and Marriage
(Sound of steel door slamming shut.)

The Simpsons

Theme composed by Danny Elfman

Home Improvement

Music by Dan Foliart
Dharma & Greg
Music by Dennis C. Brown

Dharma & Greg
Closing Theme Vanity Card

CHUCK LORRE PRODUCTIONS #1
Thank you for videotaping "Dharma & Greg" and freeze-framing on my vanity card. I would like to take this opportunity to share with you some of my personal beliefs. I believe everyone thinks they can write. This is not true. It is true, however that everyone can direct. I believe that the Laws of Karma do not apply to show business, where good things happen to bad people on a fairly regular basis. I believe that what doesn't kill us makes us bitter. I believe that obsessive worship of movie, TV and sports figures is less likely to produce spiritual gain than praying to Thor. I believe that Larry was a vastly underrated Stooge, without whom Moe and Curly could not conform to the comedy law of three (thanks, Lee). I believe my kids are secretly proud of me. I believe that if you can't find anything nice to say about people whom you've helped to make wildly successful and then they stabbed you in the back, then don't say anything at all. I believe I have a great dog, maybe the greatest dog in the whole wide world, yes, he is! I believe that when ABC reads this, I'm gonna be in biiiig trouble. I believe that Tina Turner's "River Deep, Mountain High," is the greatest rock song ever recorded. Once again, thanks for watching "Dharma & Greg." Please be sure to tune in again to this vanity card for more of my personal beliefs.
Once again, thank you for videotaping "Dharma & Greg" and freeze-framing on my vanity card. For those of you who are new, this is my sporadic attempt to share my personal beliefs with millions of people (hence the term "vanity"). This attempt has led me into communicating many deep thoughts, and, I'm afraid to say, quite a few shallow ones as well. But what I've found most interesting is that after a few weeks, I've discovered myself scrounging for new beliefs. Things about which I could stand up and say with pride, "I believe in this, dammit!" Now that's not to say that I couldn't fill this card with a lot of mindless aphorisms. But do I waste my precious moment in the sun by proclaiming, "I believe that sex with multiple partners in a moving vehicle isn't all it's cracked up to be?" No, I do not. Do I squander this priceless opportunity to announce, "I believe we are better than the animals because we're capable of reading in the bathroom?" Once again, I do not. And so it is for this reason, I have no beliefs to share with you this week. No wait. . . actually I do believe that JFK had a much better understanding of the word "perks."
Dharma & Greg

Closing Theme Vanity Card

CHUCK LORRE PRODUCTIONS #73

I guess it's not news to anyone that we've been getting clobbered in the ratings for the last few months. I have to tell you, it's been a very humbling experience. It's an experience that's caused many hours of self-reflection, self-doubt, and, on a few occasions, debilitating bouts of depression, rage, paranoia and a mild lack of appetite--nothing unhealthy, I'm just not very hungry (mostly at night, but I think I sleep better on an empty stomach). My point is, we work really hard on this show and when we lose in the ratings it just plain hurts. There's nothing to be done about it except to sit in the pain and pray for it to pass. Of course you could call twenty friends and encourage them to watch the show. That might help. I'm not actually saying you should do that. But you could... if you cared. I'd do it for you. If I had twenty friends. And you had a show.

Everybody Loves Raymond

Music by Rick Marotta and Terry Trotter
Hey baby, I hear the blues a-callin',
Tossed salad and scrambled eggs

Oh, My
Mercy (Alteration: Quite stylish.)

And maybe I seem a bit confused,
Yeah maybe, but I got you pegged!
Ha, Ha, Ha, Ha!
But I don't know what to do with those tossed salads and scrambled eggs.
They're callin' again.

[Alternate endings:]
Good night, Seattle. We love you.
What is a boy to do. Good night.
Frasier has left the building.
Thank You!
Scrambled eggs all over my face. What is a boy to do.
See you next year. We love ya.
Happy Holidays, everybody!
Moon over Parma, bring my love to me tonight.

Guide her to Cleveland, underneath your silvery light.

We're going bowlin'

So don't lose her in Solon.

Moon over Parma, tonight.
The Drew Carey Show - 1996-1997 Season

"5 O'clock World" by Allen Reynolds

Sung by the Vogues

Up every morning just to keep a job
I gotta fight my way through the hustling mob.

Sounds of the city pounding in my brain,
While another day goes down the drain.

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Well, it's a 5 O'clock World when the whistle blows
No one owns a piece of my time.
And there's a 5 O'clock me inside my clothes
Thinking that the world looks fine . . . yeah.

(Yodeling.)
Ahhhhhh . . .
All this energy calling me,
Back where it comes from.
It's such a crude attitude,
It's back where it belongs.

All the little chicks with the crimson lips go,
"Cleveland Rocks!"
"Cleveland Rocks!"
Livin' in sin with a safety pin go,
"Cleveland Rocks" (Cleveland Rocks)
"Cleveland Rocks" (Cleveland Rocks)

Ohio!
VITA

Joni Melissa Butcher was born in Washington Court House, Ohio, on November 27, 1966. She entered Louisiana State University in 1986 and received her Bachelor of Arts degree in speech communication in 1990. Following graduation, she entered graduate school and received her Master of Arts degree in speech communication in 1994. After working in children's theater for one year, she returned to graduate school where she received her Doctor of Philosophy degree in communication studies in 2003.