

**Histories of Telefantasy: the Representation of  
the Fantastic and the Aesthetics of Television**

**Volume 2 of 2**

**by**

**Catherine Johnson**

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**University of Warwick**

**Department of Film and Television Studies**

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## Chapter 5

### **Quality Cult Television: *The X-Files* (Fox, 1993-), *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (WB, 1997-) and the Economics and Aesthetics of 1990s US Television**

#### **Introduction**

Over the 1970s and 1980s the US broadcasting industry underwent a period of accelerated technological, economic and ideological change that altered the shape of US network television in the 1990s. Satellite and cable technologies developed to enable stations to offer viable alternatives to the networks' television services<sup>1</sup>. President Reagan's Republican government pushed for the deregulation of the telecommunications industry in the 1980s, and the appointment of Mark Fowler as chairman of the FCC signalled the end of antimonopoly regulations resulting in conglomerate take-overs of CBS, NBC and ABC, and allowing new media conglomerates (such as Rupert Murdoch's Fox Corporation) to enter network television broadcasting<sup>2</sup>. By the 1990s the three network oligopoly that had dominated the US television industry over the 1960s and 1970s had collapsed as the total television audience commanded by the networks fell from over 90 percent to around 60 percent (see Caldwell 1995, 11). These developments

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<sup>1</sup> See Hudson (1988) for an overview of the development of satellite technology in the US over the 1960s, 1970s and early 1980s, and an exploration of the relationship between satellite and cable technologies in television broadcasting.

<sup>2</sup> ABC was taken over by Capital Cities in 1985, CBS by real estate company Lawrence Tisch, and NBC by General Electric (see Barnouw 1990, 510). On the deregulation of the telecommunications industry, and specifically the break up of AT&T, see Carpentier, Farnoux-Toporkoff, and Garric (1992). On Rupert Murdoch's acquisition of Twentieth Century Fox see Balio (1998, 62).

had a particular impact on the production of telefantasy, which emerged as a dominant form of primetime series drama on the US networks over the 1990s. In this chapter I want to explore the relationship between the industrial changes in US network television broadcasting and the development of telefantasy in this period by analysing two series produced for network television in the 1990s: *The X-Files* (Fox/10:13, 1993-) and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (Fox/Kuzui/Sandollar/Mutant Enemy, 1997-).

As with the other series discussed in this thesis, both *The X-Files* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* have been the subject of a great deal of academic attention, primarily concerned with the significance of both series as popular culture phenomena<sup>3</sup>. These analyses have tended to focus on the series' relevance to contemporary culture, through textual analysis and fan studies<sup>4</sup>. *The X-Files*' conspiracy narratives of paranormal investigations have been associated with pre-millennial tension and the surge of interest and belief in alien abduction<sup>5</sup>. Postmodern theorists have argued that its treatment of history and multiplication of the truth exemplifies the ontological and epistemological crises in contemporary society<sup>6</sup>. These textual studies of *The X-Files* tend to concentrate on its narrative and thematic treatment of contemporary anxieties, arguing that its dark and unresolved story lines engage with a certain malaise in late 20<sup>th</sup> century US society.

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<sup>3</sup> McLean refers to *The X-Files* as a 'popular culture phenomenon' (1998, 4), while the sleeve to Kaveney's (2002) edited collection on *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* describes the series as 'one of the most original and popular television programmes of the last decade'.

<sup>4</sup> For studies of fans of *The X-Files* see for example, Clerc (1996) and Hills (1999, 2002). For studies of fans of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* see for example, Saxey (2002).

<sup>5</sup> See for example, a number of the essays in Lavery, Hague, and Cartwright (1996), in particular the editors' introduction (Lavery, Hague, and Cartwright 1996a).

<sup>6</sup> There is an ongoing debate as to the modern or postmodern status of *The X-Files*, centred predominantly on the series' treatment of truth and history, and the extent to which it is ideologically subversive or reactionary. See for example, Kellner (1999, 1999a), Dean (1997), and McLean (1998).

However, the series also holds a significant place in the history of US network television, helping to secure Fox's position as the fourth national network in US television broadcasting. As the first hour-long drama series produced by the first US network to infiltrate the industry since the mid-1950s, *The X-Files* is a pivotal text in the history of contemporary US network television broadcasting. This chapter asks what possibilities the representation of the fantastic offered to the series' producers at this particular transformative moment in the history of US television.

Focusing on the series' representation of the fantastic is particularly significant because *The X-Files* is not only pivotal in the history of the Fox network, but also in the history of telefantasy. The success of *The X-Files* triggered a renaissance in the production of drama series that centred on the representation of the fantastic for US network television. In October 1995, *Broadcasting and Cable*, reporting on the rise of 'unreal television' claimed of the network schedules for the 1995-96 season, 'more than half of this season's weekly hour-long dramas fall into the sci-fi or fantasy/adventure genres' (Littleton 1995, 57)<sup>7</sup>. Co-produced by Fox for the WB network (a second new network attempting to follow in Fox's footsteps), *Buffy the Vampire* was therefore produced in a network environment saturated by fantasy drama series. As with *The X-Files*, the majority of the academic literature on *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* is concerned with a social analysis of the series. *Buffy the Vampire Slayer's* self-conscious and playful inversion of the

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<sup>7</sup> See also Steve Coe for an exploration of 'the trend towards what some might call weird television, which might better be rechristened "unreality television"' (Coe 1995, 56). These included *Star Trek: Voyager* (UPN, 1995-2001), *Space: Above and Beyond* (Fox, 1995-96) and *Lois and Clark: The New Adventures of Superman* (ABC, 1993-97).

conventions of the horror and teen genres engages with a perceived crisis in gendered relationships and the place of the adolescent in contemporary US society that has been explored within much of the academic writing about the series<sup>8</sup>. However, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* is also an example of the way in which the representation of the fantastic functions as a production and a textual strategy within the current saturated media market. Through this analysis I want to ask what possibilities the representation of the fantastic continues to offer in the contemporary environment of US network television production and to explore the questions that this analysis raises about the adequacy of the dominant aesthetic models of television for understanding the current changes in US network television.

### **The Changing Discourses of Network Television Production**

I want to suggest that the increase in telefantasy programmes on the network schedules in the 1990s can be attributed to two related developments in US network television over the 1970s and 1980s: quality television and niche marketing. Jane Feuer (1984a) notes in her industrial history of the independent television production company MTM, a shift in network television over the 1970s towards an increasing emphasis on the demographic makeup of the television audience. As I explored in Chapter 4, in the 1960s the networks measured the success of the programmes they transmitted through the ratings provided by the A. C. Nielsen Company. These ratings estimated the total number of viewers tuned to a particular programme at any one time and, along with scheduling, determined the price

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<sup>8</sup> See for example *Slayage: The On-line International Journal of Buffy Studies*, <http://www.slayage.tv/>.

that the networks could charge for advertising space within a programme and affected the share prices of the networks in the stock market. At this time, a network's profitability was measured by the size of its audience and the networks attempted to attract large consensus audiences for their programmes. However, as NBC's anxieties over *Star Trek's* generic status as science fiction suggest, as well as trying to maximise their audiences, the networks were also concerned with the *kind* of viewer they attracted. In the case of *Star Trek* they were particularly keen not to alienate the important female viewer who was understood by advertisers to control family spending. Jane Feuer (1984a, 3) argues that around 1970 this consideration of the *composition* of the television audience began to override a concern with the *total* number of viewers tuned to one programme at a time. Audience research indicated that young adults (particularly women) aged between 18 and 49 living in urban areas were the prime consumers of the kinds of goods advertised on television. The urban audience was also crucial for the networks as these were the geographical areas in which the satellite-delivered pay television services that were developed over the 1970s had the greatest market penetration and therefore offered the greatest threat to network television services (see Hudson 1988, 222).

The shift from consensus television (based on creating programmes to appeal to the largest possible audience) to demographic television (concerned with attracting specific audience demographics that are desirable to both networks and advertisers), was essentially a reconceptualisation of the way in which the networks measured the popularity and success of their programmes. Economic profitability no longer resided

purely in the total number of viewers, but also depended on the type of viewer tuned to a particular programme. Over the 1980s and 1990s the shift towards demographics accelerated and the price for advertising spots within network programmes has come to be measured by audience demographics rather than by brute ratings<sup>9</sup>.

Jane Feuer (1984b) argues that the move in network television production towards attracting an affluent, well-educated, urban audience aged between 18-49, led to the development of 'quality' television over the 1970s and 1980s. Explicitly linked by Feuer to the independent production company MTM, the rise of 'quality' television is an overtly economic move, in which the traditional attributes of 'aesthetic value', such as authorship, artistic freedom and creativity, formal and narrative experimentation, complex characters and sophisticated writing, are used in programme production to attract what is perceived as a 'quality' audience. This is an audience that is understood to be ambivalent towards the aesthetic and cultural value of television as a medium. Such 'quality' television is therefore concerned with promoting itself as different from 'regular' television, even though as Feuer points out, the series produced by MTM signalled 'quality' and 'regularity' simultaneously, inscribing a number of different positions within a single text.

The appeal of an MTM programme must be double-edged. It must appeal both to the "quality" audience, a liberal, sophisticated group of upwardly mobile

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<sup>9</sup> The particular demographic composition of the audience most attractive to the networks has shifted over the 1980s and 1990s, and also differs between networks. The impact of these changes on television texts therefore needs to take into account the specific historical and industrial circumstances of production.

professionals; and it must capture a large segment of the mass audience as well. Thus MTM programmes must be readable at a number of levels, as is true of most US television fare. MTM shows may be interpreted as warm, human comedies or dramas; or they may be interpreted as self-aware “quality” texts. In this sense also, the MTM style is both typical and atypical. Its politics are seldom overt, yet the very concept of “quality” is itself ideological. In interpreting an MTM programme as a quality programme, the quality audience is permitted to enjoy a form of television which is seen as more literate, more stylistically complex, and more psychologically “deep” than ordinary TV fare. The quality audience gets to separate itself from the mass audience and can watch TV without guilt, and without realising that the double-edged discourse they are getting is also ordinary TV. (Feuer 1984b, 56)

The ‘quality’ television produced by MTM, with programmes such as *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*, therefore built in multiple readings to combine an appeal to the ‘quality’ demographic with a broader consensus appeal. These programmes signalled themselves as literate, stylistically complex and psychologically deep, while offering the familiar pleasures of ‘everyday’ television.

However, Caldwell argues that these 1970s MTM series, along with other ‘quality’ sitcoms produced by Tandem such as *All in the Family*, constructed their quality status in relation to content rather than to style. As with the dominant aesthetic in early television production, style was subsumed to narrative and character, and understood as anathema

to character acting and sensitive writing. As Caldwell writes, 'The reemergence of serious drama and writing as center stage in television brought with it a renewed and dominant preoccupation with zero-degree studio style in television' (Caldwell 1995, 56). However, Caldwell argues that in the 1980s there was a significant shift in the definition of 'quality' television, a shift that encompassed an increasing emphasis on visual style as an indicator of quality. Caldwell sees this as a consequence of the rise of 'quality television', arguing that 'once the aura of artistry became a conscious part of industry hype, a *critical expectation for stylistic accomplishment* followed' (1995, 61). Series such as *Hill Street Blues*, which is often cited as the initiator of the revival of quality television in the 1980s<sup>10</sup>, led the way with a new form of quality television drama whose visual distinctiveness and stylistic flourishes were as much an indicator of its 'quality' status as the complexity and depth of its characters and scripts. *Hill Street Blues* demonstrated the potential economic return for visually distinctive 'quality' television, garnering critical and financial success for NBC despite its initial low ratings. As Caldwell states, 'a shift in cultural capital has clearly occurred by the early and mid-1980s, one that made stylistics a more valuable kind of programming currency.' (Caldwell 1995, 67).

While such 'televisuality' has strong associations with quality series such as *Hill Street Blues* and *Miami Vice*, Caldwell posits it as a more far-reaching and pervasive trend in US television that has permeated across network and cable programming, dramatic and

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<sup>10</sup> See for example Thompson (1997, 59).

non-fiction forms<sup>11</sup>. What characterises the televisual turn in US television broadcasting is that the *performance* of style becomes an increasingly prevalent feature of US television, with a growing number of programmes drawing attention to and showcasing their visual styles. This self-consciousness of style is an activity rather than a look. It describes therefore not just what television programmes look like, but also the way in which they display and draw attention to their own style. Style is no longer subsidiary to dialogue and narrative, but becomes the text of the show.

However, Caldwell argues that televisuality is not just a formal development, but an industrial strategy in a saturated media market that responds to the economic crisis in US network television production in the 1980s.

Stylistic showcases, high-production value programming, and Hollywood stylishness can all be seen as tactics by which the networks and their primetime producers tried to protect market share in the face of an increasingly competitive national market. (1995, 10)

Televisuality reflects the increasing tendency for broadcasters to showcase their programmes as distinctive and special in a strategy of differentiation devised in a period of increased competitiveness. As with the development of quality television over the 1970s and 1980s, it is also a response to the increasing saturation of the television

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<sup>11</sup> Caldwell stresses that although in televisuality 'a new aesthetic sensibility has emerged' (1995, 21), it is one of many competing and contradictory paradigms in contemporary US broadcasting.

broadcasting markets. Televisuality can therefore be understood as a significant strategy in the shift towards narrowcasting to specific taste cultures as the 'industrial reconfiguration of the audience, in the name of cultural diversification, helped spawn the need for cultural- and ethnic-specific styles and looks.' (1995, 9).

Over the 1980s, we can therefore see a shift in US network television production towards niche marketing that has been central to the development of 'televisual' quality television. This is an environment in which, as Hills points out, the consensus audience has been recast as a 'coalition audience' (Collins, 1992), whereby the audience for a particular programme is constructed as a number of differently targeted (although not necessarily mutually exclusive) segments (Hills 1999a, 6). Furthermore, these market segments are increasingly defined through notions of taste, rather than through demographics. Celia Lury argues that with the shift to niche marketing, 'taste cultures' become as, if not more, important than socio-economic criteria in delineating and targeting market segments.

The term [taste cultures] was introduced in market planning as a way of exploring the role of non-demographic factors in the organisation of the audience-as-market, and as part of the recognition of the often fleeting and overlapping nature of audiences within a market. It is used to group individuals according to acts of media choice seen to display similarity of content or style - in short, according to market notions of taste - rather than to demographic variations, and has begun to be used as a basis on which to plan new products. (Lury 1993, 46)

With the growing fragmentation of the US television market over the 1980s and 1990s, the television audience is increasingly conceived and addressed as a coalition of taste markets (rather than demographics) through television series that display a distinctive visual style designed to offer product differentiation and to attract specific audience segments. The quality audience thus becomes just one in a number of taste markets that the networks are keen to attract to their programmes.

I want to argue that *The X-Files* can be situated within this history of US network television. However, rather than seeing *The X-Files* as an extension of earlier network 'quality television' (as Robert Thompson does (Thompson 1997, 184-5)), I want to suggest that the series represents a new model of 'quality cult' television. The production of quality cult television for the US networks marks a new shift in network programming, in which series that represent the fantastic and appeal to the fan-consumer audience have become increasingly valued.

### **Quality Cult Television and *The X-Files***

Unlike the earlier quality television discussed by Robert Thompson and Jane Feuer, *The X-Files* was not produced by one of the three established networks, but was part of the nascent Fox network's move into hour-long primetime drama. The Fox network had emerged in the wake of a series of corporate mergers following the deregulation of the broadcasting industry in the mid-1980s and first became profitable in 1989. By the early 1990s Fox was keen to build on its reputation for successful comedies (*The Simpsons*,

1989-, *Married... with Children*, 1987-97) and teenage dramas (*Beverly Hills, 90210*, 1990-2000) by moving into hour long drama production that would extend its demographic range into the 18-49 age group (Caldwell 1995, 11). *The X-Files*, scheduled alongside the western drama *The Adventures of Brisco County, Jr.* (1993-4), made up Fox's first full evening of hour long drama series, competitively scheduled at 9pm on Friday evenings against ABC's successful comedy line up.

As a consequence of Fox's position as a new network, the production strategies that it adopted differed from those of the three established networks. While NBC, CBS and ABC were trying to retain their audiences from the threat of the new cable and satellite services; Fox was attempting to break into the network market. Fox was therefore concerned with attracting viewers from the existing networks and from their rival cable and satellite stations. To do so, the series adopted a complex and aggressive strategy of differentiation. Lowry claims that, "Distinctive" was ... the watch-word at Fox, which was using the programming equivalent of guerrilla warfare tactics - trying to counter the more established networks with programs not readily found on their airwaves.' (Lowry 1995, 14). However, while Fox was concerned to differentiate its programmes from existing network fare, it was also attempting to attract viewers from NBC, CBS and ABC, and so needed to balance its strategy of 'distinctiveness' with programmes that were acceptable and attractive to the extant network television audience. This balancing act is central to understanding the production of *The X-Files* and the series' use of the representation of the fantastic as a production and a textual strategy.

*The X-Files* depicts the investigations of two young FBI agents, Fox Mulder (David Duchovny) and Dana Scully (Gillian Anderson) into 'X-files', inexplicable cases of supernatural phenomena rejected by the bureau mainstream. The series combines stories of detection and investigation with the iconography and narratives of the science fiction and horror genres, as Mulder and Scully explore reports of alien abductions, poltergeists, artificial intelligence, human mutations and demonic creatures, as well as becoming embroiled in a government plot to conceal the existence of paranormal phenomena from the general public. The series therefore signals its distinctiveness in part through its generic hybridity, a strategy that Robert Thompson argues is particularly indicative of quality television (Thompson 1997, 15). The series' sophisticated scripts, complex multi-layered narratives, and visually expressive cinematography are further resonant of the attributes associated with quality television. Each week *The X-Files*' protagonists peer into the dark recesses of the ostensibly 'real' setting of modern-day US society in an attempt to uncover the various fantastic phenomena that reside in the shadows waiting to leap out on their unsuspecting prey. The series frequently addresses contemporary anxieties concerning late capitalism, such as environmental issues, the role of medicine, the threat of scientific experimentation, and most overtly, the duplicity of the US government. Referring to established conspiracy theories and constructing its own, the series' convoluted story lines implicate the US government in a series of crimes against the US people, culminating with the revelation in season 6 of international government collusion with alien invaders resulting in a project to create an alien-human hybrid. The series' address to contemporary anxieties within complex and sophisticated narratives is in line with the attributes identified by Feuer (1984b) in her understanding of quality

television's appeal to the liberal 'quality' audience, and is combined in the series with the display of visual style argued by Caldwell (1995) to be a characteristic feature of contemporary quality television.

However, while we can argue that the series was produced to appeal to the 'quality' audience, it was also produced to appeal to another market segment, the fan-consumer<sup>12</sup>.

As Reeves, Rodgers and Epstein (1996) point out, when *The X-Files* was initially produced, there were two different kinds of cult television on US television. The first, like *Star Trek*, were primetime network shows that failed to gain high ratings when initially released on the networks but subsequently attracted large fan followings. These network shows were not produced specifically for the fan audience, but went on to gain fan followings, often (as was the case with *Star Trek*) through repeat runs in syndication. The second kind of cult television, such as *Mystery Science Theater 3000* and *Beavis and Butthead* were series that were narrowly targeted at niche audiences on smaller cable channels with the precise aim of attracting small but loyal fan audiences (Reeves, Rogers and Epstein 1996, 31). These were series transmitted by non-network stations specifically with the intention of trying to attract the loyal fan audience. For these smaller non-network channels that could not expect to gain the large audience figures of the networks, the loyalty of the smaller fan audience was particularly valuable. Reeves, Rodgers and Epstein argue that the production of *The X-Files* marked a new form of cult television that can be attributed to the Fox network's nascent status in the early 1990s.

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<sup>12</sup> This is not to imply that the fan and quality audiences are mutually exclusive, but that they were differently defined by the network.

Although Fox would have been perfectly happy if *The X-Files* were a top ten show, they initially conceived of the program as a candidate for cult status, hoping that (like *Star Trek* and *Star Trek: The Next Generation*) the relatively small avid viewership of the program would gradually build to a respectably large audience. (Reeve, Rodgers and Epstein 1996, 31)

*The X-Files* differs from earlier cult television in two ways. Firstly, rather than being a network series produced for a consensus audience that was 'found' by fan audiences and subsequently gained the status of a cult, *The X-Files* was actively produced as a cult series designed to attract the fan-consumer taste market. Secondly, unlike earlier series that had been produced for the niche fan audience, this was a network series produced by a new network attempting to compete with NBC, ABC and CBS. *The X-Files* combined the production strategies of the existing networks with those of their rival cable channels in an attempt to infiltrate the network primetime market and to minimise risk by attracting a specific, commercially valuable niche fan audience.

The fan audience is valuable within this competitive environment not simply because of the loyalty of fan viewers, but also because of their tendency towards conspicuous consumption. As a consequence, as Matthew Hills argues, in the 1990s 'fandom has begun to furnish a model of dedicated and loyal consumption which does, in point of fact, *appeal* to television producers and schedulers within a fragmented multi-channel environment' (1999a, 5). Furthermore, fans are not only loyal consumers of television

programmes, but also of the ancillary products that are produced around such programmes. The exploitation of the ancillary market was particularly valuable for Fox, a media conglomerate with holdings in a range of different companies. As Reeves, Rodgers and Epstein argue, Fox was able to exploit *The X-Files*' appeal to the fan market in order to promote their other media holdings and to offset the financial risks of investing in the series.

In Britain, first run episodes of the series appear only on Sky One, part of Rupert Murdoch's satellite network. Fox also attempted to use *The X-Files* to promote Delphi, its online service; Delphi became the official home of *The X-Files*, and writers and producers were encouraged to frequent the discussion areas related to the show. By using the show's cult status to multiply its revenue streams, Fox has taken away some of the pressure on *The X-Files* to be a ratings hit. (Reeves, Rodgers and Epstein 1996, 31)

*The X-Files*' use of the fantastic was central to this production strategy. While (as I argue above) the representation of the fantastic can be understood as a broader strategy of generic hybridity to appeal to the quality audience, it also builds in a significant appeal to the fan audience and signals the series 'distinctiveness'. Before the production of *The X-Files*, there was relatively little fantasy television drama on US network television. However, the success of the *Star Trek* spin-off *Star Trek: The Next Generation* in syndication had demonstrated the appeal of fantasy series beyond the loyal fan audience gained by other non-network cult shows such as *Mystery Science Theatre 3000*. *The X-*

*Files*' use of the fantastic can therefore be understood as a strategy designed to exploit the generic appeal of science fiction and horror to fan audiences, and as a strategy of product differentiation designed to offer a form of television drama not previously found on the US network schedules. *The X-Files*' creator, Chris Carter, claims that the idea for *The X-Files* stemmed from a desire to redress the lack of horror in the primetime network television schedules. Carter states that when working on the initial premise for *The X-Files* he sensed a void: 'You look at the TV schedule, ... and there's nothing scary on television.' (quoted in Lowry 1995, 10). As Glen Morgan, former co-executive producer on the series, explains, 'Horror had been relegated to the slasher movies, and I think the networks felt that you couldn't do horror without lots of blood.' (quoted in Coe 1995, 57). Here, the series' use of the fantastic is evoked in a rhetoric of distinctiveness. The implication is that *The X-Files* appealed to Fox because it offered something different from the other networks (horror), in a new way (without 'lots of blood'), allowing Fox to fill a void left open by its competitors. However, the precise nature of this difference is constructed in relation to the generic conventions of existing forms and the network's conception of acceptability. The attempt at horror functions as a viable aesthetic strategy as long as the series avoids the generic associations with 'lots of blood', which would be unattractive to a network broadcaster keen to maximise its audience and extend its demographic reach.

This negotiation of difference and acceptability is apparent in the construction of the visual style of the series. *The X-Files* has a distinctive 'signature' style, a production strategy that Caldwell (1995) argues is increasingly important as a form of product

differentiation within the saturated media environment of US television. Through the display of visual style, signature styles immediately signal the distinctiveness of a television programme, and for series with high production values, are also important indicators of quality. Carter claims of *The X-Files*, 'When you read the scripts they're very visual in terms of what the writer is asking the director to see at any particular moment. It's a very visual show.' (quoted in Martinez 1995, 21). While all television is necessarily visual, Carter suggests here that *The X-Files* employs a mode of story-telling in which the image is particularly significant. This relates in part to the series' thematic treatment of the fantastic. Fantasy narratives open up a particular space for the display of visual style through the representation of the unreal. While not all telefantasy is *primarily* concerned with this kind of visuality, the representation of the fantastic in *The X-Files* offered the possibility for the visual flourishes and stylistic distinctiveness that were particularly valuable for the Fox network as markers of difference and indicators of quality. However the creation of a signature style for *The X-Files* needs to be understood in relation to Fox's dual strategy of creating a series that would be different from existing network fare and would also be attractive to the audiences of Fox's rival networks. The use of the fantastic in the creation of *The X-Files*' signature style is therefore negotiated in relation for the need to balance product differentiation with existing notions of acceptability in US network television.

### ***The X-Files*' Signature Style**

Both John Bartley (Director of Photography on the series for its first three seasons) and Chris Carter describe the logic behind *The X-Files*' visual style in terms of lack. Bartley

claims, 'You don't want to show the audience too much. You just want to feel that there's something there.' (quoted in Probst 1995, 32), while Carter states, 'You're always more scared of what you don't see than what you do see.' (quoted in Martinez 1995, 22). In an article in *American Cinematographer* (Probst, 1995), Bartley discusses the techniques he used on the series to evoke a visual style that Carter describes as 'dark, moody, mysterious and sometimes claustrophobic' (quoted in Probst 1995, 28). Bartley explains how he consistently under-exposed actors' faces to create a shrouded image, and used blue lights in the background to give the effect of a dark hue while still showing some detail and allowing background and foreground to be distinguished. While this is most pronounced in frightening and mysterious scenes, the series as a whole tends to avoid high key lighting. The exception to this is the use of strong bright lights. A visual motif is established over the series, which associates brightness with alien abduction, medical invasiveness and memory. These three elements are repeatedly connected in the series, in which recovered memory is the only means of recollecting the medical procedures performed on alien abductees during their abductions. However, these white lights, in their blinding intensity, are not a revealing source of brightness but are as obscuring as the shadowy darkness.

The series' characteristic use of darkness and bright lights to obscure rather than reveal, places a visual emphasis on concealment. When the series does represent the fantastic it tends to be glimpsed in the shadows rather than clearly displayed. Both Bartley, and Bill Roe, the Director of Photography who replaced him for the series' subsequent seasons, emphasise their reliance on practicals - lights that have a real and discernible source - in

shooting the series<sup>13</sup>. This gives the visual style of the series a plausible basis and also makes the light sources very directional, enabling the general look to be dark, while allowing beams of light to illuminate necessary details. This effect is heightened through the use of smoke, which gives the image an underlying ambient glow while picking up beams of light as they cut through the murky darkness. This particular style of lighting is most pronounced in what can be described as a signature *X-Files* shot, in which Mulder and Scully enter darkened spaces shining bright flashlights<sup>14</sup>.

Bartley describes how they shot such a scene for the season two episode, 'Dod Kalm':

In 'Dod Kalm', which ends up in a frigate that is supposed to have been dormant for thirty years, the only lighting sources in the halls and cabins are the Xenon flashlights. [...] I use the pebble-bounce [off screen reflectors] so the actors can shine the flash-lights into the reflector, which bounces the light back into their faces. (Bartley, quoted in Probst 1995, 30)

The extent of the darkness in these scenes is pronounced. At times the screen is almost entirely black. Yet the use of strong directional light, combined with close-ups, allows the pertinent (and rather gruesome) details to be glimpsed within the bright beams of the flashlight (figs. 5.1-5.3). The series' signature style can be characterised, therefore, not only by the extremes of darkness and brightness in the screen, but also by the use of

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<sup>13</sup> For Bartley, see Probst (1995), for Roe, see Holben (2000).

<sup>14</sup> This shot is repeated each week in the series' opening title sequence.



Fig. 5.1. In the shadowy scene in which Mulder and Scully enter the dormant ship in 'Dod Kalm', the actors' Xenon flashlights are the only source of lighting.



Fig. 5.2. The gruesome details of the scene are glimpsed in close-up, illuminated momentarily by the moving beams of light.



Fig. 5.3. The characters' faces are lit only by the reflected light of the Xenon flashlights.

strong contrast. This enables the series to employ a visual rhetoric whose emphasis on concealment (what is hidden or obscured by the dark shadows and bright flashes) simultaneously opens up spaces for the fantastic to be occasionally and fleetingly exposed. This visual 'lack' functions as an ideological strategy, whereby the series can *suggest* all manner of horrors, rather than representing them. This allows the series to explore such topics as necrophilia, childhood abduction and torture without compromising the network's notions of acceptability. Within the construction of the series' signature style, we can therefore see a negotiation of the appeal to the audience of the horror/fantasy genres with the desire to appeal to the rival networks' audiences by functioning within the existing notions of acceptability on the networks.

These characteristic elements of *The X-Files*' visual style are established from the opening of the pilot episode. The episode begins with a short sequence in which a girl is killed in a forest. Although this scene is not separated from the rest of the episode by a credit sequence (as went on to be the convention over the rest of the series), it still functions narratively as a teaser, providing an exciting opening which sets up the mystery to be solved. It begins with a series of tracking shots following a girl dressed in a night-gown as she runs distractedly through a forest at night. The dark image, rapid editing and shaky camera-work provide mere glimpses of the girl as she stumbles between the trees. She falls into a clearing and bright lights fade up behind the trees to expose a dark figure in silhouette walking towards her. As the stranger reaches her, leaves begin to engulf them in an unnatural circling motion. The image gradually fades to white, and as the whirring sounds that accompany the opening sequence fade out, there is a dissolve to a

close-up of the girl's dead body being discovered in daylight the following morning (figs. 5.4-5.8). This sequence exemplifies the stylistic elements of *The X-Files*' signature look: the exciting opening teaser dominated by action over explanation (a prevalent feature of the television action-adventure series); the use of an extreme darkness to shroud the image, particularly during mysterious or frightening scenes; the visual association of bright white lights with abduction and the loss of time.

*The X-Files*' signature style reinforces the basic narrative logic behind the series, in which a central ambiguity remains as to the existence of paranormal phenomena. The emphasis on suggestion in the series' representation of the fantastic therefore reinforces the narrative and thematic lack of the series by problematising vision and perception. The series frequently re-enacts scenes, inviting a re-interpretation of what has been presented. For example, this opening sequence from the pilot episode is re-enacted later in the episode as Mulder and Scully visit the same spot in the forest late at night. This second sequence repeats the visual iconography of the first, however this time, the bright white light and shadowy figure are revealed to be the local sheriff in his car (figs. 5.9-5.13). Here the series' characteristic visual darkness is used to undermine the reliability of the image. This is then reiterated at a thematic level at the end of the episode as Scully admits that she is unable to objectively substantiate what she has witnessed. She states, 'my reports are personal and subjective. I don't think I've gone so far as to draw any conclusion about what I've seen'. The relationship between sight, belief and proof is at the heart of the series and is consistently undermined. In a later episode 'EBE', Mulder and Scully's physical encounter with a UFO and the photographic evidence that they



Fig. 5.4. The pilot episode of *The X-Files* begins with a series of darkly lit and rapidly edited tracking shots providing mere glimpses of a girl dressed in a night-gown as she stumbles through a forest at night.



Fig. 5.5. The girl falls into a clearing, and there is a cut to a shot of a bright light fading up behind the trees.



Fig. 5.6. Cut to a long-shot as a dark figure emerges from the light in silhouette and walks towards the girl.



Fig. 5.7. Cut to a brief close-up of the girl's face as the wind begins to blow violently and the light continues to increase in brightness.



Fig. 5.8. As the figure reaches the girl, the image fades to white.



Fig 5.9. Later in the pilot episode the opening sequence is re-enacted, as Mulder and Scully visit the same spot in the forest late at night. A sequence of shadowy mid-shots depicts Scully walking cautiously towards a light in the clearing.



Fig. 5.10. Cut to a shot of bright lights fading up behind the trees, mirroring the visual iconography of the opening sequence (see fig. 5.5).



Fig 5.11. Cut to a long-shot as a dark figure emerges from the light in silhouette, again mirroring the opening sequence (see fig. 5.6).



Fig 5.12. Cut to a close-up of Scully's concerned face, lit by the mysterious light behind the trees.



Fig. 5.13. Cut to a close-up of the shadowy figure, revealing that despite the similarities between this scene and the opening sequences, in this scene the bright white light and shadowy figure are not unexplained phenomena, but the local sheriff in his car.

produce, is suggested as a hoax orchestrated by the US government. Even when the fantastic is visually witnessed and even when physical proof is gained of the paranormal, uncertainty remains<sup>15</sup>. The series is therefore fundamentally concerned with the performance of visual style, inscribing the relationship between sight and belief as a central dramatic drive of its series' format. Mulder and Scully's consistent inability to gain proof for what they have witnessed, accompanied by the frequent unreliability of the image as a means of establishing the truth, is reinforced by a visual logic in which the fantastic is often shrouded in darkness or only fleetingly depicted.

### ***The X-Files'* Narrative Structure**

The creation of a signature look is a particularly valuable strategy in the production of a potentially long-running US television series. The series structure is based in part around repetition, enabling a series' signature look and formula to be established over a number of episodes. This provides the network with a recognisable product and grounds the viewer's expectations. However, a long-running series also needs to be able to maintain its audience over a number of seasons, and therefore needs a basic formula that can be sustained over time. Carter has argued that this problem is exemplified by *Kolchak: The Night Stalker*, the series he claims as his inspiration for *The X-Files*. *Kolchak* had difficulties sustaining its narrative premise week after week because it relied upon its journalist protagonist stumbling across a different paranormal monster each week (see Lowry 1995, 10-11). In situating *The X-Files'* within the FBI, Carter was able to

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<sup>15</sup> Eileen Meehan examines the way in which *The X-Files* 'calls into question the reliability and truthfulness of perception, story telling, story tellers, and memory' (1998, 154) through a detailed analysis of the season three episode 'Jose Chung's "From Outer Space"'.

construct each episode as a different case to be investigated by its protagonists.

Furthermore, Carter developed a two layer narrative structure for the series. As he explains in a 1998 television documentary produced to promote the spin-off film of *The X-Files*,

There are two main kinds of stories we tell, which are the stand-alone episodes: these are the self-contained genre episodes - horror, thrillers, science fiction; and then we tell the mythology episodes which deal with Mulder and Scully's pursuit of a conspiracy to hide something from the American public.<sup>16</sup>

As *The X-Files* continued into its second season, the unexpected pregnancy of Gillian Anderson (Dana Scully) resulted in the creation of a story arc, carried over a number of episodes, in which Scully is abducted by an unknown force. Carter claims, 'It was a way for me to do what I had resisted doing, which was to domesticate the show.' (quoted in Lowry 1995, 25). The consequent interweaving of character history and conspiracy narratives has become a prevalent feature of the series. This 'domestication' allows *The X-Files* to sustain its basic format while still providing space for the development of its recurring characters and complex mythology. *The X-Files* thus serialised the narrative structure of the series by combining one off stories traditionally characteristic of series such as *Star Trek*, with on-going narratives more usually associated with the narrative structure of the serial. This dual narrative structure enabled the series to be accessible to

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<sup>16</sup> Quoted in *Inside The X-Files*, UK, BBC 1, tx. 4/11/98.

the casual viewer, while simultaneously rewarding the loyal viewer with an on-going narrative of increasing complexity. This shift in the narrative structure of US television series indicates the increasing importance attached to the loyal viewer in US television production.

However, despite the use of a series structure that provides space for character and story development, *The X-Files* depends on the maintenance of a certain sameness. The series' basic premise is constructed around Mulder and Scully's search for *elusive* proof about the existence of paranormal phenomena. In order to give this quest value and meaning, the series must continually suggest that 'the truth is out there' (to borrow from the series' tag line), while never allowing it to be fully established. The series' signature style based around suggestion, in which the fantastic is glimpsed, rather than displayed, is central because the narrative logic of the series is constructed around continuation, which is possible only if ambiguity remains as to the reality of the fantastic.

### ***The X-Files* and the Aesthetics of Television**

When *The X-Files* transferred to the cinema for a spin-off movie, this visual style of contrast and suggestion was significantly altered. *The X-Files Movie* (Rob Bowman, 1998) differed most dramatically from the series in its two big budget special effects set pieces. The first is the finale of the opening sequence, in which Mulder fails to defuse a bomb and just manages to escape before a large city sky-scraper is blown up. The narrative logic of opening with an exciting action sequence mirrors that of the television series' use of the teaser. Yet the film's extensive use of special effects at this moment

flaunts its difference from the series: it is bigger, more expensive, more exciting. Similarly the film ends with a dramatic effects laden climax in which Mulder rescues Scully from an alien space ship buried beneath the snow moments before it takes off. An overt attempt is being made here to exploit the particular advantages of filmmaking (larger budgets, extended production and post-production schedules) to display what the cinema can offer to the television series (see Duncan 1998). The film does retain elements of the series' signature style, largely replicating its use of darkness and contrast. However, these particular set pieces are brightly lit, putting the special effects on display to the viewer. Here, *The X-Files* is not simply transferred to film; it is recreated as a blockbuster.

This is not to denigrate the technical sophistication of the television series. The extremes of bright light and darkness skirt the boundaries of NTSC's transmission capabilities, and are only possible because the Director of Photography exploits the developments in film stock, pushing the emulsion to its limits (see Probst 1995). The series also takes advantage of the lowering costs of special effects technology and advances in computer graphics to create its own exciting set pieces, such as the circling leaves at the climax of the opening sequence of the pilot<sup>17</sup>. The difference between the visual style of the film and the television series, therefore, is one of scale and context. The use of effects laden set pieces in the film relates in part to the economic context within which it was

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<sup>17</sup> The budget for *The X-Files*' first two seasons was in line with the average one hour prime-time drama in America at that time, at \$1.1 million for the first season and \$1.2 for the second. In order to keep within the series' budget and time constraints the majority of its effects are computer generated (see Lowry 1995, 32, 35-6).

produced, but also to the conventions of science fiction, horror and action cinema, where the large-scale display of effects is a generic norm. Within the television series the *emphasis* is on suggestion. Week after week the series must imply the presence of the supernatural, while maintaining a central ambiguity as to its reality, in order to validate Mulder and Scully's continued search for an elusive truth and thus maintain the *continuity* of a long-running series. This aesthetic strategy is also in line with the demands of the network, enabling the series to function within the economic and temporal demands of weekly television production, and avoiding the potentially controversial representation of excessively horrific or violent images.

I am not suggesting here that a comparison of *The X-Files*' movie and television series verifies the binary oppositions through which television's small screen and intimate address have been characterised against cinema's big budget spectacles. The centrality of visual style to *The X-Files* challenges an understanding of television aesthetics that argues that television subsumes visual style to narrative and character. Thus *The X-Files* counters assertions such as that made by Conrad Schoeffter that 'the content of a television movie you can get with your eyes closed. Television is an oral medium' (1998, 114). Not only does *The X-Files* largely rely on the image to tell its stories, but it is also thematically concerned with the role of the image in structures of knowledge and belief. However, to argue for the centrality of the image to the series is not to argue that it simply adopts a 'cinematic' style. As I have suggested through a comparison of the film and television versions of the series, *The X-Files*' visual style differs significantly from the cinematic blockbuster and needs to be understood in relation to the specific

demands of US television production in the 1990s. *The X-Files* utilises the technological advances in television production to create a signature look characterised by the unusually extensive darkness in the frame and the use of strong contrast. This visual style is motivated by the economic need for distinctiveness and longevity and the industrial requirements of 'acceptability', enabling the series to suggest all manner of horrors without clearly representing them. While the film provided the producers with the opportunity to integrate the large scale effects of the blockbuster, the television series relies on a much more subtle visual style with an emphasis on suggestion and concealment, contributing to the gradual complexity and ambiguity that are central to the series' continuing narrative structure. Here *The X-Files*' 'televisuality' challenges a number of other dominant assumptions about the aesthetics of television. As Caldwell has argued in relation to televisuality more broadly, flow and glance theory are no longer fully adequate paradigms in an environment in which 'the committed television viewer is overtly addressed' (Caldwell 1995, 26) and in which much television 'self-consciously rejects the monotonous implications of the flow' (Caldwell 1995, 19). *The X-Files*' dense visual landscape demands attentive viewing, rewards the loyal viewer, and is constructed to signal the series' distinctiveness. In the increasingly competitive environment of US network television broadcasting these qualities are particularly attractive to television producers and are increasingly characteristic of US network television. As a consequence the changing landscape of US television is challenging the adequacy of the dominant paradigms in television studies for exploring television as a medium. I want to go on to explore the consequences of this shift for our understanding of television as a medium through an analysis of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. How does the

use of the fantastic shift in an environment in which telefantasy is a common (rather than a rare) feature of network television production? What consequences do the rise in telefantasy have for the adequacy of the dominant aesthetic paradigms for understanding television?

### **Teen Fantasy and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer***

Unlike *The X-Files*, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* was produced at a time when telefantasy was a prevalent form of drama on the US network schedules. While the series' representation of the fantastic does not in itself act as an indicator of difference within this environment, the series' combination of fantasy with a range of other generic expectations mirrors the generic hybridity of *The X-Files*. However, while *The X-Files* attempted to combine an appeal to the fan-consumer taste market and the 'quality' demographic with a broader consensus appeal, I want to argue that *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* is much more clearly targeted at a coalition of taste cultures.

Since the early 1990s when Fox consolidated its position as the fourth network, the environment of US network television broadcasting has further fragmented. By the mid-1990s, two more networks had joined the existing four (NBC, CBS, ABC, Fox), the WB and UPN<sup>18</sup>. With the increased competition facing the networks over the 1990s the strategy of niche marketing has become increasingly prevalent and new audience segments and taste markets have emerged as prime targets for the new networks. As a

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<sup>18</sup> Also as with Fox, these new networks are part of larger conglomerates, UPN being owned by Paramount and WB by Time Warner. In the 1998-99 season a seventh network, Pax TV was attempting to enter into the market (see Garron 1998, 9).

consequence, the teen audience has become a particularly valued audience demographic. As with the fan audience, teens are particularly valued for their conspicuous consumption. Teens are also an attractive demographic to advertisers, and networks are able to charge high rates for advertising slots within series that appeal to teen viewers. Edward Helmore notes that although the WB's teen series *Dawson's Creek* ranked only 76<sup>th</sup> amongst all viewers in the US in 1998, the network was charging advertisers \$250,000 for a thirty second slot within the series, equivalent to the amount charged for the same slot during the CBS nightly news, a programme that attracts twice as many viewers (Helmore 1998, 27). Over the 1990s, the quality teen drama series has become an increasingly visible part of the network primetime schedules (see Moss, 2001)<sup>19</sup>. Many of these series adopt characteristics of the quality television series, with ensemble casts, sophisticated writing and psychologically complex characters, and combine them with an address to adolescent issues and an appeal to the teenage audience.

*Buffy the Vampire Slayer* can be situated with the context of the rise of the teen series on US network television. The WB initially purchased 12 episodes of the series, which were transmitted mid-season between March and June 1997. The strategy of introducing new series mid-season became increasingly common in the mid- to late 1990s, in the face of on-going debates concerning the validity of the traditional scheduling system for US

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<sup>19</sup> As Rachel Moseley notes, this has coincided with a growth in the production of teen movies such as *Clueless* (Heckerling, 1995), *She's All That* (Iscove, 1999) and *Cruel Intentions* (Kumble, 1999) (2001, 41).

network television<sup>20</sup>. In the 1997-98 season, 21 new primetime series were introduced mid-season rather than following the more traditional autumn to spring scheduling pattern of network television, enabling networks to avoid competing for audiences and production resources by commissioning and premiering new programmes at different points throughout the year. By starting *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* mid-season, the series could be marketed to attract new audiences disappointed by the new and returning shows on the more established networks at a time when new shows are far less common. In addition, the practice of introducing series mid-season minimised the financial risk for an up-coming network such as WB, as they could commission a shorter first season of 12 episodes, rather than committing to a full season of 24 episodes<sup>21</sup>.

*Buffy the Vampire Slayer* was also given a favourable lead-in to boost its audience ratings. After the two-part pilot episode of the series (which was transmitted between 8.00 and 10.00pm) the series was scheduled to run between 9.00 and 10.00pm after the WB's other hour-long drama 7<sup>th</sup> *Heaven*, the WB's highest rated series for the 1996-97 season. The scheduling of these two series as the WB's first full evening of primetime hour-long drama series was designed to contribute to the creation of a particular signature for the WB network. The WB's 1996-97 season was dominated by half-hour sitcoms designed to appeal to a teen and/or family audience. Of the eight half-hour series that

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<sup>20</sup> Peter Roth, President of the Fox Entertainment Group, claims that the traditional season pattern established in the 1960s is no longer ideal for the new network environment in the 1990s and has argued that the networks should break the standardised scheduling pattern of network broadcasting by launching series throughout the year (see Garron 1998, 32).

<sup>21</sup> All 12 episodes of the first season of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* were shot before the series aired on the WB network.

returned to the 1997-98 season, three are set in a high school (*Nick Freno: Licensed Teacher*, *The Steve Harvey Show*, *Smart Guy*), while the other five are based around a family unit (*The Jamie Fox Show*, *The Parent 'Hood*, *Sister, Sister*, *Unhappily Ever After*, *The Wayans Bros.*). The commissioning of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* with *7<sup>th</sup> Heaven* to lead the WB's move into hour-long drama contributed to the development of a defining signature for the WB as 'the "family" network' (De Moras 1997, 11). *7<sup>th</sup> Heaven*, a series about a minister, his wife and their seven children appeals to family values in its depiction of a stable loving Christian family. *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, with its young cast, high school setting and thematic treatment of adolescent anxieties, has an appeal to audiences of teens and young adults.

The consolidation of these two series into an evening of themed viewing is further emphasised in the WB's marketing campaign for the *TV Guide* during *Buffy*'s first season. The WB ran two half-page spreads under the appropriate listings page, with *7<sup>th</sup> Heaven* represented on the left, and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* on the right. The posters for each series mirror each other in terms of layout and typography, with a specific image and tag-line chosen to represent the particular plot for each episode. The advertising campaign functioned to link the WB's new hour-long series into a co-ordinated evening's viewing with a distinct profile and character that contributes to the development of a specific identity for the network, designed to appeal to the teen and family audience demographics. However, this advertising campaign also smoothes over some of the potential conflicts in combining family and teen appeal. While *7<sup>th</sup> Heaven* extolled traditional family values, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*'s treatment of adolescent themes

through horror narratives did not always sit easily with the WB's 'family' signature. Joss Whedon claims that during the production of the first season of the series, the WB expressed concern about the use of potentially controversial words, such as "slut" and "virgin"<sup>22</sup>. *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*'s treatment of adolescent anxieties included potentially contentious issues such as teenage sex, homosexuality and domestic violence. However, since its first season the series' treatment of controversial issues has actually grown, with the development of a lesbian relationship between Willow and Tara, the increasingly sexual nature of Buffy's relationship with her boyfriend Riley in season 4 (and subsequently with Spike in season 6), and Willow's 'addiction' to witchcraft in season 6<sup>23</sup>. Despite these potentially contentious story-lines the series ran successfully on the WB network for five seasons and moved to UPN for its sixth season in September 2001 after UPN offered to pay \$2.3million per episode for the series. Concurrent with the success of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* on network television has been an increase in the number of series with a strong teen address transmitted in the WB's primetime schedules<sup>24</sup>. Increasingly the WB moved over the late 1990s to develop a signature as the 'teen' (rather than the family) network.

The need to create a distinctive identity in order to distinguish itself from its competition

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<sup>22</sup> Joss Whedon's audio commentary for the pilot episode 'Welcome to the Helmouth', DVD release of season one box set (Fox, 2000).

<sup>23</sup> The growing thematic concern with sexual issues combined with the increasing representation of sex in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* stems in part from the development of the characters from high school into the semi-independence of college. Season 4 goes so far as to contain an episode that revolves around an extended sex scene between Buffy and Riley ('Where the Wild Things Are').

<sup>24</sup> Other teen series transmitted by the WB since it began transmitting *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* include *Dawson's Creek* (WB, 1998-), *Felicity* (WB, 1998-2002) and *Roswell* (WB, 1999-).

is an important commercial strategy for the WB, a new network attempting to break into the competitive environment of network television broadcasting, while also competing with an expanding number of cable and satellite stations. Despite their initial anxieties about the series, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* contributed to this network signature, depicting its eponymous heroine struggling with the everyday anxieties of adolescent life with a mixture of articulate dialogue and playful irony typical of the 1990s teen series, such as *Dawson's Creek* (WB, 1998-) and *Clueless* (UPN, 1996-9). However, Buffy is not an 'ordinary' teenager, but a vampire slayer with a sacred birthright to rid the world of demons. The series combines stories of growing up in contemporary America with tales of demons, witches and monsters, mixing characteristics of the teen series with elements of the horror and science fiction genres. Assisted by her friends Willow (Alyson Hannigan) and Xander (Nicholas Brendon), and Giles her 'Watcher' (Anthony Stewart Head), Buffy (Sarah Michelle Gellar) defeats an array of demons, with a combination of archaic investigation, high-school savvy and impressive fighting skills. Therefore while *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* can be situated within the history of the teen drama, it can also be explored in relation to the history of telefantasy. Rather than privileging one of these positions, I want to go on to explore the ways in which the series combines teen and fantasy narratives to ask what this generic mix offered to the producers and to the network within this industrial environment.

### **The Combined Appeal of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer***

The generic mix of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, which combines monsters with prom dresses, action sequences with an emphasis on the style and costuming of the characters,

combines and blurs the boundaries between the masculine and feminine appeal of the series, providing spaces for the viewer to simultaneously perform masculinity and femininity. This gender indeterminacy forms the crux of the series' generic hybridity. The basic premise of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, as exemplified in the series' title, explores the duality of Buffy's role as a petite feminine adolescent who is simultaneously a powerfully strong demon slayer. Much of the series' drama (and comedy) stems from the incongruity of Buffy's position as she wisecracks her way through fights with vampires twice her size while dressed in heels and a party dress. Buffy's concern that she will ruin her hair or break a nail is combined with a painful awareness of the responsibilities and dangers of her powerful position. As such, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* combines the female address of earlier series such as *Bewitched* (ABC, 1964-72) and *I Dream of Jeannie* (NBC, 1965-70) that attempted to explore the social contradictions for 'powerful' women through the introduction of fantasy into the domestic sphere (Spigel 1991), with the potentially titillating representation of highly feminised action heroes in series like *Charlie's Angels* (ABC, 1976-81) and *Wonder Women* (ABC, 1976-7; CBS, 1977-9). While *Buffy* provides men with a position from which they 'can safely indulge the male fantasy of the dominatrix and combine it with the Lolita fixation' (Forest 1998, 6), it also 'offers transgressive possibilities for re-imagining gendered relations and modernist American ideologies' (Owen 1999, 24). Broadly post-feminist in its address, the series attempts to create spaces in which women can be powerful, vulnerable and feminine, and to explore the consequences of this regendering for traditional masculine roles.

This is achieved through a self-conscious and playful inversion of the conventions of the horror genre. Joss Whedon has repeatedly claimed that the original idea for the film came from a desire to invert the gender roles of the horror film: 'I began thinking that I would love to see a scene where a ditsy blonde walks into a dark alley, a monster attacks her and she kicks his ass' (Whedon, quoted in Gross 1999, 20). From the opening title music, in which a gothic organ is rapidly replaced by grungy rock and roll, the series announces its playfulness with the generic expectations of the horror film. The pilot episode begins with a number of elements characteristic of the horror genre. The scene opens with sequence of slow and shadowy tracking shots through deserted high-school corridors at night accompanied by high pitch strings and a low pulsing beat. An adolescent couple break into the school, and the camera tracks around the couple in a shadowy mid-shot as the girl starts nervously at a noise in the distance. Once she is reassured, the music cuts out and with a sudden cut to a close-up over the boy's shoulder, the girl turns with an animal roar, her distorted vampire face glimpsed momentarily before she leans in, bites him viciously on the neck and the image fades to black (figs. 5.14-5.17). This sequence is infused with suspense through the use of codes associated with the horror genre. These set up viewer expectation creating an atmosphere of suspense and fear through the suggestion that misfortune will befall the nervous and unwilling girl. The moment in which she is revealed as the object of threat both upsets and fulfils these expectations. Noel Carroll argues that horror is 'necessarily linked to the problematization, violation, and transgression of standing categories, norms and concepts' (Carroll 1999, 157). He claims that the monsters in horror are frightening in part because they are impure: vampires are both dead and alive, werewolves are both



Fig. 5.14. The pilot episode of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* begins with a slow, dark tracking shot outside of Sunnydale High School accompanied by high pitch strings and a low pulsing beat.



Fig. 5.15. The sequence continues with a series of slow tracking shots along the school's darkened corridors.

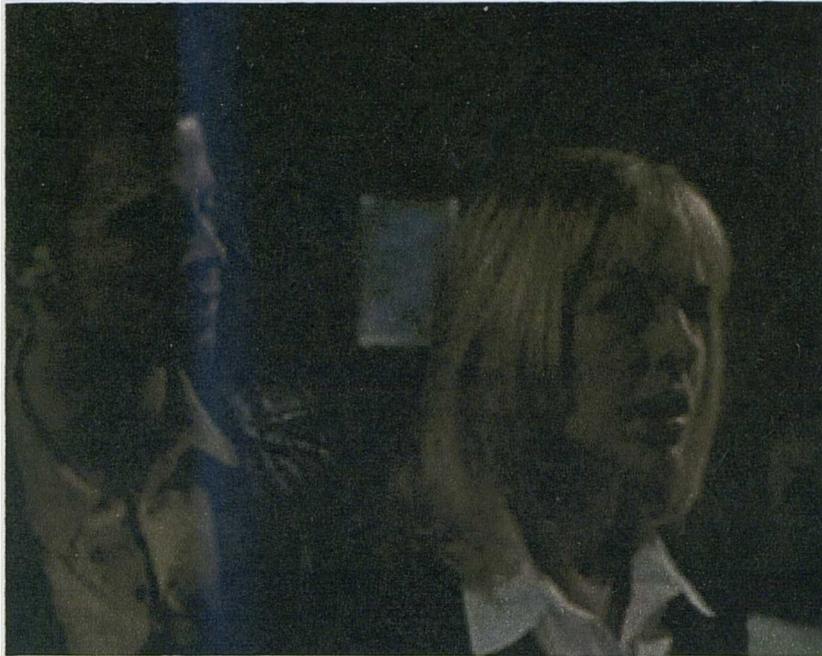


Fig. 5.16. A young couple break into the school. The camera tracks around them in mid-close-up as the girl starts at a noise off-screen.



Fig. 5.17. Reassured that they are alone, the girl suddenly turns, and the camera cuts to a close-up to reveal her vampire face as the music cuts out. As she bites the boy on the neck the image fades to black.

human and animal, each violating received categories of what it means to be alive/dead or human/animal. However, the vampiric girl in the opening does not merely violate the boundary between death and life, she also violates the cultural norm which ascribes that men are more threatening than women (and women more vulnerable than men), as well as disturbing the generic expectations of the horror film in which, as Joss Whedon put it, the 'ditsy blonde' is the victim of the 'masculine' monster. Yet the horror genre is predicated on the creation of fear and suspense and the disruption of its own conventions in order to shock is one of its characteristic features<sup>25</sup>. Thus the use of the conventions of the horror genre here simultaneously invites the evocation of fear and an ironic acknowledgement of its manipulation of viewer expectation through an awareness of the generic conventions that it disrupts. The disruption of the generic conventions of the horror genre is possible here in part because horror is predicated on the disruption of expectation in order to create fear and surprise.

This playfulness with the conventions of the horror genre is central to the series exploration of adolescent themes. As Rachel Moseley argues, the representation of the fantastic is frequently used in the contemporary teen series to articulate the experience of adolescence as an "in-between" period when the teenager is neither a child nor an adult (Moseley 2001, 42-3). The impurity of the horrific monster (dead yet alive, human yet animal) can thus be aligned with the impurity of the adolescent (child yet adult, sexually

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<sup>25</sup> David J. Russell argues that the desire to shock through novelty is an intrinsic part of the horror genre, leading to its constant mutation (1998, 234). Over the 1990s, horror films have become increasingly self-referential, with films such as *Scream* making overt reference to the conventions of its generic history, although *Scream* maintains the gendered position in which the young girl is the victim of male aggression.

aware yet sexually naïve, independent yet dependent). The vampiric girl in the above example is childlike and sexually predatory. *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* intertwines its horror narratives with adolescent themes in order to explore the ‘in-between-ness’ of the teenage experience of growing up. The series’ narrative concerns with the difficulties of attending high school, dating boys, dealing with divorce, going to college, getting a job, starting your first sexual relationship and so on, therefore forms the basis of the series’ horror narratives as the demons act as metaphors for the ‘real’ anxieties experienced by the teenage protagonists. For example in the season one episode ‘Teacher’s Pet’, Buffy’s friend Xander is seduced by his science teacher, who is revealed to be a giant preying mantis seeking virginal males to mate with and kill. The incongruity of the teacher (a human and an insect) functions metaphorically to articulate Xander’s adolescent anxieties. The teacher is both sexually alluring and sexually intimidating, and through his seduction Xander has to negotiate his sexual desire with his sexual inexperience, attempting to conceal his lack of experience in order to fulfil his longing to mature into a sexually active adult.

Through using the representation of the fantastic metaphorically to deal with adolescent themes, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* creates a fictional world in which the line between the ‘real’ world of the high school adolescent and the ‘fantasy’ world of demons and monsters is unstable and consistently violated. Joss Whedon, the series’ creator claims that ‘nothing is as it seems’ is the mission statement of the series<sup>26</sup>. Vampires conceal

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<sup>26</sup> Joss Whedon’s audio commentary for the pilot episode ‘Welcome to the Helmouth’, DVD release of season one box set (Fox, 2000).

their demonic nature beneath a human face, allowing Buffy to fall unwittingly in love with ‘vampire-with-a-soul’ Angel in the first season. Other episodes explore Giles’s dark past (‘The Dark Age’, ‘Band Candy’), Oz’s werewolf nature (‘Phases’, ‘Beauty and the Beasts’, ‘Wild at Heart’), and the growing danger of Willow’s wiccan skills (‘Tough Love’, ‘Wrecked’). Frequently incidental characters are revealed to be hiding their ‘true’ nature. Buffy’s mother falls for a ‘perfect’ man who turns out to be a robot in ‘Ted’, while in season 5, Buffy’s sister is introduced and then later revealed as a mystical key to an alternative world. While Buffy conceals her secret identity as the slayer, Sunnydale, the town in which she lives, conceals a hidden history. Its original Spanish name, ‘Boca Del Inferno’, points to its alternative identity as the location of the ‘Hellmouth’, a portal to the other world of demons and vampires, which acts as a site of mystical convergence drawing an array of ghouls and monsters to the town.

*Buffy the Vampire Slayer* is therefore premised on the creation of two different worlds that are intricately and inseparably connected. This is reflected in the visual style of the series, in which certain shared characteristics are used across the teen and demonic worlds. Oppenheimer states of the series’ visual style,

the show needed a visual style that would reflect its mix of genres and emotions. For the daytime “reality” world, in which kids attend high school and engage in typical teenage activities, Gershman fashioned a bright, colourful landscape. For nighttime sequences he shifted to a dark, edgy, textured look, replete with deep blacks and bold slashes of frequently coloured light. (Oppenheimer 1999, 91)

However, while the series differentiates visually between the high-key 'real' world of the high school and the dark and shadowy 'fantasy' world of the demons, the series also uses certain distinctive visual elements that run across its two 'worlds', contributing to the narrative and thematic blurring between the everyday and the fantastic. As with *The X-Files*, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* is unusually dark for a US primetime television series. The night and interior sequences, particularly those that feature demons, are shadowy and obscure. However, the series uses a much richer palette of colours than *The X-Files*, making extensive use of ambers, browns, greens, reds, purples and blues in its lighting, costume and set design. This use of colour stems partly from the need to compensate for the lack of depth provided by 16mm film, used to shoot the first two seasons of the series. As Michael Gershman, the director of photography on the series states,

it's hard to get depth with 16mm [...] It tends to flatten everything out, so one of the early lighting concepts I came up with was to create depth in the frame. If I put a cool light in the middle and a different color light on the actors, the frame doesn't look quite as flat (quoted in Oppenheimer 1999, 91)

The series' characteristic use of backlight (what Oppenheimer refers to as one of the series' 'trademarks' (ibid.)) and sharp beams of light across the characters' faces contributes to the creation of this illusion of depth in the frame. However, directional light also creates strong shadows, allowing both night and day scenes to be pervaded by a sense of foreboding. The use of directional light combined with the use of strong colours in the design for both night and day scenes helps to create a visual synergy between the

dark night-time and brightly lit daytime sequences in the series, allowing it to adopt two different looks within one broader signature style.

The combination of fantasy and teen drama in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* therefore has a number of different functions. The playful mix of generic references and expectations appeals to the teleliterate audience. As a textual strategy it acknowledges the viewer's understanding of generic and cultural conventions and playfully manipulates the constructed sense of expectation. It also acknowledges the conventionality of the generic means of representing the fantastic and the viewer's familiarity with these devices.

Economically the series' generic mix enables it to appeal to, and be marketed to, a range of audiences (the teen demographic, the 'cult' fan, male and female viewers). However, the combination of teen and fantasy in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* is valuable to the WB not simply because it integrates an appeal to two market segments (teen and fan-consumer) within one text. It also functions as the way in which the series distinguishes itself from other television series. In interviews to promote the series, generic references are not used to categorise or situate the series within a recognisable framework, but to draw attention to its difference. For example, Edward Gross describes the series as 'unique' because it effortlessly manages to combine humour, action and horror, while somehow managing to address the overall high school experience' (Gross 1999, 91). Therefore, while *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*'s combination of teen and fantasy contributes to the WB's signature as the 'teen' network and appeals to a coalition of valuable taste markets, it also functions to differentiate the series within a television market saturated with fantasy drama series. I want to go on to explore the ways in which the use of

generic hybridity as a marker of distinctiveness functions in the contemporary US network television market, by exploring its relationship to the increasingly dominant practice of branding.

### **Distinctiveness, Branding and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer***

Celia Lury argues that as a consequence of the circulation of cultural works as commodities in the culture industries of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, questions of authorship, innovation, novelty and creativity have become increasingly assessed in terms of ‘distinctiveness as experienced by the intended audience, rather than the creative will or expression of the cultural producer’ (Lury 1993, 56). Linked with this is the undermining of authorship as a basis for the adjudication of intellectual property rights. Intellectual property law states that for a cultural product to be designated a ‘work of art’ it must display two kinds of originality: creativity, ‘some indication of the producer’s contribution’; and distinctiveness, ‘some variation in the nature of the work itself’ (Lury 1993, 26). Lury notes that in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century there is an increasing shift from copyright law to trademark law in the assessment of intellectual property rights, which has led to the terms of this creativity and distinctiveness being recast<sup>27</sup>. She notes a tendency, particularly in the US,

to use trademark law in preference to copyright as the preferred means of securing the profitability of popular titles and characters. A trademark provides a legal

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<sup>27</sup> See Miller, Govil, McMurria and Maxwell (2001) for a discussion of the impact of the shift to trademark law on Hollywood as a global business.

shield around the name, logo, slogan, shape, or character image and, in conjunction with product licensing, makes it possible for the original proprietor to transfer this sign to second and third parties for a limited period of time in exchange for royalties. (Lury 1993, 85)

Whereas copyright law protected the author as a signifier of originality, trademark law licenses the image and/or text enabling it to be exploited as a brand across a range of products. Lury argues that as a consequence of this shift, ‘what might be called *branding*, the forging of links of image and perception between a range of products, has become an increasingly significant production strategy within and across the culture industry’ (Lury 1993, 87).

In television, Lury argues that the shift to branding is characterised by an intensification of strategies of serialisation and the creation of flat characters. Lury differentiates here between rounded characters who ‘develop and change along the chronology of classical narrative time’ (1993, 86) and flat characters, such as Superman, who endlessly repeat their actions. Flat characters are particularly valuable because they can be licensed under trademark law, enabling the exploitation of the character across a range of goods to be protected and therefore open to financial exchange. In this way the character is recreated as a trademarked brand and consequently replaces the author as the basis for the adjudication of intellectual property rights. Thus,

the cultural producer's protected position as originator has been undermined by the commercial exploitation of the possibilities of replication offered by the technologies of cultures in so far as they employ strategies of regulating innovation as novelty (Lury 1993, 51)

The regulation of innovation is particularly facilitated by the use of the series form, 'which attempts to achieve a dialectic between predictability and novelty' (1993, 43). Lury argues that the series form offers repeatable pleasures evoked by the familiarity of repetition and the subtlety of slight variations, recasting distinctiveness as the simulation of innovation rather than innovation itself. She links the narrative structure of the series to the construction of 'flat' characters, claiming that in the series form of television 'the flat character has found the ideal form for ensuring his or her immortality' (1993, 43). Thus, Lury argues, in the move towards branding in which the trademark replaces copyright law, innovation is recast as simulation. Where the author retains his/her author-function, it is only insofar as it can be understood to contribute to the effects of a cultural product, through audience ratings and sales. In trademark law, 'creative labour is able to retain privileged conditions in so far as it is able to lay effective claim to having made a contribution to the commercial "effects" of a cultural good, including, most notably, that of producing audience ratings' (Lury 1993, 54).

The move towards trademark law is particularly apparent in the production of US television series. The logos for *The X-Files* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* are both protected by trademark law and are used across a wide variety of products. The

consequences of the move towards branding are also apparent in the function of authorship in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. The series is a spin-off from the 1992 film of the same name written by Joss Whedon and directed by Fran Rubel Kuzui. The film was a co-production between Twentieth Century Fox and the independent production companies Kuzui Enterprises and Sandollar. Despite the initial box office failure of the film, it went on to acquire a small cult fan following on release to video. Gail Berman, then running the television wing of Sandollar, partnered with Fran Kuzui to turn the film into a television series. They hired Joss Whedon to act as 'creator' of the series, effectively overseeing the development and production of the programme. The presence of Whedon is significant in relation to Lury's assessment of the author-function in contemporary cultural production. In Berman's account of the series' development, she claims that she never expected Whedon to be interested in a television spin-off of one of his early and unsuccessful film scripts. Berman states of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*,

We were contractually obliged to offer this to Joss [Whedon]. Everybody said he was a big movies guy now, and he'll never want to do this, including his agent, who said that to me on the phone. Then his agent called me back and said that, in fact, this was the only thing that Joss *was* interested in doing (Berman quoted in Golden and Holder 1998, 249)

Elsewhere, Berman claims that it was Whedon's presence on the series as creator that influenced their decision to sell the series to network television, rather than for syndication (see Kutzera 1997, 54).

Berman's account raises two central points about the author-function in the production of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. Firstly, it highlights the value attached to the authorial voice of Whedon in relation to the series' marketability to network television. This is reiterated in published accounts of the series' production where the crew repeatedly identify *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* as Whedon's creation<sup>28</sup>. This marketing strategy utilises the aesthetic value attached to creative authorship as a commercial strategy. Secondly, it recasts distinctiveness as a commercial attribute by drawing on the associations between individual authorship and originality. This has a further function in relation to the series' appeal to a cult audience as cult texts are frequently identified with a single creative author by their fans<sup>29</sup>. Whedon's name has been used to promote ancillary merchandise aimed at the media cult market, such as the comic book *Tales of the Slayers* in which a number of renowned comic book artists illustrate stories about earlier slayers. While Joss Whedon writes only two of the stories (the others being authored by writers associated with the show), the book is promoted by a tag line above its title proclaiming 'from the creator of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*'.

However, although Whedon is clearly attributed authorship status of the television series in such publications surrounding the series aimed at a fan audience, the marketing produced by the WB to initially advertise the series in its first season makes no reference to Whedon, or any other author. In the issue of *TV Guide* for the series' first week of

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<sup>28</sup> See for example, the interviews in Golden and Holder (1998).

<sup>29</sup> Examples of individuals attributed with authorship of cult texts are Gene Roddenberry (*Star Trek*), Patrick McGoohan (*The Prisoner*) and Chris Carter (*The X-Files*). Hills argues that a 'designated "author" is [...] likely to be offered up by shows which aspire to any sort of cult status' (see Hills 2002, 133).

transmission, the series is advertised with a full-page poster. Across the top of the image is the series' trademarked logo, which is replicated on the merchandising that has been subsequently produced from the series. Underneath and dominating is a large image of Buffy Summers (Sarah Michelle Gellar) facing the camera and looking off to the right, with a smaller image of her friend Xander (Nichola Brendon) behind and to her left. The image is accompanied by the text 'for each generation, there is only one slayer', offering a simplified premise for the series (fig. 5.18). Here the emphasis is clearly placed on the young female lead, the character of Buffy, rather than on the authorship of the series. The advertisement essentially captures the basic format of the series, which focuses on the reactions of its protagonists to the bizarre events that they encounter and uses these events to explore their adolescent anxieties<sup>30</sup>. Here, and across a great deal of the merchandising for the series, the character of Buffy acts as a brand; a recognisable and transferable image that is used to sell calendars, chocolate bars, mugs, magazines, games, posters and so on. However, the image of Buffy does not function on its own, but is constructed in relation to the visual style of the series, allowing the actor Sarah Michelle Gellar to be differentiated from the character Buffy in ancillary merchandise. This is achieved in part by the use of the trademarked *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* logo that accompanies official merchandise for the series. However, it is also facilitated by the creation of a strong signature style for the series. Star shots of Sarah Michelle Gellar can generally be distinguished from images of the character Buffy by a combination of pose

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<sup>30</sup> The emphasis on character continues through the merchandising of the series. For example, the calendars produced for the series focus on a different character for each month, Fox have licensed a different chocolate bar for each of the main characters, and novels have been produced that focus on secondary characters like Xander and Willow.

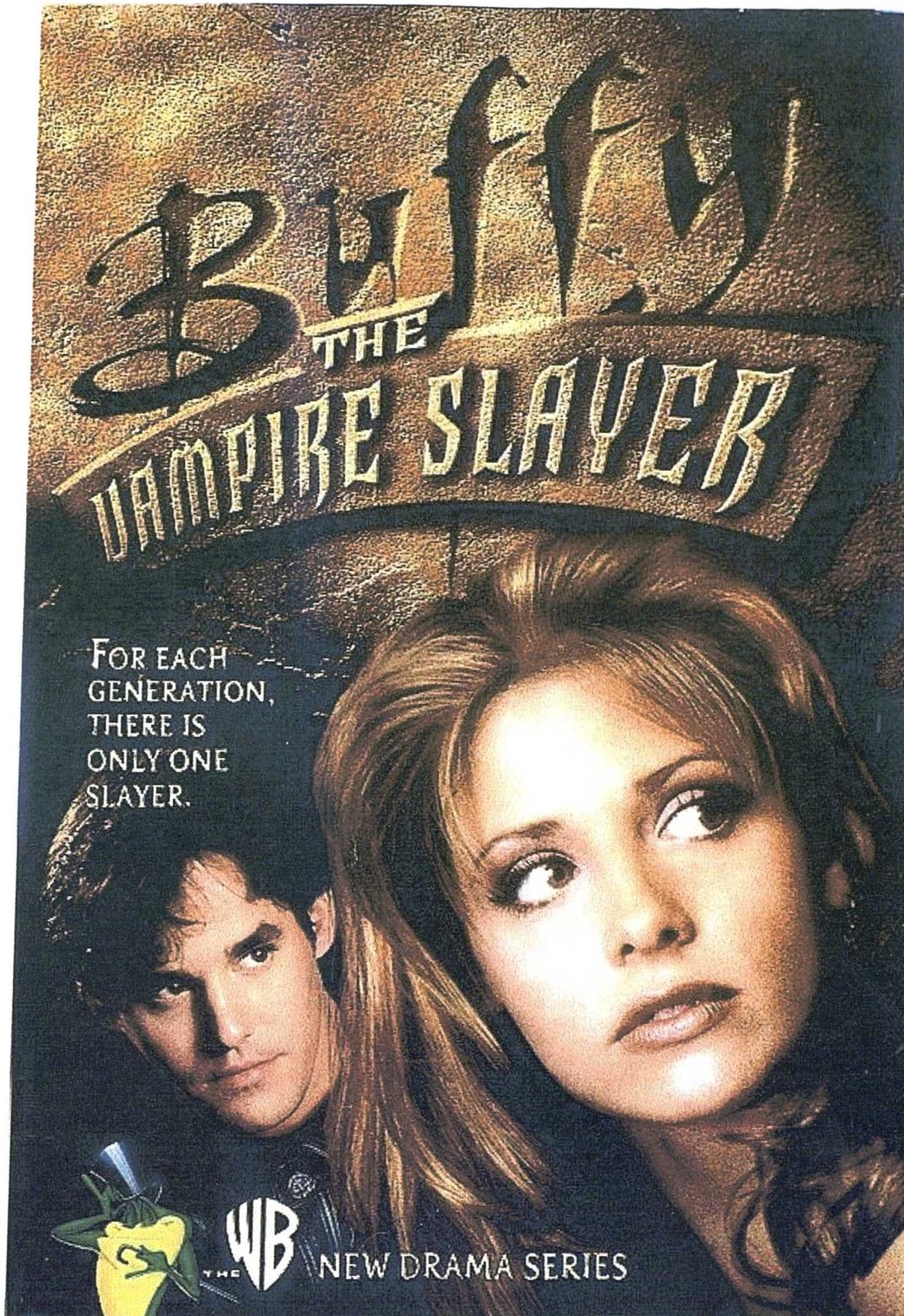


Fig. 5.18. The full-page advertisement for the first episode of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* in the *TV Guide* (8 March 1997) places an emphasis on the character of Buffy Summers, the series' young female lead.



Fig. 5.19. Promotional image of Sarah Michelle Gellar as Buffy Summers.

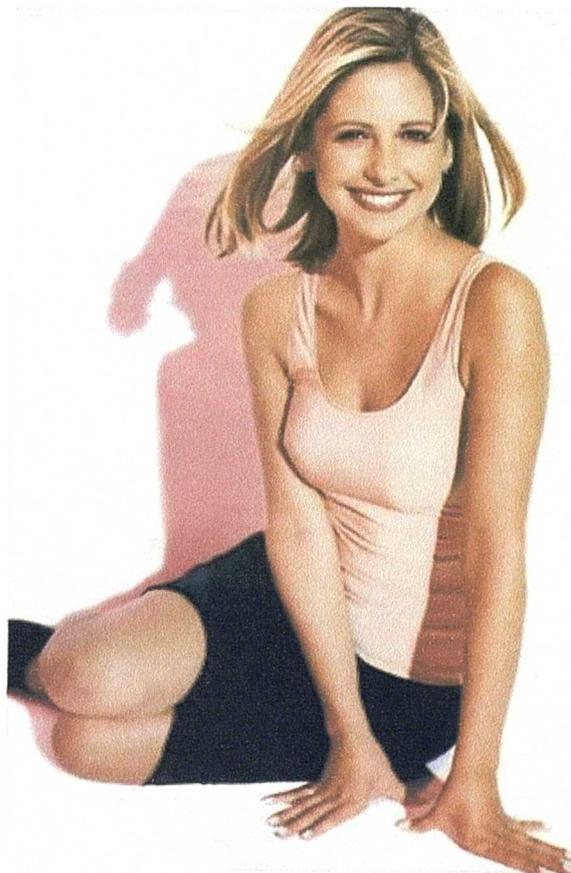


Fig. 5.20. Star shot of Sarah Michelle Gellar.

and style. Images of Buffy adopt the characteristic elements of the series' signature style, using directional light and strong colours, combined with the costuming and pose of the character (fig. 5.19). By contrast, star shots of Sarah Michelle Gellar tend to be lit in a more high-key style, and substitute the strong gaze of Buffy with more traditionally feminised facial expressions and physical poses (fig. 5.20).

The series' signature style, which uses directional light and strong colours to combine the teen and horror 'worlds' of the series, also enables the ancillary merchandise that stems from the series to be exploited across a range of differently targeted markets. For example, the magazine published by Titan to accompany the series in the UK tends to emphasise the horror elements of the series. The second issue includes a cartoon strip based on the series, interviews with two regular vampires from the second season of the series (Spike and Drusilla) in character, and an article on the creation of the series' special effects. Its featured two-page colour poster depicts Buffy threatening Drusilla with a stake in the foreground, as Spike leans aggressively forward in the background. The image predominates with ambers and browns in the series' characteristically shadowy style (fig. 5.21). This 'action' image in an industrial setting is in contrast to the covers of the fictional novels that accompany the series, which have a much clearer address to a female teen audience than the predominantly male market of fantasy comic magazines<sup>31</sup>. The colour plates on the covers of these books tend to be posed shots of the characters in soft focus, looking directly towards the camera. The emphasis tends to be

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<sup>31</sup> Thanks to Rachel Moseley in an informative discussion as part of the Midlands Television Research Group for pointing out the gendered address of the *Buffy* magazine.

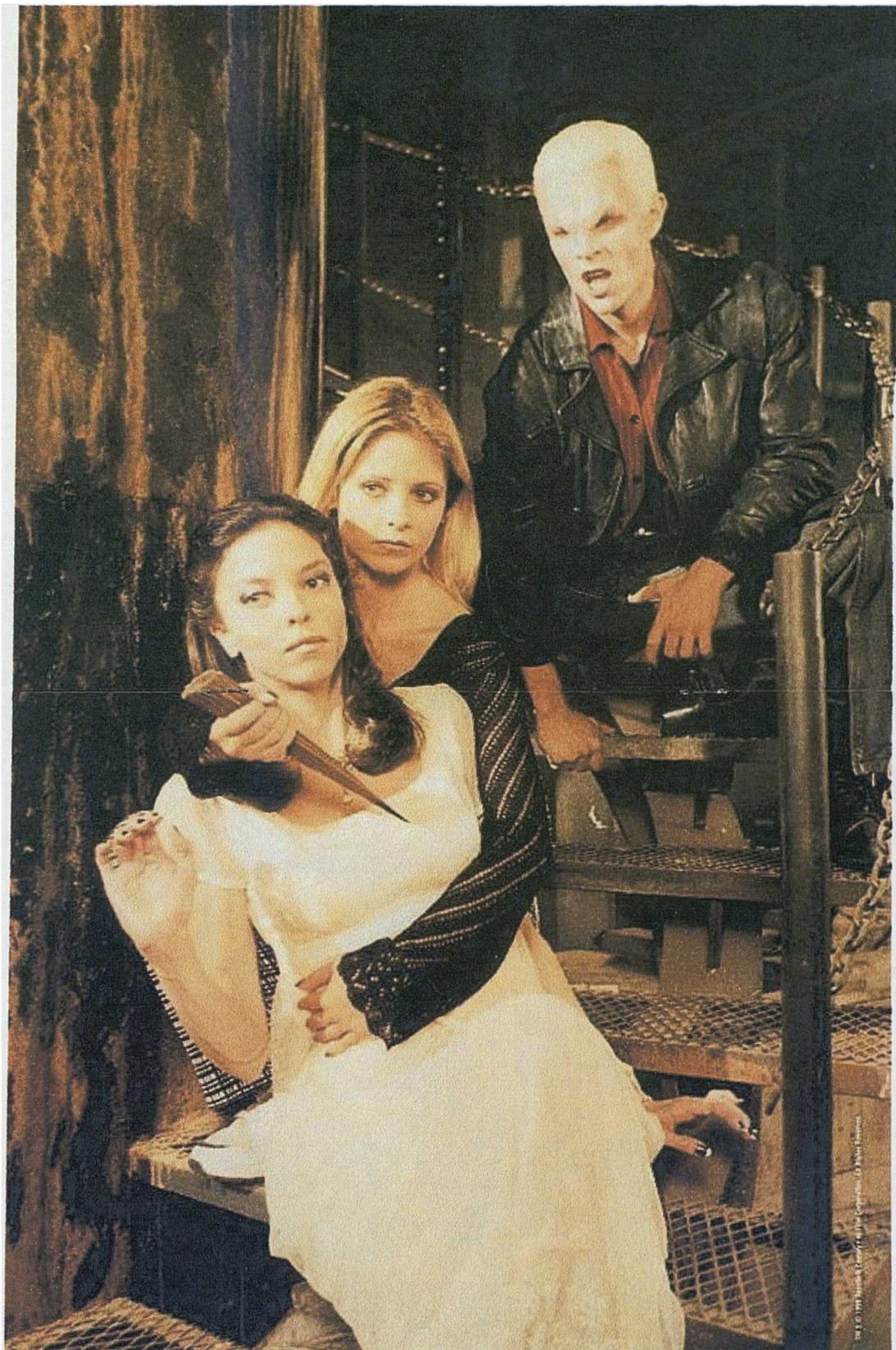


Fig. 5.21. The centrefold poster in the second edition of the *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* magazine (November 1999) is a posed 'action' image emphasising the series' depiction of vampires and slaying.

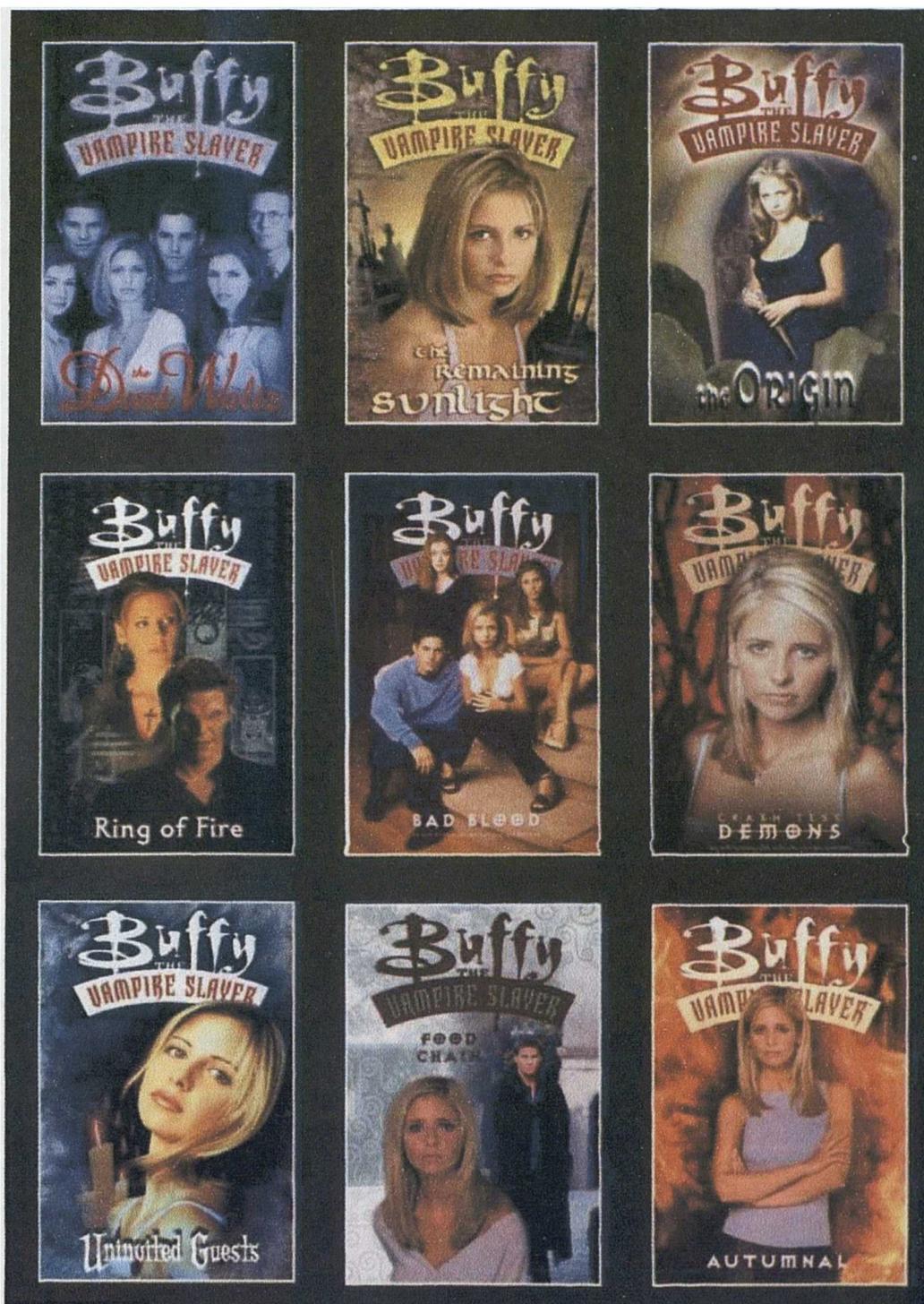


Fig. 5.22. The colour plates on the covers of the *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* novels tend to be posed shots of the characters in soft focus, emphasising the style of the characters' dress and image.

on the on the style of the characters' dress and image, rather than on the recreation of an action pose. Despite this, they still display the same use of directional light and strong ambers and blues in the colour palate (fig. 5.22).

Such ancillary merchandise exploits the different modes of address that are combined within the series in order to maximise the potential revenue of the series. The generic mix of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* not only maximises its appeal across a range of differently defined markets, but also extends the markets to which ancillary merchandise from the series can be marketed. This is particularly facilitated by the creation of a series format and signature style whose distinctiveness is constructed through generic hybridity, enabling the series to maintain its originality while still appealing to extant taste markets. The series' signature and format are both distinctive enough and flexible enough to be exploited in quite diverse ways. The generic hybridity of the 'brand' *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* is then sufficiently malleable to be marketed to a range of different taste markets and demographics, enabling the potential revenue from the series to be maximised. What I want to go on to examine, is the effect that branding as a production strategy has on the text of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* itself. Lury argues that branding favours the 'repetitive flow of the series' and 'the flat character [...] defined precisely by his <sup>[ ]</sup> (sic) abstention from experiences which might produce change or personal growth' (1993, 86). Is this an accurate reflection of the textual strategies at work in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, and what are the consequences of this for our understanding of television aesthetics?

### **Seriality and Characterisation in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer***

Over its first season, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* established its basic narrative format. Following the conventions of the action-adventure series, in each episode a pre-credit teaser introduces a different problem for the recurring cast to overcome over the rest of the episode. The 'teen' reality world is threatened or invaded by a demonic foe and through a combination of the gathering of knowledge and the marshalling of Buffy's supernatural skills the threat is destroyed. This narrative structure provides each episode with narrative resolution and maintains the basic format of the series in which Buffy is a vampire slayer located on the Hellmouth and assisted by her friends in the fight against demons. *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* establishes a format that offers certain narrative and stylistic pleasures: it will depict Buffy and her friends fighting demonic foe; it will address themes about growing up in contemporary America; it will have a characteristic visual style and contain certain elements, such as fight sequences, ironic humour and moments of horror. This format grounds the viewer's expectations and provides the network with a recognisable product that offers predictable pleasures that are repeated each week. However, unlike the narrative structure of earlier action-adventure series such as *Star Trek*, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* also develops a continuing narrative. Actions carry over from episode to episode so that the events of one episode have consequences for the series overall. While *The X-Files* balanced this paradox through the construction of genre and mythology episodes, this distinction is much less clear cut in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*.

There are episodes in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* that can be distinguished as being primarily ‘stand-alone’ stories structured around the battle against a specific demonic foe. However, it becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish between the one-off and continuing narrative strands within each episode of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* as the single episode plot devices are inextricably bound up with the continuing narratives. An example of this is the season six episode, in which one of Willow’s spells goes wrong and causes each character to lose their memory. The primary action of the episode is concerned with the main characters attempting to escape from vampires while trying to reconstruct their memories. However, the emotional resonance of the episode lies with the way that the consequences of the memory loss relate to on-going narrative strands. While in the continuing series’ narrative Willow and Tara’s relationship is faltering, under the memory loss spell they fall in love all over again. And while Buffy has lost her will to live after being brought back to Earth from heaven, under the spell she rediscovers her calling and the thrill of vampire slaying. The one-off plot convention of memory loss here resonates with the series’ on-going narratives, functioning metaphorically to explore the emotional resonance of loss experienced by a number of the series’ primary characters.

Therefore, although *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* works within certain formulaic conventions that are established during its first season, this does not restrict it to the creation of repetitive narratives and flat characters. Rather the primary emphasis in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* is on the development and growth of its characters over time. As Buffy struggles with her role as the slayer, we see her reject her duties, struggle for her

independence, return with renewed commitment to her role in season 5, only to have to re-evaluate her life after the death of her mother and her own death and resurrection in season 6. Meanwhile, Willow gradually overcomes her insecurity and low self-esteem to discover an increased sense of self-worth through her growing wiccan skills, and has to struggle to confront her increasing dependence upon magic as a source of self-esteem in season 6. In addition to these character changes, the situation of the series shifts as the characters move from high school to college. Giles has to cope with unemployment and an increasing feeling of redundancy, eventually leaving the series as a regular character in season 6, the high-school students have to re-adjust to moving away from home and becoming increasingly independent. The series is not afraid to change its regular cast. At the end of season 3, Angel and Cordelia leave the series to star in the spin-off series *Angel*. In season 4, Willow's boyfriend Oz leaves and Tara, her girlfriend, is introduced as a new regular character. The vampire Spike, who was introduced in season 2 becomes a regular character as he loses his ability to harm people and develops a growing love for Buffy. Most drastically, in season 5 both Buffy and her mother die. Through these changes the series is able to treat (metaphorically and directly) the experiences of growing up in contemporary America.

The use of the serialised series narrative structure in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* contains the dialectical demands of contemporary US television production. The series constructs a narrative structure that allows it to combine repetition and change. As I argued in relation to *The X-Files*, the move towards increasing serialisation in US television drama series reflects a shift in the strategies adopted by US television producers for attaining

longevity in series production. The move away from the repetitive structure of series such as *Star Trek* to the increasing serialisation of series such as *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* stems in part from the developments in quality in which complex narratives that carry over individual episodes were favoured as a mark of aesthetic distinction. However, serialised narratives also reflect the increasing value attached to loyal audiences who are rewarded by series with dense story-telling that refers back to previous episodes. This shift can also be understood in relation to the development of the VCR, which enables viewers to record series off air or buy sell-through copies of their favourite programmes. The VCR and the sale of sell-through videos of television series makes it easier for viewers to gain access to all the episodes of a particular series (reducing the risk of missing an episode) and also enables viewers to re-watch series. The VCR is an important element in the commercial valorisation of the fan-consumer as it creates a new market (the sale of videotapes) through which series with fan followings can be exploited. As television becomes less ephemeral, series with on-going and complex narrative structures become more commercially viable.

This challenges Lury's argument that the shift to trademark law and the development of branding leads to an emphasis on repetitive narratives and flat characters. By contrast, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* is constructed around a format that allows the character of Buffy to be both 'flat', in that her character's function is defined by her role as the slayer, and 'rounded', in that the series is centrally concerned with exploring Buffy's changing emotional response to her given role. This suggests that we need to rethink Lury's argument that the move away from copyright to trademark law has resulted in innovation

being recast as a simulation. To do so, I want to return to some of the debates addressed earlier in this chapter about the developments in quality television.

### **Debating Quality Television: Commercial Aesthetics**

Lury's exploration of branding, and Feuer and Thompson's histories of 'quality television', are all concerned with the relationship between the aesthetic and the economic. Lury argues that with the move towards branding, the mark of distinctiveness, which had traditionally functioned as an indicator of originality in the designation of a work of art, no longer functions as a signifier of innovation, but merely as the simulation of innovation. Essentially, she is exploring the ways in which the shifts in cultural production in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century have challenged the signifying function of traditional aesthetic criteria. Thompson tackles a similar problem in his analysis of quality television. He argues that by the 1990s,

“quality television” has become a genre in itself, complete with its own set of formulaic characteristics. As is the case with any genre – the cop show, the western, the doctor show – we come to know what to expect. All of the innovative elements that have come to define “quality television”, even its unpredictability, have become more and more predictable. By 1992, you could recognise a “quality show” long before you could tell if it was any good. Quality television came to refer to shows with a particular set of characteristics that we normally associate with “good”, “artsy”, and “classy”. (Thompson 1997, 16)

In Thompson's analysis the traditional criteria of aesthetic value evoked by quality television, such as creative authorship, formal innovation, complex writing, and so on, can no longer be relied upon as markers of 'good' television, but have come to serve (in part) the signifying function of generic elements that offer the viewer a particular and predictable product.

The difficulty in these accounts of dealing with the notion of the aesthetic in relation to commercial television recalls the difficulties encountered in the production of *The Prisoner* in reconciling the generic and the modernist in its textual and production strategies. The difference in the case of *The X-Files* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* is that the aesthetic and the commercial aims of such productions are co-dependent. The aesthetic signifiers of 'quality' used by both series, such as distinctiveness, single authorship, complex narratives and so on, function at the service of the commercial demands of the networks, while the commercial networks demand programmes that can be read as aesthetically valuable. While in the case of *The Prisoner*, there was a conflict at the level of production between the commercial and the aesthetic aims of the series, in the quality US television series this conflict is removed, but resurfaces at the moment of academic analysis. In many ways, Thompson's understanding of 'quality' television as a genre is astute, in that it recognises the function of traditional criteria of aesthetic value as markers of expectation, much as generic elements are used to shape viewer expectations. However, while this leads Thompson to argue that the unpredictability of quality television (in its attempt to maintain innovation) can become predictable, Feuer argues that this is in fact a central aspect of way in which the modernist emphasis on innovation

functions within the commercial demands of US television production. She argues of US network television, 'just as the system demands the repetition of previously successful formulas, it also reproduces itself on the basis of constant novelty and innovation' (Feuer 1984a, 24-5). This suggests that if we are to understand the function of aesthetic criteria such as innovation and originality in relation to contemporary US television we need to move away from the opposing discourses of populism and elitism, complicity and critique, commodity and art (Feuer 1995, 151).

Central to this in relation to these television series, is a recognition that these texts cannot be explored as static, but must be analysed in relation to the continuity of the series structure. The television series is constructed over time, and in the example of *The X-Files* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, in relation to the commercial and aesthetics demands for continuous narratives. As a consequence, the function of 'distinctiveness' in television series production must be assessed in terms of the series' variation from other cultural products and in terms of the variations within the series itself. While in *Star Trek* this variation comes from the fluidity of the fantastic setting of the series, in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* it comes from the use of fantasy to explore the *on-going* anxieties of the recurring characters. Both strategies function aesthetically to mark out the series' distinctiveness and commercially to extend their longevity. By exploring the commercial function of the aesthetic in US television production, we therefore need to explore how traditional aesthetic criteria such as distinctiveness are recast in relation to the historically contingent demands of producing long-running television series.

## Conclusion

The shifts in US network television over the 1980s and 1990s present a challenge for the dominant aesthetic paradigms for understanding television as a medium. Not only do these series challenge the adequacy of the notions of glance and flow for describing the television experience, they also threaten the previous dichotomies upon which aesthetic criteria such as quality, distinctiveness, innovation and so on, were based. In negotiating the demands for series that combine longevity and an appeal to the aesthetic criteria of quality with the propensity to be exploited through branding, both *The X-Files* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* combine flat characters and repetitive narratives (Mulder and Scully are defined by their continued search for the truth about paranormal phenomena, Buffy is defined by her role as the slayer), within a narrative structure that allows for character growth and narrative development<sup>32</sup>. This suggests that the dichotomies (repetitive narratives and flat characters versus complex narratives and changing characters) through which Lury argues that innovation is recast as simulation, can not adequately address the complex negotiation between familiarity and distinctiveness apparent in these texts. The analysis presented in this chapter therefore suggests that if we are to understand the aesthetics of contemporary US television, we need to address television as it is. These series are commercial products constructed within the competitive demands on contemporary US network television. Within this context of increased fragmentation and competition, aesthetic criteria such as distinctiveness and innovation function in relation

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<sup>32</sup> The balance of this position is more problematic in *The X-Files*, which struggles to deal with Scully's shift from sceptic to believer over its later episodes. However, this is addressed in the eighth season with the introduction of a new partner for Scully following Mulder's abduction. This allows the roles to be reversed and for Scully to rescind the role of sceptic and develop into the role of believer.

to the commercial demands for long-running series that can be easily branded and marketed to a range of different niche audience segments.

Telefantasy has been particularly generative in 1990s US television, because the representation of the fantastic facilitates a number of these key demands. The propensity for visual display in the representation of the fantastic facilitates the creation of distinctive series signatures that can be exploited through branding across a range of ancillary products. The tendency towards generic hybridity in fantasy texts enables the marketing of these series to a range of different niche demographics. Fantasy narratives also retain associations with cult texts, suggesting the representation of the fantastic as a useful strategy in appealing to the valued fan-consumer taste market. In the following chapter I want to go on to explore the place of telefantasy in Britain within the same historical period. If the growth of telefantasy responds to the move towards niche marketing in the face of increased competition in US network television, what function does it have in the public service environment of British terrestrial broadcasting?

## **Chapter 6**

### **Problematic Histories: Scheduling and Producing Contemporary**

#### **Telefantasy in Britain**

##### **Introduction**

This chapter seeks to explore the differences between contemporary British and US telefantasy. It is particularly concerned with analysing the impact of nationally specific notions of quality, popularity and value on the scheduling of US telefantasy on British television and the production of indigenous telefantasy in Britain. In the US the industrial, economic and aesthetic changes in the television industry since the 1980s led to the alignment of certain aesthetic and economic attributes in the programming of primetime network television. Value is attached to network series that function within a generically defined notion of ‘quality television’, appeal to a specific range of niche taste markets and display a distinctive visual style that can be branded and exploited across a number of products. *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* fulfils these requirements, with its striking visual style, complex narratives and appeal across a range of valuable taste markets, particularly teen and fan audiences. I want to explore how the industrial, economic and aesthetic changes associated with the rise of satellite, cable and digital television resonate in the contemporary British television industry. The expansion of satellite and cable services, technological advances in television production and shifts in cultural and aesthetic value, have been understood to threaten received notions of public service broadcasting through the introduction of increasing commercial pressure. What effect do

these shifts have on the scheduling and production of telefantasy in contemporary British terrestrial television? I want to explore this question through an examination of the scheduling of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and its spin-off series *Angel* on British terrestrial television and an analysis of the remake of the 1960s British telefantasy series *Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)* for transmission on BBC 1 in 2000-01.

### **Scheduling *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Angel* on British Terrestrial Television**

When initially aired on US network television, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* is scheduled in a primetime weekday evening slot between 8.00 and 9.00pm. In the UK, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* gets its first transmission on the subscription satellite, cable and digital channel Sky 1 about four months after it is originally screened in the US. On Sky 1, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* is scheduled much as it is in the US. It screens on a weeknight in the primetime slot between 8.00 and 9.00pm and, as occurred on the WB, is followed by the spin-off series *Angel*<sup>1</sup>. Generally a year after it is first transmitted on US network television, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* is transmitted on UK terrestrial television. However, rather than being scheduled in a mid-evening primetime slot, the series is placed between 6.45 and 7.30pm on the second public service channel BBC 2, which has a remit to provide minority and specialist interest programming. The specific slot within which *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* is situated further emphasises its status as minority or specialist interest programming as it provides an alternative to the early evening news bulletins

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<sup>1</sup> Although *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* moved to UPN in the autumn of 2001, *Angel* stayed at the WB. This move has reduced the viability of cross-over narratives between the two series, which were an occasional feature of the first two seasons of *Angel*.

transmitted by the two main terrestrial channels BBC 1 and ITV between 6.00 and 7.00pm.

Annette Hill and Ian Calcutt have recently argued that the scheduling of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* on BBC 2 situates the series in a slot for family and children's programmes. They argue that the 'teatime slot may be suitable for the younger fans [of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*], but not for viewers aged 16-24 who are the core audience for this series' (Hill and Calcutt 2001). However, if we look briefly at the history of this slot, it is apparent that it has a distinctive identity as a site for programmes aimed precisely at an audience of teens and young adults. On two nights a week in the late 1980s and early 1990s, BBC 2 scheduled dedicated youth programming in this slot, under the collective title of *Def II*. In addition to programmes created specifically for an audience of teenagers and young adults, such as the *Rough Guide* travel series and the music show *Rapido*<sup>2</sup>, *Def II* also consisted of repeats of fantasy series from the 1960s and 1970s. After *Def II* was cancelled by the BBC in the early 1990s, repeats of fantasy series, such as *The Addams Family*, *Star Trek*, *Stingray*, *The Man from UNCLE* and *Dr Who* continued to form a large part of this slot. This was also the place in which the first *Star Trek* spin-off series, *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, premiered in the UK<sup>3</sup>. Over the 1990s, the 6.00-7.30pm slot on BBC 2 has continued to be the primary site in which imported contemporary US fantasy television drama is scheduled in the UK, with

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<sup>2</sup> For a more comprehensive discussion of these youth programmes, and *Def II*'s precursor on BBC 2 *Network 7*, see Lury (2001).

<sup>3</sup> *Star Trek: The Next Generation* premiered in the UK on 26<sup>th</sup> September 1990 with a feature length pilot transmitted by BBC 2 between 6.00 and 7.25pm. It went on to be regularly scheduled every Wednesday evening on BBC 2 between 6.00 and 6.50pm before *Def II*.

primetime US network series such as *Star Trek: Voyager* and *Sliders* being transmitted in this slot.

What is apparent in this scheduling history is that contemporary primetime US fantasy series, such as *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, are being associated with alternative, specialist interest youth programming in the UK. This has a direct impact on the form in which we are able to view these programmes on UK terrestrial television<sup>4</sup>. In order to conform to the expectations of its pre-watershed early evening slot, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* is cut by the BBC for language and violent and sexual content<sup>5</sup>. The pattern for scheduling *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* on BBC 2 has been repeated with the scheduling of *Buffy's* spin-off series, *Angel*, on Channel 4, a terrestrial channel funded by advertising but with a public service remit to provide diverse, experimental and minority interest programmes. The first season of *Angel* was scheduled between 6.00 and 7.00pm on Channel 4, in contrast to its 9.00-10.00pm slot on the WB network in the US. As with the 6.00-7.30pm slot on BBC 2, this slot on Channel 4 is also associated with alternative programming with a strong youth appeal. Channel 4 schedule a number of US sitcoms here such as *Friends*, in addition to their youth-orientated soap opera *Hollyoaks*. They have also placed a number of fantasy series here, such as the US series *Babylon 5* and *Smallville: Superman the Early Years*, and the 1960s series *The Avengers* and *The Time Tunnel*. Produced as a more adult-orientated spin-off of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Angel's* violent

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<sup>4</sup> Annette Hill and Ian Calcutt (2001) go on to discuss the effect of this scheduling practice on the British fans of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Angel*.

<sup>5</sup> Fans of the series complained about its treatment in the British schedules. When the series returned to BBC 2 in October 1999 to complete its second season, a late night uncut repeat was added into BBC 2's schedules.

action sequences and occasionally coarse language were cut for its early evening transmission on Channel 4. Jay Kandola, Channel 4's head of series' acquisition, defended this decision by arguing that, 'Channel 4 has made minimal cuts [to *Angel*] to make sure that it can be viewed by all of its fans and not just some' (from an interview in *Right to Reply*, UK, Channel 4, tx. 6/10/00).

I want to suggest that the scheduling and cutting of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Angel* needs to be understood in relation to received notions of public service broadcasting in Britain. Jay Kandola's defence of Channel 4's scheduling of *Angel* appeals to a particular understanding of television's social responsibilities in which television scheduling safeguards the rights of all viewers to watch programmes that are both appealing and appropriate. Simon Frith has recently argued that in the current climate of British broadcasting, audience research indicates that for viewers in Britain, 'access [to television programmes] is as significant as *content*' (Frith 2000, 47). It is precisely through this argument that the terrestrial broadcasters are here defending cutting the *content* of *Angel* in order to enable *access* to the series by the full range of its potential viewers.

Part of the problem raised by series such as *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Angel* stems from their generic hybridity, combining horror and action with a strong address to adolescent themes. In the competitive, fragmented environment of US network television the appeal of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* to two valuable niche taste markets makes it an economically viable primetime series. However, on UK terrestrial television, this

multiple address has to be negotiated in order to fulfil the perceived requirements of public service broadcasting. This is further exacerbated by the association of US fantasy television with youth programming in the UK schedules. While the combination of appeal to the teen and fan taste markets contributes to the value of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* in the US network schedules, the categorising of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Angel* as youth programming has proved problematic for its scheduling on UK terrestrial television. For while on the new US networks, programmes with a strong youth appeal are considered a valuable element of primetime television drama, in the UK they tend to be understood as fulfilling ‘alternative’ tastes to the mainstream<sup>6</sup>.

### **Quality, Value and British Public Service Television**

What is particularly striking in the scheduling of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Angel* in Britain and the US is the differing terms under which such decisions are justified by programmers. As I argued in Chapter 5, the production and scheduling of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* in the US can be understood in relation to industrial attempts to unite aesthetic and economic value through a redefinition of quality television as a generic style combined with an appeal to a number of valuable niche markets. By contrast, Jay Kandola’s defence of the scheduling of *Angel* on Channel 4 is not couched in terms of the economic or aesthetic value of the series. Rather it appeals to public service notions of the role of the broadcaster to protect and meet the needs of the majority of viewers.

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<sup>6</sup> Not all programmes created largely for the youth market are scheduled on BBC 2. For example, the pop music series *Top of the Pops* commands a prime-time slot on BBC 1.

Implicit in such decisions is an evaluation of the programme and its perceived audience(s).

In a recent article in the British journal *Screen*, Simon Frith (2000) reported on the findings of the Economic and Social Research Council's Media Economics and Media Culture Research Programme, which was set up to explore the impact of economic and regulatory frameworks on the value judgements made in the process of producing and delivering programmes in Britain. He identifies three interrelated notions of value in British television: quality television, valuable television and good television. This division, while rather schematic, provides a useful starting point for thinking about the ways in which the shifts in the context of television production over the 1980s and 1990s have affected the types of programmes being aired on terrestrial television in Britain, and the forms of value associated with them. In Frith's model, 'quality television' refers both to a type of programme and a mode of production. As with Thompson's (1997) definition of quality in US television, quality television is here understood as the exception rather than the norm. However, Frith's notion of quality is constructed within the context of British public service broadcasting. Thus, quality television in Britain stands in contrast to popular television and is produced for aesthetic rather than commercial gain. Frith argues that, 'The idea of quality television comes [...] from the concatenation of two strands of British regulatory history: high cultural disdain for the mass media; and the defence of public service broadcasting against various forms of commercialization.' (2000, 40). While arguing that the definition of quality television stems largely from broadcasters, Frith claims that 'valuable television' is defined by

viewers in terms of what they like and what they are prepared to pay for. By contrast, 'good television' refers more directly to received notions of aesthetic value, such as imagination, authenticity, social relevance and so on (Frith 2000, 45).

These three concepts interrelate in the negotiations that take place across the industry, text and audience about the value of television as a medium and as individual programmes. Within Britain they are constructed specifically through the notion of public service broadcasting. Thus quality television has traditionally been associated with non-commercial television produced within institutions protected from the denigrating effects of market forces by state regulation<sup>7</sup>. In this public service model, quality television is defined through traditional aesthetic criteria associated with high culture that is differentiated from mass mediated and commercial cultural production. Within this definition of quality television, *commercially produced television series such as Buffy the Vampire Slayer and Angel* are automatically situated as the kind of programming against which judgements of quality are made.

However, these traditional notions of quality television not only problematise the place of commercially produced US television in the UK, they also problematise notions of the intrinsic aesthetic value of television programmes themselves, suggesting that television can only be of 'quality' if it refuses or subverts the mass mediated nature of the medium.

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<sup>7</sup> It is worth noting here, that commercial television has also been 'protected' from the potentially denigrating effects of market forces by state regulation in the UK. For example, the 1990 Broadcasting Act stipulated that the ITC apply a 'quality threshold' when awarding the ITV franchises in 1992. Franchises could not simply be allocated to the highest bidder, and companies had to demonstrate a commitment to quality programming. This regulation implies that commercialisation stands in opposition to quality.

The implication that television programmes in themselves are not of the same aesthetic value as other cultural products is reflected in Channel 4's differing policies on cutting films and television programmes. Channel 4 has a policy of not cutting films purely to fulfil scheduling requirements. By contrast, by claiming that in the scheduling and cutting of *Angel*, 'I have to please everybody, and I think I have pleased the majority of people' (from an interview on *Right to Reply*, UK, Channel 4, tx.6/10/00), Jay Kandola implies that it is part of the channel's requirements as a public service broadcaster to censure a television series like *Angel*. What Jay Kandola is implying is that Channel 4 has a greater responsibility to schedule a series such as *Angel* in a slot which is accessible to the majority of the public to whom the series will appeal than to ensure that the series remains uncut. The channel's remit to serve the public is defined here in terms of enabling viewers to *access* the programme at the expense of any intrinsic aesthetic value that the series may have.

As we saw in Chapter 3, the relationship between the commercial imperative and aesthetic value has long since been a contentious and problematic issue in British public service broadcasting. However, this is an issue that is further exacerbated by the growth of satellite, cable and digital television, which has made commercial US television an increasingly central part of the landscape of British television culture. Technologically, new forms of programme delivery, such as satellite, cable and digital television, have lead to a proliferation of television programmes across a greatly expanded range of channels. This not only threatens the status of terrestrial television as the sole provider of programmes across a limited number of channels, it also introduces new approaches to

television production, such as niche marketing and branding (discussed in Chapter 5). Economically, this proliferation of channels challenges the monopolies of terrestrial television, while simultaneously providing them with extended markets through which to exploit their own products. For example, in 1991, the BBC launched a commercial satellite channel, *BBC World Service TV*, to exploit the apparent international demand for BBC programmes, suggesting that in the expanded market of international television, the BBC itself can be understood as a brand associated with quality. A year later it partnered with the US cable operator, Cox, and the commercial company Thames Television, to set up *UK Gold*, a UK directed satellite channel screening repeats from the archives. The economic shifts in the television industry affect the terms under which programmes are produced, with markets other than the terrestrial one becoming an increasingly important factor in the production of programmes<sup>8</sup>.

The commercial imperative behind these new forms of delivery for television has also brought into question the validity of a public service broadcaster like the BBC, funded by a compulsory licence fee. While the threat to the licence fee, which hung over the BBC under the Thatcher government in the 1980s, has since diminished (see Goodwin 1998), the ramifications of these industrial changes are apparent in the rationalisation of the corporation. The 1990 Broadcasting Act stipulated that terrestrial broadcasters commission not less than 25 percent of their programmes from independent production companies, a move that stands in line with the gradual reduction of the BBC's role as an

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<sup>8</sup> International markets have been a significant factor in the production of television programmes since the 1960s (see chapter 3). However, the expansion of satellite and cable and VCR technology multiplies the number of potential markets through which programmes can be economically exploited.

in-house production company. This shift, in combination with the increasing importance of global markets, affects notions of quality as an appeal to British tastes and standards may no longer be the primary financial incentive in television production. It also challenges the power of commissioning editors in the UK to dictate the types of programmes made, as the terrestrial television market becomes just one of a number of potential points of sale. As a consequence, notions of quality in British public service broadcasting that are defined against commercial mass media, are becoming increasingly difficult to sustain.

However, despite the growth in satellite, cable and digital television, terrestrial television still remains the primary form of television in Britain. In 2000, the audience share for public service broadcasters in homes with satellite, cable or digital television was as high as 61.6 percent of the total audience, rising to 70 percent in primetime<sup>9</sup>. Terrestrial broadcasters maintain control over the scheduling of series which, as in the example of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, conform to nationally specific notions of appeal and value. However, the precise nature of these notions is constructed in the interface between producer and viewer. Frith notes a paradox in the public service approach to television production in which there is both a suspicion of popular aesthetics (the tastes of the viewers) and a need/desire to appeal to audience interests (whether in the production of minority programming for a specific audience, or in the creation of mainstream programming with a wide appeal) (Frith 2000, 46). This is apparent in the transmission

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<sup>9</sup> Statistics presented in the report by the Department of Trade and Industry and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, entitled *A New Future for Communications* (2000), reproduced in Franklin (2001, 36).

of an episode of *Right to Reply* on Channel 4 in which an irate viewer challenged Channel 4 programmers about the scheduling of *Angel*, and from which the quotations from Jay Kandola above are taken<sup>10</sup>. In this programme the viewer's identification of *Angel* as a 'valuable' programme comes into conflict with the programmers' notions of 'quality' television.

Frith also suggests that these evaluative criteria are further complicated by the social shifts in the make up of the audience and production personnel.

The question now, then, is whether different patterns of recruitment (Media Studies rather than Oxbridge graduates), different cultural reference points (US cinema rather than the British stage) are [...] leading to a different, more populist, set of evaluative criteria even of drama. (Frith 2000, 45)

What this suggests is that the current period of change in the landscape of British television broadcasting is one in which the traditional notions of aesthetic value that are central to definitions of public service broadcasting are currently under threat, both by changes within the British industry and British society, and by the increasingly significant impact of global markets.

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<sup>10</sup> *Right to Reply* is a consumer interest programme that offers viewers the opportunity to air their complaints about television programmes.

### **British Telefantasy: Responding to *The X-Files***

As in the US, the success of *The X-Files* in Britain demonstrated the potential for telefantasy series with high production values to appeal to a broad audience. The series was initially transmitted on British terrestrial television between 9.30 and 10.15pm on BBC 2. It was advertised by the *Radio Times* as a 'cult' hit from the US (Johnson 1994, 31). However, over its first season it gained exceptionally high ratings for the minority channel and was moved to a primetime BBC 1 slot during its second season<sup>11</sup>. This scheduling move represented a shift in strategy for the BBC and recognition of the mainstream appeal of this 'cult' US hit with a majority British audience. Janet McCabe (2001) argues that the scheduling of *The X-Files* by the BBC exemplifies the shift in British public service broadcasting from the notion of the 'vulnerable' viewer defined in the Pilkington Report in the 1960s to the 'informed consumer' defined in the Peacock Report in 1986. The Peacock Report signalled a shift in the notion of British public service broadcasting by suggesting that 'viewers and listeners are the best ultimate judges of their own interests' (Peacock Report quoted in McCabe 2001, 149). With an increasing recognition of the plurality of British society over the 1970s and 1980s (exemplified by Channel 4's remit for diversity, see Higson (1989) and Harvey (2000)), and the expansion of viewer choice with the multiplication of television services, the imagined 'public' of public service broadcasting has come into question. McCabe argues that the scheduling of *The X-Files* reflects the BBC's difficulties in negotiating its position within this environment. She suggests that while the move of the series from

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<sup>11</sup> *The X-Files* continued to run on BBC 1 until the end of its sixth season. At the start of its seventh season it moved back to a post-watershed slot on BBC 2.

BBC 2 to BBC 1 responded to the judgements of its viewers, the subsequent erratic scheduling of the series on BBC 1 was justified by an understanding of the series' audience as loyal and devoted viewers who would follow the series regardless of its scheduling (2001, 150). McCabe argues that these scheduling decisions reflect not the actual audience gained by the series (which increased by 2 million when the series moved from BBC 2 to BBC 1), but the BBC's 'imagined' audience for the series, reflecting how 'the BBC, on the verge of change, finds a consensual notion of the public more difficult to sustain' (McCabe 2001, 152).

The above debates suggest that the recent changes in British television have brought earlier definitions of public service broadcasting into question by challenging the possibility of conceptualising or appealing to the British 'public' as a consensus audience. However, while in the US the 'consensus' audience has been replaced by a notion of the television audiences as a 'coalition' of viewers, the problematic space that US telefantasy series occupy in the UK terrestrial schedules suggests that within the tradition of public service broadcasting in Britain, this shift is much more problematic to negotiate. The tensions between commercial imperatives and a tradition of public service; popularity and quality; mass media and high culture; the national and the global; problematise the criteria by which telefantasy is valued both industrially and culturally in the UK. This is apparent not only in the scheduling of imported telefantasy, but also in the production of contemporary British telefantasy.

A number of indigenous British telefantasy series followed the success of *The X-Files* in the UK, and adopted a range of different strategies. The 1996 series *Neverwhere* followed in the tradition of British telefantasy drama characterised by the long-running series *Dr Who*, with its emphasis on using studio sets and costumes to depict a 'ordinary' man's adventures in a fantastical world beneath the streets of London. The four part series *The Last Train*, transmitted 3 years later, reinvigorated another tradition of British telefantasy. In following the survivors of a global holocaust with a gritty, realist style, *The Last Train* is clearly indebted to series such as *Survivors* from the disaster strand of British telefantasy from the 1970s. Other series attempted to transfer the themes and style of *The X-Files* to a British setting. The six part serial *Ultraviolet* updated the vampire myth to the 1990s, following the work of a covert government agency set up to deal with the vampire threat. The series' dark visual style and combination of conspiracy narratives with tense action and suspense is clearly indebted to *The X-Files* and comparisons were made between the two series by David Pirie in *Sight and Sound* (Pirie, 1996). By contrast, *The Visitor* and *Invasion Earth* were more concerned with exploiting the developments in special effects technology in their invasion narratives. Both series premiered in Spring 1998, *The Visitor* on ITV and *Invasion Earth* on the BBC. Jed Mercurio situates his creation of *Invasion Earth* directly in relation to *The X-Files*, stating that, 'Because of the ratings success of *The X-Files*, TV executives have been looking for a British version' (quoted in Millar 1998, 2). The series, a co-production between BBC Scotland and the US satellite station The Sci-Fi Channel, was reportedly the most expensive drama ever made for British terrestrial television with each episode costing approximately £750,000 (Millar 1998, 2). The high budgets were used to exploit the

developments in CGI technology to create a vast alien entity, an expense that Mercurio justifies in terms of a desire to disassociate the series from the comparatively low production values of earlier British telefantasy (quoted in Millar 1998, 2).

Thus we can see in the response to the success of *The X-Files* in Britain, two broad thrusts. First, to build on the renewed interest in telefantasy by reinvigorating British traditions in telefantasy. Second, to integrate the thematic and stylistic possibilities opened up by *The X-Files* within indigenously produced British programming. The most apparent difference between these British series and their US counterparts is their narrative structure. All of these British programmes adopt a much shorter narrative structure than their US counterparts. Each series is relatively self-contained, and although a series such as *Ultraviolet* is based on a format that could run over a number of seasons, it still functions on a much smaller scale, limited to six episodes. None of these contemporary British telefantasy programmes have been long-running. This difference in narrative structure can be understood in part in relation to the differences between the national industries. In the US, the television industry is relatively standardised around a particular scheduling routine that favours the production of series with 20-26 episodes. The location of the industry in Hollywood means that production tends to be dominated by a number of key conglomerates, and production companies have access to a wide range of specialist services. In addition, as discussed in Chapter 5, the commercial imperative in US broadcasting places an emphasis on the production of programmes that can be exploited across a range of media and sold to syndication. All of these elements combine to favour the long-running series.

By comparison, the British terrestrial schedules are constructed along more diverse lines. The public service remit in British broadcasting is based on the notion that the British public is best served by a mixed schedule of programmes. While there is room within this schedule for long-running series and soap operas such as *The Bill* and *Eastenders*, there is a greater emphasis on a diversity of programme types than on the US networks. However, as we saw in Chapter 3, British television drama has historically adopted the series structure of the US television series. The different narrative structure of these series cannot simply be attributed to the greater diversity of narrative forms on British terrestrial television. Another factor here is <sup>the</sup> impact of US programmes on UK production values in the 1990s. As Jed Mercurio's comments above suggest, there was a perceived need in the production of *Invasion Earth* to compete with the production values of US telefantasy. However, with the relatively lower production budgets in British television production, such a financial investment is less risky in a series that only runs for four or six episodes. One consequence of the shorter narrative structure of British telefantasy is the effect that it has on the broader cultural impact of these series. Programmes that run for four or six episodes are less likely to have the broader cultural impact of the US series that run for a number of seasons, and are consequently less likely to develop cult fan followings. I want to explore these differences between contemporary US and UK telefantasy by examining a recent example, *Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)*. As a remake of a late 1960s British telefantasy series, the differences between these two productions suggest a number of ways of thinking about the changes in British television as it has moved from the era of scarcity to the era of availability.

### **British Telefantasy on British Terrestrial Television: *Randall and Hopkirk***

#### ***(Deceased)***

The original series of *Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)* ran for one season of 26 fifty minute episodes in 1969. It was produced by Lew Grade's ITC, who were responsible for a number of telefantasy series in the 1960s and 1970s, including *The Prisoner* (see Chapter 3). The two protagonists, Jeff Randall and his partner Marty Hopkirk, run a detective agency and the series follows a basic detective narrative as they investigate cases, assisted by Hopkirk's wife, Jeannie. The 'twist' in the series comes in the first episode when Hopkirk is killed in a hit and run accident and returns as a ghost, visible only to his partner Randall, to solve his own murder. The original series was essentially constructed around the detective genre with the fantastic elements confined to the appearance and disappearance of Marty (whose paranormal powers were predominantly limited to observation) and the occasional poltergeist effect, produced through stopping the camera and removing the actor from the frame. The series was reasonably light in tone, particularly with the casting of Kenneth Cope as Marty, an actor best known for his appearances on the satire series *That Was the Week that Was*. As with much of ITC's production in the 1960s, *Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)* was produced for both a British and a US market. Re-named *My Partner the Ghost* for US audiences, the series was not a ratings success, but did run in syndication through the 1970s.

The *Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)* series was revived in the late 1990s by WTTV for the BBC, and the re-make was first transmitted in March 2000 on BBC 1. WTTV (Working Title TV) was formerly owned by Polygram, and was sold to the US conglomerate,

Universal, as part of the Polygram deal in 1997. Working Title is best known for the productions of its sister arm, Working Title Films, responsible for a number of internationally successful British films in the 1990s, including *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, *Elizabeth* and *Notting Hill*. The television arm of the company by contrast has a significantly low output, producing around 20 major television dramas and films between its formation in 1984 and the production of *Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)* in 2000. WTTV's managing director, Simon Wright, claims that the company's ownership by a large US conglomerate like Universal is financially and aesthetically valuable in the current television market. He argues that the international market has become increasingly central to television production, with series that perform badly in Britain still being financially viable as a product for sale abroad and often proving successful in the international market (see Elliott 2000, 21). Much of WTTV's television output has been in the form of international co-productions, a strategy that is facilitated by Universal's powerful international distribution arm. Furthermore, Wright claims that while most independent production companies in Britain are struggling to increase their production output at a low cost in order to maximise profits, the economic pressures on WTTV are offset by the financial presence of Universal.

Most [independents] are trying to make as much as possible because the amount of work you do equates with the amount of profit you make. We have a long-term interest in sharing ownership of programmes and exploiting their library value.  
(Wright quoted in Elliott 2000, 21)

As a consequence WTTV can develop projects independently from the broadcasters without the pressure to raise a percentage of the production costs from them. Wright argues that this gives them the creative freedom to select scripts, directors and principle cast before approaching potential broadcasters (ibid.). This creative independence is combined with the financial backing of Universal to enable them to produce high quality, big budget series.

WTTV's production of *Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)* arose out of Polygram's desire to exploit its ownership of the ITC catalogue (which has since been purchased by the British company Carlton). Wright's reasons for the choice of this series point to the factors that he argues are particularly economically viable in the current television market. He sees the original series as 'high-concept cult TV' (Elliott 2000, 21) which could be improved with modern effects and an increased budget<sup>12</sup>. As such, the series is attractive because of what it offers and because of what it lacks. It provides a high-concept template upon which the larger budgets from Universal could impose higher production values.

In this account, Wright attaches value to particular attributes that contribute to the economic value of the series for development. As with the US network television market, high concept series (whose premise can be easily reduced to a simple phrase – a detective series in which one of the partners is a ghost) are prioritised as more saleable

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<sup>12</sup> Justin Wyatt (1994) analyses the increasing importance of 'high concept' films to Hollywood, as products that can be easily pitched and marketed.

across a range of markets<sup>13</sup>. These economic criteria of value are combined with aesthetic criteria as Wright draws attention to the creative independence of his production company from the rigors of the market, and the high production values attached to their development of the series. As with the accounts of the production of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, Wright equates the economic and aesthetic, suggesting that higher production values and creative authorship lead to a more financially viable product (ibid.).

There are a number of similarities between *Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. Both series combine elements of telefantasy with a significant address to a youth audience. They both play with different levels of audience expectation (in *Buffy*'s use of genre, and *Randall and Hopkirk*'s status as a remake) structured around various levels of generic and narrative 'known-ness'. Furthermore, both are scheduled as mainstream primetime drama when initially transmitted in their countries of production. However, there are a number of significant differences in the particular strategies employed in the production of each series that need to be understood in relation to nationally specific notions of aesthetic and economic value.

### ***Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)* as Mainstream Family Television**

*Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)* was commissioned by the BBC and transmitted on BBC 1 between 8.55 and 9.45pm every Saturday night for six weeks between 18 March and 22

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<sup>13</sup> Wright compares the premise of *Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)* with another ITC series *The Persuaders*, which was rejected for development because its format was considered old-fashioned and sexist (Elliot 2000, 21).

April 2000<sup>14</sup>. This is a post-watershed slot, allowing the treatment of material considered unsuitable for younger viewers. However, the Saturday evening schedules are also traditionally constructed for family viewing, consisting of game shows, variety, soap operas and mainstream drama series that are seen to have a broad demographic appeal and that can be viewed by all the family members together. The commissioning of *Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)* for this slot points to the particular evaluative judgements that lie behind the BBC's construction of both appropriate and appealing family viewing.

As a remake of a 1960s television series, *Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)* functions in relation to the appeal of the original series. Meg Carter (2000) argues that the current appeal of 'retro TV' stems from the increasing economic pressures on broadcasters and programme-makers. She quotes Jim Reid, head of development at Channel X, who claims that 'Dusting off old programme formats is a way of minimising the risks. Certain series, such as *Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)*, are widely known even by those who can't remember them. You don't have to explain the concept.' (quoted in Carter 2000, 20). The recent remakes of telefantasy series from the 1960s and 1970s into Hollywood blockbusters, such as *Lost in Space* and *The Avengers*, would seem to back up Reid's argument. Certainly, the remake of *Randall and Hopkirk* is part of an economic strategy by WTTV to exploit the economic potential of Universal's ownership of the ITC catalogue. However, it can also be understood in relation to the perceived audience

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<sup>14</sup> A second season of seven episodes was transmitted between 29 September 2001 and 24 November 2001.

appeal of such series.

Charlie Higson, who adapted *Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)* for WTTV, describes his initial interest in the series in nostalgic terms. He claims, 'I'd always wanted to have a go at making the kind of show I enjoyed as a kid. Big, imaginative shows, like *The Avengers* and *The Prisoner*, with a strong fantasy element' (Higson 2000, 19). Higson's own nostalgia for these programmes suggests that part of the appeal of the series for BBC 1's Saturday night schedules stems from a recognition of the changing makeup of the family audience, many of whom, like Higson, would have watched such series as a child. It is a recognition that the audience for 'cult' telefantasy is not necessarily made up of an 18-24 demographic, and that such a remake could have a strong resonance across a number of generations – those who watched the original series in the 1960s, those who watched the repeats of the series in the early 1990s on BBC 2 in the 6.00 to 7.30pm slot, and those who have never seen the original but are fans of telefantasy programming.

As an adaptation of a 1960s telefantasy series, therefore, *Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)* does have a potential cross-generational appeal. However, the series' creator Charlie Higson casts the primary appeal of the series in terms of the presence of Vic Reeves and Bob Mortimer in the starring roles, and the series' generic associations with US telefantasy. He states of his approach to adapting the series,

I certainly didn't want to tinker with the basic premise and dynamic, but after the first couple of episodes I wanted to get away from the old series and do something

completely new. The BBC was keen that we made it very much a detective show. I was told, “People understand detectives, you know, police and mysteries. They like what’s familiar.” But I pointed out that there are at least four detective programmes on every day and that’s just on terrestrial TV. What the world didn’t need was yet another dull detective show. We had Vic and Bob [Reeves and Mortimer]; we had a central character that was a ghost – and just look at the success of shows like *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *The X-Files*. So my aim was to push the fantasy side of it. (Higson 2000, 20)

Higson’s justification of his approach to the series is significant on a number of levels. Firstly, there is recognition of the value of the ‘basic premise and dynamic’ of the original series alongside a simultaneous desire to ‘do something completely new’. This tension is then articulated in relation to a struggle between the BBC’s desire for the ‘familiar’ and his emphasis on creating something unusual and different, which is structured in generic terms around the combination of the detective and fantasy genres within the series’ format. Finally, Higson situates the difference of the fantastic within known terms – the comic personas of Reeves and Mortimer and the success of US telefantasy. For Higson, the appeal of the series can be seen to lie in the way in which it integrates these two elements into the basic format of an extant programme.

### **Performing Comedy, Performing Fantasy**

I want to explore the two different elements that Higson sees as central to the appeal of the remake of *Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)*: the presence of Reeves and Mortimer in

the starring roles, and the success of US telefantasy. British comedians Vic Reeves and Bob Mortimer are a well-known double act from the alternative British comedy scene. They first rose to prominence in the late 1980s with their stage show, *Vic Reeves' Big Night Out*, which was turned into a television series for Channel 4 in 1990. After moving to BBC 2 with the sketch show *The Smell of Reeves and Mortimer*, the pair went on to combine their act with other mainstream genres, producing four series of *Shooting Stars*, a game-show parody in which two teams of celebrity guests competed against each other for absurd prizes. While their previous series had been produced for BBC 2 and Channel 4, in 1998 Reeves and Mortimer moved into mainstream television with the family quiz show, *Families at War*. Scheduled to open BBC 1's Saturday evening family viewing, the series pitted two families against each other in a series of bizarre tests of skill and talent set by Reeves and Mortimer. This series combined familiar aspects of the Reeves and Mortimer double act (the animosity between the comedians, the repetitive catch phrases, the bizarre set pieces) with the expectations of the family quiz show (the inclusion of real families, the light tone, the omission of offensive language, and so on).

Although coming out of the British alternative comedy scene, Reeves and Mortimer can also be situated within the context of British light entertainment. The pair have been frequently compared to the comic double act Morecambe and Wise, who were a staple of British primetime television over the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. Morecambe and Wise's double act combined sketches with musical numbers in which the pair parodied well-known routines and songs for comic effect. Ernie Wise played the straight, gullible foil to Eric Morecambe's infantile and mischievous clown. Becoming somewhat of a British

institution, the duo's comedy series were frequently scheduled in the primetime Saturday night variety slot on BBC 1. Reeves and Mortimer's double act in *Vic Reeves' Big Night Out* is in many ways an updated (if somewhat anarchic and surreal) version of Morecambe and Wise, with its combination of sketches, musical numbers and dance routines performed in front of a live studio audience.

I want to argue, therefore, that the appeal of Reeves and Mortimer extends across a range of potential audiences. As a comic double act coming out of the alternative British stand-up scene, they have an appeal to teenagers and young adults. However, elements of their act can be understood in relation to a tradition of British variety with a strong family appeal. Furthermore, the combination of this act with mainstream genres extends this appeal to both a younger and older demographic.

Like Reeves and Mortimer, Charlie Higson, is a comedian from the alternative British scene. Higson worked with Reeves and Mortimer on the stage version of *Big Night Out*, and since then as a script editor and producer. He also has a reputation in Britain as a comedian in his own right, most recently with the successful television series *The Fast Show* (BBC 2). *Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)* is therefore a move, both for Reeves and Mortimer, and Higson, into drama from sketch comedy. While Higson insists that the series is not a spoof, but 'straight drama' (Killick 1999, 9) he also emphasises a desire to build on its comic potential, a move which is intrinsically linked to the presence of Reeves and Mortimer in the starring roles.

*Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)* can therefore be seen as an extension of Reeves and Mortimer's gradual move into more mainstream television, from the surreal comedy of the sketch show *The Smell of Reeves and Mortimer* to the more accessible combination of surreal humour with established generic forms in *Shooting Stars* and *Families at War*. The combination of Reeves and Mortimer's double act with the basic format of *Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)* conflates stand-up comedy with the narrative drama of telefantasy. Reeves and Mortimer do not portray the characters of Marty Hopkirk and Jeff Randall, rather they perform them. What is presented, therefore, is the transposition of the comic personas of the double act onto the fictional characters of the series. Reeves and Mortimer's double act is constructed around a deeply affectionate yet antagonistic relationship between the pair. This is recreated in the relationship between Marty and Jeff, which is represented as a deep bond despite Jeff's irritation at Marty's frequently infantile behaviour. It is important to distinguish here between the performers Jim Muir (Vic Reeves' real name) and Bob Mortimer, and the comic personae 'Vic Reeves' and 'Bob Mortimer', constructed through their double act. Reeves' comic persona is the likeable clown with an absurd sense of humour. Mortimer tends to act as his foil, the voice of reason or incredulity at Reeves' jokes and performances. These constructed comic personae remain reasonably consistent across the body of Reeves and Mortimer's work. For example, when the pair hosted the game-show *Shooting Stars*, their performances and the relationship enacted between them was in line with that established in their earlier series. They were not merely chairing a celebrity quiz. Rather they were comedians presenting a performance of their comic personae acting as hosts.

The strength of Reeves and Mortimer's comic personae is apparent in their performances in *Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)*. Not only can we equate the characters of Randall and Hopkirk with the comic personas of Mortimer and Reeves (respectively) there is also a strong element of 'performance' in their portrayals of the characters. The childlike clownish qualities in the character of Marty Hopkirk are emphasised in Reeves' performance in order to highlight the similarities between his comic persona and the character he portrays. This is played against an interpretation of Jeff Randall as Marty's straight, uptight foil, corresponding to Mortimer's comic persona and the constructed relationship of their double act. For example, in episode 4 Marty's ability to create a ghostly wind is given a comic twist as he demonstrates to Jeff his ability to move objects through farting. This visual gag plays out the relationship between Reeves and Mortimer's comic personas as Jeff attempts to continue the 'straight' narrative development of the story while Marty disrupts the scene through his ghostly presence. This correlation between the performer Reeves and the character Marty is further emphasised in the following episode when Marty performs a song and dance routine in Limbo. As Marty sings the song 'Kick in the Head', the visual effects literally depict him kicking his own head as part of his dance routine. This number does not advance the narrative but rather acts to combine the showcasing of Reeves' trademark comic musical numbers with the display of special effects.

The performative nature of Reeves and Mortimer's portrayals of Randall and Hopkirk to appeal to the expectations of their comic personae is extended to other characters within

the series, most prominently Marty's mentor Wyvern, portrayed by Tom Baker<sup>15</sup>. In episode two, Wyvern introduces Marty to the practicalities of his ghostly existence. He explains that his house is just a construct to make Marty feel more at home and that his physical appearance is also merely fabricated to please Marty. As Marty leans in to ask Wyvern what he really looks like, there is a cut to a close two shot of them and Wyvern stares into his eyes and replies mystically, "You don't want to know Marty, believe me, you don't want to know." Marty and Wyvern then both turn their heads slowly to look directly out to the camera, pausing the conversation before there is a cut back to a mid-shot and Wyvern rises out of his seat to continue his oration (figs. 6.1-6.2). This look out towards the camera is clearly and deliberately marked by the camera work, editing and performances as a significant pause in the narrative thrust of the episode. It can be read simply as an acknowledgement of the unknown, a gaze out as Marty contemplates what possible manifestation Wyvern may possess. But there is also a deliberate overttness about the look, which addresses the viewer directly. This break with conventional modes of representation at the moment when Wyvern is describing his 'true' appearance self-consciously addresses the cult fan viewer and draws attention to the fabrication of the performances. It adds ironic significance to the question of what Wyvern 'really' looks like, highlighting the presence of Tom Baker (who played the fourth Doctor in the British telefantasy series *Dr Who*) in the role of Wyvern. Such moments of knowing irony, also apparent in the cameos by British comedians and actors throughout the series, appeal

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<sup>15</sup> The series is populated by a series of established British comic and straight actors often in cameos that playfully acknowledge the expectations associated with such stars.



Fig. 6.1. In episode two of *Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)* Marty asks Wyvern what he looks like, and in a mid-shot Wyvern replies “You don’t want to know Marty, believe me, you don’t want to know.”



Fig. 6.2. Marty and Wyvern then slowly turn to look directly at the camera, in a shot that is marked out by a significant pause in the action, before cutting to a long-shot of the characters as the narrative continues.

directly to the knowledgeable of the cult television fan, but also contribute to the emphasis on the performative in the series overall.

While the remake of *Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)* utilises the expectations associated with the comic personae of Reeves and Mortimer, it also playfully acknowledges the viewer's knowledge of the narrative format of the original series. This is most overt in the first episode in which Marty is killed investigating a case and returns from the dead to enlist Jeff's help in solving his own murder. The first half of the episode plays with the viewer's expectation of Marty's imminent death. It begins with a teaser in which a wealthy art dealer threatens to kill Marty. However, the moment of Marty's death is delayed through a number of comic narrative displacements. When a car later races towards Marty at high speed, a close-up of Marty adopting a direct copy of the pose struck by Kenneth Cope (as Marty) in the original series just moments before he was killed by a speeding car, invites the viewer to assume that this will be the moment of Marty's death, and then subverts this expectation as the car fails to hit Marty. Marty manages to avoid a series of accidental deaths over the episode before ironically exclaiming "It's not my lucky day" just moments before he is driven off a cliff to his death. The series' manipulation of expectation for comic effect reveals a delight in narrative and visual play that informs the whole of the series' visual and narrative style.

Despite being based on a detective narrative, *Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)* privileges visual style over narrative, in much the same way that it privileges the comic personae of Reeves and Mortimer over the characters of Randall and Hopkirk. Each episode does

concern a different case to be solved by the two detectives. However, the plotting of the story privileges the showcasing of the comic personae of Reeves and Mortimer, the play of irony and the display of special effects, over the exposition of narrative twists, the gradual unfolding of clues and the piecing together of a complex case, more typical of the detective genre. For example, in episode four, Jeff Randall is hired to protect an ex-Government employee, Douglas Milton, who is due to give a potentially damaging paper at a conference on 'Freedom, Security and Terrorism'. Milton's fear of assassination is confirmed after the opening teaser, as a number of different characters are depicted plotting his death. Once he arrives at the conference, the disastrous failure of each attempt on his life is played for comic effect, while Randall and Hopkirk are oblivious to the danger Milton is in. In the denouement, a new plot is revealed in which Marty witnesses the head of security threatening Milton and Jeannie and uses his ghostly powers to save them. Finally, the episode ends on a comic gag as Milton's paper is shown merely to consist of well-known political scandals. Over the episode, a case is established and resolved. However, Randall and Hopkirk do not use any detective skills, and the murderer is exposed through chance rather than through expertise. There are no clues presented over the course of the episode whereby the viewer can piece together the final solution. Each of the potential assassins is clearly displayed as such, while no evidence is provided through which the audience could anticipate the head of security's eventual betrayal. Instead the episode is constructed for comic effect. The assassins are inept characters played for laughs, and their attempts on Milton's life are farcically plotted as they end up killing each other rather than their intended victim in a series of visual set pieces.

The emphasis on the performative in the series' narrative and visual style extends into the series' use of special effects. In its first six episodes, the series contains over 500 special effects, which accounted for a large part of the series' £5.5million budget. These are used to manifest Marty, and also, in a departure from the original series, to create an environment for him in the afterlife. Paul Franklin from Double Negative, the company responsible for creating the effects, describes the techniques used as 'cutting edge. This stuff has only been available for a few months.' (quoted in Richardson 2000, 51). The particular way in which these effects are used in *Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)* is significant here. The scene in which Marty meets Wyvern, his ghostly mentor, and the after-world is represented for the first time, is constructed to showcase the sophistication of the CGI effects. A CGI effect is used to materialise Wyvern out of a stream of smoke against a blank black frame. Wyvern swirls his arms above his head in a majestic gesture and the camera tracks left as a number of moving plates swirl across the screen, oscillating in size and position and eventually coming together to create a large room composed of a number of moving images. This scene self-consciously draws attention to the use of special effects as the room is literally constructed before the audience (figs. 6.3-6.6). After a short scene in which Jeff receives his first client, the action returns to Wyvern and Marty. Wyvern explains that the room is merely a fabrication and demonstrates this by creating two alternate environments for Marty. As he does so, the camera tracks back from a mid-shot of the two seated characters, and the CGI constructed image of the room is transformed into an airport runway with the shadow of a plane taking off over their heads. The camera tracks once again towards the characters and the



Fig. 6.3. In episode two of *Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)*, Wyvern explains that his room is merely a fabrication. The room is constructed of a series of CGI-created images that slowly move in the background.



Fig. 6.4. The camera tracks back and the images of the room fragment and transform into an airport runway.



Fig. 6.5. The camera tracks towards the two seated characters and the fragments of the room reform.



Fig. 6.6. This sequence of shots is repeated as the camera tracks away from the characters and the room is transformed into a scene from one of Marty's computer games.

background of the room returns. This is repeated a second time, with the space transforming into a scene from one of Marty's computer games, before finally returning to the room interior once more. These two sequences function to showcase the series' special effects through equating the ghostly powers of Wyvern (and later Marty) with the technological trickery of modern effects technology.

This display of special effects continues over the course of the series. In episode five, Marty is allowed to experience other areas of the afterlife and enter 'Limbo', a night-club for the dead. Marty enters a large tower of letters spelling the word 'Limbo' constructed out of flashing fluorescent lights against a CGI background of pulsing lines of electric blue, and is transported upwards. The camera cranes up to reveal a black set containing a large triangular shaped bar around which a number of ghosts attired in characteristic white suits drink and converse. In the spaces around the bar are a number of circular and rectangular CGI images of brightly coloured shapes and places. The camera cuts to a side view of the bar in mid-shot and tracks past one of these rectangular plates containing a colourful, swirling image, which narrows and flips over. As it does so, it reveals Marty as he enters the shot from the left (fig. 6.7-6.9). The delay in Marty's entrance allows the camera to linger on the computer-generated elements of this constructed landscape, once again drawing the viewer's attention to the use of special effects.

Higson justifies the use of such technically sophisticated techniques in terms of the audience's expectations of visual fantasy on television.

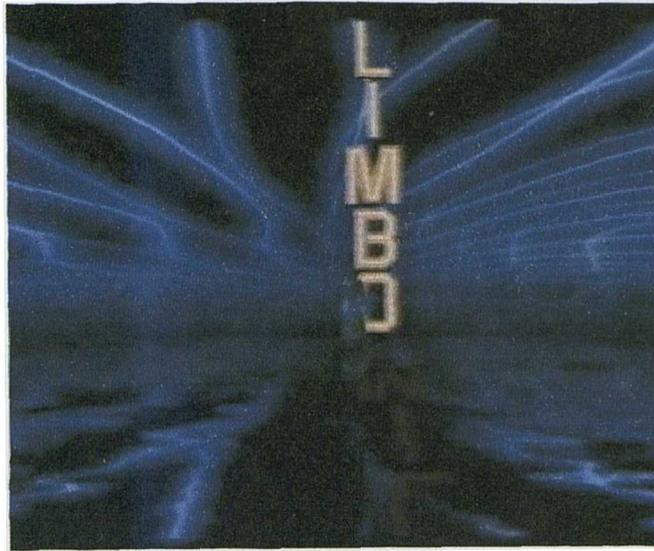


Fig. 6.7. In episode five of *Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)*, Marty approaches the entrance to Limbo in long-shot against a CGI background of pulsing blue lines.



Fig. 6.8. Inside, Limbo is surrounded by rectangular and circular plates of CGI images depicting different brightly coloured places.



Fig. 6.9. Marty enters from the left past these images, which pulse and flip over.

People these days watch a lot of American TV which is very sophisticated, they watch so many films and the level of effects they do in there is extraordinary. So there is a very big special effects budget on this [*Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)*] because anything with a fantasy, special effects, supernatural element to it, if you don't do it properly you just get laughed off the screen. (Higson quoted in Killick 1999, 9)

Higson's comparison with US television here reflects in part the generally lower budgets available to British television in the 1990s. However, whilst there are a number of contemporary US series that make extensive use of CGI technology, such as *Lex* and *Stargate SG-1*, this is certainly not a prerequisite of successful telefantasy in the 1990s. For example, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*'s use of expensive computer generated special effects is relatively limited. The death of vampires, in which they explode into dust, is created using CGI, as are some of the monsters, particularly in the season finales, such as the transformation of the Mayor into a snake-like demon at the end of season three. However, John Vulich (from Optical Nerve, who create the special effects for *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*) claims that the series' producers do not like 'the look of CGI as much, and prefer the organic, shot-on-the-set look. [...] So we're always being pushed to do things practically on sets and come up with creative ways to do them' (quoted in Ferrante 1998, 48). The extensive use of CGI effects in *Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)* must therefore be understood not as a prerequisite of the creation of telefantasy in the contemporary age, but as a specific decision by the producers that can be understood in relation to the national context of the series' production.

The showcasing of special effects in *Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)* functions to place the series within a particular relationship to the traditional conventions and values of British telefantasy. Both Charlie Higson and Simon Wright argue that part of the rationale for choosing to develop *Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)* was the relative simplicity of the special effects techniques used in the original production. As such, the series' display of special effects can be understood in terms of an attempt by the producers to differentiate the remake from the expectations associated with a tradition of British telefantasy that is associated with low production values and poor special effects, where the fantasy is created through costumes and sets, and the focus is on the characters over the action<sup>16</sup>. In showcasing its use of special effects therefore, *Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)* is not simply adopting the conventions of contemporary US telefantasy, but is working against a notion of British telefantasy that is seen as aesthetically inferior and less appealing to British (and international) audiences than its contemporary US counterparts.

### **Negotiating Primetime**

The BBC's audience research for the first season of *Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)* revealed that it attracted a younger demographic than was usual for this scheduling slot. Simon Wright claims that the published reviews also suggested a generational divide, stating that, 'Those critics who liked it generally came from the more stylish, trendy press

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<sup>16</sup> This mirrors the argument made above by Jed Mercurio in defending the large number of special effects used in creating the British telefantasy series *Invasion Earth* (Mercurio in Millar 1998, 2).

with a younger audience' (Wright quoted in Carter 2000a, 19). Wright goes on to situate this appeal to a comparatively young audience as a failure of the series to fulfil the public service remit of the primetime Saturday evening slot within which it had been scheduled. He claims, 'Saturday nights on BBC 1 are and should be about catering for everyone. Which is something we will be addressing in series two, which will have a broader appeal' (ibid.). Despite the emphasis that WTTV place on the international market to contemporary television production, and despite Higson's understanding of the appeal of the series in relation to the popularity of US telefantasy in the UK, it is notions of public service broadcasting against which Wright finally evaluates the success of the series. And in this evaluation it appears that despite the shifts in British broadcasting over the last 20 years, the notion of the 'consensus' audience is still central (if problematic) to the programming of BBC 1's primetime schedules.

When *Randall And Hopkirk (Deceased)* returned for a second season in autumn 2001, the series had incorporated a number of changes in order to appeal to a broader audience. While the series still placed an emphasis on the performative in the portrayal of the central characters, the narrative structure and the use of special effects, all three of these elements were subtly toned down. Most apparent was the change to the narrative form of the series. A greater emphasis was placed on the investigative elements of the narrative, with plots whose structure was closer to the conventions of the detective genre, allowing the audience to piece together clues over each episode. There was also far less emphasis placed on the display of special effects. All of these changes contribute to diminish the emphasis on the performative that characterised the first season of the series, and to

increase the emphasis on the writing. The changes between the first season and the second can therefore be understood in relation to dominant notions of the aesthetics of television. While privileging the performance of the stars and the special effects over narrative complexity in the first season can be understood as a form of post-modern play with conventional signifiers, the greater emphasis on narrative structure in attempting to broaden the appeal of the series in the second season reflects a more traditional notion of British television as a writer's medium.

### **Conclusion**

The rise of satellite, cable and digital television, the growth in the number of independent production companies and international co-productions and the increasing importance of global markets, all have the potential to displace the traditional public service role of the British terrestrial television broadcasters. Despite this, these case studies suggest that there remains a strong and distinctive culture of public service broadcasting on British terrestrial television. However, these case studies also suggest that the changes in British television over the last two decades have raised new debates that are challenging the terms by which we understand public service broadcasting in the UK. These debates engage in particular with the way in which broadcasters, to borrow Georgina Born's phrase, 'engage imaginatively with "the audience"' (Born 2000, 415). The mixed demographic appeal of a series like *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* cannot be easily reconciled with the current scheduling practices of British terrestrial television. The perceived appeal of the series to an audience of teens and young adults and its generic associations with cult fantasy television suggest the current 6.45–7.30pm slot on BBC 2 as an ideal

site for the series. Yet the content of the series conflicts with the perceived address of this slot and the public service broadcaster's responsibility to ensure the appropriateness of its broadcasting. Charlie Higson's attempt to create a primetime British series that responds to the success of US telefantasy series such as *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *The X-Files* in the UK, is similarly problematic. In attempting to combine an appeal to the audience for US telefantasy, fans of Reeves and Mortimer and of the original series, *Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)* not only fails to fulfil the public service requirements of its primetime Saturday evening slot, it also complicates the dominant aesthetic model for British television. The series adopts a self-conscious style epitomised by the display of special effects and the performance of the stars that is more akin to the 'televisuality' through which Caldwell (1995) defines the dominant aesthetics of contemporary US television, than the dominant aesthetic model of television in Britain as an intimate, 'writer's' medium.

However, I do not want to argue that this implies an 'Americanisation' of British television in the wake of a threat to traditional notions of British public service broadcasting. If one compares *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *The X-Files* (the US series with which Charlie Higson generically equates *Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)*) with *Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)* itself, the British series actually places a far greater emphasis on the showcasing of visual effects than its US counterparts. Therefore, we can not simply understand the 'televisuality' of *Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)* in terms of an attempt to replicate the style of contemporary US telefantasy. Rather, the emphasis that Charlie Higson places on the role of special effects in appealing to the expectations

of viewers attuned to the high production values of US telefantasy, can be understood as much in relation to Charlie Higson's own construction of British television as less 'sophisticated'.

The tensions in the reception of *Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)* suggest that the established criteria of judgement for quality, valuable and good television are currently open to debate. Simon Frith argues that 'until quite recently (the launching of Channel Four in 1982 marked the beginning of the change) there was a straightforward continuity between ideas of television quality held by the artistic establishment inside and outside television' (2000, 45). These aesthetic criteria, which Frith (borrowing from Jay Blumler) list as 'freshness, imagination, authenticity, education, truth, social relevance, expressive richness, integrity' (ibid.), are broadly modernist in tone and can be understood in relation to the dominant aesthetic in British television. As has been discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, British television drama has been predominantly understood within a realist framework. This tradition is apparent in two recent studies of British television. John Caughie's (2000) exploration of 'serious television' clearly situates quality television in relation to both modernism and realism. Meanwhile, John Ellis' (2000) model of television as a form of 'working through' is most clearly applicable to news, documentary and forms of drama, such as British soap opera, which belong to a broadly defined tradition of British social realism. Furthermore, the growth of academic interest in telefantasy over the 1980s and 1990s has to be understood primarily as a US phenomenon. Although there are studies of British telefantasy by British academics, such as James Chapman's (2000) exploration of *The Avengers*, these

are greatly outnumbered by the extensive academic work on US telefantasy by predominantly US academics.

Simon Frith asks whether different patterns of recruitment into the television industry and different cultural reference points will lead to a shift towards a more populist set of evaluative criteria in the production of television programmes. It would certainly appear that in the production of *Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)* both Simon Wright and Charlie Higson employed evaluative criteria that attempted to address the impact of US television and move against some of the traditions of British television drama. However, these judgements are made specifically in relation to perceived audience appeal and, as is apparent in the changes made to the second season of the series, must be understood as negotiated between viewer and producer rather than as stemming simply from programme-makers. Implicit in this, is an appeal to a particular notion of popularity. Far from being an insignificant factor in the evaluation of public service broadcasting, the failure of *Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)* to gain popular appeal across a wide demographic is equated with a failure for it to fulfil its function with a public service remit, to appeal to a broad consensus audience. The nationally specific notions of value, quality and popularity that circulate in the production and reception of television texts may have become increasingly populist in tone. However, there still exists a tension within the public service model between high and low culture. While in the US in the 1990s telefantasy has become equated with the economic and aesthetic value of mainstream drama, its status in Britain is more problematic. In the US the popularity of mainstream television drama is defined through reference to specific economically valued

audiences. By contrast, in the UK it is measured in relation to appeal across a broad consensus audience. As a consequence, the criteria for evaluating the success of mainstream television drama in the UK tend to be in line with dominant notions of aesthetic value. Therefore, despite the increasing address to younger audiences (in terms of a revaluation of youth appeal which recognises a shift in the generational makeup of the 'family' audience), mainstream television in the UK remains embedded within a traditional understanding of dominant aesthetic criteria.

## Conclusion

### History, Genre, Aesthetics

Over the course of this thesis, I have situated a number of telefantasy programmes within their context of production through an analysis of the *Quatermass* serials, *The Prisoner*, *Star Trek*, *The X-Files*, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, and the re-make of *Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)*. In this conclusion I reflect on the value of bringing these historically, industrially, and generically disparate texts together for analysis as ‘telefantasy’. In doing so, I want to consider how these case studies have engaged with the debates and questions raised in the introduction concerning genre, aesthetics and history.

### Genre and Television

At the beginning of the thesis I raised the dual difficulty that these series present to the study of genre in television. Firstly, each series displays a pronounced generic hybridity that poses problems for their generic categorisation. Secondly, while all of these programmes are generically linked through the centrality of the representation of the fantastic to their basic series’ formats, the fantastic remains a confusingly imprecise term that crosses and complicates the boundaries between generic categories. This thesis has argued that an approach to genre that attempts to situate these texts within theoretically delineated generic boundaries closes down the possibility for exploring the often complex and contradictory ways in which a number of different genres function within these

series. Rather it has proposed an approach that explores how the production discourses surrounding these series engage with a range of generic expectations and how these are articulated within the texts themselves. Such an approach understands genres as sets of culturally and historically constructed conventions, rather than as theoretically predetermined categories, and enables an exploration of the ways in which genre is used within specific historical contexts.

What is apparent from this approach, is that the generic expectations associated with specific genres such as science fiction, horror, thriller and comedy function in relation to those associated with the broader notions of television as a medium, television drama, serial drama and so on. Thus, for example, the generic expectations of the horror and detective genres function in *The X-Files* in relation to the specific demands on US network television in the 1990s to create a visually and thematically distinctive series that combines on-going narratives with one-off story lines. Furthermore, within each of these case studies, this range of expectations has been proved to be historically specific. For example the representation of the fantastic in *The Quatermass Experiment* is negotiated in relation to the generic expectations of US cinematic science fiction and horror (the most visible example of these genres at this time), and in relation to the dominant notion in the 1950s of television as an intimate medium. By contrast, the use of fantasy in *Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)* is negotiated in relation to the generic expectations that associate fantasy with 'cult television' in the 1990s, which are problematically negotiated in relation to the changing notions of television as a public service medium in the UK at this time. However, if the generic expectations associated with specific genres (at a

micro level) and television as a medium (at a macro level) are so historically specific, what is the value of bringing this range of texts together under the umbrella of 'telefantasy'?

While each chapter has explored a different set of historically and nationally specific debates, bringing these series together for analysis demonstrates that certain discourses concerning the representation of the fantastic as a production and a textual strategy recur across these different contexts. However, to link these texts in this way need not constitute the construction of telefantasy as a generic category. The five case studies that make up this thesis do not provide a model for describing the representation of the fantastic that can be applied across other texts in order to construct a generic corpus termed telefantasy. What they demonstrate is that the representation of the fantastic raises certain recurring discourses that are differently articulated at the level of production and text within specific industrial contexts<sup>1</sup>. By comparing a range of historical and national case studies, the different ways in which these recurring discourses are articulated within specific contexts can be explored, bringing to the fore the impact of certain historical shifts on the production and textual practices in television without losing the specificity of these historical instances to the generalising tendencies of grand theory.

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<sup>1</sup> This thesis focuses on the representation of the fantastic as a link between these series. However a different set of generic expectations could form the focus of such an approach. Following this methodology it is perfectly possible that the *Quatermass* serials, *The Prisoner*, *The X-Files*, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Angel* and *Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)* could be combined with other series that make use of the generic expectations of the detective genre in order to explore a different set of discourses.

### **Television Aesthetics: Visual Style and Narrative Structure**

Throughout this thesis I have argued that the representation of the fantastic is a particularly valuable site for the analysis of visual style in television drama, an area that, as John Caughie has argued (1991, 137), has been largely overlooked in television studies in favour of the analysis of theme. In the production discourses circulating around all of these series, the role of the image has been understood as central to the representation of the fantastic. The representation of the fantastic implies the representation of that which confounds socio-cultural verisimilitude, and part of the rhetoric of the fantastic is a rhetoric of vision, structured around seeing or revealing the unknown, and the relationship between sight and knowledge. This is a rhetoric that has been apparent in each of these series, from the *Quatermass* serials, that gradually build up to the final revelation (and subsequent destruction) of the alien, to *The X-Files*, which destabilises the relationship between sight and knowledge. The emphasis placed on the visual representation of the fantastic in these series invites (but does not necessarily demand) the *display* of visual style, in which the role of the image becomes a central narrative and thematic element within the text. The display of visual style has been proved to be a primary production and textual strategy in the representation of the fantastic, showcasing the potential for spectacle in early British television in the *Quatermass* serials, and providing strong signature styles in *The X-Files* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* that facilitate the branding of these series in the increasingly competitive market of US network television production in the 1990s.

Each case study has also demonstrated that the display of visual style facilitated by the representation of the fantastic needs to be understood in relation to the narrative structure of the programme. The dark visual style of *The X-Files* contributes to the continuation of its narrative by suggesting (but not confirming) the presence of the fantastic, while the gradual revelation of the fantastic in the cliff-hangers of the *Quatermass* serials builds suspense by escalating the threat of the alien while increasing our knowledge of the danger. The representation of the fantastic also opens up spaces for extensive narrative fluidity, which has been particularly exploited by long-running series such as *Star Trek* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* as it enables extensive story latitude while remaining within the series' established narrative format.

The discourses circulating around the role of the image in the representation of the fantastic are further bound up with discourses concerning experimentation. In each case study the disruption of socio-cultural and generic verisimilitude implied in the representation of the fantastic is understood to offer the opportunity to experiment with the formal possibilities of television as a medium. Within these discourses therefore the representation of the fantastic is understood to offer the opportunity to adopt new narrative practices, to use new technologies, and/or to explore new generic combinations, in order to represent something that appears completely 'other', alien and unreal. In the discourses surrounding the production of these series, the fantastic is therefore understood as offering a means to innovate formally and thematically. However, the fantastic is also understood within these discourses to occupy a seemingly contradictory

set of expectations in which it is understood as formulaic, thematically and aesthetically unchallenging, responding purely to consumer demand and so on.

The contradiction between the generic expectations associated with the fantastic as both 'low' art (formulaic, commercial, conventional) and 'high' art (subversive, innovative, experimental) can be understood in relation to the formal practices of representing the fantastic. While the representation of the fantastic implies the representation of that which confounds socio-cultural and generic verisimilitude, this thesis has argued that this process depends on the maintenance of socio-cultural and generic verisimilitude. The representation of the fantastic therefore demands the negotiation of a dialectical position, simultaneously depending upon and disrupting the generic and socio-cultural expectations at work in the text. As a consequence, these programmes rely on familiar narrative and visual conventions, while equally challenging dominant representational and expressive strategies in television production.

This dialectic in the representation of the fantastic has enabled these programmes to be read as *both* ideologically progressive *and* repressive. The problems that programmes such as *Star Trek* and *The X-Files* raise within academic discourses, being equally redeemed as progressive and dismissed as reactionary, are a reflection of the tendency within television studies to situate the analysis of television within a series of binary oppositions. Hence, academically valued television is that which opens up spaces for resistance to dominant ideological structures through its treatment of themes and characters, while academically dismissed television is that which confirms dominant

ideological structures through the representation of stereotyped characters and conventional narratives. What these case studies suggest is that such binary oppositions do not account for the often contradictory textual representations within television programmes, and the often contradictory pressures on television production.

In the production discourses surrounding these series, the representation of the fantastic is negotiated in relation to broader institutional discourses concerning the varying aesthetic and economic pressures on television production. The negotiation of the economic and the aesthetic is industrially and historically specific, shifting quite dramatically from the 1950s and 1960s to the 1990s, and from the UK to the US. In particular it is bound up with nationally specific notions of the social and aesthetic role of television as a medium, which is in part legitimised by the different industrial structures within which television is situated. However, while the commercial system in the US places a greater emphasis on the economic than the public service system in the UK, Chapters 3 and 5 in particular have been concerned with complicating any easy dichotomies between these two industrial systems. The production of *The Prisoner* and the production of *The X-Files* are both concerned with aligning the aesthetic and the economic. However, in the former case, this is an attempt to create aesthetically valuable 'public service' television that will also appeal to a wide (and international) audience, while in the latter case, the turn to the aesthetic functions as a specific economic strategy to appeal to a particular 'quality' demographic.

What these case studies suggest, therefore, is that the representation of the fantastic is a particularly rich site for challenging the established dichotomies in television studies. Rather than evidencing a model of television aesthetics that privileges the spoken word over the image, that constructs the television viewer as distracted, and that draws particular attention to television's intimacy through reference to its small screen, poor sound and image quality, these case studies paint a more complex picture. The centrality of the display of visual style to these series threatens the notion of television spectatorship as distracted, and suggests that these series pertain to a distinctiveness that attempts to separate them from the 'flow' of everyday television. While studies such as Siegel's (1984), have argued for an aesthetics of television science fiction in which visual style and spectacle should be rejected in favour of the development of character, complex story-telling and the treatment of contemporary social concerns, these case studies demonstrate that the dichotomies established by Siegel (action versus character, spectacle versus narrative complexity) are false ones. Each chapter has revealed that the tendency towards visual display need not be understood as opposed to narrative complexity, character development, continuity or intimacy. Rather, the representation of the fantastic challenges these dichotomies because it suggests the possibility of adopting a dialectical position, in which texts can be experimental and formulaic, spectacular and intimate, economically successful and aesthetically valued. Furthermore, each of these case studies has demonstrated that the adoption of such a position is a particularly desirable production strategy across a range of different historical instances. However, it has also been a problematic strategy, and one that reveals some of the key discourses that dominated television production within these different contexts.

### **History: Exploring Telefantasy through Historical Case Studies**

Chapter 2 explored the discourses that arose in relation to the representation of the fantastic in the *Quatermass* serials, which were primarily concerned with the ways in which the fantastic offered the opportunity to experiment with the formal possibilities of television. Reacting against the intimate model of television that predominated in the early days of British television production, Nigel Kneale and Rudolph Cartier created three series that stressed the importance of the image to the narrative. In each of these series there is a build up to revealing the fantastic, that places an emphasis on the sheer spectacle of seeing images represented that confound socio-cultural verisimilitude. However, this representation of the fantastic as spectacle is not opposed to the notion of television as an intimate domestic medium. Rather, moments of spectacle are constructed as much to *exploit* the 'intimate' screen as to *expand* it. The representation of the fantastic therefore functions as a means of enabling an *experimentation* with, rather than a *rejection* of the dominant television aesthetic of the early 1950s. The construction of intimately spectacular moments is facilitated by the serial structure that embeds these serials within the weekly routines of everyday life and is used to encourage identification with the recurring characters. The combination of experimentation and familiarity that was an integral part of *The Quatermass Experiment* was understood to be exemplary of the potential for BBC television drama following the introduction of competition in 1955, and became an integral part of the *Quatermass* formula in the second and third serials.

Chapter 3 explored how such discourses of experimentation are negotiated in relation to the production of *The Prisoner* in 1967, as part of an attempt to reconcile the conflicting

demands of commercial and public service television in the UK in the late 1960s. The representation of the fantastic functions in *The Prisoner* to combine the demands of appealing to a 'mass' audience with the call for television drama that fulfils traditional criteria of aesthetic value (single authorship, formal and narrative experimentation). In attempting to negotiate a position as 'serious entertainment', *The Prisoner* uses the evocation and disruption of socio-cultural and generic verisimilitude in the representation of the fantastic to occupy a seemingly contradictory position between the familiar pleasures of generic entertainment and the formally disruptive strategies of the avant garde. However, over the course of its 17 episodes, the series struggles to maintain this dialectical position, as its disruptive strategies are embedded in its repetitive serial structure. While in the *Quatermass* serials the dialectic between experimentation and formula is contained within the serial structure, *The Prisoner's* initial experimentation with existing representational strategies finally becomes a rejection of them, as the series abandons the generic and narrative expectations upon which it had been premised.

In the *Quatermass* serials and *The Prisoner*, the dialectic between disruption and dependence upon generic expectations in the representation of the fantastic functions (to varying degrees) as a means of challenging existing representational and production strategies. By contrast, Chapter 4 demonstrated how in *Star Trek* it functions at the service of the dominant aesthetic. For the producers of *Star Trek*, the representation of the fantastic fulfils two primary requirements in the production of primetime network series television – product differentiation and story latitude – while functioning within the expectations of the action-adventure series, the dominant series form at that time. While

the representation of the fantastic does offer the opportunity to experiment with new technologies (particularly colour television) and new series formats (futuristic space travel), this experimentation is used to fulfil the commercial demands on network television rather than to challenge or disrupt existing practices. However, the series' dependence upon and disruption of socio-cultural verisimilitude, in constructing a fictional world that is both fantastic and plausible, does enable the series to be read as both a progressive and a reactionary text at the point of criticism.

Although product differentiation and story latitude remain key in the 1990s, Chapter 5 demonstrated that within this industrial environment, the strategies used to fulfil these requirements are distinctly different. While *Star Trek* was produced for a broadly defined 'mass' primetime audience, by the 1990s the US network primetime audiences had been reconceived as a series of 'taste markets' to which specific programmes could be marketed. In appealing to a range of differently defined (although not mutually exclusive) taste markets, *The X-Files* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* display a pronounced generic hybridity that has a further function as a marker of distinctiveness. While generic hybridity has always been a feature in television programmes, here it is exploited as an economic strategy to maximise profits by giving each series a clear visual signature that can be exploited through branding to a range of markets. It also functions as an aesthetic strategy that endeavours to construct these series as aesthetically valuable (individually authored, thematically and formally challenging) in order to appeal to a 'quality' demographic. The attempt to combine the commercial and aesthetic demands of television production recalls the attempt to conflate extant generic expectations and

modernist representational strategies in *The Prisoner*. However, here its function as a production and a textual strategy is quite different. *The Prisoner* was produced within an industrial environment within which the economic, social and aesthetic demands of television production were still understood to be in conflict. By contrast, in the industrial environment of 1990s US network television production, an appeal to 'quality' is not understood to be opposed to the commercial or the economic. 'Quality' functions here at the service of the economic, as distinctiveness functions as a valuable marketing strategy. However, the alignment of the aesthetic and the economic in the production of these series has proved problematic in analyses of the aesthetics of contemporary US television, as it threatens the previous dichotomies upon which aesthetic criteria such as quality and distinctiveness were based.

While Chapter 5 demonstrated that in the 1990s, US network television production has increasingly depended upon the construction of series to appeal to specific (and frequently multiple) taste markets, Chapter 6 argued that UK terrestrial television at this time still maintains an emphasis on catering to a broadly defined national audience. This has proved particularly problematic for the scheduling of series like *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, whose mixed address is not easily accommodated into the scheduling practices of UK terrestrial television. Attempts to create British terrestrial series that respond to the increasing number of US telefantasy series transmitted in the UK have also been problematic. *Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)* reworked the format of a 1960s British telefantasy series with two popular alternative British comedians, Vic Reeves and Bob Mortimer, in the central roles. The discourses surrounding the representation of the

fantastic in *Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)* are concerned with aligning the series with its US contemporaries by adopting a self-conscious display of visual style. The series uses the representation of the fantastic to challenge the dominant expectations associated with British television as less 'sophisticated' than its US counterparts. However, this attempt to react to the predominance of US telefantasy in the late 1990s is difficult to reconcile with the public service requirements of the BBC. The series emphasised the display of visual style combined with the anarchic and surreal performance style of Reeves and Mortimer, over the narrative consistency and generic expectations of the original series. Although the series was popular with younger viewers, its lack of success with older viewers was understood as a failure to fulfil the public service requirements of the BBC 1 primetime Saturday evening slot, within which the series was scheduled, to provide entertainment for a broad family audience. While on US network television telefantasy has been critically and commercially successful in the 1990s, in the UK the production and scheduling of telefantasy remains problematic to the current public service environment of British terrestrial television.

These historical case studies reveal that in order to fully understand the representation of the fantastic as a production and a textual strategy it is necessary to situate each series within the specific industrial contexts within which they were produced. Through these case studies it is possible to identify the ways in which the debates surrounding both public service and commercial television have developed across the US and the UK, and the impact that US television has had on British terrestrial television. By following the development of the debates concerning public service broadcasting in the UK, it is

apparent that while from the 1950s the demands of competition have been problematic for definitions of public service broadcasting, these become particularly strained in the 1990s with the expansion of television service providers. Furthermore, the expansion of television in the UK and the development of VCR technology, have increased the influence of US television on British television, both because it is more visible, and because it has become an increasingly important market for television production. However, despite this, proclamations of the end of public service television in the UK certainly seem premature, as the demands of public service broadcasting are still a significant factor in the production of British terrestrial television.

These case studies also reveal the development of the debates concerning US network television, and enable a comparison between the different responses of the British and US industries to the expansion of the television industry in the 1980s and 1990s. In the US these industrial changes can also be seen to threaten the established network system. However here, this has led to the development of production and textual strategies that are concerned specifically with combining the aesthetic and economic demands of television production. This is not to suggest that US television in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s was not concerned with aesthetics. Rather it is to suggest that in the 1980s and 1990s the aesthetic becomes a central economic strategy in the production of US network television, in response to the increasing fragmentation of the television industry.

### **Histories of Television: Methodology and Theory**

Finally I want to explore the implications of this approach for the current debates in television studies. As the US and the UK television industries struggle to negotiate the rapidly changing terrain of television production, television scholars have been exploring the impact of these shifts for the barely established discipline of television studies. There has been an increasing interest in television production as a site of analysis<sup>2</sup>, as well as attempts to delineate the dominant paradigms in television and explore how they are challenged by the current industrial changes<sup>3</sup>. These debates are inevitably bound up with the histories of television studies as a discipline, a field that has been dispersed (and sometimes marginalised) across a range of more established fields (film studies, cultural studies, sociology, media studies and so on)<sup>4</sup>. As television studies has struggled for a place within academia, these historical discourses have been inevitably concerned with the value of television as an object of study. Explorations that centred on the effects of this seemingly pervasive social phenomenon were replaced by an increasing shift towards studying the viewing practices of actual audiences. These studies were concerned with exploring the social and psychological value of television as a medium in the broader practices of everyday life. Similarly textual studies of television increasingly embraced popular forms and asserted the value of studying television as a popular medium. Historically the study of television has also been concerned with differentiating television as a medium from other forms of media in order to establish the debates that arise

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<sup>2</sup> See for example Born (2000).

<sup>3</sup> See for example Frith (2000) and Ellis (2000).

<sup>4</sup> The diverse and obtuse nature of television as a medium – a collection of texts, a series of industries, a rapidly developing technology, a social phenomenon, and so on – has inevitably contributed to the dispersal of television studies across so many different academic disciplines (see Brunson, 1998).

specifically in relation to television. Television is understood to have had a profound effect on our personal and public lives, bringing the very definition of the personal and the public into question. It has been understood as a medium that is essentially embedded in the everyday domestic sphere, a medium whose value can be found in its social function. As a consequence, television's aesthetic has been defined in terms of its specificity, its difference from other media. It has been conceptualised as a domestic medium, whose small screen intimately addresses viewers in the private space of their own homes. Television programmes have been understood as ephemeral texts that exist in a flow of programmes that enter the home and are integrated in the routines of everyday life.

However, as Western television studies struggles to make sense of the rapid changes that have occurred in the US and UK television industries over the past two decades, the previous paradigms for understanding television have become increasingly problematic. Visually and technologically, television has become increasingly aligned with cinema. Television dramas are frequently shot on film, home cinema attempts to replicate the cinematic experience in the domestic space, and television is increasingly the primary site for the consumption of movies. With the development of VCR and the expansion of television channels, television is no longer ephemeral and is no longer exclusively embedded in our everyday domestic routines. As these changes challenge the dominant paradigms for conceptualising television, they suggest the inadequacy of such essentialist models for understanding historical change in television.

The case studies presented in this thesis suggest that such generalising ‘grand theories’ of television’s specificity are unable to account fully for the historical and national diversity of television as a medium. At the level of production and at the level of text, these case studies demonstrate that in order to understand television fully, it is necessary to situate a study of television within specific historical contexts<sup>5</sup>. However, as this thesis has argued, to offer historically embedded and contextualised analyses of television texts need not necessitate a rejection or avoidance of the broader theories concerning television as a medium. Rather, such work can provide an historical specificity that explores the consequences of broad shifts within specific contexts, and can thus complicate the existing paradigms for understanding television as a medium.

In this thesis this approach has been adopted in relation to the representation of the fantastic across five historically and nationally specific instances. These five case studies represent a very small section of the total production of television fantasy and television as a whole. Despite this, these case studies have suggested the inadequacy of the dominant paradigms of television as a medium for fully understanding these programmes within their historical context of production. While the challenge that these series present to the dominant paradigms within television studies may have led to their characterisation as ‘unique’ cultural phenomena, this thesis suggests that the production of these series can be understood as part of a broader set of strategies designed to respond to the

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<sup>5</sup> While this thesis has explored each text within its historical context of production, these texts can also be understood within other historical contexts. As the analysis of the scheduling of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* in the UK demonstrated, television texts can operate quite differently within specific historical, national and industrial contexts.

historical circumstances within which they were produced. The tendency to remove these series from the historical context within which they were produced is not, therefore, a consequence of their unique cultural status, but rather a reflection of the inadequacy of our historical and contemporary understanding of the aesthetics of television as a medium. This has profound implications for the ways in which television studies approaches the current industrial changes in the UK and US television industries. By undermining the adequacy of these paradigms for exploring the *Quatermass* serials, *The Prisoner*, and *Star Trek*, this thesis suggests that we cannot go on to use these paradigms as a barometer for exploring the impact of the current industrial upheaval in the UK and US television industries. If television studies is to understand the implications of the current changes in the television industry, it must approach television in ways that acknowledge the historical specificity of what television is and has been, before it can fully assess what television could or should be.

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## Appendix A

### Filmography: *The Quatermass Experiment*, *Quatermass II* and

### *Quatermass and the Pit*

*The Quatermass Experiment*, UK, BBC, tx. 18/07/53 – 22/08/53.

Writ: Nigel Kneale, Prod: Rudolph Cartier.

Main Cast: Reginald Tate (Professor Bernard Quatermass), Isabel Dean (Judith Carroon), Duncan Lamont (Victor Carroon).

‘Contact has been Established’, Episode 1, tx. 18/07/53.

‘Persons Reported Missing’, Episode 2, tx. 25/7/53.

‘Very Special Knowledge’, Episode 3, tx. 1/08/53.

‘Believed to be Suffering’, Episode 4, tx. 8/08/53.

‘An Unidentified Species’, Episode 5, tx. 15/08/53.

‘State of Emergency’, Episode 6, tx. 22/08/53.

*Quatermass II*, UK, BBC, tx. 22/10/55 – 26/11/55.

Writ: Nigel Kneale, Prod: Rudolph Cartier.

Main Cast: John Robinson (Professor Bernard Quatermass), Hugh Griffiths (Dr Leo Pugh), Monica Grey (Paula Quatermass).

‘The Bolts’, Episode 1, tx. 22/10/55, telerecorded repeat, tx. 24/10/55.

‘The Mark’, Episode 2, tx. 29/10/55, telerecorded repeat, tx. 31/10/55.

'The Flood', Episode 3, tx. 5/11/55, telerecorded repeat, tx. 7/11/55.

'The Coming', Episode 4, tx. 12/11/55, telerecorded repeat, tx. 14/11/55.

'The Frenzy', Episode 5, tx. 19/11/55, telerecorded repeat, tx. 21/11/55.

'The Destroyers', Episode 6, tx. 26/11/55, telerecorded repeat, tx. 28/11/55.

*Quatermass and the Pit*, UK, BBC, 22/12/58 – 26/01/59.

Writ: Nigel Kneale, Prod: Rudolph Cartier.

Main Cast: André Morell (Professor Bernard Quatermass), Christine Finn (Barbara Judd), Cec Linder (Dr Matthew Roney), Anthony Bushell (Colonel Breen).

'The Halfmen', Episode 1, tx. 22/12/58.

'The Ghosts', Episode 2, tx. 29/12/58.

'Imps and Demons', Episode 3, tx. 5/01/59.

'The Enchanted', Episode 4, tx. 12/01/59.

'The Wild Hunt', Episode 5, tx. 19/01/59.

'Hob', Episode 6, tx. 26/01/59.

## Appendix B

### **Filmography: *The Prisoner***

As transmission dates varied from region to region, those given below relate to the Southern region only.

‘Arrival’, Episode 1, *The Prisoner*, UK, ITV, tx. 1/10/67.

Writ: George Markstein and David Tomblin, Dir: Don Chaffey, Prod: David Tomblin.

Main Cast: Patrick McGoohan (Number Six), Guy Doleman (Number Two).

‘The Chimes of Big Ben’, Episode 2, *The Prisoner*, UK, ITV, tx. 8/10/67.

Writ: Vincent Tilsley, Prod: David Tomblin, Dir: Don Chaffey.

Main Cast: Patrick McGoohan (Number Six), Leo McKern (Number Two), Nadia Gray (Nadia).

‘A, B and C’, Episode 3, *The Prisoner*, UK, ITV, tx. 15/10/67.

Writ: Anthony Skene, Dir: Pat Jackson, Prod: David Tomblin.

Main Cast: Patrick McGoohan (Number Six), Colin Gordon (Number Two), Sheila Allen (Number Fourteen).

‘Free For All’, Episode 4, UK, ITV, tx. 22/10/67.

Writ: Patrick McGoohan under the pseudonym Paddy Fitz, Dir: Patrick McGoohan, Prod: David Tomblin.

Main Cast: Patrick McGoohan (Number Six), Eric Portman (Number Two).

'The Schizoid Man', Episode 5, *The Prisoner*, UK, ITV, tx. 29/10/67.

Writ: Terence Feeley, Dir: Pat Jackson, Prod: David Tomblin.

Main Cast: Patrick McGoohan (Number Six), Anton Rogers (Number Two).

'The General', Episode 6, *The Prisoner*, UK, ITV, tx. 5/11/67.

Writ: Lewis Greifer under the pseudonym Joshua Adam, Dir: Peter Graham Scott,

Prod: David Tomblin.

Main Cast: Patrick McGoohan (Number Six), Colin Gordon (Number Two), John

Castle (Number Twelve).

'Many Happy Returns', Episode 7, *The Prisoner*, UK, ITV, tx. 12/11/67.

Writ: Anthony Skene, Dir: Patrick McGoohan under the pseudonym Joseph Serf,

Prod: David Tomblin.

Main Cast: Patrick McGoohan (Number Six), Georgina Cookson (Mrs Butterworth).

'Dance of the Dead', Episode 8, *The Prisoner*, UK, ITV, tx. 16/11/67.

Writ: Anthony Skene, Dir: Don Chaffey, Prod: David Tomblin.

Main Cast: Patrick McGoohan (Number Six), Mary Morris (Number Two).

'Checkmate', Episode 9, *The Prisoner*, UK, ITV, tx. 3/12/67.

Writ: Gerald Kelsey, Dir: Don Chaffey, Prod: David Tomblin.

Main Cast: Patrick McGoohan (Number Six), Peter Wyngarde (Number Two),

Ronald Radd (The Rook).

‘Hammer Into Anvil’, Episode 10, *The Prisoner*, UK, ITV, tx. 10/12/67.

Writ: Roger Waddis, Dir: Pat Jackson, Prod: David Tomblin.

Main Cast: Patrick McGoohan (Number Six), Patrick Cargill (Number Two).

‘It’s Your Funeral’, Episode 11, *The Prisoner*, UK, ITV, tx. 17/12/67.

Writ: Michael Cramoy, Dir: Robert Asher, Prod: David Tomblin.

Main Cast: Patrick McGoohan (Number Six), Darren Nesbit (Number Two).

‘A Change of Mind’, Episode 12, *The Prisoner*, UK, ITV, tx. 31/12/67.

Writ: Roger Parks, Dir: Patrick McGoohan under the pseudonym Joseph Serf, Prod: David Tomblin.

Main Cast: Patrick McGoohan (Number Six), John Sharp (Number Two).

‘Do Not Forsake Me, Oh My Darling’, Episode 13, *The Prisoner*, UK, ITV, tx. 7/01/67.

Writ: Vincent Tilsley, Dir: Pat Jackson, Prod: David Tomblin.

Main Cast: Patrick McGoohan (Number Six), Nigel Stock (The Colonel/The Prisoner).

‘Living in Harmony’, Episode 14, *The Prisoner*, UK, ITV, tx. 14/01/68.

Writ: David Tomblin, Story: David Tomblin and Ian Rakoff, Dir: David Tomblin, Prod: David Tomblin.

Main Cast: Patrick McGoohan (Number Six), Alexis Kanner (The Kid).

'The Girl who was Death', Episode 15, *The Prisoner*, UK, ITV, tx. 21/01/68.

Writ: Terence Feeley, Dir: David Tomblin, Prod: David Tomblin.

Main Cast: Patrick McGoohan (Number Six), Justine Lord (Sonia), Kenneth Griffith (Schnipps).

'Once Upon a Time', Episode 16, *The Prisoner*, UK, ITV, tx. 28/01/68.

Writ: Patrick McGoohan, Dir: Patrick McGoohan, Prod: David Tomblin.

Main Cast: Patrick McGoohan (Number Six), Leo McKern (Number Two).

'Fall Out', Episode 17, *The Prisoner*, UK, ITV, tx. 4/02/68.

Writ: Patrick McGoohan, Dir: Patrick McGoohan, Prod: David Tomblin.

Main Cast: Patrick McGoohan (Number Six), Alexis Kanner (Number Forty-eight)

## Appendix C

### **Filmography: *Star Trek***

Individual episode references given only for those episodes referred in the text of the thesis. Episode order corresponds to order of original transmission on NBC in the US.

Season 1, *Star Trek*, US, NBC, tx. 8/09/66 – 13/04/67.

Creator/Executive Prod: Gene Roddenberry, Prod: Gene Roddenberry, Gene L. Coon.

Main Cast: William Shatner (Captain James T. Kirk), Leonard Nimoy (Mr Spock), DeForest Kelley (Dr McCoy), James Doohan (Scotty), Nichelle Nichols (Lieutenant Uhura).

‘Where No Man Has Gone Before’, Episode 3, tx. 22/09/66.

Writ: Samuel A. Peeples, Dir: James Goldstone, Prod: Gene Roddenberry.

‘The Naked Time’, Episode 4, tx. 29/09/66.

Writ: John D. F. Black, Dir: Marc Daniels, Prod: Gene Roddenberry.

‘The Enemy Within’, Episode 5, tx. 6/10/66.

Writ: Richard Matheson, Dir: Leo Penn, Prod: Gene Roddenberry.

‘Balance of Terror’, Episode 13, tx. 15/12/66.

Writ: Paul Schneider, Dir: Vincent McEveety, Prod: Gene Roddenberry.

'This Side of Paradise', Episode 23, tx. 2/03/67.

Writ: D. C. Fontana, Story: D. C. Fontana and Jerry Sohl under the pseudonym

Nathan Butler, Dir: Ralph Senensky, Prod: Gene L. Coon.

'The Devil in the Dark', Episode 24, tx. 9/03/67.

Writ: Gene L. Coon, Dir: Joseph Pevney, Prod: Gene L. Coon.

'Errand of Mercy', Episode 25, tx. 23/03/67.

Writ: Gene L. Coon, Dir: John Newland, Prod: Gene L. Coon.

Season 2, *Star Trek*, US, NBC, tx. 15/09/67 – 29/03/68.

Creator/Executive Prod: Gene Roddenberry, Prod: Gene L. Coon, John Meredyth

Lucas.

Main Cast: William Shatner (Captain James T. Kirk), Leonard Nimoy (Mr Spock),

DeForest Kelley (Dr McCoy), James Doohan (Scotty), Nichelle Nichols (Lieutenant

Uhura).

'Mirror, Mirror', Episode 4, tx. 6/10/677.

Writ: Jerome Bixby, Dir: Marc Daniels, Prod: Gene L. Coon.

'A Piece of the Action', Episode 17, tx. 12/01/68.

Writ: David P. Harmon and Gene L. Coon, Story: David Harmon, Dir: James

Komack, Prod: John Meredyth Lucas.

'Assignment: Earth', Episode 26, tx. 29/03/68.

Writ: Art Wallace, Story: Gene Roddenberry and Art Wallace, Dir: Marc Daniels,

Prod: John Meredyth Lucas.

Season 3, *Star Trek*, US, NBC, tx. 20/09/68 - 3/06/69.

Creator/Executive Prod: Gene Roddenberry, Prod. Fred Freiberger.

Main Cast: William Shatner (Captain James T. Kirk), Leonard Nimoy (Mr Spock),  
DeForest Kelley (Dr McCoy), James Doohan (Scotty), Nichelle Nichols (Lieutenant  
Uhura).

'Spectre of the Gun', Episode 6, tx. 25/10/68.

Writ: Gene L. Coon under the pseudonym Lee Cronin, Dir: Vincent McEveety, Prod:  
Fred Freiberger.

'Turnabout Intruder', Episode 24, tx. 3/06/69.

Writ: Arthur H. Singer, Story: Gene Roddenberry, Dir: Herb Wallerstein, Prod: Fred  
Freiberger.

## Appendix D

### **Filmography: *The X-Files***

Individual episode references given only for those episodes referred in the text of the thesis. The episode numbers correspond to original transmission order on the Fox network in the US.

#### **Film Credits:**

*The X-Files: Fight the Future*, Dir: Rob Bowman, Fox/10:13, 1998.

#### **Television Series Credits:**

Season 1, *The X-Files*, US, Fox, tx. 10/09/93 – 13/5/94.

UK, Sky, tx. 26/01/94 – 6/07/94.

UK, BBC 2, tx. 19/09/94 – 9/03/95.

Creator: Chris Carter, Line Prod: J. P. Finn, Supervising Prod: Daniel Sackheim,

Howard Gordon and Alex Gansa, Director of Photography: John Bartley.

Main Cast: David Duchovny (Fox Mulder), Gillian Anderson (Dana Scully).

‘Pilot’, Episode 1, tx.10/09/93 (Fox), tx. 26/01/94 (Sky), tx. 19/09/94 (BBC 2).

Writ: Chris Carter, Dir: Robert Mandel, Supervising Prod: Daniel Sackheim.

‘E.B.E.’, Episode 17, tx. 18/02/94 (Fox), tx. 18/05/94 (Sky), 19/01/95 (BBC 2).

Writ: Glen Morgan and James Wong, Dir: William Graham, Line Prod: J. P. Finn.

Season 2, *The X-Files*, US, Fox, tx. 16/9/94 – 19/5/95.

UK, Sky, tx. 21/02/95 – 9/08/95.

UK, BBC 2, tx. 28/08/95 – 18/12/95, BBC 1, tx. 9/01/96 – 27/02/96.

Creator: Chris Carter, Prod: J. P. Finn, Paul Brown, David Nutter, Kim Manners, Rob Bowman, Director of Photography: John Bartley.

Main Cast: David Duchovny (Fox Mulder), Gillian Anderson (Dana Scully), Mitch Pileggi (Asst. Dir. Walter Skinner), William B. Davies (Cigarette Smoking Man).

‘Dod Kalm’, Episode 19, tx. 10/03/95 (Fox), 27/06/95 (Sky), 16/01/96 (BBC 1).

Writ: Howard Gordon and Alex Gansa, Dir: Rob Bowman, Prod: J. P. Finn, Kim Manners, Rob Bowman.

Season 3, *The X-Files*, US, Fox, tx. 22/9/95 – 17/05/96.

UK, Sky, tx. 5/03/96 – 13/08/96.

UK, BBC 1, tx. 12/09/96 – 3/09/97.

Creator: Chris Carter, Prod: J. P. Finn, Kim Manners, Rob Bowman, Director of Photography: John Bartley.

Main Cast: David Duchovny (Fox Mulder), Gillian Anderson (Dana Scully), Mitch Pileggi (Asst. Dir. Walter Skinner), William B. Davies (Cigarette Smoking Man).

‘Jose Chung’s “From Outer Space”’, Episode 20, tx. 12/04/96 (Fox), tx. 16/07/96 (Sky), tx. 18/12/96 (BBC 1).

Writ: Darin Morgan, Dir: Rob Bowman, Prod: J. P. Finn, Kim Manners, Rob Bowman.

Season 4, *The X-Files*, US, Fox, tx. 4/10/96 – 18/5/97.

UK, Sky, tx. 12/01/97 – 13/07/97.

UK, BBC 1, tx. 10/09/97 – 4/03/98.

Creator: Chris Carter, Prod: J. P. Finn, Kim Manners, Rob Bowman, Director of Photography: Bill Roe.

Main Cast: David Duchovny (Fox Mulder), Gillian Anderson (Dana Scully), Mitch Pileggi (Asst. Dir. Walter Skinner), William B. Davies (Cigarette Smoking Man).

Season 5, *The X-Files*, US, Fox, tx. 16/11/97 – 17/05/98.

UK, Sky, tx. 15/03/98 – 5/07/98.

UK, BBC 1, tx. 3/10/98 – 17/03/99.

Creator: Chris Carter, Prod: Paul Rabwin, J.P.Finn, Kim Manners, Rob Bowman, Director of Photography: Bill Roe.

Main Cast: David Duchovny (Fox Mulder), Gillian Anderson (Dana Scully), Mitch Pileggi (Asst. Dir. Walter Skinner), William B. Davies (Cigarette Smoking Man).

Season 6, *The X-Files*, US, Fox, tx. 8/11/98 – 16/05/99.

UK, Sky, tx. 7/03/99 – 25/07/99.

UK, BBC 1, tx. 5/01/00 – 12/08/00.

Creator: Chris Carter, Prod: Bernadette Cauldfield, John Shiban, Paul Rabwin, Kim Manners, Rob Bowman, Director of Photography: Bill Roe.

Main Cast: David Duchovny (Fox Mulder), Gillian Anderson (Dana Scully), Mitch Pileggi (Asst. Dir. Walter Skinner), William B. Davies (Cigarette Smoking Man).

Season 7, *The X-Files*, US, Fox, tx. 7/11/99 – 21/5/00.

UK, Sky, tx. 2/04/00 – 13/08/00.

UK, BBC 2, tx. 29/11/00 – 27/05/01.

Creator: Chris Carter, Prod: Bernadette Cauldfield, Paul Rabwin, Director of

Photography: Bill Roe.

Main Cast: David Duchovny (Fox Mulder), Gillian Anderson (Dana Scully), Mitch Pileggi (Asst. Dir. Walter Skinner), William B. Davies (Cigarette Smoking Man).

Season 8, *The X-Files*, US, Fox, tx. 5/11/00 – 20/05/01.

UK, Sky, tx. 18/02/01 – 28/06/01.

UK, BBC 2, tx. 3/03/02 –

Creator: Chris Carter, Prod: David Amann, Harry V. Bring, Paul Rabwin, Director of

Photography: Bill Roe.

Main Cast: David Duchovny (Fox Mulder), Gillian Anderson (Dana Scully), Mitch Pileggi (Asst. Dir. Walter Skinner), Robert Patrick (John Doggett).

Season 9, *The X-Files*, US, Fox, tx. 11/11/01 – 19/05/02.

Creator: Chris Carter, Prod: Harry V. Bring, Tony Wharmby, Director of

Photography: Bill Roe.

Main Cast: Gillian Anderson (Dana Scully), Mitch Pileggi (Asst. Dir. Walter Skinner), Robert Patrick (John Doggett), Annabeth Gish (Monica Reyes).

## Appendix E

### **Filmography: *Buffy the Vampire Slayer***

Individual episode references given only for those episodes referred in the text of the thesis. The episode numbers correspond to original transmission order on the WB/UPN networks in the US.

#### **Film Credits:**

*Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, Dir: Fran Rubel Kuzui, Kuzui Enterprises/Sandollar Productions/Fox, 1992.

#### **Television Series Credits:**

Season 1, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, US, WB, tx. 10/03/97 – 2/06/97.

UK, Sky, tx. 3/01/98 – 21/03/98.

UK, BBC2, tx. 03/12/98 – 31/03/99.

Creator: Joss Whedon, Prod: Gareth Davies, Director of Photography: Michael Gershman.

Main Cast: Sarah Michelle Gellar (Buffy Summers), Nicholas Brendon (Xander Harris), Alyson Hannigan (Willow Rosenberg), Anthony Stewart Head (Rupert Giles), David Boreanaz (Angel).

‘Welcome to the Hellmouth’, Episode 1, tx. 10/03/97 (WB), tx. 3/01/98 (Sky), tx. 30/12/98 (BBC 2).

Writ: Joss Whedon, Dir: Charles Martin Smith, Prod: Gareth Davies.

'Teacher's Pet', Episode 4, tx. 25/03/97 (WB), tx. 24/01/98 (Sky), tx. 13/01/99 (BBC 2).

Writ: David Greenwalt, Dir: Bruce Seth Green, Prod: Gareth Davies.

Season 2, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, US, WB, tx. 15/09/97 – 19/05/98.

UK, Sky, tx. 28/03/98 – 13/08/99.

UK, BBC2, tx. 08/04/99 – 16/03/00.

Creator: Joss Whedon, Prod: Gareth Davies, Director of Photography: Michael Gershman.

Main Cast: Sarah Michelle Gellar (Buffy Summers), Nicholas Brendon (Xander Harris), Alyson Hannigan (Willow Rosenberg), Anthony Stewart Head (Rupert Giles), David Boreanaz (Angel/Angelus), Charisma Carpenter (Cordelia Chase), James Marsters (Spike), Juliet Landau (Drusilla).

'The Dark Age', Episode 8, tx. 10/11/97 (WB), tx. 16/05/98 (Sky), tx. 11/11/99 (BBC 2).

Writ: Dean Batali and Rob Des Hotel, Dir: Bruce Seth Green, Prod: Gareth Davies.

'Ted', Episode 11, tx. 8/12/97 (WB), tx. 6/06/98 (Sky), tx. 9/12/99 (BBC 2).

Writ: David Greenwalt and Joss Whedon, Dir: Bruce Seth Green, Prod: Gareth Davies.

'Phases', Episode 15, tx. 27/01/98 (WB), 4/07/98 (Sky), 20/01/00 (BBC 2).

Writ: Rob Des Hotel and Dean Batali, Dir: Bruce Seth Green, Prod: Gareth Davies.

Season 3, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, US, WB, tx. 29/09/98 – 21/09/99<sup>1</sup>.

UK, Sky, tx. 20/08/99 – 26/11/99.

UK, BBC2, tx. 30/03/00 – 21/09/00.

Creator: Joss Whedon, Prod: Gareth Davies, Director of Photography: Michael Gershman.

Main Cast: Sarah Michelle Gellar (Buffy Summers), Nicholas Brendon (Xander Harris), Alyson Hannigan (Willow Rosenberg), Anthony Stewart Head (Rupert Giles), David Boreanaz (Angel/Angelus), Charisma Carpenter (Cordelia Chase), Seth Green (Daniel 'Oz' Osborne), Eliza Dushku (Faith).

'Beauty and the Beasts', Episode 4, tx. 20/10/98 (WB), tx. 10/09/99 (Sky), tx. 4/05/00 (BBC 2).

Writ: Marti Noxon, Dir: James Whitmore Jr., Prod: Gareth Davies.

'Band Candy', Episode 6, tx. 10/11/98 (WB), tx. 24/09/99 (Sky), tx. 18/05/00 (BBC 2).

Writ: Jane Espenson, Dir: Michael Lange, Prod: Gareth Davies.

Season 4, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, US, WB, tx. 5/10/99 – 23/05/00.

UK, Sky, tx. 7/01/00 – 28/05/00.

UK, BBC2, tx. 28/09/00 – 12/04/01.

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<sup>1</sup> Season 3 was scheduled to complete its run on the WB on 25/05/99. However, due to the school shooting at Columbine, 'Earshot' was postponed from 27/04/99 to 21/09/99, and the season finale 'Graduation Day Part 2' was postponed from 25/05/99 to 13/07/99.

Creator: Joss Whedon, Prod: David Fury, Gareth Davies, Director of Photography: Michael Gershman.

Main Cast: Sarah Michelle Gellar (Buffy Summers), Nicholas Brendon (Xander Harris), Alyson Hannigan (Willow Rosenberg), Anthony Stewart Head (Rupert Giles), James Marsters (Spike), Seth Green (Daniel 'Oz' Osborne), Marc Blucas (Riley Finn), Emma Caulfield (Anya Jenkins).

'Wild at Heart', Episode 6, tx. 9/11/99 (WB), tx. 11/02/00 (Sky), tx. 9/11/00 (BBC 2).

Writ: Marti Noxon, Dir: David Grossman, Prod: David Fury, Gareth Davies.

'Where the Wild Things Are', Episode 18, tx. 25/04/00 (WB), tx. 5/05/00 (Sky), 1/03/01 (BBC 2).

Writ: Tracey Forbes, Dir: David Solomon, Prod: David Fury, Gareth Davies.

Season 5, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, US, WB, tx. 26/09/00 – 22/05/01.

UK, Sky, tx. 5/01/01 – 1/06/01.

UK, BBC2, tx. 23/08/01 – 4/04/02.

Creator: Joss Whedon, Prod: Jane Espenson, David Solomon, Gareth Davies, Director of Photography: Michael Gershman.

Main Cast: Sarah Michelle Gellar (Buffy Summers), Nicholas Brendon (Xander Harris), Alyson Hannigan (Willow Rosenberg), Anthony Stewart Head (Rupert Giles), James Marsters (Spike), Emma Caulfield (Anya Jenkins), Michelle Trachtenberg (Dawn Summers), Amber Benson (Tara Maclay).

'Tough Love', Episode 19, tx. 1/05/01 (WB), tx. 11/05/01 (Sky), tx. 31/01/02 (BBC 2).

Writ: Rebecca Rand Kirshner, Dir: David Grossman, Prod: Jane Espenson, David Solomon, Gareth Davies.

Season 6, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, US, UPN, tx. 2/10/01 -

UK, Sky, tx. 10/01/02 -

Creator: Joss Whedon, Prod: Douglas Petrie, David Solomon, Gareth Davies, Director of Photography: Michael Gershman.

Main Cast: Sarah Michelle Gellar (Buffy Summers), Nicholas Brendon (Xander Harris), Alyson Hannigan (Willow Rosenberg), James Marsters (Spike), Emma Caulfield (Anya Jenkins), Michelle Trachtenberg (Dawn Summers), Amber Benson (Tara Maclay).

'Wrecked', Episode 10, tx. 27/11/01 (UPN), tx. 7/03/02 (Sky).

Writ: Marti Noxon, Dir: David Solomon, Prod: Douglas Petrie, David Solomon, Gareth Davies.

## Appendix F

### **Filmography: *Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)***

In the UK, *Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)* was transmitted in two seasons, the first consisting of 6 episodes and the second of 7 episodes. However, WTTV intend these 13 episodes to make up one season for sale abroad.

‘Drop Dead’, Episode 1, Season 1, *Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)*, UK, BBC 1, tx. 18/03/02.

Writ: Charlie Higson, Dir: Mark Mylod, Prod: Charlie Higson.

Main Cast: Vic Reeves (Marty Hopkirk), Bob Mortimer (Jeff Randall), Emilia Fox (Jeannie Hurst), Charles Dance (Kenneth Crisby).

‘Mental Apparition Disorder’, Episode 2, Season 1, *Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)*, UK, BBC 1, tx. 25/03/02.

Writ: Charlie Higson, Story: Mike Pratt and Ian Wilson, Dir: Rachel Talalay, Prod: Charlie Higson.

Main Cast: Vic Reeves (Marty Hopkirk), Bob Mortimer (Jeff Randall), Emilia Fox (Jeannie Hurst), Tom Baker (Mr Wyvern), Hugh Lawrie (Dr Lawyer).

‘The Best Years of Your Death’, Episode 3, Season 1, *Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)*, UK, BBC 1, tx. 1/04/00.

Writ: Charlie Higson, Dir: Mark Mylod, Prod: Charlie Higson.

Main Cast: Vic Reeves (Marty Hopkirk), Bob Mortimer (Jeff Randall), Emilia Fox (Jeannie Hurst), Tom Baker (Mr Wyvern)?, Peter Bowles (Captain Graves).

‘Paranoia’, Episode 4, Season 1, *Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)*, UK, BBC 1, tx. 8/04/00.

Writ: Charlie Higson and Paul Whitehouse, Dir: Charlie Higson, Prod: Charlie Higson.

Main Cast: Vic Reeves (Marty Hopkirk), Bob Mortimer (Jeff Randall), Emilia Fox (Jeannie Hurst), Tom Baker (Mr Wyvern)?, Paul Rhys (Douglas Milton).

‘A Blast from the Past’, Episode 5, Season 1, *Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)*, UK, BBC 1, tx. 15/04/00.

Writ: Charlie Higson, Dir: Rachel Talalay, Prod: Charlie Higson.

Main Cast: Vic Reeves (Marty Hopkirk), Bob Mortimer (Jeff Randall), Emilia Fox (Jeannie Hurst), Tom Baker (Mr Wyvern), Paul Whitehouse (Sidney Crabbe).

‘A Man of Substance’, Episode 6, Season 1, *Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)*, UK, BBC 1, tx. 22/04/00.

Writ: Charlie Higson, Dir: Mark Mylod, Prod: Charlie Higson.

Main Cast: Vic Reeves (Marty Hopkirk), Bob Mortimer (Jeff Randall), Emilia Fox (Jeannie Hurst), Tom Baker (Mr Wyvern), Gareth Thomas (Dickie Bechard).

‘Whatever Possessed You’, Episode 1, Season 2, *Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)*, UK, BBC 1, tx. 29/09/01.

Writ: Charlie Higson and Gareth Roberts, Dir: Metin Huseyin, Prod: Charlie Higson.

Main Cast: Vic Reeves (Marty Hopkirk), Bob Mortimer (Jeff Randall), Emilia Fox (Jeannie Hurst), Tom Baker (Mr Wyvern), Hywel Bennett (James Whale).

‘Revenge of the Bog People’, Episode 2, Season 2, *Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)*, UK, BBC 1, tx. 6/10/01.

Writ: Charlie Higson and Kate Woods, Dir: Charlie Higson, Prod: Charlie Higson.

Main Cast: Vic Reeves (Marty Hopkirk), Bob Mortimer (Jeff Randall), Emilia Fox (Jeannie Hurst), Tom Baker (Mr Wyvern), Celia Imrie (Professor McKern), Mark Williams (Professor Doleman).

‘O Happy Isle’, Episode 3, Season 2, *Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)*, UK, BBC 1, tx. 13/10/01.

Writ: Charlie Higson, Dir: Metin Huseyin, Prod: Charlie Higson.

Main Cast: Vic Reeves (Marty Hopkirk), Bob Mortimer (Jeff Randall), Emilia Fox (Jeannie Hurst), Tom Baker (Mr Wyvern)?, George Baker (Berry Pomeroy).

‘Marshall and Snellgrove’, Episode 4, Season 2, *Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)*, UK, BBC 1, tx. 27/10/01.

Writ: Charlie Higson, Dir: Metin Huseyin, Prod: Charlie Higson.

Main Cast: Vic Reeves (Marty Hopkirk), Bob Mortimer (Jeff Randall), Emilia Fox (Jeannie Hurst), Tom Baker (Mr Wyvern)?, Shaun Parkes (Charlie Marshall), Colin McFarlane (Sebastian Snellgrove).

'Pain Killers', Episode 5, Season 2, *Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)*, UK, BBC 1, tx. 20/10/01.

Writ: Gareth Roberts, Dir: Charlie Higson, Prod: Charlie Higson.

Main Cast: Vic Reeves (Marty Hopkirk), Bob Mortimer (Jeff Randall), Emilia Fox (Jeannie Hurst), Tom Baker (Mr Wyvern), Dervla Kirwan (Petra Winters), Derek Jacobi (Colonel Anger).

'The Glorious Butranekh', Episode 6, Season 2, *Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)*, UK, BBC 1, tx. 3/11/01.

Writ: Charlie Higson, Dir: Charlie Higson, Prod: Charlie Higson.

Main Cast: Vic Reeves (Marty Hopkirk), Bob Mortimer (Jeff Randall), Emilia Fox (Jeannie Hurst), Tom Baker (Mr Wyvern), Pauline Quirke (Felia Siderova).

'Two Can Play at That Game', Episode 7, Season 2, *Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)*, UK, BBC 1, tx. 24/11/01.

Writ: Mark Gatiss and Jeremy Dyson, Dir: Steve Bendelack, Prod: Charlie Higson.

Main Cast: Vic Reeves (Marty Hopkirk), Bob Mortimer (Jeff Randall), Emilia Fox (Jeannie Hurst), Tom Baker (Mr Wyvern), Roy Hudd (Dicky Klein), John Michie (Stuart Boyle).