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Escaping the Honeytrap

Representations and Ramifications of the Female Spy on Television Since 1965

Karen K. Burrows

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University of Sussex

Karen K. Burrows

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Television Since 1965

Summary

My thesis interrogates the changing nature of the espionage genre on Western television since the middle of the Cold War. It uses close textual analysis to read the progressions and regressions in the portrayal of the female spy, analyzing where her representation aligns with the achievements of the feminist movement, where it aligns with popular political culture of the time, and what happens when the two factors diverge. I ask what the female spy represents across the decades and why her image is integral to understanding the portrayal of gender on television.

I explore four pairs of television shows from various eras to demonstrate the importance of the female spy to the cultural landscape. These shows represent the female spy's birth in the era of the sexual revolution, her rise as a feminist career woman, and the post-9/11 restrictions on who is allowed to serve the country. I argue that the conflation of nation and family that occurs in each show serves to elevate the primacy of the heterosexual reproductive unit, challenging the outwardly-progressive representation of the apparently feminist spy figure. Analyzed in concert, these shows reveal the conservative bent of the espionage genre despite the higher visibility of its female protagonists.

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Escaping the Honeytrap: Representations and Ramifications of the Female Spy on Television Since 1965

*You'll never know how I watched you from the shadows as a child,
You'll never know how it feels to get so close and be denied,
It's a gold and honey trap
I've got for you tonight
Revenge, it's a kiss,
This time I won't miss,
Now I've got you in my sights¹*

Introduction

The female spy is an amorphous figure. Used and abused by multiple organizations, her appearance is malleable, yet instantly recognizable. She is Mata Hari, dangerously sexual; she is Edith Cavell, patriotic martyr. She is everywhere, the unknowable threat behind every woman's femininity in wartime eras when men are cautioned not to share secrets with their sweetheart lest she be working for the other side. She is Valerie Plame, abandoned by her country; she is Julia Child, her record classified for decades; she is Josephine Baker, using her fame to mask her intrigues. She is Mother Russia invading the West, seducing politicians for information. On television, she is all these things and more; she is an image in which the feminist politics of her era may be reflected. This thesis uses the figure of the female spy as a lens through which to explore the relationship between television and contemporary politics. It builds a close analysis of several espionage programmes and their narrative and thematic similarities, then interrogates the progression of those programmes against the backdrop of cultural and political development throughout the eras being considered. Through the persona of the female spy, I explore the extent to which television is reflective of the culture in which it is produced and the extent to which it can instead be seen as a tool for informing the audience. My work relies on close textual analysis in a cultural context, drawing on aspects of cultural historicism to provide a view of these programmes within their respective eras.

This thesis has its genesis in my curiosity about the interplay between the figure of the female spy in popular culture and her influence on the real-life perception of women in

¹ Tina Turner, vocal performance of "GoldenEye," by Bono and The Edge, recorded 1995 on *GoldenEye Soundtrack*, Parlophone, CD.

espionage. I have long been fascinated by the suggestion, explored by Tony Bennett and Janet Woollacott in *Bond and Beyond: The Political Career of a Popular Hero*, that Fleming's Bond novels were a post-war attempt at providing a 'recipe' for how to exist as a British gentleman in a new era.² Bond provided a reference point for everything from cigarette brands to the number of eggs to have for breakfast (see Biddulph, "'Bond Was Not a Gourmet': An Archaeology of James Bond's Diet"; Hale, "James Bond and the Art of Eating Eggs"); I wondered whether the female spy as an archetype had spurred similar consumerist or ideological points of reference for women throughout the last several decades. I envisioned a work similar to Brunsdon's analysis of women and soap operas or Ang's work on *Dallas*. I quickly realized, however, that my scope was too wide and work on the female spy too sparse for audience research to provide a meaningful window onto the genre. Before examining the reception of the female spy, I wanted to understand her presentation.

Escaping the Honeytrap has thus become an analysis of how the female spy has been conceptualized and deployed on television since her rise, concurrent with second-wave feminism, in the mid-1960s; it is less about the impact of the female spy's representation as it is about the meaning of that representation. To understand what the female spy means and has meant, I sought first to understand where the conception of the archetypal female spy as overly sexual, foreign, and dangerous³ was developed by exploring the two most recognizable representations: Mata Hari and the Bond Girl. Having done so, I question whether and why – or why not – this prevailing preconception presents itself on television over the last half-century.

The Female Spy in History

The archetype of the female spy-seductress owes its creation and rise to prominence almost entirely to the mythologized history of one woman: Margaretha Zelle MacLeod, better known as Mata Hari. Born in the Netherlands in 1876, Mata Hari was condemned as a German spy and executed in France in 1917. Despite compelling evidence of her innocence, both that available at the time of her trial and that which has come to light since, the name Mata Hari has become internationally recognized shorthand

² Tony Bennett and Janet Woollacott, *Bond and Beyond: The Political Career of a Popular Hero* (London: Macmillan, 1987), 4.

³ Julie Wheelwright, *The Fatal Lover: Mata Hari and the Myth of Women in Espionage* (London: Collins & Brown, 1992), 4.

for the danger embodied by the female spy: she has entered the pop consciousness to become "the measure against which all other fictional women spies are assessed for their competence, loyalty, and femininity."⁴ The mythology of her history as a spy has some basis in truth: it demonstrates how she unwittingly played into the fears that male authorities had and have about female sexuality in wartime. Mata Hari is best remembered for her dancing, the main attraction of which – other than her nearly-nude body – was its exoticism. Her act played on her dark features and her time in Java to add 'authentic' Oriental mysticism to her performances. While this tactic certainly generated the publicity she desired, it also painted her as decidedly other, which would bring together "fears about the enemy alien, the wayward woman, and sexual decadence"⁵ in the male Allied intelligence officers who would ultimately condemn her as an Axis spy. These fears of 'otherness' and sexuality entwine in the fictionalized figure of the female spy; Mata Hari marks their inception.

Mata Hari's stage presence was not the only mark against her when she was accused of being a traitor. She worked as a courtesan and took many lovers even beyond the men who 'kept' her, as did other women, yet she was excoriated for it. To the men who "controlled espionage during the war, espionage and sexual perversity went hand in hand;" thus Mata Hari's "story had inevitably linked the international woman to espionage and prostitution" and had linked the latter two concepts together as well.⁶ Mata Hari's particular crime was not merely that she had many lovers, but that many of them were officers or soldiers, which, her accusers charged, meant that she was using her womanly wiles to gain information from them when their defenses were lowest, information which she subsequently shared with the enemy. There was no proof of any of these allegations, but the spectre of 'pillow talk' as a method of interrogation remains tied to the Mata Hari mythos.

The strength of the legal case against Mata Hari was weak from the outset, dogged by misdirections and assumptions. Nevertheless, she was tried and convicted in a farce of a trial, and her execution gave rise to legends both official and unofficial. Officially, her death was a partial repayment for that of English nurse Edith Cavell, who had been executed in Germany in 1915. Cavell, who had used her position as a nurse to sneak Allied forces to safety, became a propaganda figure whose feminine profession, courage,

⁴ Wheelwright, 4.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid, 100-101.

and martyrdom was deployed against the uncontrollable sexuality of Mata Hari. The virgin/whore paradigm of the Cavell/Mata Hari comparison enabled the Allies to tighten their control on woman's sexuality during wartime such that

women who fell short of patriotic expectations stood accused of a double crime. Any suggestion that they had abandoned the passive sexual role was tantamount to a betrayal not only of their family or husband but of the state as well.⁷

Unofficially, however, the Mata Hari myth grew to such an extent that even as much later as the 1960s "a 'real Mata Hari' was a temptress of mystery, intrigue, and possibly danger."⁸ Her execution occurred during wartime and was not open to the public, thus allowing rumours to spread unchecked: she had been rescued by a knight on a white horse; she had disrobed before the firing squad and escaped while they were dazzled by her beauty; the squad had been issued dummy bullets and her execution faked; her body had disappeared after the execution; she had recovered from her wounds and was living happily ever after. All the glamour of her myth cannot, however, dispel the harsh realities of her truth: Mata Hari paid for her missteps in the man's game of spy-warfare with her death.

There Was A Man Named Bond

Throughout the inter-war period, during the Second World War, and into the beginning of the Cold War, the Mata Hari archetype dominated fictional representations of the female spy.⁹ Women were punished for interfering in the masculine world of international espionage: those who were allowed to survive functioned as domestic servants or as generic romantic interests for the hero rather than claiming any autonomy of their own.

And then came Bond.

Whether in Fleming's novels or in the iconic film series, the world of James Bond is one of sexism, heterocentrism, racism, and colonialism. The films' Bond Girls are culturally synonymous with Playboy Bunnies – as indeed many of them were – regardless of the later versions' self-positioning as 'a different kind of Bond Girl' (a refrain common since the 1995 relaunch of the series). Nevertheless, while the balance of power rests

⁷ Ibid, 128.

⁸ Ibid, 144.

⁹ Ibid, 146.

firmly in favour of Bond and his ideal(ized) masculinity, the positioning of women initially by Fleming and as subsequently continued in the films marks a radical change, a step away from the Mata Hari archetype, which provides a basis for the female spies of the 60s and beyond.

The Bond Girls, at first glance, may seem to perpetuate the generic stereotypes: generally exotic foreigners, they either succumb to Bond's manly charms or die as a result of rebuffing his advances. While the defining characteristic of (almost, as I will discuss later) all the women in the Bond canon is their sexual availability, their narrative roles are inevitably far more complex than that of a simple lust object. The international women Bond encounters on his missions are crucial to his success: he makes use of their specialized knowledge and skills (no pun intended). Honeychile Rider (*Dr. No*) and Kissy Suzuki (*You Only Live Twice*) serve as guides to unfamiliar territory, while Pussy Galore (*Goldfinger*) and Domino Vitale (*Thunderball*) are even empowered so far as to save Bond's life rather than requiring him to rescue them. Vesper Lynd (*Casino Royale*), who repents of her traitorous actions through suicide, is probably closest to a Mata Hari figure among Bond's girls, yet her very Englishness alters the formula. Exoticism is no longer the ultimate mark of suspicion, nor Anglicism of safety.

Vesper is of course the exception to the rule: the other women of the British Secret Service, including Loelia Ponsonby, Mary Goodnight, and most especially Miss Jane Money Penny, are as devoted to Queen (or King) and country as is Bond himself. They are also, as Christine Bold points out, "the enabling mechanism" of Bond's universe:

women carry the files, operate the decoders, oversee the paperwork, screen the appointments, and supply the canteen services which keep the institution running. Headquarters hums with efficient women trotting along corridors, dispensing advice in outer offices, even operating a 'powder-vine' through 'the girls' restroom' which disseminates confidential information far more efficiently than any official communications system.¹⁰

A far cry from the Mata Haris who are punished for their interference in the 'man's world' of spy-games, Money Penny and her ilk are vital to Bond's Service and to his success. They are, in fact, relatively representative of the real MI5 and MI6 at the time, when female

¹⁰ Christine Bold, "'Under the very skirts of Britannia': re-reading women in the James Bond novels," in *The James Bond Phenomenon: A Critical Reader*, ed. Christoph Lindner (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 171.

agents filled similar roles – until marriage took them away from the agency.¹¹ I believe the introduction of these capable, invaluable, if servile (though in much the same way Bond is servile) women in Fleming's novels of the 50s provides a basis for the independent female agents of the 60s and beyond, including Emma Peel and Agent 99.

Money Penny herself is an important marker of difference in terms of female sexuality and power in the Bond universe. In the novels, she is perpetually desiring and desirable, yet the consummation of her flirtation with Bond is perpetually deferred. As "the woman behind the man (M) behind the hero,"¹² Money Penny wields little power but controls access to much: M's office, symbol of the strength of the Secret Service. In the classic Bond films, Money Penny is used to bolster the filmic Bond: she provides a point of recognition when different actors inhabit the role. She is also artificially aged to suggest by comparison Bond's eternal youthfulness.¹³ In *GoldenEye* (Martin Campbell, 1995) and the two subsequent films, however, Samantha Bond's Money Penny and Pierce Brosnan's Bond retain the equitable flirtation style of the novels: she even accuses him of sexual harassment, though in a teasing way such that neither the power balance nor his image is truly threatened.

Importantly, *GoldenEye* further marks a shift in gendered representation of espionage: with the introduction of Dame Judi Dench as M, Bond is made subordinate to a woman, possibly for the first time. M's regendering is reflective of the real-life appointment in 1992 of mother-of-two Stella Rimington as Director-General of MI5,¹⁴ but it also serves several purposes within the Bond universe. The casting re-emphasizes the essential Britishness of the texts; Dench as an actor is a British national treasure, having been honoured as Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire in 1980. Following her appearance as M, she has also portrayed both Queen Victoria and Queen Elizabeth I on film in *Her Majesty, Mrs Brown* (John Madden, 1997) and *Shakespeare in Love* (John Madden, 1998); the conflation between head of Service and head of Empire suggests the

¹¹ Keith Jeffery, *MI6: The History of the Secret Intelligence Service, 1909-1949* (London: Bloomsbury, 2010), 254.

¹² Tara Brabazon, "Britain's last line of defense: Miss Money Penny and the desperations of filmic feminism," in *The James Bond Phenomenon: A Critical Reader*, ed. Christoph Lindner (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 204.

¹³ Ibid, 208.

¹⁴ James Chapman, *License to Thrill: A Cultural History of the James Bond Films* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007), 220.

importance of M's role. M herself is "a more useful signifier of Englishness than Bond,"¹⁵ her equation with national identity challenges Bond's ubiquity.

Making M female also ensures that Bond is faced with one woman whom he will never be able to seduce. M is not entirely de-sexualized, as might be expected given her age relative to the other women who appear in the Bond films. The audience is given glimpses of a home life that suggest that M has not only acquired the top spot in the Service but has avoided the fate of "perpetual concubinage to... King and country"¹⁶ that Loelia Ponsonby bemoaned as inevitable. M is 'different' where the 'Bond Girls' have not been. In her first appearance, she calls Bond a "sexist, misogynist dinosaur" and derides his "boyish charms;"¹⁷ the terminology of the latter recalls the infantilization inherent in the phrase 'Bond Girls' itself. In later films, her reprimands retain the sting of the power structure: "I knew it was too early to promote you."¹⁸ In the 2006 Daniel Craig reboot of the series, Dench's M is the only character other than Bond who reappears from the previous films. M, superior to Bond, represents "values such as Duty, Country, and Measure;"¹⁹ her presence validates the film as Bondian as much as Bond's own does, and her unchangeable presence supplants the gap between Craig's Bond and those who came before. Ultimately, "it is M who endows Bond with phallic authority: the difference here is that the pistol with its huge silencer ('I love you too, M') is a gift from a woman."²⁰ Neither her marital status nor her age are probable hindrances to a pursuit of her by Bond: her ultimate position of control, however, is. This control is denied to Bond's girls, but is a key element in the narratives I discuss in this thesis.

If the novels' spy girls cleared the way for television's female spies, that is certainly not the only place at which Bond and my field of interest intersect. This is not a work about Bond, however, so I wish to leave him to the sidelines as much as possible while still acknowledging the influence he has on other texts and particularly on the culture within which they are produced. Works such as James Chapman's *License to Thrill* and Christoph Lindner's edited collection *The James Bond Phenomenon: A Critical Reader*

¹⁵ Paul Stock, "Dial 'M' for metonym: Universal Exports, M's office space and empire," in *The James Bond Phenomenon: A Critical Reader*, ed. Christoph Lindner (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 224.

¹⁶ Ian Fleming, *Moonraker* (London: Coronet Books, 1989), 10.

¹⁷ *GoldenEye*, directed by Martin Campbell, (1995; London, UK: MGM, 2003), DVD.

¹⁸ *Casino Royale*, directed by Martin Campbell, (2006; London, UK: Sony Pictures Home Entertainment, 2007), DVD.

¹⁹ Umberto Eco, "Narrative Structures in Fleming," in *The James Bond Phenomenon: A Critical Reader*, ed. Christoph Lindner (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 37.

²⁰ Chapman, *License to Thrill*, 248.

provide excellent and thorough analyses of Bond as a cultural phenomenon and of his excursions. The spies with whom I am concerned are not Bond Girls in any sense of the words, however: to judge them only on Bondian merits does them a disservice and ignores the influence *they* have had on later Bond. Bond, then, is a classic, a paradigm. The women that follow pay him homage in their own ways, then go on to expand their genre until the original Bond would never recognize it.

Narrowing the Honeytrap

I have chosen to concentrate on television as a medium in order to provide a framework for what would otherwise be an unwieldy project. Television's position as both a moral authority within the home and a medium through which politics are brought to the Western audience makes it an excellent window onto cultural viewpoints. From its inception, television has been intended as a tool to shape its audience, a reflection of and even replacement for the 'real world,' the reality of which was meant to "bind public and private spheres"²¹ and "level class and ethnic divisions in order to produce a homogenous public for national advertising."²² Television was effectively a corporate invention, initially responsive to corporate desires as a blunt instrument with which to shape the viewing public. Ever since the beginning of the genre, then, we the audience have been conditioned into responding to television in a certain fashion. Television was conceived to be a new authority in the home, a replacement for experience and an integration of corporate interests into the everyday. For television viewers, the line between lived reality and televised reality has always, deliberately, been blurred.

Much early television was filmed live, a conceit that was rare in the pre-recorded world of the cinema to which viewers were used and so served to reinforce the immediacy and reality of television.²³ This interplay between televised reality and audience reality was further developed by the advertising agencies and the ways in which sponsorships and shows were intertwined. The system that operates today, whereby commercials are separate from the shows during which they air (with the possible exception of product placement) was not yet in use. Instead, advertising was effectively part of the show: sponsors' messages were routinely delivered by star actors, still in character, with no clear

²¹ Lynn Spigel, *Make Room for TV: Television and the Family Ideal in Post-War America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 9.

²² *Ibid.*, 6.

²³ John Ellis, *Seeing Things: Television in the Age of Uncertainty* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2000), 31.

delineation between the message and the scripted show. The interplay between fantasy and reality was further blurred by the hugely popular 'family' sitcom genre, including the well-known representative *I Love Lucy* (CBS, 1951-1957). Such shows were meant to emulate real life, and arguably to allow the viewer to experience such a life vicariously, but were also marketed so that fans of the show could themselves shape their real lives to emulate the show. In the case of *Lucy and Ricky* – already complicated by the layers of meaning imparted by the show's reflection of Lucille and Desi – viewers were given the option to outfit their own bedrooms in the style of Lucy's, right down to the pajamas.²⁴ By making it possible for the audience to reclaim the televisual reality as their own, such merchandising concepts enabled television to enter the home as more than merely an appliance, cementing its influence in everyday life.

The position of television within the home has only become more concrete as it has developed, time and familiarity increasing its importance. Lynn Spigel describes the early presentation of television as the new household patriarch, placing it initially in a very specific position of authority.²⁵ The term 'patriarch' carries with it particular connotations, suggesting that television took charge of the moral lessoning in a household, replacing the dominion that the father would previously have exercised. It also emphasizes the growing position television has taken as teacher, a role to which it is ill-suited but at which it is surprisingly effective given its non-literate position. 'Non-literate' in this context should not be misunderstood to mean uninformed or unintellectual, however; rather, television "has inherited an oral tradition of teaching, using song, story, sight, and talk rather than 'book-learning.'"²⁶ It has developed the authority, or a simulation thereof, both to speak and to compel viewers to listen.

More and more, audiences turn to television to order their lives. A position of moral authority, a position of intellectual authority: despite its detractors, the 'idiot box' has always done quite well for itself. Moreover, television has developed into a regulatory device, a new kind of clock-time by which audiences can organize our days, making our experience of time inseparable from our experience of media events.²⁷ In all of this, then, there is a common thread, of everyday viewers both using television and allowing it to use them, shaping their days by it and letting it shape their beliefs. This bleed between the

²⁴ Lori Landay, "Millions 'Love Lucy': Commodification and the Lucy Phenomena," in *NWSA Journal* 11, no.2 (Summer, 1999), 27.

²⁵ Spigel, *Make Room for TV*, 60.

²⁶ John Hartley, *Uses of Television* (London: Routledge, 1999), 44.

²⁷ Andrew Hoskins and Ben O'Loughlin, *Television and Terror: Conflicting Times and the Crisis of News Discourse* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), 17.

everyday and the mediated experiences which television provides increases the ease with which television's version of events can become the 'official' version in the collective mind of the audience. Hoskins and O'Loughlin characterize the evolution in acceptance of media presentation as such: "What happens on-screen is inseparable from off-screen events, but more and more, it is the case that off-screen events become inseparable from media representations of those events."²⁸ Audiences experience real events through their media representations, such as news broadcasts: no surprise, given the penetration of news reporting into the television schedule – and thus the audience's everyday life – through breaking news bulletins, scrolling headline tickers, and so on. These methods are often the only exposure to large-scale events that much of the population has. The inability to distinguish between the news coverage, or the documentary, or even the historical documentary, and the real occurrence, suggests a degree of interconnectivity between television and real life that does not allow the audience to expand their horizons: rather, it limits the extent of their knowledge to that which the television programmers wish them to know, while simultaneously assuring them that they are in touch with current events and that their knowledge is accurate. This television-driven knowledge base thus informs the audience's view on and reaction to the world they experience outside their homes.

Television's authoritative presence is not restricted to commentary on current events: in fact, historical television is an extremely popular genre. Like with news broadcasts, many viewers have difficulty detaching the televised representation of historical events from the reality, regardless of whether or not they know the televised version to be fictional.²⁹ Audiences learn history from their television experiences, and television experience can in fact carry more weight with dedicated viewers than actual experience; television is capable of altering an audience's perceptions of their everyday world. Television changes us, and it would be naïve to assume that programmers are unaware of this phenomenon. Televised fiction provides touchstones that help audiences to clarify the fight between good and evil, right and wrong, without necessarily carrying the same assumptions of morality that 'real' media associate with those categories.³⁰ Fictional shows can claim a distance from the truth that allows audiences to avoid feeling as though

²⁸ Ibid, 5.

²⁹ Lynn Spigel, "From the Dark Ages to the Golden Age: Women's Memories and Television Reruns," *Screen* 36, no.1 (1995).

³⁰ Stephen Hess and Marvin Kalb, *The Media and the War on Terrorism* (Washington: Brookings Institution, 2003), 217.

they are being preached at or judged while simultaneously ensuring the further emphasis of the same values that non-fiction provides. Whether this claim is authentic is certainly not a given, however: fiction is responsive to the era that shapes it, to the needs of that time for the productive force that television can be. Jane Stokes describes the production of cultural identity through television:

there is a small subset of technologies that generate artifacts that have value only because they generate meanings; these become conduits of cultural ideas. All of the mass media can be accommodated into this category; each produces artifacts that are marketed for the meanings they create.³¹

These meanings are particularly important in that within the espionage genre, television both reflects and influences contemporary conceptions of politics.³² This analysis begins in the Sixties, when "television became a potent cultural force exceeding the reach of every previous mass medium and establishing itself as the central cultural technology,"³³ and its impact on real-life politics was just becoming apparent; it runs through to the early years of the new millennium, when the sensationalism of television news makes dissociating entertainment from information increasingly complicated. The programmes I have chosen reflect the medium's entanglement with social concerns and cultural formations.

Many critics have explored the question of representation on television, and most particularly the multiply-layered question of audience response, with much more depth than I am capable of within the remit of this thesis. Gary Edgerton claims that television is now "the primary way that children and adults form their understanding of the past,"³⁴ but television itself has no sense of past; it is inescapably a medium of the present and serves to "amplify the present sense of immediacy out of proportion."³⁵ Its inevitable concentration on the present focuses its gaze "only on those people, events, and issues that are most relevant to [television programmes] and their target audiences."³⁶ It can therefore be seen not only to form understandings of the past, but to mediate

³¹ Jane Stokes, *On Screen Rivals: Cinema and Television in the United States and Britain* (London: Macmillan, 1999) 2.

³² Jennifer J. Hora, "The President as Hero: Don't Blame Me, I Voted for Bartlet," in *Homer Simpson Goes to Washington: American Politics Through Popular Culture*, ed. Joseph J. Foy (Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 2008), 92.

³³ Stokes, *On Screen Rivals*, 36.

³⁴ Gary R. Edgerton, "TV as Historian: A Different Kind of History," in *Television Histories: Shaping Collective Memory in the Media Age*, eds. Gary R. Edgerton and Peter C. Rollins, (Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 2001), 1.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

understandings of the present. The use of television creates not merely "usable pasts"³⁷ but a current collective cultural memory, which is "produced and must be understood in relation to an array of cultural and ideological forces."³⁸ The shows I consider navigate the popular and political histories of their eras, depending on memories and experiences that would be formative elements of their contemporaneous audiences. They build on a collective political memory and enhance it, using audience understandings and experiences of their era's politics to help them constitute themselves as an imagined community. They move from what John Hartley would call 'cultural' citizenship – predicated on inclusion in a visible identity group – to 'do-it-yourself' citizenship dependant on individual alignment with created groups that are more cognizant of differences within themselves.³⁹ These groups include multiple mediated identities; I am interested in how nation becomes a 'DIY' category, how those identities are managed, and how questions like those raised by David Morely, whose consideration of the constructed national family asks "who feels included in or excluded from symbolic membership of the nation, and how they participate in the idea of the nation as represented in its mediated culture,"⁴⁰ are reflected in the representation of the female spy.

This is not to say that concepts of audience or of reception can be considered so simply. I maintain Ang's view that the 'audience' as such is "not an ontological given, but a socially-constructed and institutionally-produced category"⁴¹ that is constituted by the very medium to which it gives legitimacy. The term 'television audience,' then, "refers first of all to a structural position in a network of institutionalized communicative relationships: a position located at the receiving end of a chain of practices of production and transmission,"⁴² meaning that it is a sliding identification with no firm membership. Given the multiple eras I consider in this work, audience is even further removed from a monolithic identity. Nevertheless, all members of the category are constituted by their engagement with watching television, an act that is itself "ill-defined shorthand for the multiplicity of situated practices and experiences in which television audiencehood is

³⁷ Ibid, 4.

³⁸ Steve Anderson, "History TV and Popular Memory," in *Television Histories: Shaping Collective Memory in the Media Age*, eds. Gary R. Edgerton and Peter C. Rollins, (Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 2001), 21.

³⁹ John Hartley, "Democratainment," in *The Television Studies Reader*, eds. Robert C. Allen and Annette Hill (London: Routledge, 2004), 524.

⁴⁰ David Morely, "Broadcasting and the Construction of the National Family," in *The Television Studies Reader*, eds. Robert C. Allen and Annette Hill (London: Routledge, 2004), 418.

⁴¹ Ien Ang, *Desperately Seeking the Audience* (London: Routledge, 1991), 3.

⁴² Ibid.

embedded."⁴³ As a result, 'audience' is defined by "television as a bearer and provoker of meanings and pleasures" within a culture that functions as "the generation and circulation of this variety of meanings and pleasures within society," creating "social dynamics by which the social structure maintains itself in a constant process of production and reproduction."⁴⁴ I do not, therefore, attempt to define how this multifarious audience does react to the representations of the female spy in the programmes I explore; rather I ask what representations appear and what reactions they attempt to prompt.

I do not wish to suggest a strict equivalence between television and national politics any more than I wish to portray an attentive audience passively receiving media messages. Nevertheless, I argue that within the shows I examine and the representations of the female spy they provide lie formative elements of the 'audience's' national identity. Television is engaged in what Marita Sturken would call a relationship of mutual determination, or "entangledness,"⁴⁵ with the flow of cultural memory and the creation of cultural identity.⁴⁶ The term 'television representation' already "conjoins up notions of one thing standing in for another,"⁴⁷ and the female spy stands as a representation for a discourse on national and familial identity and gender. Lynn Spigel points out that many feminist critics⁴⁸ have "explored the way television reinforces patriarchy while also providing women... with pleasurable ways to fantasize against the grain of patriarchy."⁴⁹ The espionage genre is one that television critics, feminist and otherwise, have not engaged with to any great depth, but similar work done on the crime drama emphasizes the importance of not directly equating television representation with the 'real world.' The characters I explore are formed through the interventions of multiple elements, including "the TV network, the production company and production team, the television audience, the press, and various interest and pressure groups."⁵⁰ I cannot hope to analyze the

⁴³ Ibid, 165.

⁴⁵ Marita Sturken, *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 5.

⁴⁶ Anderson, "History TV and Popular Memory," 21.

⁴⁷ Julie D'Acci, "Television, Representation, and Gender," in *The Television Studies Reader*, eds. Robert C. Allen and Annette Hill (London: Routledge, 2004), 374.

⁴⁸ Including but not limited to Spigel herself, Ien Ang, Christine Geraghty, Julie D'Acci, Charlotte Brunsdon, Angela McRobbie, etc. For a more complete list see Brunsdon, D'Acci, and Spigel, *Feminist Television Criticism: A Reader* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997).

⁴⁹ Lynn Spigel, "Introduction," in *Television After TV: Essays on a Medium in Transition*, eds. Lynn Spigel and Jan Olsson (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 9.

⁵⁰ Julie D'Acci, "Women Characters and 'Real World' Femininity," in *Television: The Critical View*, ed. Horace Newcomb (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 100.

varying impacts had by all of these layers of meaning, but rather attempt to consider them as part of the cultural forces hoping to make an impression on audiences.

I am most interested in the decoding rather than the encoding⁵¹ of the female spy as "negotiations of meanings of *woman*, *women*, and *femininity*"⁵² that take place among the morass of interests and conflicts that characterize the programmes I study, yet I remain aware that the meanings present operate on multiple axes. I attempt to consider what D'Acci calls the four spheres of the circuit of media studies – "production, cultural artifact, reception, and sociohistorical context"⁵³ – though I am aware that my analysis of reception particularly is incomplete. I also endeavour to keep in mind D'Acci's discovery during her feminist analyses of television crime drama that "many of the network's interventions were especially aimed at containing those aspects of the [women's] characterizations that challenged not only conventional definitions of femininity but also institutionalized differences among women."⁵⁴ Given the politicization of the spy drama and its close relationship with crime drama, I believe these machinations are likely to be key in the attempts made by the programmes I study to build "female characters who can plausibly do, as well as be done to and looked at."⁵⁵ I explore how these influences create characters with aspects that include or exclude them from the citizenships and identities being celebrated on television; these containments play out with particular aptness through the figure of the housewife.

Despite the appeal of those identities, the female spies I study, like other female fictional characters,

cannot be conceptualized as realistic images of women, but as textual constructions of possible modes of *femininity*: as embodying versions of gendered subjectivity endowed with specific forms of psychical and emotional satisfaction and dissatisfaction, and specific ways of dealing with conflicts and dilemmas. ...they do not function as role models but are symbolic realizations of feminine subject positions with which viewers can identify *in fantasy*. (italics in original)⁵⁶

⁵¹ Stuart Hall, *Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse* (Birmingham: Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, 1973).

⁵² D'Acci, "Women Characters," 134.

⁵³ Julie D'Acci, "Cultural Studies, Television Studies, and the Crisis in the Humanities," in *Television After TV: Essays on a Medium in Transition*, eds. Lynn Spigel and Jan Olsson (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 432.

⁵⁴ D'Acci, "Women Characters," 134.

⁵⁵ Charlotte Brunsdon, *Screen Tastes: Soap Opera to Satellite Dishes* (London: Routledge, 1997), 61.

⁵⁶ Ien Ang, "Melodramatic Identifications: Television Fiction and Women's Fantasy," in *Feminist Television Criticism: A Reader*, eds. Charlotte Brunsdon et al (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 162.

Whether the female spy can be a site for female identification in the same way that Ang's soap opera is beyond the scope of my analysis, but the "versions of gendered subjectivity" she presents in her multiple incarnations since 1965 answer questions about the creation and promotion of national identities within the political narratives of the shows I consider. The development of the female spy and her importance to her nation cannot be understood without simultaneously considering the changes brought about by the feminist movement to both the position of women within – largely Western – culture and the representation of women on television. Because of the scope of this project, the spies I examine span multiple female and feminist identities, from the early empowerment of the 60s, the T&A of the 70s,⁵⁷ and the Regan-era backlash of the 80s⁵⁸ to the questionable (post)feminism of Girl Power/grrlpower⁵⁹ in the 90s and 00s. The women on whom I focus do not map perfectly to the achievements of the feminist movements either on screen or off. I thus explore to what extent the female spy can be seen as reactive to the feminisms of her era.

I am specifically interested in analyzing the identity of the housewife as it relates to the female spy. Since the 1963 publication of Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*, arguably the launching point for second-wave feminism, the housewife has largely been positioned as the feminist's other.⁶⁰ She is seen as a trap of traditionalism, a rejection of the steps towards equality for which feminists have fought; some postfeminisms seek to reclaim her as an empowered choice,⁶¹ while others see the push for women to 'have it all' as yet another unrealistic expectation imposed by a heteronormative patriarchy. I was thus fascinated to discover, throughout my analysis of a figure I assumed to be feminist (if complicatedly), that the housewife and the honeytrap are almost inextricable. I believe the figure of the housewife, as deployed as the alter ego of almost all the female spies I study in this thesis, is used as a way both to confine the female spy and to legitimize her power. The relationship between the domestic and the political in these shows troubles me: it

⁵⁷ See Susan Faludi, *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 1991).

⁵⁸ Stacy Gillis and Joanne Hollows, "Introduction," in *Feminism, Domesticity, and Popular Culture*, eds. Stacy Gillis and Joanne Hollows (New York: Routledge, 2009), 2.

⁵⁹ Sue Jackson and Elizabeth Westrupp, "Sex, Popular Culture and the Pre-Teen Girl," in *Sexualities* 13.3 (2010, 357-376), 360.

⁶⁰ Angela McRobbie, "Post-feminism and popular culture," in *Feminist Media Studies* 4.3 (2004, 255-264), 256.

⁶¹ See Charlotte Brunsdon, "Pedagogies of the Feminine: Feminist teaching and women's genres" (1991) for a deeper analysis of second-wave feminism's use of the duality between housewife and feminist and Rachel Moseley and Jacinda Read, "Having it *All*y" (2002) for an exploration of one way that postfeminist media reclaims traditional femininity and housewifeliness in particular.

uses the empowerment of the female spy as a way to reinscribe traditional gender roles into the espionage genre.

The espionage genre itself is perhaps the most inescapably political on television, tied as it inevitably is to the politics and ideas of its nation in the time of its conception. As such, it provides an ideal viewpoint on the cultural concepts with which it engages. Michael Denning calls spy narratives 'cover stories' for our culture; he places the genesis of the genre "at the beginning of the twentieth century in the imperialist stage of capitalism when the existence of rival imperialist states and a capitalist world system made it increasingly difficult to envision the totality of social relations as embodied in any single 'knowable community'" and gives its mission as the transformation of "an incomprehensible political situation (or a situation the knowledge of which is being repressed) into the ethical categories of masculine romance, the battle of hero and villain becoming one between Good and Evil, the forces of light and the forces of darkness."⁶² The masculinization of this mission is not incidental; the female spy is a figure normally hidden behind the shadow of the male, particularly that of Bond. Her identity, as the figure whose portrayal changes most within the genre over the years, provides a model of the adaptations that the idea of the spy undergoes. If television represents "the bringing together of textuality and citizenship,"⁶³ then the espionage genre must be particularly important to the mediation of a media citizenship that inevitably informs other citizenships.⁶⁴ Political dramas have a threefold effect on the presence of political issues in the popular consciousness:

they can *expose* issues that might otherwise be overlooked, they can *legitimize* issues and viewpoints that might otherwise be considered marginal or inappropriate, and they can *set agendas* for political discussion, forcing issues into a national dialogue that otherwise might not have taken place.⁶⁵

The position of the female spy brings forward issues surrounding not only her presence, but that of women in general, within politics and nation. In his study of the spy in film and

⁶² Michael Denning, *Cover Stories: Narrative and Ideology in the British Spy Thriller* (London: Routledge, 1987), 13-14.

⁶³ John Hartley, "From Republic of Letters to Television Republic? Citizen Readers in the Era of Broadcast Television," in *Television After TV: Essays on a Medium in Transition*, eds. Lynn Spigel and Jan Olsson (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 389.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 402.

⁶⁵ Timothy M. Dale, "The Case for Popular Culture as Public Sphere," in *Homer Simpson Marches on Washington: Dissent Through American Popular Culture*, eds. Timothy M. Dale and Joseph J. Foy (Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 2010), 29.

television from the 1930s to the 1960s, Toby Miller finds that, "[m]otivated by the desire for sexual and material power rather than patriotism, women are thought to prize the overthrow of men above the call of duty."⁶⁶ My analysis begins at the end of his time period and follows this image of the female spy through its developments in the latter half of the twentieth century. How her persona changes, but equally how it remains the same, reveals the interaction between gendered roles on television and questions of politicized feminist identity.

Even having narrowed my remit to include only televised versions of the female spy narrative leaves far too large a field for consideration within a single thesis. I have therefore chosen shows that fit within a specific set of requirements. The first criterion I applied was time period. I began with 1965 because it marks a turning point for televised images of the female spy, responding both to the tensions of the Cold War and the advent of the burgeoning feminist movement. I finish in 2011 in order to bring the analysis to a near-contemporary point that is also a decade past the events of 9/11; this temporal distance allows the political and cultural ramifications of those events to reach equilibrium. Having defined a time period, I have thus chosen shows that provide windows into multiple eras within that span of time, ensuring it is possible to determine if, and if so how, the representations each show provides progress. I have deliberately sought shows produced in multiple Western cultures – ultimately British, American, and Canadian – in order to discern whether country of origin has an effect on the narrative.

From within the pool thus decided, I have chosen shows where the female spy is written to be equal to or more capable than her male counterparts. I have also discarded shows where the female spy's gender was deemed irrelevant to the creative process or where she filled a role written for a man: while these representations may be progressive and worthy of study in their own way, they would skew my data. Similarly, I focus only on shows whose original runs lasted at least three seasons, in order to ensure I have a basis on which to assess character development. I have also applied a final criterion that is simultaneously somewhat vague and yet ultimately extremely useful: I have chosen shows that were memorable and had an impact on the era in which they aired. This impact is not necessarily quantifiable; it cannot be reduced to critical acclaim or viewing figures. Nevertheless, each of the shows I examine in this thesis successfully harnessed and rode the zeitgeist of its age and thus became a definitive part of it.

⁶⁶ Toby Miller, *Spyscreen: Espionage on Film and TV from the 1930s to the 1960s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 155.

My first chapter, "Killer Fashions," considers two shows that aired in the Sixties; I use them to mark the point at which the female spy developed into a fully-formed character rather than a stereotype. I begin with the Emma Peel era of *The Avengers* (ITV/ABC/Thames, 1961-1969); though this is arguably a subset of a larger show, it is the definitive subset and is considered discrete from what came before and what follows. The Peel era debuted in the same year as *Get Smart* (NBC/CBS, 1965-1970) in America. I analyze these two shows together as a result of their cross-generic properties: both break from the traditional hyperrealism of the spy genre in order to question its import through comedy and science fiction. Despite the timing and the humorous elements, both shows nevertheless introduce the tension between the growing influence of the female spy and her apparent division of loyalty between family and nation.

Chapter Two, "From Super-Woman to Super-Mom," explores what happens when the spy genre allows women to simultaneously inhabit roles in both private and public spheres. *Wonder Woman* (ABC/CBS, 1975-1979), airing near the end of the Vietnam War, reflects a desire to bolster American patriotism with superheroic support, while *Scarecrow and Mrs. King* (CBS, 1983-1987) comes from the last decade of the Cold War and attempts to emphasize the importance of traditional femininity and motherhood to America's anti-Communist way of life. These programmes demonstrate that the female spy may have extracurricular interests or abilities as long as they can somehow be made to benefit her nation.

"America's Identity Crisis," my third chapter, examines two shows in which the female spy enters the world of corporate business. *La Femme Nikita* (CTV/USA, 1997-2001) presents a female spy who is untethered from the requirements of a national identity, a move possible only because a Canadian company heads the production. In contrast, *Alias* (ABC, 2001-2006) tells a story, contemporary to 9/11, about a female spy whose very identity is reaffirmed by her patriotism. Despite these differences, both shows suggest that only a full understanding of family identity makes possible a comprehension of national alignment.

The final body chapter, "It's a Man's World?," breaks slightly from my proscribed criteria in analyzing two shows whose protagonists are male; they are, however, reflective of their era and thus allow me to ask why the strength of the female spy was so rapidly erased following 9/11. *24* (FOX, 2001-2010) replaces her with a cowboy for a new millennium, while *Spooks* (BBC One, 2002-2011) relies on a paternalistic power structure to keep her in line. Though there are women in both series, they are diminished; not only

is there a tension between the familial and national loyalty within the person of the female spy, but she also threatens to create that tension for the male spy.

In order to understand the state of the espionage genre ten years on from 9/11, the conclusion touches on two shows that debuted in 2010, both with strong connections to previous iterations of the female spy. It spins off from these shows to explain the use of the female spy on the Western television landscape and to understand how that landscape shapes and is shaped by her presence. I conclude that the portrayal of the female spy inevitably reflects concerns about the role of the traditional family as a patriotic image.

All of the shows I explore in this thesis, regardless of period, nationality, or the gender of their protagonist, demonstrate the unease that surrounds the intersection of national identity and family identity. These issues arise as a result of multiple types of familial interactions, including parental relationships, sibling relationships, and marital relationships. Within all of these categories, women are presented as a threat to national cohesion. A closer analysis of the figure of the female spy suggests that her representation on television is neither as progressive nor as influenced by the feminist movement as one might hope. Rather, the espionage genre particularly appears to be reinscribing into Western culture the importance of traditional gender roles. In this thesis, I examine how the female spy develops alongside the feminist movement, why the spy's relationship to national identity is important, and how the housewife's presence challenges the liberation of the spy figure.

Chapter One: Killer Fashions

It is unsurprising that the first two television shows that demonstrate the equality of the female spy are comedic, parodic, or downright fantastic in aspect. While many of the shows of the late Fifties and early Sixties leavened the seriousness of spying with the occasional comedic moment, *The Avengers* and *Get Smart* differentiate themselves sharply from their generic antecedents by treating the topic of espionage with a consistently light touch; audiences in the UK and the US, eager to reduce the near-miss of the Bay of Pigs incident to a manageable concept, embraced the mockery of the spy tactics that endangered them. While David Brixton contends that series with pop sensibilities typically contain "a controlled ideological strategy for poking fun at selected topics of the establishment old guard,"⁶⁷ combining them with the political alignment of the spy genre creates both a commentary on the trappings of the genre and a reassuring message that the situation is not so bad that it cannot be made light of. The distance of humour allows creators to introduce the potentially ridiculous idea of competent female spies without fear of backlash.

The elements of humour and the inclusion of the emerging mod sense of style and fashion enable the female spy to achieve a strength of her own, one that is withheld from the male spies of the series. Both *The Avengers'* Emma Peel (Diana Rigg) and *Get Smart's* Agent 99 (Barbara Feldon) challenge the alignment of the female spy into a Bondian sex/gender hierarchy that borrows from the code of pornography.⁶⁸ Where Bond demonstrates not just a 'license to kill' but also a 'license to look,' part of his identity rooted in his objectification of the female spy,⁶⁹ Emma and 99 take control of their appearance and use it as a weapon. Though the audience are still invited to look at the female spies with sexualized and consumerist gazes, the looks shared between the onscreen male and female spies differ greatly from those seen in Bond and in earlier television programmes. Equality is beginning to emerge: the female spy is occasionally allowed to look back.

Previous incarnations of the spy show had of course included women in their casts, but primarily in subordinate roles, yet the impact of 1965's two egalitarian female agents

⁶⁷ David Brixton, *From the Avengers to Miami Vice: Form and Ideology in Television Series* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), 97.

⁶⁸ Denning, *Cover Stories*, 102.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

on popular consciousness demonstrates the readiness for change present in the audience. This is particularly evident in the evolution of *The Avengers* to the 'Emma Peel Era.' Where the show had previously been a traditional spy drama, it underwent a transition to its famous 'spy-fi' self with Emma's introduction. The series moved from successful to wildly popular in part due to Rigg's casting. Similarly, the presence of 99 in *Get Smart* disrupted the typical buddy dynamic common to crime programmes and allowed it to achieve popularity. While 99 was a more progressive figure – a fellow agent to Emma's talented amateur, equal rather than subordinate – the two demonstrate the beginning of a sea-change in the political thinking of the popular audience.

Despite the light-hearted nature of the shows, however, both narratives also deal with the tension between equal rights and family responsibilities that dominated political discussions of the era. Following the 1963 release of Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*, the housewife was being deployed as the other by what was then known as the 'women's movement.' The women who would become second wave feminists believed that the only solution to the problems Friedan identified was for women to abandon the "comfortable concentration camp" of "house-husband-children"⁷⁰ and understand that the domestic "would never bring them any real fulfillment."⁷¹ Yet the housewife was immediately deployed to conclude and contain the narratives of both breakout female spies. Neither Emma Peel nor 99 begin as housewives, but both end as such in ways that are damaging to their careers. These acts of containment are not surprising, as even the most advanced of mainstream media typically work to reduce female power within their bounds.⁷² I maintain, however, that the figure of the housewife is used as a deliberate decoy to reduce the impact of the female spy. The spy's true danger lies in her ability to influence the domestic and the political spheres at the same time; the housewife keeps her from doing so.

⁷⁰ Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965), 245.

⁷¹ Gillis and Hollows, "Introduction," 6.

⁷² For an excellent analysis of this containment in action from the 60s through the 90s, see Andrea Press, "Gender and Family in Television's Golden Age and Beyond," 2009.

*A drink on a clear moonlit night
 I relax, she smiles
 There's something peculiar going on
 Now, she can't be working for them – I mean us
 She seems so very straightforward [...]
 Well, at least she's a good-looking spy*⁷³

New Traditions: *The Avengers*

Given the debut of *The Avengers* in 1961 and the distinct eras it goes through with each of Steed's partners, it is easy to see within the series the progression towards "enjoyment and away from the kind of hardship that had previously provided solidarity to working-class experience and sharpness to its politics" that typified British culture at the time.⁷⁴ From the gritty *noir*-ish detective drama of the show's beginnings to the riotous mod sensibilities it displays following Diana Rigg's debut, the series captures a turning point in British television. John Corner defines this change, which he pegs as beginning in the leadup to the 1964 return of the Labour Party to government, "economically by a rise in the general standard of living, politically by themes of modernism and technology moving to the fore, and culturally by shifts in the concept of individual identity and community."⁷⁵ All of these changes contributed to the rise of *The Avengers* as a lighter-hearted entity: the economic upswing made it possible to position Steed and Emma as members of the upper classes, even the aristocracy, without incurring grumblings about their frivolity. Similarly, the growing acceptance of modernism and technology made the move towards science fiction possible even while the show clung to the mod ethos of reality. Despite the unabashed silliness of the series, it was still taking place in an era where the British broadcasting culture was "based around a State-influenced BBC/ITV duopoly that, even after the advent of commercial television in 1955, still operated with a Reithian public service ethos of social purpose and moral responsibility."⁷⁶ *The Avengers* fulfilled that role by providing political commentary and reasserting a sense of Empire, as well as by normalizing a feminist movement that, while slower to develop in Britain than in America,

⁷³ Josh Groban, vocal performance of "Mountain Duet," by Benny Andersson, Björn Ulvåus, and Tim Rice, recorded 13 May 2008 on *Chess in Concert*, Warner Bros. Records, CD.

⁷⁴ David E. Morrison, "Cultural and Moral Authority: The Presumption of Television," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 625 (Sept. 2009, 116-127), 122.

⁷⁵ John Corner, "Television and British Society in the 1950s," in *Popular Television in Britain: Studies in Cultural History* (London: BFI, 1991, 1-21), 1-2.

⁷⁶ Bruce Carson and Margaret Llewellyn-Jones, "Issues of Cultural Identity," in *Frames and Fictions on Television: The politics of identity within drama*, eds. Bruce Carson and Margaret Llewellyn Jones (Exeter: Intellect, 2000, 1-16), 2.

was nevertheless beginning to take hold, foregrounded in British television by "casting decisions and frequent disputes on gender labeling depicted in the scripts."⁷⁷

Despite having been designed to hold maximum "man appeal,"⁷⁸ Emma Peel has developed a strong reputation as an early feminist icon,⁷⁹ in England as well as America,⁸⁰ and "the harbinger of every female action hero to come."⁸¹ Upheld as a role model for fictional and non-fictional female spies alike, she has been lauded for her independence, her mental acuity, her physical prowess, and her ability to trade witty barbs with John Steed. In many ways, her character demonstrates a natural progression for the show from Steed's previous partner, Dr Cathy Gale (Honor Blackman), the initiator of the leather catsuit for which Emma ironically became so popular.⁸² Like Cathy, Emma is extremely bright and a talented martial artist. But though Cathy was recognizably a strong woman in her own right, she was seen as less than equal to Steed and often revolted against what she perceived as his callous use of her on assignments.⁸³ Blackman was cast to replace Steed's initial male partner, Dr David Keel (Ian Hendry) and her first episodes were written with him in mind. Blackman's presence in "scripts that were already written proved to be revelational.... However, the moment the writers knew they were writing for a woman, the scripts became soft and flaccid."⁸⁴ Emma, at least at first glance, is more self-contained and successful, with Steed or on her own. Rigg, thirteen years younger than Blackman, brings youth, modernity, and, paradoxically, pedigree to the role of Steed's better half.

Emma is shown to equal or better Steed on several occasions at several different pursuits. In terms of intelligence she seems to be Steed's superior: in episode 4.06, "The Master Minds," she effortlessly passes an intelligence test under his name in order to ensure he can qualify for a 'mastermind' club and infiltrate it discreetly. When Steed must subsequently sit another test himself, he is incapable of completing it until Emma sneaks him the answers. She is knowledgeable on a wide range of topics, with and without formal

⁷⁷ Joy Leman, "Wise Scientists and Female Androids: Class and Gender in Science Fiction," in *Popular Television in Britain: Studies in Cultural History*, ed. John Corner (London: BFI, 1991, 108-124), 114.

⁷⁸ Dave Rogers, *The Complete Avengers* (London: Bantam Books, 1989), 87.

⁷⁹ Thomas Andrae, "Television's First Feminist: *The Avengers* and Female Spectatorship," *Discourse: Theoretical Studies in Media and Culture* 18, no.3, 1996.

⁸⁰ Jeffrey S. Miller, *Something Completely Different: British Television and American Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 51.

⁸¹ Gladys L. Knight, *Female Action Heroes: A Guide to Women in Comics, Video Games, Film, and Television* (Santa Barbara: Greenwood, 2010), 110.

⁸² Where Cathy wore leather, Emma eventually favoured tight fabric jumpsuits that became known as "Emmapeelers."

⁸³ Andrew Pixley, *The Avengers Files* (London: Reynolds & Hearn, 2007), 118.

⁸⁴ Paul Cornell, Martin Day, and Keith Topping, *The Avengers Dossier: The definitive unauthorized guide* (London: Virgin books, 1998), 45.

certification. Her skill as a chemist is integral to solving several cases. Episode 5.15, "The Joker," reveals that she has published articles in scholarly journals, while in episode 7.01, "The Forget-Me-Knot," the possibility that she is nationally renowned for her anthropological theories succeeds as a ruse to convince her to accompany Steed to the Ministry. She "knows everything about those areas where Steed knows nothing,"⁸⁵ the breadth of her knowledge and interests marks Emma as a true Renaissance woman and an equal partner to Steed.

Emma is also shown to excel in traditionally masculine pursuits. In episode 4.23, "The House that Jack Built," we learn that Emma – then Miss Emma Knight – inherited control of Knight Industries, her father's company, when she was only twenty-one. Despite her youth and her gender, she ran it "more efficiently" than her father,⁸⁶ inverting the expectation that a successful businessman would be succeeded by his son. Her skill at self-defense is also explicitly compared to the masculine in episode 4.03, "The Cybernauts," when she defeats a female karate expert because, in the words of the sensei, Emma "fights like a man."⁸⁷ She certainly fights better than many men throughout the series: she is able to withstand solo assaults and group attacks, disarming armed opponents and disabling unarmed ones. She and Steed seem evenly matched, as each is occasionally able to overpower the other, though Russian files that characterize Steed as "handle with care" warn "do not handle at all" of Emma.⁸⁸ While Steed rescues Emma more often than Emma rescues Steed,

Emma Peel, when tied up, does not acknowledge her bonds in the slightest, wearing them as one would wear a fashion accessory. She is not worried, nor is she relieved when Steed rescues her. This results in three things. One: she is not seen to be the subject of male power (the villains doing the tying are almost always men) or male fantasy (the male viewers are denied the emotional responses required for bondage fantasies). Two: despite actually being rescued by Steed, she gives the impression that she could simply step out of the ropes at any point, denying the hero the power of being the rescuer. Three: she gives the programme

⁸⁵ Cornell et al, *The Avengers Dossier*, 128.

⁸⁶ "The House that Jack Built," *The Avengers*, directed by Don Leaver (1966; London, England: ABC Weekend Television, 2001), DVD.

⁸⁷ "The Cybernauts," *The Avengers*, directed by Sidney Hayers (1965; London, England: ABC Weekend Television, 2001), DVD.

⁸⁸ "The Correct Way to Kill," *The Avengers*, directed by Charles Crichton (1967; London, England: ABC Weekend Television, 2001), DVD.

a postmodern sheen of self-awareness by indicating very obviously that she is in no real predicament, that she knows this is all a game.⁸⁹

Steed, when he needs rescue, is more likely to be in a life-threatening situation, rather than merely inconvenienced as Emma seems often to be.

Despite her lack of formal training, Emma is as calm, collected, and competent a secret agent as Steed – more so, perhaps, as she is even compared favourably to that quintessential British spy, James Bond; in episode 5.01, "From Venus with Love," she encounters, and escapes from, a laser death trap that deliberately parallels the one in which Bond is captured in *Goldfinger* (Guy Hamilton, 1964). From the tips of her stylishly curled hair to the toes of her fashionable shoes, Emma Peel certainly seems the portrait of an independent, modern woman whose iconic stature is well-earned. Yet her identity suggests the two female archetypes identified by Joy Leman as regularly occurring in 1960s British science fiction television: the "wise scientist" and the "female android." Emma's intellectual pursuits present her "as the crucial link between the cold rationalism of science and the 'feminine' domain of emotional promptings, hunches and intuitive interpretations,"⁹⁰ as seen in the "wise scientist" archetype. Her intellect makes it 'okay' for her to be a woman because she has transcended that role. Similarly, despite being flesh and blood, she displays some hallmarks of the "female android," "an idealized, perfect [woman] of the 1960s, invincible in terms of intellect and by contemporary ethnocentric standards perfect in form."⁹¹ Emma is stiff-upper-lip stoic in almost all situations, save those when Steed takes the emotional burden from her, as I will discuss later. Her inhabitation of these archetypes, and her transcendence of them only in the presence of (benevolently patriarchal) men, troubles a reading of her as uncomplicatedly feminist.

In the four-plus decades since *The Avengers* aired, Emma's feminist reputation has become nigh-mythic, with Rigg herself stating that she continues to receive letters from fans citing her impact on their feminism⁹² and women praising her in magazines from *TV Guide* to *Teen* and *Mademoiselle*.⁹³ A closer look at the show itself, however, suggests that her portrayal was not quite so groundbreaking as it has since been made out to be. Certainly her accomplishments within the universe of the show are legion. Her mental and physical skills are unquestionably remarkable achievements, as the audience are often

⁸⁹ Paul Cornell, "S and Em," in *The Avengers Dossier: The definitive unauthorized guide*, ed Paul Cornell et al (London: Virgin Books, 1998), 345.

⁹⁰ Leman, "Wise Scientists and Female Androids," 113.

⁹¹ Ibid, 122.

⁹² Miller, *Something Completely Different*, 51.

⁹³ Ibid, 68.

informed, usually by Steed. Though her lack of spy training makes her abilities even more impressive, still Emma is only a "talented amateur" in service to "top professional" Steed.⁹⁴ Steed controls the cases. He receives instructions from his employers at the Ministry, decides how best to allocate his given resources, and only brings Emma in when he deems it necessary; often he assigns her a role in the investigation prior to consulting her. Steed determines whether or not Emma is aware of the details of their investigations and has on occasion deliberately chosen to misinform her in order to use her reactions to further the investigation. In "The Master Minds," he fakes an attack in order to assure a colleague that Emma is willing and able to come to his aid, going so far as to gamble on her actions. Similarly, in episode 4.12, "Two's a Crowd," Steed pretends to be his own doppelgänger in order to fool the Russians and fails to mention the fact to Emma, using her certainty that he has been replaced to convince the enemy. Steed holds the balance of power and Emma is forced reluctantly to accept "his insistence that her innocence of what was going on was her best protection."⁹⁵ He and Emma may be equal in their ability to combat threats to the nation, yet their partnership is decidedly uneven.

Nowhere is the inequality of power more evident than in the show's depiction of Steed's summoning Emma to join him on cases. Starting in season five – the second Emma Peel season – Steed requests Emma's assistance by conveying to her the message "Mrs Peel – we're needed."⁹⁶ He rarely does so directly, however, preferring instead to employ a variety of non-traditional methods, all of which infringe directly on Emma's privacy. The motif is meant to be amusing, and certainly Emma never displays anything worse than an amused tolerance of Steed's tricks, yet it raises serious questions about Steed's, and by extension the Ministry's, view of Emma. In order to plant the notifications, Steed must enter Emma's flat without her knowledge, follow her, even predict her movements and purchases. He marks one of her paintings, tampers with her mail, and even causes property damage to her flat. This casual disregard for Emma's personal boundaries diminishes her: she has no worth except for how she can assist Steed. The constant penetration of her home also serves as commentary on her refusal of a housewifely role. Miller reads the representation of her flat in "The Cybernauts" as a refusal of containment and domesticity, as "the one scene in which she is shown at home visually foregrounds the fact that she is there alone, engaged in a purely leisure activity:

⁹⁴ Rogers, *The Complete Avengers*, 93.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 87.

⁹⁶ "The Fear Merchants," *The Avengers*, directed by Gordon Flemyng (1967; London, England: ABC Weekend Television, 2001), DVD.

doing the crossword puzzle. Home, for Mrs. Peel, is not a place of day labour but a place of rest."⁹⁷ The most work we see Emma doing at home is fencing or painting, true, but even as the home is a place of leisure, it is it is a place of uncertainty. It can be invaded at any point by Steed with a summons, whether he has an invitation or not. As Emma has neither husband nor children, her home is of little importance. It is telling that the two episodes in which Emma is in serious danger – and which end with her hand in relieved hand with Steed – take place in houses, if not homes.

Emma has extraordinary skills, far beyond those of most women portrayed on television at the time. While those skills are celebrated, they also lead her into danger: she is punished for exceeding the roles assigned to her by society. Her role in managing Knight Industries, for instance, is not mentioned until "The House that Jack Built," which I discuss in more detail later in this chapter. Her success in business is noticed, but she nearly dies because of it: the titular 'house' turns out to be a personalized death trap built for her by a scientist whom she'd angered by dismissing him from his position at Knight Industries. Though she escapes, there is a direct correlation between her tenure as head of her own company and the threat to her life. Knight Industries is never mentioned again; what happens to the company, even whether she is still involved with it, is less important than the danger it poses to her. Similarly, in "The Joker," Emma's 'hobby' of publishing in academic journals endangers her, as jilted criminal lover Max Prendergast uses the pretext of her latest article as a pretext to lure her into a meeting with another expert in the field, only to make an attempt on her life. Emma survives, as in "The House that Jack Built," through her own skills and some assistance from her "knight in shining armour" Steed,⁹⁸ but those very skills were the cause of the trouble to begin with. Her extraordinary abilities put Emma in extraordinary danger.

Man Appeal

Emma's appearance was part of her identity before the role was even cast, in the producers' search for someone with 'man appeal.' She certainly presents visual appeal, particularly once the show transitions to colour and the full gamut of Sixties psychedelia appears in her wardrobe. The emphasis on her appearance is not as heavy as one might suspect, however; though it is a point of identification for the audience, with the 'Peel

⁹⁷ Miller, *Something Completely Different*, 65.

⁹⁸ "The House that Jack Built," *The Avengers*.

Collection' available for purchase in shops,⁹⁹ Emma's outfits are part of the scenery rather than functional weapons. Her clothes, as well as the fantastically mod furniture and décor in her flat, mark the rise in England of a more affluent consumer culture and a diversity of expression and display focused around objects of consumption."¹⁰⁰ Unlike *Get Smart*'s 99, her wardrobe is rarely integral to her job as an agent; she does not use lipstick radios or decoder earrings, and her revolver is a utilitarian black rather than a striking red. Her femininity is often remarked upon, but generally in a way that then allows her to reveal how impressively she transcends it. Her gender is not an impediment to her profession; indeed, on occasion it enables her access that Steed cannot achieve. Intriguingly, however, when she does become the target of gendered threats, they deal with her intellectual accomplishments as much as her gender presentation.

"The Joker" is reworked from episode 3.12, "Don't Look Behind You," starring Blackman as Cathy Gale. In Emma's case, the plot hinges on an article she publishes in the *Bridge Player's International Guide* entitled "Better Bridge with Applied Mathematics." This is one of several academic articles Emma has published, which range across disciplines as varied as psychoanalysis, thermodynamics, and medieval history.¹⁰¹ The latter article, and the reputation for intellectual acumen she has earned through her other work, provide a means by which she is lured into a trap. This parallels the Cathy Gale episode, save for the differing topics; where Emma's article is on bridge, Cathy's was on anthropology. The episodes are remarkably similar, with even dialogue reproduced in some cases, but what differences there are serve to highlight how the show has changed in its treatment of Steed's partners.

"The Joker" is framed in such a way as to emphasize Emma's independence and abilities while simultaneously denigrating them. The episode opens with Emma arriving at Steed's flat, where she intends to ask him to drive her to her assignation with the bridge-loving Sir Cavalier who, she believes, has asked her for a visit in order to discuss her article. On his way to answer the door, Steed falls down the stairs, prompting Emma to break into his flat; upon seeing her, Steed gasps, "Mrs. Peel, you're needed!"¹⁰² The use of the same terminology he employs to summon her to work emphasizes the conflation of Steed's identity with that of the Empire; it simultaneously demonstrates her status as a

⁹⁹ "The Peel outfit is said to have been the first publically available clothing collection designed for TV." Miller, *The Avengers*, 47.

¹⁰⁰ Morrison, "Cultural and Moral Authority," 122.

¹⁰¹ Pixley, *The Avengers Files*, 246.

¹⁰² "The Joker," *The Avengers*, directed by Sidney Hayers (1967; London, England: ABC Weekend Television, 2001), DVD.

junior partner, meant to attend when required. Steed's injury is no accident, however, but part of the plot engineered by Max Prendergast (Peter Jeffrey). Prendergast was seduced by Emma as part of an undercover operation that led to his arrest; having escaped from prison, he uses the ruse of a meeting with Sir Cavalier to draw Emma into his revenge scheme.¹⁰³ With Steed out of the way, the implication is that Emma by herself poses a threat that Prendergast can easily overcome. This approach also emphasizes her independence, especially in contrast with the Cathy Gale episode, in which Steed escorts Cathy to Cavalier's house. Emma drives herself when Steed cannot, but her self-sufficiency is used against her; she brings herself to the site of trauma. The opening of the episode shows that Emma believes she is able to take care of herself, but also that such belief is likely to be dangerous.

Despite her evident self-control, Emma is presented as an object rather than a subject in a much more blatant way than Cathy. Though both are exposed to the male gaze, as literalized through Prendergast's/Goodman's collection, fetishization, and destruction of various magazine photos in both narratives, Emma's objectification is more overtly sexualized. While Prendergast/Goodman spies on both women through holes in the walls of their bedrooms, only Emma is captured in the midst of changing. She is stripped of her defenses; Prendergast penetrates the supposed safety of her bedroom and sees her undressed, emphasizing the sexualized danger she is in. The short scene recontextualizes the manner of threat that Emma is facing. Both women are in danger because of their work as female spies; their undercover assignment to seduce Prendergast/Goodman was successful, leaving him hopelessly obsessed and thus emphasizing the danger of 'Mata Hari' work to the woman performing it as much as the men being entrapped. Nevertheless, the sexual threat to Emma is presented in a more obvious manner and it is implied that she is less able to contend with it.

Prendergast is clearly confident in his ability to overcome Emma on his own, as shown by his efforts to eliminate Steed as the only evident threat to his plan. More tellingly, Steed appears to share this assessment, as his immediate response to learning of Prendergast's release is to rush to Emma's rescue. He arrives just in time to save her from Prendergast's grasp; his rescue heralds the dawn, ensuring that Emma survives to see another day. Upon seeing Steed arrive to save her life, she drops her gun and takes his hand. She no longer needs to protect herself with Steed present.

¹⁰³ While the narrative remains the same, in "Don't Look Behind You" Cathy faces a criminal by the name of Martin Goodman (Maurice Good).

Steed's attitude towards Cathy's weekend with Goodman is entirely different. Steed is aware of the threat Goodman poses before Cathy sets out for Cavalier's house; indeed, he allows her to walk into the trap to act as bait. Though he remains in the vicinity, his willingness to put her in danger is a mark of his belief that she will be able to survive it. That his response to Emma being in the same situation is to act the gallant knight immediately reinforces his view of her as a damsel in distress despite her skills. As mentioned earlier, the show often attempts to foreground Emma's regular need to be rescued by Steed in such a way as to mark it as ridiculous. In episode 4.02, "The Gravediggers," for example, Steed must free Emma from the train tracks to which she is tied before the train arrives, a situation borrowed directly from classic black and white melodramas. The absurdity of it is highlighted by the railroad being a miniature version; Emma is then allowed to reclaim her autonomy by driving Steed home on a scooter. While the show subverts these obvious trappings of traditional feminine endangerment, as Cornell points out in "S and Em," the narrative of "The Joker" suggests that the widowed Emma is still subject to sexualized punishment for her honeytrap skills until the husband-figure of Steed saves her from Prendergast's physical threat.

"The House that Jack Built" similarly uses the precocities by which Emma is defined in order to threaten her life. This paradox continues to emphasize the danger that being exceptional poses to Emma; her very accomplishments can be the mechanism of her destruction. The episode centers around a house into which Emma is lured and which then becomes a death trap. Even the method of bringing her to the house plays on her status in society. She receives a key and notification that she has inherited a house in the country from a distant relative. Her willingness to believe this story, and the fact that the villain behind the scheme knew it would pass unchallenged mark Emma's social position. As the daughter of a knight – twice over; her father was *Sir John Knight* – and a successful debutante, Emma's class is such that she is not surprised by the revelation that she has wealthy eccentrics as relatives. This parodic jest at England's class structure nevertheless also ensures that Emma's privileged status is also a danger to her.

The rest of the episode similarly castigates and champions Emma for her accomplishments. When she arrives at the house, it transforms into a carnivalesque trap, full of doors that open onto new rooms each time they are shut and disorienting wallpaper patterns meant to induce mental trauma. This atmosphere signals the concept under which the mind behind the construct is operating: he believes that a natural order has been turned awry and intends to rectify that mistake through any means necessary. When

Emma succeeds in breaking through the first layer of the house's defenses, she discovers herself in a central room that displays a timeline of the events that drove its still-unrevealed creator to insanity. The room is a monument to Emma's own life from birth to present day; her difference from the norm is so great as to impel such a monumental response, attempting to capture her in order to redress the imbalance she has caused.

Emma's examination of the room reveals that its designer's delusion centers specifically on her ascension to and work as head of her father's company, Knight Industries, after his death. Her tenure as a youthful businesswoman is another of Emma's distinguishing facets; it sets her apart from the rest of the debutante society in which she moves and elevates her above not only the men of her age and class, but those who are her senior in years as well. This recognition of her skills and her ability to use them in passing judgment is at the core of the entire exercise with the house; the building was created to punish Emma for transgressions from years prior. Emma eventually triggers an automaton within the room that explains this cause and effect: the house was created by Professor Keller (Michael Goodliffe), a scientist whom Emma fired from Knight Industries not long after her father's death. He designed the house as a death trap in order to retroactively punish her for daring to exercise authority over him. Emma's audacity in possessing and using abilities and opportunities above and beyond those of other women – the very opportunities that make her valuable as Steed's partner, an appointment that is itself fraught with danger – becomes here so virulent a crime against society that she is condemned to death for it.

Emma does not, of course, die in the house that Keller built. Her deductive reasoning, scientific knowledge, and physical strength allow her to escape where two other men who were trapped in the house with her are killed. She is not even portrayed as a damsel in distress. Although Steed does arrive at the house in response to her perceived need, he is only in time to see her emerge unscathed from the depths of the control room. Emma escapes the death trap on her own merits, but those very talents and their perception by society were the impetus behind the original danger. Steed's arrival to extract a triumphant Emma from the house legitimizes her abilities and gives her license to use them. *The Avengers* thus presents "a contradictory image of modern womanhood that celebrates female empowerment and at the same time attempts to establish control mechanisms whereby women can be kept in their place."¹⁰⁴ When she was an unmarried

¹⁰⁴ Chapman, "The Avengers," 57.

woman heading her own company and thus did not answer to any higher authority, Emma was a threat to the underpinnings of society. Subordinate to Steed, and thence to Mother and the grinding bureaucracy of British Intelligence, her exceptionality can be harnessed and directed; the danger posed by her sexuality is neutralized by the State.

Gentleman Spy

The relationship between Emma Peel and John Steed is one of the show's most memorable qualities. In contemporary times, the Emma Peel era largely serves to define the entire series.¹⁰⁵ Certainly the 1998 big-screen adaptation made it seem as if no other partnership had existed.¹⁰⁶ Yet part of the reason that the movie failed was that Ralph Fiennes and Uma Thurman could not capture the odd mixture of sexual tension and chumminess that defined Steed and Emma's relationship - a relationship that arguably made it possible for Emma to work as a spy at all.

In the midst of the tumultuous Sixties, John Steed harkens back to an earlier era; with his pluperfect bowler hat, jaunty broly, and perfectly tailored suits, he trod the line of dandyism. He is rather more of a rake, however, whose "Achilles heel is the opposite sex,"¹⁰⁷ and who is rarely without female companionship as desired. Steed's appearance and his similarly immaculate manners are reminiscent of Britain's Imperial Age and emphasize his role in protecting not just England, but the idea of the glorious Empire. He is a gentleman in all senses of the term, moving in a world where the only class admitted to, much less present, is the upper.¹⁰⁸ His foppishness disguises a brutal efficiency, recalling the Scarlet Pimpernel, on whom Patrick Macnee admits to have modeled the role.¹⁰⁹ Macnee claims that Steed is often overshadowed by the women of the series,¹¹⁰ yet unlike Maxwell Smart in *Get Smart*, there is never any doubt about Steed's ability to excel at his job. Following Kim Philby's defection to the USSR in 1963, however, the image of the English gentleman is slightly tarnished; he needs a modern partner to ensure his safety.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, 43.

¹⁰⁶ *The Avengers* (Jeremiah S. Churik, 1998) attempted to recreate the Steed-Peel partnership for the big screen; its failure suggests the series' attraction is tied to its cultural era.

¹⁰⁷ "The Forget-Me-Knot," *The Avengers*, directed by James Hill (1968; London, England: ABC Weekend Television, 2001), DVD.

¹⁰⁸ Brian Clemens, quoted in Rogers, *The Ultimate Avengers*, 132.

¹⁰⁹ Rogers, *The Complete Avengers*, 14.

¹¹⁰ Pixley, *The Avengers Files*, 68.

Pairing eighteenth-century man Steed with the decidedly twentieth-century Emma seems odd on the surface. Emma is, after all, thoroughly Sixties, from the Art Deco modernity of her flat to the bright colours of her signature catsuits and dresses. Still she is, in her way, just as much of a symbol of Old England as Steed, with a lengthy pedigree and an Oxbridge degree. Even her maiden name, Knight, marks her as a signifier of Glorious Britannia. Both characters emphasize a particular kind of English identity – specifically English, rather than British.¹¹¹ Their deliberate nationality and their class identity represent an Englishness that still presents an aspirational appeal, demonstrating an image of cultural citizenship that the audience can both internalize and idealize.¹¹² Steed and Emma are the perfect partners, then, dedicated to defending England from external threats and maintaining it as befits its status.

Part of the secret to Steed and Emma's partnership, based as it is on both old-school courtesy and the sparkling chemistry Macnee and Rigg shared, is Emma's marital status. Widowed, Emma has not only entrée into society in a way she would not as a 'single girl,' but also a level of personal and professional autonomy she would be denied as a wife. Her emancipation is what makes it possible for her to operate as a spy; she is able to disappear on missions on short notice or at odd hours without having to make excuses. Similarly, being a widow enables her participation in the inevitably sexual aspects of some of their missions. Emma has the social mobility of a married woman without it actually affecting her availability as a potential sexual object. She is not portrayed as an innocent, but neither is she a 'wanton woman' as in the overly-sexualized Mata Hari stereotype of female spies.

Emma's widowhood also ensures that her partnership with Steed has a frisson of sexual tension that toes the line of acceptability. The nature of their relationship is never made explicit on the show, though it often strays from the professional into the personal. Its depth is drawn into question in episode 5.16, "Who's Who?," when Steed and Emma have their minds swapped with their criminal counterparts, Basil and Lola, who are lovers as well as partners. Though Basil and Lola conclude that Steed and Emma are "just good friends,"¹¹³ their complete inability to understand the pair puts their interpretation in doubt. The impersonators are, after all, caught out by their imperfect performances of social cues, such as failing to properly chill champagne and biting the ends off cigars; Basil and Lola

¹¹¹ Chapman, "The Avengers," 49.

¹¹² Hartley, *Uses of Television*, 26.

¹¹³ "Who's Who?," *The Avengers*, directed by John Lewellyn Moxey (1967; London, England: ABC Weekend Television, 2001), DVD.

are defined by their incomprehension of Steed and Emma and cannot be considered authorities on the relationship. Macnee claims that "we took it for granted that Steed and Emma slept together, but simply didn't dwell on it,"¹¹⁴ which displays the burgeoning sexual freedom of the era and yet further ties the female spy into a sexualized figure.

The suggestion of intimacy between Steed and Emma is emphasized by the manner of Emma's departure from their partnership. She left due to outside forces: Rigg, fed up with on-set mistreatment that included, at one point, her wage being lower than that of the cameramen, refused to renew her contract for more than one additional season.¹¹⁵ Unlike previous partners, who simply disappeared from the show, Emma's departure is explained specifically in the final scene of her last episode: she must quit the spy game because her husband has returned. In "The Forget-Me-Knot," Emma and Steed discover that Peter Peel, Emma's lost and presumed-dead husband, has been found alive in the Amazon jungle; Emma abandons Steed – and spying – in order to resume her wifely duties. The one appears to preclude the other: there is no suggestion that Emma could be both a spy and a wife. In 1960s Britain, spies must, apparently, be single in order to operate successfully. Marriage does not necessarily single the end of spydom in concurrent shows, however. The season after Emma departed *The Avengers*, 99 married Max on *Get Smart*. Yet Emma walking out on Steed introduces a theme developed by subsequent spy shows. Female spies can marry, but they must marry other spies; otherwise they split their loyalty between family and country. The reincorporation of Emma into a 'traditional' – housewifely – role suggests the further stability of her solo home, which is likely to become a site of unpaid labour rather than of leisure. This containment strategy is a denial of Emma's identity.¹¹⁶ It emphasizes that the housewife cannot be the heroine. Emma could have a sexual relationship with Steed as an amateur, as it ensured her ties to the Intelligence Service, but cannot remain an agent while married to an outsider. Her relationship with Steed maps onto her relationship with British intelligence: breaking it off with the one means she cannot continue to serve the other, and vice versa. More, it ties her to "the threat of the 1960s new professional woman – a woman who put intellect first and had to be taught, by a *man*, to express femininity and respond to emotions."¹¹⁷ Her partnership with Steed provides her with the ability to accept her husband once more,

¹¹⁴ Quoted in *Featuring the New Avengers* (London: Independent Television Books Ltd, 1976), 60.

¹¹⁵ David K. Smith, "Behind the Scenes: The Emma Peel Era," *The Avengers Forever*, published 25 Nov 2002, accessed 17 June 2012, <http://theavengers.tv/forever/peel2-prod.htm>.

¹¹⁶ Gillis and Hollows, "Introduction," 6.

¹¹⁷ Leman, "Wise Scientists and Female Androids," 122.

while her parting words to Tara King (Linda Thorson), Steed's replacement partner, emphasize the interrelationship between Steed and the State: Steed "likes his tea stirred anti-clockwise,"¹¹⁸ Emma informs Tara. One of the most important parts of Tara's new duties will be the care and feeding of Steed, then, not instead of protecting the nation but as a way of enabling that protection.

Put a Little Spies in Their Life

The parodic elements evident in the Emma Peel era of *The Avengers* are not always a part of the show, but rather develop slowly; the refinement of the show's formula takes place alongside the shifting cast of Steed's partners. To an extent, these changes are emblematic of the era: the Sixties are, after all, defined by the rapid political, social, and cultural changes that took place during that decade and that informed the rest of the century. When the series begins, with Macnee as Steed and Ian Hendry as Keel, it inherits the ethos of *Police Surgeon* (1960), from which Keel's character was drawn – a gritty, nearly *noir* police procedural much closer to the dark paranoia of the Fifties than to the new freedom of the Sixties. Even the introduction of Blackman's Cathy Gale keeps the show based in reality – relatively speaking. Episodes primarily adhere, during the Macnee-Blackman era, "to the sort of cloak-and-dagger storylines... familiar from series like *Danger Man*,"¹¹⁹ while plots are often directly analogous to the politics of the day. Cathy's background further emphasized the show's close relation to reality: her husband died in the Mau Mau uprising in Kenya, her gun-handling skills came from hunting for big game, and she was in England at all because she had been deported from Cuba by Fidel Castro.¹²⁰ Cathy never quite warms up to Steed because she too readily comprehends the danger that really lies behind the nigh-impossible tasks he often asks her to accomplish. When reality proves too much for her, Cathy retreats into fantasy, retiring to the Bahamas and leaving the series open for redesign.

Following Blackman's departure, the show's concept and execution was retooled, largely in an attempt to make it more attractive to American networks who might then be persuaded to invest. A large part of this reinvention was devoted to creating the character of Emma Peel. Though Emma was based on the Cathy Gale template, the crew knew that they needed to update the design and create "a hermaphrodite, a woman, but one who

¹¹⁸ "The Forget-Me-Knot," *The Avengers*.

¹¹⁹ Chapman, "The Avengers," 42.

¹²⁰ Pixley, *The Avengers Files*, 210.

runs like a man," as Macnee himself put it.¹²¹ Unlike Cathy, who took on roles already written for Keen and thus ensured that Blackman had a base on which to build a strong character, Emma herself was designed to be extraordinary and independent from the start. Her history is clearly modeled on Cathy's, but the differences between the two women show the shift away from harsh reality that the show is attempting. Both women are widowed, but where Cathy's husband was killed in a violent uprising, Emma's disappeared in the Amazon jungle and – the ultimate fantasy – is eventually discovered alive. Cathy supported herself through the PhD she had earned in anthropology; Emma appears not to work at all, outside of writing consistently well-received academic articles whenever the impulse strikes her. Alongside Emma, Steed, too, becomes further separated from reality, his waistcoat and cravats ever more immaculate. Steed and Emma take the reality of England's past and future and inflate it to nearly – but not quite – parodic stature, reflecting the tumultuous Sixties "by taking its concerns, its neuroses, and its aspirations and painting them in cartoon-esque strokes across the canvas of popular consciousness."¹²² The broad caricatures of contemporary life resonated with viewers despite their absurdities.

In the Peel era, many of *The Avengers'* plots were completely divorced from reality, mixing science fiction and politics, making the show perhaps the first incarnation of the 'spy-fi' genre that *Alias* would later embrace. Storylines involving man-eating plants from outer space ("Man-Eater of Surrey Green") or time-travelling criminals ("Escape in Time") could only take place in a fantasy world such as that constructed by *The Avengers*. By contrast, plots such as the search for a Russian spy ("Two's a Crowd") or the unlikely collaboration between Russia and Britain against a common enemy ("The Correct Way to Kill") could have come from any other contemporary spy series but for the twists characteristic of *The Avengers*. Despite the wide range of plotlines, however, the series' message is perpetually clear: England endures, in the form of Steed and Emma protecting the nation against threats both internal and external.

As previously mentioned, both Steed and Emma exemplify the best of British tradition. Steed boasts the Etonian education and old school ties that define upper class British masculinity; although he was expelled, even that is emblematic of a particular breed of roguish good old boy who eventually comes to see the error of his ways. Emma too, as

¹²¹ Quoted in Rogers, *The Complete Avengers*, 88.

¹²² Keith Topping, "The Medium is the Message," in *The Avengers Dossier: The definitive unauthorized guide*, ed. Paul Cornell et al (London: Virgin Books, 1998), 356.

the daughter of a shipping magnate, a woman of independent means who read chemistry at Cambridge and then embraced the swinging London lifestyle, mixes England's new world with her old. Keith Topping suggests that *The Avengers*, even while on the cutting edge of pop sensibility in the Peel era, displays a marked lack of willingness to truly engage with or embrace modernity.¹²³ For Topping, clinging to school loyalties and class structure marks an unwillingness to accept England's move towards the future. Maintaining the fantasy world allows the show to cling to the vestiges of imperial glory while avoiding the social strife endemic in England of the Sixties. I disagree, however; I believe with Steed and Emma, more than any other era of *The Avengers*, the series is "about dragging Britain into a post-war transformation."¹²⁴ Much like Bond dictated a recipe by which Fifties society might be navigated, Steed and Peel provide "the proof that traditional and modern values can coexist in a pure complicity,"¹²⁵ each building on and benefiting from the other. It is perhaps the least obviously progressive text for its time I study in this thesis, given its insistence that family ties come before any other loyalties for the female spy and her subsequent exclusion from the power structure of national defense. Nevertheless, Emma provides a model against which the female spy will be measured for many decades to come.

Emma's fashionability, her intelligence, and her physical skills are all revolutionary within the espionage genre. That she is allowed to present as a near-equal to Steed's "top professional" agent skills without any of her accomplishments being belittled is similarly groundbreaking. She builds on the template that Cathy Gale began, making it her own and ensuring subsequent agents such as Tara King can aspire to similar equality. The narrative is not entirely comfortable with Emma's presence; it celebrates, yet simultaneously challenges her independence, using her extraordinary abilities to mark her and draw her into danger. Her sexuality endangers her in "The Joker," her inheritance from her father nearly leads to her death in "The House that Jack Built," and her husband's return from the dead removes her from the pool of viable agents in "The Forget-Me-Knot," but Emma retains her customary aplomb. The position of Steed's assistant is filled by a constant parade of mostly young female agents, suggesting their interchangeability; Emma, despite the narrative's effective containment of her empowerment, marks a new era and leaves her memorable stamp on the role. Emma creates an image of an

¹²³ Ibid, 355.

¹²⁴ Miller, *The Avengers*, 30.

¹²⁵ Brixton, *From The Avengers to Miami Vice*, 101.

emancipated, fashionable female spy who can hold her own against the men in the espionage world and provides a benchmark against which future spies are measured. She is, Jeffrey Miler argues, "the most important legacy of the British spy shows of the 1960s... a character American women saw as a model for a new role in society – and a character American television productions saw as a model for re-creating their own crime series."¹²⁶ Though her adventures, particularly those following the series' turn to colour in 1966, are partially bankrolled by export to America, Emma and *The Avengers* are of distinctly English sensibilities. Translating her extraordinary abilities into American culture in *Get Smart* creates a fusion between the American housewife and the new working woman, one who literally defies labels.

¹²⁶ Miller, *Something Completely Different*, xii.

*Here's a warning for all of you swingers
 Some advice from an average guy
 If you're seeing a dame who won't give you her name
 And she won't look you straight in the eye
 She could be a spy¹²⁷*

Spy Stuff: Get Smart

In 1965 the Cold War had been raging for nearly twenty years. Following the Cuban Missile Crisis and with the Vietnam War escalating, the tension between the two superpowers was drawing ever tighter. Though the prestige of the House Un-American Activities Committee and their anti-Communist stance was declining, the figure of the spy was still present within the cultural consciousness. The popular craze for the espionage genre was evident in film and novels: not only the Bond films and novels, but also books by Len Deighton and John le Carré and their film adaptations, dominated the bestseller charts and the box office. Bond was read in America as a reflection of John F. Kennedy's 'Camelot,' but also as an individual who defied the global and national impact of government organizations.¹²⁸ On television, the picture was not much different; the Cold War "depended on a deeply militarized understanding of identity and security [that] relie[d] on distinct notions about masculinity,"¹²⁹ and airwaves were thus dominated by earnest, heroic men serving and saving their country. Shows like *Danger Man* (ITV, 1960-1968) and *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* (NBC, 1964-1968) predominated, filling the necessary formula out to the satisfaction of the viewers. American popular literature and entertainment typically engaged with Cold War culture by expressing "disquiet with the tensions of life at home and abroad [which] would not be resolved, but they could be assuaged by the assurance that America's foes represented greater evils."¹³⁰ Both the conventions of the genre and the constraints of the Cold War were thus firmly entrenched in the popular conception. In the years following Kennedy's 1963 assassination and the 1965 escalation of the Vietnam War, television began to refocus its portrayal of the government. Where some ambiguity in sensibility was permitted in previous shows, in the new political climate "the secretive, bureaucratic institution fighting for Good had to be

¹²⁷ Swingerhead, vocal performance of "She Could Be A Spy," by Michael Andrew, recorded 1998 on *She Could Be A Spy*, Colossal, CD.

¹²⁸ Miller, *Something Completely Different*, 33.

¹²⁹ Cynthia Enloe, *The Morning After: Sexual Politics at the End of the Cold War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 3.

¹³⁰ Scott Lucas, "Policing Dissent: 'Orwell' and Cold War Culture, 1945-2004," in *American Cold War Culture*, ed. Douglas Field (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 129.

identified as such to differentiate it from bureaucratic institutions of Evil whose power derived from their abilities to disguise themselves,"¹³¹ as was seen in British import successes *Danger Man/Secret Agent* (ITV, 1960-1968) and *The Prisoner* (ITV, 1967-1968). It was time, then, to begin thinking of these serious issues through another lens: that of parody.

Buck Henry and Mel Brooks initially conceived of what would become *Get Smart* as a response to the big-screen success of the James Bond films and the small-screen prevalence of *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.*. Their aim was to expose the conventions of the genre through mockery; though several of the spy dramas then airing had light-hearted moments, *Get Smart* refused any semblance of seriousness. It was James Bond by way of Inspector Clouseau.¹³² Where Bond's call number, 007, denoted his elite status and 'license to kill,' Smart's would draw attention to his ineptitude: the number 86 was chosen for its connotations of incompetence. Like the drunks in bars back in the day, Smart's career should have been "eighty-sixed," cut off before he did more damage.¹³³ When creating Max, Brooks and Henry knew he would need a straight man, someone who would not only react to his jokes, but would be able to save him from the serious situations in which he would inevitably become entangled. Rather than settling for the 'buddy show' format that dominated the airwaves at the time, however, the creative team decided to provide Max with a straight *woman* as his partner. At the time, women on American network television "comprised only a fifth of characters represented in paid employment. Action series had especially strict segregation, with very few heterosocial partnerships."¹³⁴ The presence of women in the domestic rather than public sphere was seen in the 1950s as "part of the 'American way of life' that would protect United States citizens from the lures of Communism,"¹³⁵ so the choice to place 99 on the front lines of intelligence work as Max's equal reflected the changes being wrought throughout the Sixties.

A Dame Who Won't Give You Her Name

99 was deliberately conceived of as a feminist character, a plan that informed every element of her character. She was designed and debuted on television at the same

¹³¹ Miller, *Something Completely Different*, 36.

¹³² Buck Henry, "Buck Henry Interview," *Get Smart: Season 1* (Burbank, CA: Warner Home Video, 2009). DVD.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Miller, *The Avengers*, 65.

¹³⁵ Enloe, *The Morning After*, 16.

time as Honey West (Anne Francis) in the show of the same name (ABC, 1965-1966), yet the difference between the two spies is stark. Though Honey was the star of her show and 99 merely a sidekick, Honey West inherited the Bond girl sensibility, as shown by her name (not quite Pussy Galore, but close), her dependence on her male partner Sam Bolt (John Ericson), and her reliance on her sexual wiles rather than her black belt in judo.¹³⁶ 99's design circumvented these failings in the Honey West programme, though not without problems. There were several issues that arose along the way, notably in the decision on her numerical designation: the creative team originally pushed for her to be called '69' and only compromised on '99' out of fear of the network censors.¹³⁷ Still, her number and the amount of effort focused on choosing it became a defining feature of 99's existence. Unlike Max, whose number and secret identity were used interchangeably, 99's real name was never revealed. This was a deliberate choice on the part of the creators in their attempts to distance 99 from the stigma attached to female spies at the time. "I didn't want her to have a name that identified her gender," says co-creator Buck Henry. "I liked that there could be someone [talking about her] on the phone not knowing whether she was a guy or a girl."¹³⁸ Several episodes played with revealing her name, but not even Max could get her to let it slip. Exchanges such as the following emphasize the layers of concealment surrounding her real name:

Max: Don't worry, 99. Nothing's going to happen to me.

99: You know what I mean, Max.

Max: Yes I do... Ernestine.

99: That's the first time you've ever called me Ernestine.

Max, *romantically*: I know.

99: I wish it were my name.¹³⁹

99's secret identity was the most closely guarded secret in CONTROL. Even the Chief of CONTROL (Edward Platt) couldn't keep his real name out of enemy hands: only 99 was allowed that level of success as a spy.

Although 99's gender was irrelevant to her success as a spy within the show's economy, it was certainly relevant to the loose plot arc that tied *Get Smart*'s five seasons together. While most of the episodes were self-contained, the seasons did display a

¹³⁶ Op. cit, 51.

¹³⁷ Barbara Feldon et al, "Featurette: Barbara Feldon: From Real Model to Role Model," *Get Smart: Season 2* (Burbank, CA: Warner Home Video, 2009).

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ "99 Loses CONTROL," *Get Smart*, directed by Bruce Bilson (1968; Burbank, CA: Warner Home Video, 2009), DVD.

certain level of continuity and change, one element of which was the development of the romantic relationship between Max and 99. 99's interest in Max was apparent as early as the pilot episode, "Mr. Big." The writers conceived of it as a way to explain why the über-competent 99 would not only put up with, but often cover for, an incompetent like Max.¹⁴⁰ In "Mr. Big," Max meets 99 when she is assigned to pick him up at the bus station. She is in disguise, dressed semi-androgynously in a chauffeur's uniform, and Max appears to ignore her gender and treat her with respect for her ability. Not until halfway through the half-hour episode is Max's ignorance revealed: when 99 takes off her cap and her hair tumbles down, he turns to her in shock and exclaims, "But you're a girl!"¹⁴¹ The moment is meant mainly to emphasize Max's unsuitability to his role as a spy, he is so unaware of his surroundings that he cannot even tell the gender of the agents he works with. It serves two further purposes, however: it establishes that 99 is an extremely competent agent first and a woman second, and it shows that 99 is typically more accomplished as a spy than Max is.

The basis of Max and 99's relationship is introduced in the pilot as well, though it is not completely developed until the fourth season. Shortly after Max 'discovers' that 99 is a girl, the two of them nearly kiss, distracted only at the last moment by KAOS. This moment is a nod to both Max's characterization as a womanizer and 99's instant infatuation with him. Later episodes develop these elements more fully. Max's womanizing tendencies come to exclude 99, except for those occasions when he is drugged, has amnesia, or is otherwise not himself: he sees her as one of the boys – one of the agents – rather than an eligible woman. Her job comes first. The joke, of course, is that 99 pines after Max while he ignores the one woman with whom he might have a chance in order to chase any other girl who crosses his path (many of whom turn out to be agents of KAOS).

A good-looking spy

99 was designed to appeal to the younger television demographic, male and female alike.¹⁴² In the mid-60s, this meant she had to have a very mod sensibility. Part of this pop design was achieved by casting Barbara Feldon, whose career to that point had largely consisted of modeling jobs and commercials, thus ensuring her attractiveness to

¹⁴⁰ Feldon, "Featurette: Barbara Feldon."

¹⁴¹ "Mr. Big," *Get Smart*, directed by Howard Morris (1965; Burbank, CA: Warner Home Video, 2009), DVD.

¹⁴² Henry, "Buck Henry Interview."

the male half of the young demographic NBC were courting. Feldon's height ensured she could carry off the fashions of the era, and the producers made a concerted effort to keep 99 on the cutting edge. "She had all that fancy designer clothes. They were a big deal," says director Bruce Bilson. "She was very well dressed, and I think that was part of what the young ladies of the world admired about her, as well as the fact that she was holding up her half of that combo of CONTROL spies."¹⁴³ Her wardrobe places 99 firmly into the contemporary mindset and emphasizes, rather than detracts from, her competence. The clothes 99 wore were in line with the daily fashions seen on the street; Feldon herself says she "had a free ride in terms of wardrobe for about five years, because I got to wear everything I loved to wear on *Get Smart*, and then I actually got to keep all the clothes!"¹⁴⁴ In an era where portrayals of 'youth' usually raised anxieties about anti-establishment attitudes,¹⁴⁵ integrating 99's mod styling into the intelligence agency served both to update the image of espionage and to reduce concerns about youth rebellion.

99 is 'with it' where Max is staid; when they have to infiltrate a nightclub being used as a front by KAOS, it is 99 who knows the dances of the time well enough not only to use them for camouflage, but also to adapt them for defense and disable enemy agents while still keeping the beat. Her knowledge of popular trends makes it possible for her and Max to foil KAOS on several occasions, such as when she is able to recognize the contemporary rock band KAOS is using as a front for their mind-control operation:

99: The Sacred Cows!

Max: Of course! The Sacred Cows! Of course it's the Scared Cows! It has to be the Sacred Cows, who else could it be but the Sacred Cows! ...One question, 99.

99: What's that, Max?

Max: Who are the Sacred Cows?

99: They're the hottest rock 'n' roll group in the country, Max.

Max: Of course. The Sacred Cows.¹⁴⁶

Her contribution is not limited to answering Max's questions. While Max physically tackles the Groovy Guru, the man behind the mind-control, 99 takes steps to prevent the Sacred Cows' hypnotic melodies from being broadcast by simply unplugging the machinery. Her

¹⁴³ Feldon et al, "From Real Model to Role Model."

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Aniko Bodroghkozy, *Groove Tube: Sixties Television and the Youth Rebellion* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 81.

¹⁴⁶ "The Groovy Guru," *Get Smart*, directed by James Komack (1968; Burbank, CA: Warner Home Video, 2009), DVD.

skills are not dismissed as useless or feminine, nor are they ridiculed; they are an integral part of her capabilities as an agent. She is even responsible for the education of others: the Chief asks her to teach him how to dance at the end of episode 1.02, "The Diplomat's Daughter." Where Max is oblivious and the Chief is out of touch, 99 is a modern woman.

99's area of ability is not confined to 'girly' matters such as clothing or dancing. She equals or exceeds Max in almost every arena of their job. Where Max has his trademark shoe phone (and, occasionally, his garter phone, and belt phone, and tie phone, and handkerchief phone...), 99 keeps in contact with CONTROL via a lipstick and compact mirror radio or a comb phone, emphasizing her femininity. Nevertheless, her undercover work is consistently successful. The promotional materials clearly emphasized the dual nature of her appearance. She carries a fashionably red-plated handgun in her purse, but she is a crack shot with it. A commercial aired during the 1989 broadcast of the reunion movie *Get Smart, Again!* (Gary Nelson, 1989) capitalizes on the interplay between fashion and function: "On the runway, dressed to kill in uniform chic, we spy 99. She's accessorized with a .321 Mauser in black, perfect for any undercover gal on the go."¹⁴⁷ The feminine trappings of her outfits often disguised further gadgetry from CONTROL's labs: the large mod-style red glass earrings whose polarization allows her to read messages written in invisible ink and the diamond ring that enables her to cut her way out of death traps both play on and subvert the cliché of feminine wardrobe obsession. 99's mental acuity is also never in question. As is inevitable for anyone who works closely with Max, 99 often finds herself in dire situations due to his ineptitude; it is almost always 99 who devises a way out and saves both their lives. While Max pretends to know exactly what he is doing, "it was 99 who [is] usually running the show,"¹⁴⁸ as seen in the discussion of the Sacred Cows in "The Groovy Guru." On the surface this too is meant to invite ridicule of Max: imagine James Bond ever having such an exchange with Miss Money Penny. To bring Max down must bring 99 up, however, and it must be acceptable that a female agent be portrayed as knowledgeable, competent, and loyal.

Though Feldon had a model's looks, she did not have a martial artist's abilities. "Agent 99 could never quite get in touch with her inner macho," Feldon says:

Apropos Agent 99's propensity, or not, to be violent on screen, I was always very admiring of Diana Rigg, who did *The Avengers* in England, because she was tough. I mean, she didn't smile all the time like Agent 99 did, you know, she wasn't

¹⁴⁷ *Get Smart, Again!* ABC: February 26, 1989.

¹⁴⁸ Feldon et al, "From Reel Model to Role Model."

trying to ingratiate herself all the time, she just did the job. And she was my role model in a way. I never quite accomplished it. But of course, her partner was a bit softer than Max was, was a little different person to negotiate than Maxwell Smart.¹⁴⁹

As a result, 99 rarely engaged in physical combat with enemy agents like Emma did; where Emma and Steed were more equal in their physicality, in *Get Smart* Max was the brawn and 99 was the brains.¹⁵⁰ She was not, however, depicted as weak. In fact, a recurring joke centered around her ability to overpower even Max. Several times during the course of the series, Max unwisely sneaks up behind 99; startled, she inevitably lays him out with a strong right hook to the jaw, a reflex from her "agent training."¹⁵¹ Even the Chief falls victim to this trick. 99 does on occasion get the chance to directly fight KAOS operatives, male and female: she does not always win, but she is never forbidden from fighting by CONTROL, despite the fact that she was a 'girl.' Rather than handicapping her, her gender offers her avenues of combat and escape not available to other agents, such as the ability to kiss her way out of hostage situations, relying on her 'knockout lipstick' to subdue her captor.

Unlike her counterparts, 99 is essentially a 'good girl,' proof that espionage does not require sexual perversion of its practitioners.¹⁵² When 99 does don provocative disguises, as a harem girl or a lounge singer, for example, it is the exception, not the rule, and is in fact cause for minor scandal. These disguises take 99 outside of her normal self to such an extent that she becomes unrecognizable: while she is dressed as a harem girl, Max first mistakes her for a salesgirl and then confuses a similarly-attired KAOS agent with 99, thus spoiling their entire plan. When she is masquerading as a lounge singer, she crosses Max's path several times before he realizes who she is. She can take on the sexually provocative role of a Mata Hari seductress-spy, but only temporarily. Where previous iterations of the female spy showed the 'vamp' as a way of life, for 99 it is clearly only another element of the cover stories which 99's work requires of her.

Rather than the exotic temptress, 99 is the girl next door, a woman with whom the viewing audience might come to identify – assisted, of course, by her mod wardrobe. Like many women of the era, 99 is concerned with her future, a future which will not include

¹⁴⁹ Barbara Feldon, "Barbara Feldon Interview," *Get Smart: Season 4* (Burbank, CA: Warner Home Video, 2009), DVD.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ "The Farkas Fracas," *Get Smart*, directed by Jay Sandrich (1968; Burbank, CA: Warner Home Video, 2009), DVD.

¹⁵² Wheelwright, *The Fatal Lover*, 100.

perpetually risking her life in the service of CONTROL. Rather, 99 wants to settle down and begin a family, as seen in 3.19, "99 Loses CONTROL," when she leaves CONTROL to marry casino mogul Victor Royale (Jacques Bergerac).¹⁵³ 99's decision is motivated by her realization that "a girl's gotta think of her future,"¹⁵⁴ suggesting that working as a spy naturally precludes the sort of future happiness that 99, and by extension all working women, seeks. Royale, of course, turns out to be a KAOS agent, as Max discovers when he goes after 99, but 99's interaction with him further emphasizes her separation from the female spy stereotype. On discovering that Max has followed her, 99 insists that "Victor doesn't know anything about my work at CONTROL. He wouldn't want to marry... that kind of girl."¹⁵⁵ The pregnant pause communicates all the anxieties and expectations tied up in being "that kind of girl" spy: be they questions about her femininity or about her abnormal sexuality, they certainly imply that she, whoever she is, is not someone who could get married. That 99 wants to get married, and goes to the trouble of inventing a fake name in order to distance herself from CONTROL and do so, further suggests that she defies the spy-girl stereotype so entrenched in her future husband's mind.

Mr. and Mrs. Spy, Take One

In the show's fourth season, the tantalizingly unresolved 'will they or won't they' issue of Max and 99's relationship is finally brought to the fore: they get married. The move was characterized by Barbara Feldon as a ratings grab¹⁵⁶ and certainly did not seem to arise organically from the series' plot. The development of the twosome into a fully-realized romantic pairing from the somewhat platonic friendship they had previously enjoyed did not please Buck Henry, who had co-created the characters but since moved on. "I didn't want anybody to ever be related to anybody, and I would have fought tooth and nail to keep them from getting married and having kids. That was not my idea of what [the show] was about," he says.¹⁵⁷ Nevertheless, apparently even in parody the spy genre relies on familial relationships in order to maintain relevance. When Max and 99 are caught in yet another of KAOS's deathtraps for what seems the final time, Max finally realizes and admits his true feelings. Even in this, it is 99 who leads him:

¹⁵³ The reference, of course, is to the James Bond novel *Casino Royale*.

¹⁵⁴ "99 Loses CONTROL," *Get Smart*.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ Feldon, "Barbara Feldon Interview."

¹⁵⁷ Henry, "Buck Henry Interview."

Max: It's just that I – well, I have to tell you how I really feel about you. I've wanted to tell you for a long, long time but I – well, I've never been able to find the right words. You see, 99, it's not easy to say – well, it's not easy to say –

99: To say 'I love you,' Max?

Max: Yes.

99: Well, why don't you let me say it for you? I love you, Max.

Max: No, no, 99, that's not what I wanna say, I wanna say 'I love you, 99.'

99: No, I'm saying I love you too, Max.

Max: You do?

99: I always have.¹⁵⁸

Her ability to give him the exact phrase for which he is searching parallels all the times she has provided him with information about their cases, only for him to adapt it as his own idea. That he does not do so with their profession of love equalizes them, yet it is 99 who, once they've admitted their mutual desire, who saves them from certain death:

Max: There's just one thing I'd like to know, 99. Why didn't you think of a way out of here before I'd asked you to marry me?

99: Well, I didn't have as much to live for then.¹⁵⁹

Initially, as this exchange demonstrates, 99's love for Max improves her ability as a spy. Though her skill is somewhat maligned by the suggestion that she had nothing to live for before they were married, nevertheless she remains in control and maintains her position as the superior spy in the partnership.

The engagement shows that Max has come a long way since his inability in the pilot to tell that 99 is female. Indeed, while at the end of the previous season Max was inviting 99 out only as long as she paid her own way¹⁶⁰ and telling her he thought of her as "one of the guys,"¹⁶¹ the prospect of romance makes her gender an important plot point in a way it had never previously been. "You're a girl. Why do you wanna go out all the time getting shot at?" Max asks in the beginning of the engagement episode.¹⁶² 99's femininity was never questioned previously in the series, nor was her capability in the field or her right to be there ever in doubt. She was often more highly ranked at 'spy skills' than Max, and her gender enabled her to take on cases that no one else could. Yet her ability to be

¹⁵⁸ "The Impossible Mission," *Get Smart*, directed by Bruce Bilson (1968; Burbank, CA: Warner Home Video, 2009), DVD.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ "99 Loses CONTROL," *Get Smart*.

¹⁶¹ "The Hot Line," *Get Smart*, directed by Gary Nelson (1968; Burbank, CA: Warner Home Video, 2009), DVD.

¹⁶² "The Impossible Mission," *Get Smart*.

both sexualized and competent is called into question once the possibility of a truly romantic partnership with Max arises. The tension between loyalty to family and loyalty to nation that runs through the stories of many female spies thus begins to establish itself here for 99 as well, and will shape the plots of many, if not most, of the episodes in the remaining two seasons. Where this tension will be far more troubling in later series, in *Get Smart* it causes 99 to vacillate between being an indispensable agent and a danger to her country.

Max and 99's relationship becomes the focus of the first third of Season Four, with the forces of KAOS interfering in everything from Max's first meeting with his future mother-in-law (4.02, "Snoopy Smart vs the Red Baron") to his attempts to buy an engagement ring (4.05, "Diamonds are a Spy's Best Friend") to his bachelor party (4.06, "The Worst Best Man"). All these tasks are further complicated by the necessity of maintaining secret identities: Max and 99 cannot reveal that they are spies even to 99's mother and must stick to their cover of working for a greeting card company. This enables the persistence of another trope found in later spy tales, of daughters accidentally entering the family business.¹⁶³ When introduced to Max, 99's mother muses, "Your father always used to say he was in the greeting card business... didn't you know? Your father was a spy."¹⁶⁴ Even with the engagement dominating screen time, 99's prowess as a spy continues to be emphasized: in episode 4.07, "A Tale of Two Tails," she is revealed to be a three-time winner of the Lamont Cranston Award for Shadowing¹⁶⁵ and easily manages to outwit two lackluster spies whom Max has assigned to tail her.

99 has always been the good girl; though she has played the seductress role when required of her by CONTROL, it has never been a component of her character outside the job. Marrying Max makes her the ultimate antithesis of the Mata Hari role and incorporates the female spy into the rhetoric of a wholesome America. She escapes the stereotype and is able to become a 'normal' woman. This transformation is emphasized by the importance with which the show treats it. The wedding is dealt with at the same level within the universe of the show as is the fate of the nation: where previously KAOS concentrated on attempting to dominate the free world, in the fourth season of *Get Smart* they focus equally on trying to foil Max and 99's wedding.

¹⁶³ See *La Femme Nikita* and *Alias* in Chapter Three and *Spooks* in Chapter Four.

¹⁶⁴ "Snoopy Smart vs the Red Baron," *Get Smart*, directed by Reza Badiyi (1968; Burbank, CA: Warner Home Video, 2009), DVD.

¹⁶⁵ A reference to Lamont Cranston, the alter-ego of the film and radio versions of pop-culture icon The Shadow.

The wedding and the preparations that surround it become tools that KAOS employs in its more complex machinations. In 4.05, "Diamonds Are A Spy's Best Friend," Max becomes entangled in a KAOS diamond smuggling ring while attempting to buy 99's engagement ring; his unwitting involvement causes the Chief to accuse him of theft. Subsequently, in 4.06, "The Worst Best Man," Max's search for a best man is complicated when KAOS assassinates each man shortly after Max picks him. The Chief orders Max to select Hymie the robot (Richard Gautier), not knowing that he is playing straight into KAOS's hands and enabling their plan to plant a bomb in Hymie and kill the male CONTROL agents at Max's bachelor party. These and similar plotlines reflect the incongruity perceived to surround the marriage of a female spy and her recuperation into normative sexuality. In an era when the reality of female espionage agents was that they were largely confined to working as file clerks and yet the popular conception was of their value as honeytraps, 99's marriage and the fact that she subsequently continued working was a troublesome occurrence. Her employment status was in fact reflective of the realities of the era, as "while the labor force participation rates for all women increased considerably during [the period between 1950 and 1980], married women's involvement in the labor force accelerated at a much greater rate,"¹⁶⁶ yet 99's position contradicts the image of female spies as sexually open. The plots wherein KAOS undertakes to thwart the marriage reflect the difficulty the show had in presenting the encounter as plausible. This problem affected not only the marriage; it continued to plague Max and 99 throughout their honeymoon, emphasizing that the issue was firmly rooted in the representation of 99's sexuality.

The wedding itself is nearly cancelled as the result of a threat to the free world itself. In episode 4.09, "With Love and Twitches," Dr. Madre (Alan Oppenheimer), a KAOS escapee, smuggles a top-secret map to Max; the map will show the location of the Menick uranium mines, which are vital to KAOS's plots. Unbeknownst to Max, Madre converts the map into liquid form and Max drinks it. In order for the map to re-appear, Max must stay upright for 48 hours, until the map emerges as a rash on his chest – and his and 99's wedding is scheduled for the next day. Max's attempts to stop the wedding are met with disbelief from the other characters, who accuse him of getting cold feet, until KAOS kidnaps him just before the ceremony. He battles his way free and makes it to the church

¹⁶⁶ Steven D. McLaughlin, et al, eds, *The Changing Lives of American Women* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988) 93.

on time to exchange vows,¹⁶⁷ but normalcy is not completely restored. The episode concludes not with a tasteful fade to black on Max and 99's bedroom door, but with Max spending his wedding night propped in the corner under the careful supervision of the Chief and Larabee while 99 retires to spend her wedding night alone. Arguably, 99 had previously been 'married to the job' in that she had no visible life outside her profession; we never see 99's home, for example, though we see Max's regularly. By marrying Max, however, she has effectively married the agency and is forced to literally invite it into her bedchamber.

Marital Bliss

Following the wedding, Max and 99 are continually thwarted in their attempts to take their honeymoon, by plots more outrageous each time. In episode 4.12, "Temporarily Out of CONTROL," Max and 99 are preparing to leave on a two week Caribbean cruise when Max and the Chief called to active naval duty. Their attempts to escape the Navy by proving that they are spies fail because CONTROL is so secret no one will admit to knowing of it; meanwhile, 99 saves the day. Episode 4.13, "Schwartz's Island," sees Max and 99 sailing on their honeymoon; Max shipwrecks them, however, and they land on an artificial island built by KAOS. While the honeymoon is in progress (or attempts are being made), 99 remains an active agent and retains a level of competence far above that of her new husband. In "Temporarily Out of CONTROL," she easily disables the KAOS spy Max and the Chief were tracking, while in "Schwartz's Island" she is once again the heroine of the day, discovering how to use Max's mini-magnet to counteract the maxi-magnet made by KAOS. The honeymoon soon ends, however, and 99's role as a wife begins to impinge on her ability to be a successful agent: her answer when Max asks why she wants to hire a maid is, "I found out there just weren't enough hours in the day to be an efficient housewife and a good spy."¹⁶⁸ Worse, 99's 'issues' affect her husband's role as a spy as well.

99 has long exhibited a jealous streak where Max is concerned; as early as the second episode, "Diplomat's Daughter," she challenges Max on his womanizing ways. Previously her reaction has been limited to outrage or at worst slight prankishness. Married life appears to bring out her insecurities, however: having 'caught' Max, she is

¹⁶⁷ 99's real name remains a secret even after the wedding: the use of her name in the vows is concealed by the snores of a sleeping wedding guest.

¹⁶⁸ "The Laser Blazer," *Get Smart*, directed by Jay Sandrich (1968; Burbank, CA: Warner Home Video, 2009), DVD.

unsure of her ability to keep him. 99's jealousies interfere with her attempts to do her job and often prompt her to interfere with Max's missions as well. This drastic difference in her characterization weakens the portrayal of independence for which 99 had been so well known. Again, the tension between nation and family is made explicit, and in *Get Smart*, the nation always comes first. This is particularly evident in episode 5.04, "Widow Often Annie," when the Chief, ignoring 99's pregnancy, assigns Max to seduce a 'black widow' suspected of marrying CONTROL agents and killing them for their life insurance policies. 99's jealousy is so great that she first attempts to force Max to refuse the case. She throws several tantrums while Max's pursuit of Ann (Dana Wynter) continues, even jeopardizing his cover by spying on them; her irrationality and attempts to use her skill as a trained espionage agent in service of her own desires rather than the safety of her country appears to affect her abilities, as she is much less effective than usual in the series. While Max's thoughtlessness certainly does not ease her fears – he takes the ring from 99's finger in order to go through with his (faked) marriage to Ann, which 99 attends – he never gives her any reason to believe he is interested in Ann outside of the bounds of his cover. Nevertheless, 99's interference continues – she disguises herself as a chambermaid and intrudes on Max and Ann's 'honeymoon' suite, instigating a farce that nearly leads to the ruination of the mission. 99-as-wife is not necessarily more subservient to her husband, but she is lessened: she becomes the butt of the show's jokes rather than a co-conspirator in their execution, an 'illogical woman' punchline that needs no explanation in its familiarity. Her sexuality is more of a threat to the agency and the nation now that she is safely married than it was when she was a swingin' single spy.

The role of the housewife begins to overpower the role of the spy as 99 is further absorbed by her marriage. Although the mid- to late 1960s demonstrated a slow change in the representation of the relationship among women, work, and family that had predominated in the 1950s and early 1960s, with images of women in the workplace and in family identities outside that of the housewife appearing in the mass media,¹⁶⁹ the *meaning* of the housewife appears to remain the same. Her marriage immediately transforms her into a shrewish, jealous nag at home and an incompetent at work. In fact, 99's sexuality and her role as a housewife threaten not only CONTROL, not only the fate of the nation, but also, much closer to home, the life of her own husband. Max is endangered by 99's overwrought jealousy, as seen above; moreover, he is unmasked as a

¹⁶⁹ Press, "Gender and Family in Television's Golden Age and Beyond," 142.

spy as a result of their marriage. Upon learning that 99 is pregnant in episode 5.01, "Pheasant Under Glass," Max becomes so addled that he first causes a scene in public so great that it attracts media attention and then reveals his real name and occupation to those present. There is a direct correlation between 99's announcement of her pregnancy and Max's revelation making it impossible for him to continue working as a CONTROL agent.¹⁷⁰ 99 is not entirely sidelined during the pregnancy, though Max does try to exclude her from missions, but her pregnancy is nevertheless portrayed as a threat to the nation in much the same way as her marriage was: it endangers not just Max, but also his mission. In episode 5.06, "Smart Fell on Alabama," Max is forced to head a team into a target's house to steal back an important piece of information while 99 is about to go into labour: this is a time-sensitive, extremely dangerous mission requiring secrecy and absolute silence. Regardless, he tells 99 to contact him on his watch phone should her labour begin. She does indeed call, several times, and Max answers, all while trying to crack a safe without alerting KAOS agents to his presence. This scene would play well were the wife unaware that her husband is a spy, but 99 knows perfectly well what Max is doing and has herself been in similar circumstances: for her to call and distract him while he is on such a mission is incompatible with her experience as an agent. Ultimately, 99 turns out to have been in false labour: all the interruptions were for nothing.

A similar story plays out in episode 5.07, "And Baby Makes Four, Part 1," in which 99 actually does go into labour. Max is so distracted by the impending birth that he is incapable of concentrating on his mission. His discombobulation is so great that upon leaving a meet, he accidentally switches trench coats with his KAOS target. In the pocket of Max's trench coat was a carefully researched map designed to get him and 99 from their apartment to the hospital as quickly as possible. In the KAOS agent's trench coat was a carefully designed map meant to lead the bearer to KAOS's newest base of operations, which was cleverly hidden in a sanatorium. Inevitably, 99 goes into labour and she and Max end up following the KAOS map. Equally inevitably, when they arrive at the KAOS sanatorium, Max does not realize it is the wrong hospital and attempts to check 99 in, thus putting them at the mercy of KAOS medical staff.

Indirectly, 99's pregnancy puts her and Max in extreme danger: were she not in labour, they would not have followed the KAOS map, nor would Max have been so distracted that he ignored the differences between his map and the KAOS map. Her

¹⁷⁰ The situation is resolved within the episode by some truly remarkable plastic surgery (leading to Max being played temporarily by Phyllis Diller) and not referred to again in the series.

condition also provides the pretext under which the KAOS agents separate her and Max, as well as a plausible explanation for why the KAOS nurse is nearly able to kill 99 by injecting her with a poisoned needle. Rather than following the map on purpose, with foreknowledge and a full complement of backup, Max's blunder ensures that CONTROL has no access to the KAOS headquarters, nearly enabling KAOS's latest world-domination scheme to succeed without fear of CONTROL interference. 99's femininity, as marked by her ability to procreate – arguably one of the greatest cross-cultural signifiers of womanhood – thus threatens Max's mission, both her life and Max's, and potentially the fate of the world.

After 99 gives birth, the dialogue surrounding her fitness to be both a field agent and a mother is extremely confused. She is clearly caught in between eras. In the early years of the Cold War,

the insecurity and anxiety generated by the presumed Soviet threat put a premium on family stability and linked women's traditional domestic roles to the nation's future. National leaders as well as popular culture proclaimed that women's role in the international crisis was to strengthen the family and raise new citizens emotionally and mentally fit to win the Cold War.¹⁷¹

In the Sixties, however, women were becoming more vocal about their positions in the workforce as well as their identities beyond the domestic.¹⁷² 99 fluctuates between traditional and contemporary positions. In episode 5.09, "Physician Impossible," her motherhood again endangers her and Max when, dressed in scrubs to visit their twins in the maternity ward, they are mistaken for doctor and nurse and forced at gunpoint to operate on a KAOS agent whom Max had previously wounded. In episode 5.10, "The Apes of Rath," however, sexuality is treated nonchalantly, as she and Max share a double bed for the first time onscreen. And in episode 5.13, "Ice Station Siegfried," 99 takes on a case without Max: she is assigned to partner a CIA agent named Quigley (Bill Dana). The two are described as among America's top agents and are sent to Canada on a mission to save the world. 99's gender is not an issue at any point in the episode, nor is her status as a mother: she is again portrayed as an über-competent spy.

¹⁷¹ Susan M. Hartmann, "Women's Employment and the Domestic Ideal in the Early Cold War Years," in *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America, 1945-1960*, ed. Joanne Meyerowitz (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), 85.

¹⁷² Stephanie Coontz, *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992), 162.

The very next episode directly raises the question of 99's continued suitability to espionage. In episode 5.14, "Moonlighting Becomes You," 99 complains to the Chief that "you stopped sending me on dangerous missions the moment you found out Max and I were going to be parents."¹⁷³ She believes her reduced workload was the Chief's attempt either to keep her safe or to allow her time with her children, evoking the suggestion of maternity leave, and asks him to return her to more active duty. Instead, the Chief reveals that her enforced leave of absence has an entirely different root cause: he sidelined her because her lengthy exposure to Max's clumsiness has caused her to develop similar habits. Though she denies the charge, she proceeds to pull many 'Max-isms' over the course of the episode, such as slamming her hand down on the table to make a point and splattering cream pie everywhere. While this episode effectively rebuts the argument that 99's *motherhood* has a negative effect on her competence, it does appear to suggest, for the first time, that her *femininity* makes her less fit for duty than male spies. 99 picking up Max's incompetence seems reason enough to pull her from the field, given how destructive Max can often be. However, Max has been developing and perfecting his problems for five seasons now and has never been sidelined as a result.

Spy-fi versus Sit-com

What, then, does the show say about 99, and how can that be understood in the wider context of the spy genre? Like *The Avengers*, *Get Smart* "offers a contradictory image of modern womanhood that both celebrates female empowerment and at the same time attempts to establish control mechanisms whereby women can be kept in their place."¹⁷⁴ Her character is clearly a complex one, standing in for various stereotypes as fits the joke of the week. Does this flexibility, this elision of defining characteristics, suggest the role to be unimportant or trivial? No, but in order to understand why not, we must consider *Get Smart* not just as part of the spy genre, but also as part of the sitcom genre.

Sitcoms are underrepresented in television scholarship; if Television Studies has only recently achieved recognition of its worth, still sitcoms, seen as the least worth aspect

¹⁷³ "Moonlighting Becomes You," *Get Smart*, directed by Alan Rafkin (1970; Burbank, CA: Warner Home Video, 2009), DVD.

¹⁷⁴ Chapman, "The Avengers," 57.

of that contested discipline, have yet to reach critical acceptance.¹⁷⁵ Their cultural importance should not be underestimated, however: Brett Mills claims that the sitcom, particularly in America, is "the major place where social concerns are played out in a popular form."¹⁷⁶ Sitcom differs from most other television genres in that, while humour is an integral part of most shows, only sitcom is defined by its ability to make the audience laugh. This emphasis on – often cheap – humour is a cause of sitcom's devaluing, yet it is also the reason for the sitcom's importance in popular culture. The laugh track, that nigh-ubiquitous marker of the sitcom, signals "that all is well with the word, that our problems are not that important, and that they are not insurmountable."¹⁷⁷ For a spy show to succeed as a sitcom in America in the 1960s thus signals a desire on the part of the audience to downplay the threat of the Cold War and to seek reassurance about its inevitable end and America's ultimate victory.

If the show itself is a security blanket of sorts for the popular American audience, then the characters too must achieve that aim, while at the same time fulfilling the role of sitcom characters by being "easily recognizable... in order for an audience to find them funny at all."¹⁷⁸ The Chief, in his role as able but harried bureaucrat, reassures by his familiarity and competence while amusing via his reactions to Max's antics. Max is recognizable both as a spy and as a clown: his success as the former despite the incompetence he displays as the latter not only evokes audience hilarity but trivializes the strength of the threat he and America face. Siegfried (Bernie Kopell) and Starker (King Moody), and indeed all the KAOS agents, are marked as other by virtue of their exaggerated accents;¹⁷⁹ their buffoonery makes it possible for audiences to laugh at their antics as well as revel in their failures. The use of sitcom tropes also avoids any confusion about Good and Evil in terms of government organizations:¹⁸⁰ there is no room for complicated morality in the buffoonery of CONTROL and KAOS. 99, however, must inhabit a more complicated role, representing the traditional place of the woman in sitcom while simultaneously negotiating the familiar spy-seductress role.

¹⁷⁵ Paul Attallah, "The Unworthy Discourse: Situation Comedy in Television," in *Critiquing the Sitcom: A Reader*, ed. Joanne Morreall (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2003), 95.

¹⁷⁶ Brett Mills, *Television Sitcom* (London: BFI Publishing, 2005), 57.

¹⁷⁷ Op. cit, 100.

¹⁷⁸ Mills, *Television Sitcom*, 101.

¹⁷⁹ See also the discussion of accents as markers of foreign identity on *Alias* in Chapter Three.

¹⁸⁰ Miller, *Something Completely Different*, 36.

Sexuality is allotted a very specific role in sitcom – particularly female sexuality, and particularly in the 1960s, though some progress has been made since then. Sitcom sexuality

is usually presented in its most highly domesticated form: the leading characters are married, have been married, or envisage marriage as a likely outcome in their lives. The discourse of sexuality in situation comedy constitutes it as necessarily heterosexual and necessarily unconsumable outside of matrimony. This is a discourse of sexuality as it is spoken in many of the dominant institutions of the present social formation.¹⁸¹

The genre also retains throughout the 1960s the sensibility in developed in the 1950s, where it was concerned primarily with "the organization and maintenance of happy families."¹⁸² These unwritten rules proscribe the lengths to which the spy-seductress stereotype can be explored, particularly by one of the protagonists; KAOS agents can push the boundaries slightly further because they are coded as being both foreign and wrong. 99, however, must always regain her innocence and be recouped into normative sexuality. Attallah also claims that "the only way in which sex can be explicitly mentioned in situation comedy is in the tone of amused embarrassment. To mention it is already to be funny."¹⁸³ The need here for humour helps explain some of the excesses to which 99 is prone when her sexuality is foregrounded, from her bouts of overblown jealousy to the very fact that, when pregnant, she gives birth not to one child, but to twins.

Even within the restrictions placed on her by the stringency of sitcom sexuality, 99 is a remarkably progressive female character. The label of 'first independent working woman on television' is often granted to Mary Richards (Mary Tyler Moore) of *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*, which ran on CBS from 1970-1977, yet that distinction rightly belongs to 99. While 99 conforms to social expectations by marrying Max, Mary Richards remains independent – read, single – throughout most of the series; however, Mary is not content with her solo life. Mary works in a traditionally male-dominated environment, the newsroom, but is frequently overshadowed and belittled by her male coworkers and ends the series unemployed. 99, by contrast, is more competent than her male colleagues; her 'feminine wiles' are part of her arsenal of tools and have been used to save her life and

¹⁸¹ Attallah, "The Unworthy Discourse," 111.

¹⁸² Barbara Moore et al, *Prime Time Television: A Concise History* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2006), 123.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

Max's. She juggles marriage and motherhood alongside her career with, if not aplomb, certainly a high level of success and, importantly, is not forced to retire upon getting married or giving birth. 99 is, in the Sixties, everything Mary Richards fails to be in the Seventies – and Mary is herself an exception in an era where

working woman portrayed on television are never granted private lives and... mothers are denied any relationship to the workplace. The few 'shadowy' female characters who exist as independent women in responsible jobs take no initiative within the narratives, and frequently disappear for weeks at a time.¹⁸⁴

Far from being passive, 99 demonstrates as much agency as Max, and often with less disastrous results. Nor is she written out in favour of storylines focusing on her male counterparts: of the show's 138 episodes, Barbara Feldon appeared in all but four, more than anyone else except first-billed star Don Adams. In the decade before the 'progressive' Seventies, 99 transcended these stereotypes, demonstrating that a woman could do her patriotic duty for her country just as well as a man could – even without distracting the enemy by taking all her clothes off.

Conclusion

The spies of the Swinging Sixties demonstrate the shift to a more egalitarian gender hierarchy within the espionage drama on television. The focus on fashion, for example, is not used merely to trivialize women's interests and rather demonstrates their accumulation of unique and important skills. 99's gun may be red – to match her outfit – but she knows how to use it. Nevertheless, the shows still emphasize the dangers that women pose in the defense of their nation, as their loyalties may be split in the assumption of a family identity strong enough to challenge their national ties. Emma Peel is useful to the Service as a widow, able to access society yet without other distractions; when her husband returns she is forced to quit spying. While 99's position is more progressive, not requiring her to choose between husband and espionage (as long as she marries further into her job), still her identity as a mother endangers her, Max, and CONTROL.

Both shows demonstrate the confusion of attempting to straddle two different eras. While they allow the female spy to develop skills of her own and a position equal to that of

¹⁸⁴Serafina Bathrick, "The Mary Tyler Moore Show: Women at Home and at Work," in *Critiquing the Sitcom: A Reader*, ed. Joanne Morreall (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2003), 158.

the male in the audience's esteem, that progression is not always reflected in the shows' narratives. In *The Avengers*, Steed controls the method of contact he uses to reach Emma, the amount of information he gives her, and the transmission of their missions from their higher-ups. In *Get Smart*, Max's incompetence still ensures him a place amongst the top ranks of CONTROL spies, where 99's temporary assumption of some of Max's worst traits nearly sidelines her entirely. Both women are acknowledged as intelligent, competent, and professional, but despite the advances these shows mark in the portrayal of the female spy specifically and working women on screen more generally, they do not in fact achieve full equality.

Neither woman is the star of her own series; neither is able to become more than a spy. The role of the (house)wife is a particular challenge for both of them, rendering them to some extent unfit for their jobs. This recuperation of their strength into something that can be controlled by the patriarchal family if not the patriarchal state reflects mass media's discomfort with social change. These spies are rarely allowed private lives that do not devolve into professional entanglements; instead, Emma and 99 are allotted specific roles with no room for expansion. Not until other programmes build on the advances that *The Avengers* and *Get Smart* have pioneered will we see female spies able to assume and traverse multiple roles with something approaching ease instead of difficulty. Nevertheless, the progress made by these two programmes changes the visible face of espionage on television even if their message is not as modern as their bright colours hope to suggest.

Chapter Two: From Super-Woman to Super-Mom

Chapter One explored the evolution of the female spy from a sidekick to a confident woman more than able to hold her own with any male partner. Emma Peel and Agent 99 demonstrated that, in the *Swingin' Sixties*, a woman could be attractive, formidable, and yet of service to her country as much as the next man (if not more). Both women were allowed to develop their sexuality, though never without repercussions, and though they more often played the damsel in distress, they also had the occasional chance to be the hero themselves and rescue their male partners from certain death. Despite their achievements, however, both Emma and 99 remained entrenched within a paradigm that forced them into containment in order to legitimize their strength on behalf of the state. The spectre of the housewife haunts both of them, leaving them unable to fully engage their own desires without being chained by traditional femininity. Yet as the women in Chapter One introduced the concept of the competent female spy, the shows I examine in Chapter Two develop the archetype further, building on the continued influence of societal and political developments to change the face of popular media's conception of espionage agents.

In the 1970s and 1980s, women began agitating for the right not merely to be seen as equal workers, but to be able to balance simultaneous entry into the workforce as well as multiple public and private spheres. The representation of women on television began to shift as well, "toward a more 'feminist' image that was less passive, more powerful, and more independent – though still heterosexual and romantic – than earlier television women."¹⁸⁵ The representation of women's relationship to work and sexuality were in a particular state of flux.¹⁸⁶ The female spy was no different. While she was already capable of taking on any role in an undercover capacity, she was rarely able to engage meaningfully with any identity outside of her work. Even 99's maternity was filtered through – and seen as a threat to – her profession. The new spies of the later Cold War era demonstrate the separation occurring between professional and personal identity. By expanding the representation of the female spy to include women whose successes are not dictated only by their work life, *Wonder Woman* and *Scarecrow and Mrs. King* provide

¹⁸⁵ Press, "Gender and Family," 143.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

a pointed commentary on the importance of the new roles women are able to take on. Each show presents a representative view of prime-time television's attempts to simultaneously represent and contain the growing feminist movement in its respective era:¹⁸⁷ *Wonder Woman* is part of a cohort, emblemized by *Charlie's Angels*, that pays lip service to the idea of feminism by enabling strong women as long as they are portrayed as traditionally feminine. Meanwhile *Scarecrow and Mrs. King* places the heart of female strength in the – similarly traditional – home. Still, these two shows widen and complicate the concept of the female spy as audiences are used to it from Mata Hari or previous media representations.

The emphasis on fantasy rather than reality, as in both *The Avengers* and *Get Smart*, is apparent in *Wonder Woman*: outside of her job as a spy, Diana Prince (Lynda Carter) is also secretly a super-hero. Even this outlandish role demonstrates the increase in acceptable levels of female strength: she is able to operate as a hero outside of the patriarchal order symbolized by the intelligence agencies and is often able to succeed where they fail. Her strength is neither controlled by nor lesser than that wielded by men. While the realistic bent on *Scarecrow and Mrs. King* ensures that a similar level of feminine autonomy and authority is not forthcoming in the 'real' world, still Amanda King (Kate Jackson) provides positive representation of women beyond the professional. Amanda's identities as a divorced single mother are not erased by her development as a spy; they are allowed to provide value to her work, emphasizing their importance, rather than becoming detrimental to her future. This representation simultaneously valorises the housewife and reasserts her importance to traditional ideas of family and identity, however. The interaction between conflicting identities remains a danger to national security in both series, but the importance of presenting multiple roles for women becomes apparent.

¹⁸⁷ Julie D'Acci, "Defining Women: The Case of *Cagney and Lacey*," in *Private Screenings: Television and the Female Consumer*, eds. Lynn Spigel and Denise Mann (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992, 169-200), 170.

*All the world is waiting for you
And the wonders that you do
In your satin tights
Fighting for our rights
And the old red, white, and blue*¹⁸⁸

Détente: Wonder Woman

Although the 1970s in America were not exactly characterized by a relaxation of Cold War tensions, they did demonstrate a certain rebuilding and a nation beginning to find its footing while still embroiled in multiple confusing conflicts. Under Jimmy Carter, America's foreign policy began to stabilize, with a new emphasis on human rights restoring "a sense of domestic self-confidence and foreign credibility to an America shaken by Vietnam, Watergate, and the CIA scandals."¹⁸⁹ The bicentenary in 1976 summoned up a sense of pride that buffered public opinion of a government whose meddling in Vietnam and Chile was seen as overreaching its boundaries.¹⁹⁰ As the country was scrambling to regain its sense of self, nostalgia permeated its popular culture, particularly on television where the 1950s were yearned for as "a seemingly simpler time when issues were more black and white."¹⁹¹ America was in need of reassurance about its strength and inherent goodness.

One element troubling the America of the 1970s that was not related to the Cold War was the inescapable fact that the entry of women into the workforce was a permanent change.¹⁹² Network television quickly discovered, however, that "'feminist programming'... was good business" and began to produce shows aimed at tapping into what was seen as a new audience.¹⁹³ Although the representations of women that appeared on television at this time "drew, in varying ways and decrees, on the new feminist consciousness,"¹⁹⁴ they were not without their problems. The industry "was careful to invoke not only connotations regarding the 'new woman' but also more traditional notions of femininity."¹⁹⁵ The women who appeared in these 'feminist' shows were physically beautiful and presented for the

¹⁸⁸ "Wonder Woman," by Charles Fox and Norman Gimbel. Recorded 1975.

¹⁸⁹ Stephanie A. Slocum-Slafter, *America in the Seventies* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2003), 126.

¹⁹⁰ Francis Wheen, *Strange Days Indeed* (New York: Public Affairs, 2010), 159.

¹⁹¹ Moore et al, *Prime Time Television*, 185.

¹⁹² Ibid, 182.

¹⁹³ Lauren Rabinovitz, "Ms. Representation: The Politics of Feminist Sitcoms," in *Television, History, and American Culture*, eds. Mary Beth Haralovich and Lauren Rabinovitz (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999, 144-167), 145.

¹⁹⁴ D'Acci, "Defining Women," 170.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid, 176.

male gaze in such a way that the era is known as the T&A, or 'jiggle,' era.¹⁹⁶ Although there was a wider variety of female representation on television drama, it "occurred in a social context that lacked public awareness of feminism or of the existence of any organized political resistance to women's oppression."¹⁹⁷ These shows were primarily about visual pleasure rather than political commentary; even when they had a more cogent feminist message behind them, they were unwilling to push too hard for fear they would alienate viewers.¹⁹⁸ Feminism was informing the representation of women on television, yet the cultural context in which it occurred worked to repress even the most prominent examples.

Beautiful as Aphrodite, Wise as Athena¹⁹⁹

Unlike all the other female spies I examine in this thesis – from *Get Smart*'s Agent 99 and Emma Peel of *The Avengers* up to Sydney Bristow from *Alias* – the Wonder Woman/Diana Prince character existed in the popular culture consciousness before she appeared on the television screen. In order to fully understand the complicated set of assumptions associated with Wonder Woman and her iconic status, we must turn to the medium in which she originally appeared and in which, barring a brief hiatus in 1986, she has been continually published for the past seventy years: the tri-colour world of comic books. Since her introduction in All American's *All Star Comics* #8 in December 1941, Wonder Woman has been one of the "best known, longest lasting, and most controversial characters in the history of comics."²⁰⁰ Her lengthy, near-unbroken run places her in a category shared only by Superman (who debuted in 1938) and Batman (who debuted in 1939), with whom she makes up the "Big Three" of DC Comics' powerhouse marketing brands. Yet unlike her male compatriots, Wonder Woman "has always been obliged to play a double role. In addition to keeping a large audience entertained with her exploits, she has also been expected to serve as a representative and an example for an entire gender."²⁰¹ Moreover, she has been a symbol of American patriotism since her red-white-and-blue debut: with the American eagle on her bustier and her star-spangled bikini – originally a skirt – echoing the flag, her appearance as well as the storylines she endured

¹⁹⁶ Ibid, 173.

¹⁹⁷ Dow, *Prime Time Feminism*, xvii.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid, xxi.

¹⁹⁹ Robert Kanigher, "Eagle of Space," *Wonder Woman*, April 1959, 1.105.

²⁰⁰ Les Daniels, *Wonder Woman: The Complete History* (Vancouver: Raincoast Books, 2004), 11.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

encouraged her identification with the American troops who were rallying to revenge the attack on Pearl Harbor. Superhero comic books experienced an immense surge of popularity during the Second World War and many heroes engaged in periodic propaganda, but "most of them, like Superman and Batman, only occasionally made it the subject of their stories. Wonder Woman couldn't leave it alone, however, especially after she gave up Diana Prince's nursing career and got her alter ego a secretarial job with Army Intelligence."²⁰² Wonder Woman was thus aligned with American military interests in both her civilian and her superheroic identities – although her stated mission was to help bring peace to "Man's World," she certainly seemed willing enough to engage in its wars instead.

Though it has undergone several revisions, Diana's backstory has remained relatively consistent. Formed of clay brought to life by the Greek gods, she was raised on "Paradise Island" by a tribe of immortal Amazons led by her mother, Queen Hippolyta. When U.S. Army pilot Steve Trevor crashed his plane on their island, Diana won the right to accompany him back to what the Amazons called "Man's World" both to spread their message of peace and to stay close to the man with whom she had instantly fallen in love. Her civilian identity as an Army officer allowed her to keep watch over Steve at all times; despite her frequent dereliction of duty in order to defend America as Wonder Woman, her Diana Prince alter ego eventually attained the rank of Major. Despite her foreign origins, then, Diana became a clear symbol of American patriotism. Her creator, William Moulton Marston,

simply rewrote America's creed in a new key, putting Aphrodite in place of God the Father and Wonder Women in place of the Super Men who had previously been the heroes of America's tale of origins. In the process he did for an Amazon what has not been done for any other mythical woman from Greece or Rome: he literally transported her from the Old World to the New and transformed her into a figure of American mythology.²⁰³

Diana was "largely a colourless personality,"²⁰⁴ however, outside of the vaguely schizophrenic Diana-Steve-Wonder Woman love triangle that caused her to bemoan the fact that Steve loved her as Wonder Woman but barely noticed her as Diana. In the

²⁰² Daniels, *The Complete History*, 33-34.

²⁰³ Gregory A. Staley, "The Amazons: Wonder Women in America," in *American Women and Classical Myths*, ed. Gregory A. Staley (Texas: Baylor University Press, 2009), 207.

²⁰⁴ Robert Greenberger, *Wonder Woman: Amazon. Hero. Icon* (New York: Universe Publishing, 2010), 98.

narrative, as in the love triangle, Wonder Woman was the focus and Diana Prince was an afterthought.

The emphasis on superheroic Wonder Woman over ordinary Diana Prince endured until 1968, when

Change was in the air. ...The term 'women's liberation' was coined in 1964, and the demands for equal rights were renewed with a furor and a voice that grew louder by the day. Those issues were reflected in popular culture by [among other events] America's premier comic book heroine renouncing her powers.²⁰⁵

In September 1968, with *Wonder Woman* #178, Diana gave up her superhuman abilities and her Amazon heritage, choosing to stay in Man's World and continue to help Steve Trevor and America as much as she could as a normal human being. The move reflected a perceived change in the dynamics of comic book readers; the redesign emphasized vibrant colours, bold designs, and contemporary style in an attempt to capture the 'mod' ethos of the decade. Similarly, by stripping Diana of her powers, writer Dennis O'Neill and editor/artist Mike Sekowsky hoped to tap into the feminist consciousness by emphasizing her achievements as an 'ordinary' girl, one without godly support. These aspirations were affected by

the cult developing around an imported British television series called *The Avengers*. One of its stars, Diana Rigg, played a slim, athletic secret agent who engaged in bouts of hand-to-hand combat while dressed in provocative and progressive fashions. ...The influence helped turn Diana Prince into a globe-trotting, karate-kicking spy, and in the course of her adventures Wonder Woman became romantically linked with more than one man.²⁰⁶

Though Diana was never attached to any intelligence agency – in fact, having resigned her commission in the Army, she was completely disconnected from America's official lines of defense – she was described as a spy by readers within the first responses to her makeover. This assumption clearly shows the depth of penetration achieved by the fashions and image of the Emma Peel character; applying them to Diana gave her a mission and a new identity at a time when her old one was erased. Emma Peel's lack of superpowers and her loyalty to her country reflect the competing images that the Wonder Woman persona made it difficult to reconcile; it is clear, however, which aspect DC Comics chose to play up when depowering Diana. Romance, martial arts, and a little dash

²⁰⁵ Greenberger, *Amazon. Hero. Icon*, 170.

²⁰⁶ Daniels, *The Complete History*, 128-129.

of the agony felt by every girl when the man she loves betrays her to a Chinese death cult: finally Diana was a woman with whom 'normal' readers could empathize. When Sekowsky took over editorial duties, the book even began exploring feminist themes directly, part of the desire to present Diana as what writer Dennis O'Neill saw as "a mortal woman in the modern world."²⁰⁷

Though there was a noticeable increase in readers during the mod period, most critics did not appreciate Diana's new look. Though Sekowsky engaged directly with feminist issues, including having Diana join the fight for equal wages in issue #203, a "feminist backlash" developed, "demanding that Wonder Woman regain the powers and costume that put her on a par with the Man of Steel," Superman.²⁰⁸ I believe it is important to unpack this statement and understand why the demands were thusly phrased – not just Diana's superpowers, but her costume, needed to be restored in order for her, like Superman, to fight for truth, justice, and the American way. Her appearance as much as her abilities affected her status. One of the biggest proponents of establishing the red-white-and-blue image of Wonder Woman as the emblem of feminism was Gloria Steinem, who for the 1972 debut of *Ms.* magazine put Wonder Woman on the cover. Steinem at the time was "the face of media feminism," both because she was recognizable and because she was unthreatening, ie white, young, and heterosexual.²⁰⁹ *Ms.* magazine "cemented Steinem's status as the model moderate feminist and media spokesperson."²¹⁰ Wonder Woman fit perfectly into this mold: she was white, apparently heterosexual, and branded her body with an American flag that concealed the necessities and revealed everything else. Her appearance on *Ms.* fit perfectly into the 'jiggle era' of feminism, being both symbolic and yet not actively threatening. Still, this act and the rest of the media frenzy surrounding her costume "transformed the Amazon into a political symbol of national significance and exposed her to an ideological scrutiny that she has never entirely escaped."²¹¹ It was perhaps inevitable that DC would eventually capitulate both to the weight of public outrage and to the simple fact that Diana was less interesting without Wonder Woman to act as a foil. In January 1973 a new creative team took over the book and rebooted the reboot, returning the Amazons to earth and giving Diana back her powers – and, of course, her iconic outfit. Within months it was as if the mod period had

²⁰⁷ Quoted in Daniels, *The Complete History*, 126.

²⁰⁸ Greenberger, *Amazon. Hero. Icon*, 175.

²⁰⁹ Dow, *Prime Time Feminism*, 29.

²¹⁰ *Ibid*, 30.

²¹¹ Daniels, *The Complete History*, 123.

never existed – except, as the abundant media coverage proved, it certainly had. If the reboot had little lasting effect on Wonder Woman in-continuity, it did achieve at least two things: it generated "so much visibility that she finally caught the elusive eye of television,"²¹² and it established a correlation between Diana's popularity and her engagement with American patriotism.

You're a Wonder, Wonder Woman

There had already been two failed attempts at creating a Wonder Woman television series. The first, a 1967 spoof entitled "Who's Afraid of Diana Prince," tried and failed to capitalize on the campiness that made the Sixties *Batman* so effective; the second, in 1974, took its cue from the mod era in making Diana a powerless spy and, unsurprisingly, flopped. Wonder Woman endured, however, and in 1976 ABC began airing *The New Original Wonder Woman*, with former Miss World USA Lynda Carter donning the tiara and bracelets of the Amazing Amazon. ABC's concept followed that of the early comics right down to the 1940s setting, with Diana Prince as an Army officer and Wonder Woman fighting Nazis. The theme song reflected both the period setting and the most important aspects of the Wonder Woman character, as the lyrics show:

All the world is waiting for you
 And the power you possess
 In your satin tights
 Fighting for your rights
 And the old red, white, and blue
 Now the world is ready for you
 And the wonders you can do
 Make a hawk a dove
 Stop a war with love
 Make a liar tell the truth
 Get us out from under, Wonder Woman
 All our hopes are pinned upon you
 And the magic that you do
 Stop a bullet cold
 Make the Axis fold

²¹² Daniels, *The Complete History*, 134.

Change their minds and change the world

You're a wonder, Wonder Woman.²¹³

The emphasis is placed first on costuming, with reference both to her "satin tights" and to the "red, white, and blue" that makes up both the component colours of her uniform and of the American flag. These are the aspects that give her the "power" she uses to fight for her rights; the two concepts are tied together by proximity. Her ability to use diplomacy rather than just brute force is celebrated, as is the importance of her mission to "make the Axis fold." These are all parts of getting the American people "out from under," as the song implores her to do. The theme song thus introduces and emphasizes the character as created in the comics, transporting her onto the small screen largely unchanged.

Despite relatively strong ratings, ABC chose not to renew the show for a second season. As comics historian Les Daniels put it, though, "Aphrodite must have intervened, because after ABC dropped *Wonder Woman*, CBS picked her up. This kind of move from one network to another is rare enough to be considered a minor miracle."²¹⁴ The basics of the show remained the same, from the theme tune to the principal cast, but as a condition of renewal CBS mandated that the show be updated to take place in contemporary times. *The New Adventures of Wonder Woman* had to enter the Seventies.

The process of reinvention that led to *Wonder Woman* seasons two and three shows that the executives in charge had in fact paid some attention to the failure of the Sixties comics. Diana Prince got a makeover – her thick-rimmed glasses disappeared, she started literally letting her hair down, and she clearly began to pay attention to the fashions of the day – but this time Wonder Woman was not left behind. The two aspects of her personality attain a roughly equal importance in season two; in many ways Diana appears to personify brain while Wonder Woman provides brawn, but fundamentally they work together. The importance of the Wonder Woman costume is emphasized in seasons two and three; in fact, the outfit is portrayed as essential to Diana's superheroics. The uniform is the source of most of her powers; without it, she is as helpless as any other woman. This claim is never fully explored – she must have some martial arts training, for example, which would not necessarily desert her when she was Diana Prince – but without the costume she is portrayed as an 'ordinary girl,' in a nod to the ethos behind the 'mod' period in the comics. As Diana, she is capable enough, certainly one of the new breed of liberated women; it is, after all, on Diana Prince's merits that she holds a position as a spy.

²¹³ "Wonder Woman," Charles Fox and Norman Gimbel.

²¹⁴ Daniels, *The Complete History*, 145.

Nevertheless, as Diana she is sometimes perilously close to becoming a damsel in distress, constantly kidnapped, tied up, knocked out, or sealed into a shipping crate. Yet this damsel does rescue herself; by effecting a transformation into Wonder Woman, she can get herself out of any situation, no matter how dire. The association between the costume and the strength with which she defends America emphasizes the importance of her patriotic attachment; it must be in evidence at all times, the flashiness reminding the audience where her allegiance lies. The powers spring from her desire to defend America; they are a reward and a symbol of approval from a country that needs her badly, but needs to maintain its perception of itself more.

More interesting, though, is the way the show adapted to provide Diana with her link to American national identity. Rather than involving her with the Army – a somewhat more problematic position in the Seventies than in the Forties – they updated her position and recruited her to the fictional IADC. The IADC, or Inter-Agency Defense Command, was a CIA-esque spy agency, concerned with protecting America from criminals within and outside of its borders, as well as from the occasional alien invasion (the latter may seem absurd, but consider that popular science fiction had long been providing metaphors for the Cold War²¹⁵). It is notable that the IADC *is* fictional – in the 1970s, American intelligence agencies were not seen as competent or even honest.²¹⁶ Placing Wonder Woman as an intelligence officer served two functions. First, it aligned her with American national interests again, emphasizing the importance of the *new* kinds of wars – the ones that are won, not by brute force as had been the case in the 1940s, but with covert operations. This is a clear nod to the importance of human intelligence in the Cold War; Wonder Woman is still determined to protect America, but here she does so in keeping with the changing face of modern warfare. Second, fictionalizing the intelligence agency took advantage of the associations Wonder Woman herself brought to the show in order to affect the perception of the IADC. In the comics, Diana worked for the Army first. After her mod reboot, she first worked for the United Nations as a translator, then for the United Nations Crisis Bureau. She briefly trained to be an astronaut. Finally, she returned to the military as an air force captain in the Pentagon's Special Assignments Bureau.²¹⁷ All these jobs reflect her aspiration to improve the world. She embodies the ideals that America likes to represent itself as having; by extension, so too does the IADC. Wonder Woman

²¹⁵ See, e.g., Eric Smoodin "Watching the Skies: Hollywood, the 1950s, and the Soviet Threat," *Journal of American Culture* 12.2 (Summer, 1989).

²¹⁶ Tim Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes: The History of the CIA* (New York: Doubleday, 2007), 142.

²¹⁷ Greenberger, *Amazon. Hero. Icon*, 101.

would never work for an organization of which she didn't approve. The IADC must then pass the Wonder Woman test: it promotes the best and the brightest of American patriotism.

The Wonder Woman theme song was updated for the new version and contains some telling differences from the original:

All the world is waiting for you
 And the wonders that you do
 In your satin tights
 Fighting for our rights
 And the old red, white, and blue
 All of us are counting on you
 And the power you possess
 Putting all your might
 On the side of right
 And our courage to the test
 Wonder Woman
 Get us out from under, Wonder Woman
 Here to fight the force of evil
 And your chance won't be denied
 Woman of the hour
 With your super power
 We're so glad you're on our side
 You're a wonder, Wonder Woman²¹⁸

In the original version, Wonder Woman was "fighting for your rights" – ie, her own rights. In this version, however, she is "fighting for *our* rights," or the rights of the viewing audience. The audience is "counting on" her putting all her "might on the side of right" in order to "fight the force of evil." The suggestion is that America is the "right" she is to defend in order to help the world achieve peace. The lines "Putting all your might / On the side of right" appear in the opening sequence over images of a dossier labeled "Top Secret" being read by Steve Trevor; this association too emphasizes that her spy skills will be important to her defense of the realm. "We're so glad you're on our side," the song

²¹⁸ "Wonder Woman," by Charles Fox and Norman Gimbel, recorded 1977.

declares, but really it merely emphasizes that their "side" is the only one that would enable Wonder Woman to perform her miracles.

One notable difference between the television series and the comics is the erasure of Steve Trevor as Diana's love interest. ABC executives decided against introducing a new love interest in order to avoid romantic clichés and, according to executive producer Douglas S. Cramer, maintain the show's focus on Diana.²¹⁹ In the *Wonder Woman* comic, Diana's immediate romantic infatuation with Steve Trevor is a strong driving force in her desire to leave Paradise Island; it informs her choice of secret identity are meant to rescue Steve, saving the world almost as an afterthought. In seasons two and three of *Wonder Woman*, however, Diana is faced with Steve Trevor Junior, the son of the man whom she knew in the 1940s, who is thus not a romantic interest at all. While in the comics Diana was always portrayed as rather mousy, revealing her full beauty only as Wonder Woman, in the television show she is fashionable and attractive in costume and in her civilian identity. Several men hit on her in the course of the show; unlike her comics-self, who is too flustered by the attention to enjoy it, this Diana takes it in her stride, rebuffing them kindly but with a humour that ensures she maintains control of the interactions. Like another famously single spy, Bond's Miss Money Penny, Diana's singleness "does not allow the male/female, active/passive dynamic to stand."²²⁰ She is in control of her romantic life as well as her career. Steve too gets to engage in his share of flirtatious behaviour, which helps the show present Diana not as a prude or a nymphomaniac, but as a normal liberated woman with a normal romantic life.

The easygoing regularity with which Diana's sexuality is handled is a definite shift from the portrayals of female spies in the Sixties, which I explored in Chapter One. In *Get Smart*, of course, 99's sexuality is almost a threat to the nation even after she and Max are married: her journey to motherhood nearly destroyed America at least twice. In *The Avengers* there is also a distinct correlation between female sexuality and service to the nation, as Emma's marriage gets in the way of her continued partnership with Steed. Diana does seriously consider a relationship with an alien vigilante named Andros (Dack Rambo) in the Season Two episodes "Mind Stealers from Outer Space," parts 1 and 2. The implication is that Diana's extraordinary abilities make it impossible for her to find an equal in America; Andros matches her skills, but Diana must reject the Other in favour of

²¹⁹ Douglas S. Cramer, "The Return of Wonder Woman DVD Commentary," *Wonder Woman: The Complete Second Season* (Burbank, CA: Warner Home Video, 2005), DVD.

²²⁰ Brabazon, "Britain's best line of defense," 207.

the nation she defends. The narrative both emphasizes Diana's sexual eligibility and yet ties her more closely to America by virtue of her positioning of the nation's needs above her own desires. That Diana is allowed to be single – and to remain single throughout the course of the series without feeling the need to remonstrate with herself – is partially a function of the burgeoning feminist sexual politics of the Seventies. With Wonder Woman on the cover of *Ms.* magazine, after all, she could hardly be seen to be regressive in her political stance. This position of privilege allows her to illustrate the growing strength of the American woman and the American spy; she stands as a model for the new breed of female workers whose strength in the workplace eclipses their sexual presence.

Unlike the other spies I discuss in this thesis, Diana does not explicitly take on or parallel the role of the housewife. I believe she avoids this fate because she is at once both branded American and ineluctably foreign. Diana's patriotism is literally always on display when she is onscreen in her costume. She does not need to be recuperated into the heterosexual family in order to protect the nation. Her foreignness also makes her unsuitable for the role of American mother. She does portray maternal aspects at points: she cares for Steve Trevor Jr. because of her relationship with Steve Trevor Sr., and the multitude of young men and women who appear in the series inevitably look to her for guidance. This persona is made explicit in "The Man Who Could Move the World," when Diana reveals that she saved Ishido and his brother when they were children. Despite her superheroic maternal instincts, however, she is punished for not conforming to the housewife role. Her home is easily penetrable and is regularly the site of brawls, robberies, and even kidnappings. It is also her unsuitability for the home that marks her most obviously as Other: when she returns to Man's World in "The Return of Wonder Woman," she is challenged over her inability to understand that the price of rent and household goods has increased since the 1940s. She is an imperfect consumer and thus an imperfect homemaker. Notably, these confusions are only found in the television series; in the comics Diana is well-informed about finances and society.

Also unique to the television series is Diana's work as a spy. Although she was described as such in the comics' 'mod' period, due mostly to the influence of Emma Peel, at no time did she actually work for a government or covert agency. Updating the television show to the 1970s did not necessarily mean that Diana's type of employment had to change: by that time in the comics, she was once again working with Steve Trevor in the Pentagon. Yet change it does with Diana's move to the IADC. Diana's role as a spy was not entirely different than that of an Army officer. She was still tied to the defense and

support of the American country and government, emphasizing the continued relation between the United States and Diana's stated mission of restoring love and peace to the world. Couching this message in Cold War terms meant directing it against the Commies rather than the Nazis, but positioning Diana within the American public service reiterated her belief that America was still on the right side regardless of which war they were fighting. More importantly, however, Diana's reincarnation as a spy trades on the prevailing popular conception of espionage and reveals the importance of its portrayal in American culture.

Understanding and Repeating the Past

The first two episodes of *The New Adventures of Wonder Woman* – not including the pilot – deal with the relationship between America and the rest of the espionage world by recasting Cold War anxieties in the shape of former enemies. In 2.02, "Anschluss '77," the plot recalls the Nazi threat of the Second World War, providing a bridge into the new series for fans of the old while simultaneously reminding the audience of the successes Wonder Woman has achieved on behalf of America. The episode begins with Steve and Diana discussing Wonder Woman's mysterious reappearance and what the world was like when she first entered Man's World – "back when I wore a cloak and carried a dagger for the OSS,"²²¹ says their boss Joe. Joe's statement creates a link for the audience between the real OSS²²² and the fictional IADC; it aligns the government with Wonder Woman's successes, which Steve and Diana were celebrating, and it ensures that the audience knows that the Nazis were brought down by a combination of American efforts. This leads directly into Diana's discovery that despite having left Man's World for more than three decades, her first assignment on her return is to deal with more Nazis. She and Steve are sent to South America to investigate a former Nazi sympathizer who has turned up in connection with the phrase "Anschluss '77." On investigation, they discover a compound full of neo-Nazi soldiers and scientists who plan to celebrate "the thirty-ninth anniversary of the Fuhrer's Austrian Anschluss"²²³ by cloning him and starting a new Nazi empire in South America. They must infiltrate the camp, overpower the new Hitler, and reduce him back to his component molecules by reversing the cloning machine.

²²¹ "The Return of Wonder Woman," *Wonder Woman*, directed by Alan Crosland (1977; Burbank, CA: Warner Home Video, 2005), DVD.

²²² The OSS – the Office of Strategic Services – was created in 1942 and transformed into the CIA in 1945.

²²³ "Anschluss '77," *Wonder Woman*, directed by Alan Crosland (1977; Burbank, CA: Warner Home Video, 2005), DVD.

This story integrates several aspects of Cold War anxieties with reassurances of America's abilities and inevitable success. The resurgence of the Nazi threat provides a suitably threatening enemy without forcing the audience to directly consider the dangers affecting them at the time. Though fresh in the American collective memory, that war has been overcome; it follows that having been defeated once, the new breed of Nazis can be eradicated as well. This is even a chance to improve on the past; the original Anschluss, the annexation of Austria by Germany on 12 March 1938, was against the terms of the Treaty of Versailles, yet the Allies never reacted to it. The episode allows the Allied forces to prevent the reoccurrence of an event that they never punished as they should have. The use of technology in this episode also echoes tension about the capabilities of Russian scientists of the era. In the wrong hands, technology is an incredible threat: while Steve and Diana immediately laud the cloning machine for its potential use in medicine, the neo-Nazis are only interested in its ability to reincarnate Hitler. The American forces are quickly able to turn the technology to their own needs, however, and use it to destroy Hitler, thus de-powering the enemy threat and emerging victorious once more. It is not difficult to read this as a parable of the space race, the arms race, or any of the myriad other technological battles in which America and Russia engaged.

Tellingly, the story is woven not just as the triumph of American ingenuity, but as a success of American espionage; Joe's reminder of his OSS past only introduces the topic. There are spies working on both sides: one of the IADC's agents manages to communicate the vital evidence about Anschluss '77 in the nick of time, while one of the neo-Nazis' plants nearly sends Diana to her death. Even Wonder Woman herself is immediately reframed as a spy: the Nazis refer to her as "an American intelligence agent from the Forties,"²²⁴ when at the time she was nothing of the sort. Nonetheless, the reference reminds the audience of the successes that American espionage had during the war: if even the Nazis fear American spies, they must have been extremely effective. The dialogue also positions Wonder Woman as representative of American intelligence then and now. Diana is described in the episode as "a good agent"²²⁵ for her ability to resist torture and willingness to sacrifice herself for her country; instead of relying on Steve to save her, she saves herself as Wonder Woman. This, then, is the portrait of the new American female spy. She is no longer relegated to the world of honeytraps and helplessness: instead she is in charge of herself and her own survival. By switching

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ Ibid.

Diana's cover identity from that of an army officer to an espionage agent, the show emphasizes the change in perception of what is necessary for the defense of America. In the 1940s, the Army was the major element in America's participation in the Second World War; it was the driving force behind America's fight for freedom and world peace. In the 1970s, however, the Cold War mentality dominates and is characterized by the lack of open aggression and physical battle engagements. Wartime strategy is instead dependent on the success of intelligence gathering and infiltration. Espionage work cannot be dismissed flippantly as 'cloak and dagger' but must be granted a measure of appreciation and respect.

Episode 2.03, "The Man Who Could Move the World," expands on these themes of American war successes, if in a more complicated manner. The episode again combines the fear of technology with the reappearance of a former, vanquished enemy. "The Man Who Could Move the World" deals with the creation of a machine meant to amplify brainwaves in order to make psychokinesis a viable possibility. Rather than technology developed by the enemy for nefarious purposes, as in "Anschluss '77," here the brainwave amplifying machine is being developed in association with the Pentagon and is thus unthreatening in and of itself. It is corrupted, however, when the test subject decides to steal the machine and its creator, Dr. Wilson, in order to enact his anti-American revenge scenario – for the psychokinetic in question, Ishido, is Japanese. There is a clear line drawn between the development of technology for (American) defense and its use for (foreign) personal gain. Although American relations with Japan are more cordial than ever, their involvement with the Axis ensures they remain unfit for equal involvement in weapons development: Ishido can be used to test the machine but cannot himself be trusted to use it wisely.

Unlike the clone of Adolf Hitler in "Anschluss '77," however, Ishido is not interested in personal gain; he wants to revenge himself against America for the injustices he and his family suffered when they were forcibly relocated into Japanese internment camps during the Second World War. Ishido is positioned as both villain and victim, a much more nuanced view than with the previous episode's neo-Nazis. While the episode does not flinch from presenting the internment camps as a negative part of American history, one of which they are ashamed, it also does not show Ishido as completely justified in his feelings of mistreatment. Much of his resentment comes from his belief that Wonder Woman caused his brother to be killed, yet this turns out to be false: in fact, she rescued his brother, and only failed to rescue Ishido himself because he eluded her. America is thus

able to retain the moral high ground, as the truth of Wonder Woman's actions is literally that she was trying to take care of those who were incapable of caring for themselves. This defense is uncomfortably close to the American claims that the Japanese were interred for their own protection, yet by invalidating Ishido's primary complaint, the show acknowledges the error of the camps while still presenting America as the kindly educator of the ignorant foreigner.

Indeed, the magnanimity of the American spirit is further shown in the conclusion of the episode, as Steve and Diana drop all charges and instead invite Ishido to demonstrate his ability with the brainwave machine. When he fails, they reveal that the true point of the meeting was to reunite him with the brother he thought dead, emphasizing that he had been wrong all along about the cruelty of the American forces. The munificence these actions display is slightly blunted by Diana's admission that they deliberately sabotaged Ishido's test of the brainwave machine, thus ensuring that he would believe himself incapable of launching another psychokinetic attack against America and that the IADC could retain the working technology for American interests. The final exchange between Steve, Diana, and their boss Joe emphasizes the vision of America that the show attempts to conjure:

Joe: There were some tragic errors after the hysteria that followed Pearl Harbor.

Diana: Well, I guess that's why pencils have erasers. It's a shame, but we learn from our mistakes.

Steve: We've learned that East is no longer simply East.

Joe: Agreed. Our relationship with Japan has never been better.²²⁶

Like "Anschluss '77," "The Man Who Could Move the World" revisits a regrettable period in American history. In "Anschluss '77," the Nazi threat is quashed, a reimagining of the Allies' lack of action during the initial Anschluss that both reminds the audience who won the war and suggests that America is capable of making more successful decisions about its wartime exploits than previously. In "The Man Who Could Move the World," the characters do not attempt to redress the wrongs enacted during the internment camp era: though they express regret amongst themselves, while in Ishido's presence they only refer to the necessity of leaving the past in the past. Similarly, though Joe claims that Japanese-American relations have "never been better," the IADC's actions belie that claim. The Japanese, like the Germans, provide a convenient scapegoat onto which the

²²⁶ Ibid.

audience's Cold War anxieties can be displaced. That they cannot be trusted is implied by the refusal to re-equip Ishido with the psychokinetic machine. Both the Germans and the Japanese take on the role of foreign others who require the helping – or hindering – hand of America; the outcome of the episodes validates the type of overreaching that typified American foreign policy in Vietnam and Chile.²²⁷ Moreover, Japanese – and thus foreign in general – technological prowess is devalued. Ishido cannot construct the machine, only operate it, and is unable to recognize when it is sabotaged by the IADC. America's technological advantage in the Cold War is thus shown in their mastery of the brainwave amplifier: it remains operational, but should only be used by patriotic Americans in the defense of their country, a category into which Ishido can apparently never fit.

Old enemies, new allies

With Wonder Woman's bonafides established by the emphasis on her past deeds and their position in her continued mission to defend America, the show proceeded to update her storylines, drawing her into contemporary situations. In 2.04, "The Bermuda Triangle Crisis," Diana must deal with elements of the contemporary Cold War framework such as spy planes and missile test sites. Like "Anschluss '77," "The Bermuda Triangle Crisis" takes an embarrassing incident in American war history and uses Wonder Woman's incredible powers to recuperate the blot on their history; here she reimagines a victory over the 1960 U-2 spy plane incident in which, on 1 May 1960, an American U-2 spy plane was shot down over Soviet Airspace. Then-President Eisenhower denied that the plane had been involved in covert operations and was thus embarrassed when then-Premier Khrushchev revealed the pilot had survived, as had the photographs he took of Soviet military bases. Both the spying and the lying caused Soviet-American relations to deteriorate. "The Bermuda Triangle Crisis" reaches back to this event, a point in the Cold War that caused American spies to lose face, and reworks it as a superheroic test. The embarrassment of the failed cover-up attempt made after the U-2 spy plane was discovered is made acceptable by invoking the confounding geography of the Bermuda Triangle, implying that American mistakes are due to outside interference rather than their own incompetence; ultimately the loss of the spy planes in the episode is shown to be part of an enemy plot, further freeing America from culpability and rehabilitating the image of American espionage.

²²⁷ Wheen, *Strange Days Indeed*, 159.

This episode also gives us one of the only references in the CBS seasons to Diana's Paradise Island home and the Amazons who were previously so important to her. While the ABC season included Debra Winger as "Wonder Girl" and frequent visits to and by Diana's mother, Queen Hippolyta (Cloris Leachman/Carolyn Jones), the updated show no longer places the same importance on Diana's origins. Nevertheless, family is the one element that renders Diana uncertain of her duty; when the IADC plans to test-detonate a nuclear missile in the Bermuda Triangle, where Paradise Island is located, Diana is forced to choose between undertaking the mission as assigned and sabotaging it to save her family. Though the detonation is ultimately averted without Diana's interference, the episode shows that Diana's loyalty to her family must be made subordinate to her loyalty to America. The anxieties around nuclear testing and test sites appear in several episodes over the course of the show, particularly appropriate as the late Seventies marked a rise in such political posturing for the first time since the beginning of the decade. *Wonder Woman* presents nuclear testing as a necessary element in the nation's defense, reminding the audience of the sacrifices they must make to ensure America's eventual victory, by strength of will if not strength of arms. Though Diana does not have to sacrifice Paradise Island in "The Bermuda Triangle Crisis," the audience is left believing that she would have done so if necessary in order to serve the greater good.

Season Three was characterized by a move away from the more traditional spy narratives; episodes like 3.05, "Disco Devil," and 3.08, "Skateboard Wiz," reflect the show's move towards 'modern' concerns. The latter end of the season takes place largely in L.A. rather than Washington and introduces a new cast of characters, among them a teenage boy who knows that Wonder Woman and Diana Prince are the same person. At the same time, the Diana persona begins to dominate the screen-time; Wonder Woman mostly appears when Diana needs to be able to wield brute force. These developments suggest that the producers were angling towards a new direction for Season Four, one reminiscent of the comics' mod period where Diana Prince dominated and the storylines reflected what was 'hip and happening.' Ratings began to decline, however, and the show was not renewed, emphasizing a lesson that the mod period should have taught already: Wonder Woman's appeal depends largely on her patriotic appearance and actions. Erasing one of these, much less both, in favour of a smaller canvas makes her less appealing. Removing the need for Diana to present "two good selves, one Amazon [and]

the other human,"²²⁸ suggests that acceptance of female strength has progressed to a point where she no longer needs to "pretend to be weaker and more submissive than she really is."²²⁹ The question is not whether Diana's 'human self' is strong enough, however, but whether it is patriotic enough. Without the markers of American identity, the "old red, white, and blue," Diana's powers are effectively curtailed.

Conclusion

When Wonder Woman appeared on television in the autumn of 1976, she was immediately recognizable by a vast swathe of the American public, far more than had actually read her comic book adventures. Thanks to the publicity surrounding her ill-omened mod makeover in the comics, the popular culture consciousness was aware of two facts about the Amazing Amazon: first, due to Gloria Steinem's crusading, her importance as a feminist icon was entrenched in the popular imagination; second, after the illustrated costume debate, both the image and the importance of Wonder Woman's original red-white-and-blue costume came to represent the best of American patriotism. Both these qualities were inherent in *The New Original Wonder Woman* as it originally debuted on ABC, but only when the show was reimagined by CBS as *The New Adventures of Wonder Woman* were these two aspects of the Wonder Woman character really put to use. Making Diana Prince a spy played on the patriotic bent of her appearance while simultaneously reflecting the glory of her superheroic achievements back onto the slightly tarnished visage of American intelligence agencies. In an era where "women as a group were moving away from covert power based on emotional and sexual manipulations in the private realm of family and marriage and toward overt exercises of power,"²³⁰ the importance of Diana's civilian identity maps onto an increased acceptance of female strength. This perceived gender equality allows her super-spy persona take priority over her heroic appearance, suggesting that within the breast of every American secret agent beats the heart of a superhero whose duty was to defend her – or his – country.

Lynda Carter's Diana also had to translate onto the screen a character who former DC Comics president Jenette Kuhn called "the first feminist in popular fiction."²³¹ The

²²⁸ Lori Landay, *Madcaps, Screwballs, and Con Women: The Female Trickster in American Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), 147.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, 192.

²³¹ Quoted in Daniels, *The Complete History*, 201.

statuesque Carter embodied the grace and strength the character possessed while simultaneously imbuing her with beauty and confidence as both Diana Prince and Wonder Woman. Her representation of a modern woman – one allowed both to be fashionable and to punch any man who tried to intercept her through a brick wall - made a distinct impression even on a television landscape that was not without its share of female autonomy. Though shows like *Charlie's Angels* (ABC, 1976-1981) and *The Bionic Woman* (ABC/NBC 1976-1978) presented similar images of strong women, Wonder Woman transcended them all. Diana defined beauty and power in a way that defied the stereotypes of the female spy: the gentle sincerity that characterized her made it impossible to fit her into the image of a Mata Hari spy-seductress, while her super-strength and other powers kept her from the meek Edith Cavell image. Like the generations of women making their way into the workplace, she insisted on carving out a place for herself in the popular imagination.

By using a character whose symbolism was already established in the collective consciousness, the *Wonder Woman* television show was able to put the pre-existing brand recognition to work for them. The patriotic, popular Amazon Princess presented audiences with a reason to believe in the strength and honour of the women and men who were defending their country in the covert Cold War. She was able to take the didactic position that she had so long inhabited in her comics persona and inform the American public of the importance that loyalty to their country held, as shown by the knowledge that America had inspired such a heroine. Though her earnest patriotism would not be diminished in the next female spy to appear on America's small screens, the role she inhabited would change dramatically. Diana demonstrated the ability of women to achieve and even surpass men in areas, such as superheroics, that had traditionally been masculine. The next step in the feminist work of the female spy was to approach outright the role that had constantly been haunting the progress of the female spy: the housewife.

God bless the American housewife
How she does it all I'll never know
God bless the American housewife
She could use a miracle for sure
God bless the American housewife
*Cleanin' up the world for you and me*²³²

Glasnost: Scarecrow and Mrs. King

As the Cold War progressed, television representations of it moved away from the frivolous and came to represent it in a manner that was more true to life. In the Seventies, spy dramedies were loud and exciting. *The New Adventures of Wonder Woman* echoes the comics from which the character was drawn; the episodes are characterized by bright colours, outlandish plots, and larger-than-life characters. They are the Seventies writ large, but as more of a parody than a true representation. By the Eighties, *Scarecrow and Mrs. King* abandons the attempt to attract the teen demographic through contemporary fashion. Networks were making deliberate attempts to create politically conservative programming in order to capitalize on the rightward shift occurring across the country,²³³ and *Scarecrow* epitomizes this attempt. The show displays a bureaucratic, almost industrial feel, reflective of America's insular politics; it is gritty, realistic, and dark. Much of the action takes place in the office or the home, a sharp contrast to the varied settings to which *Wonder Woman* travelled in her quests to save the world. Some of the changes are due to the fact that between *Wonder Woman* going off the air in 1978 and *Scarecrow and Mrs. King* debuting in 1983, broadcasting standards relaxed, allowing more explicit violence; the cartoonish, bloodless fights in *Wonder Woman* gave way to guns with bullets that didn't bounce off anyone's bracelets, but found homes in non-superhuman flesh. In general, American television during the height of the Cold War speaks "in the public imaginary as the apparatus *sine qua non* of unmediated reality,"²³⁴ but the somber mien of Eighties television comes from more than just an attempt to present a more truthful face of the nation. *Scarecrow* reflects a more self-contained America, one whose gaze is turned inward to the troubles within the country: the threat from the outside is already established, but its internal politics are unstable.

²³² SHeDAISY, vocal performance of "God Bless the American Housewife," by Jann Arden and Russell Broom, recorded 2005 on *Music From and Inspired By Desperate Housewives*, Hollywood Records, CD.

²³³ Bodroghkozy, *Groove Tube*, 240.

²³⁴ Nadil, "Cold War Television," 146.

The Eighties are also a 'backlash era' in terms of the representation of feminism on television.²³⁵ This backlash, which does not merely take place on television, is driven by Reagan-era new conservatism and largely shaped around "a repudiation of sexual politics, the distinctively radical core of the women's liberation movement of the 1960s and 1970s,"²³⁶ thus forcing the return to more traditional roles, particularly those of "wife and mother."²³⁷ Feminism is actively attacked on and off television as "irrelevant and/or dangerous to women's (and men's) lives"²³⁸ and *Scarecrow and Mrs. King* extends that threat to the nation itself. Julie D'Acci points out in her discussion of *Scarecrow's* contemporary *Cagney and Lacey* that the intersection between feminism and the working woman is particularly troubling to network television, often resulting in openly feminist depictions of women being forced to soften their characters in order to bring them "back in line with conventional television notions of femininity."²³⁹ *Scarecrow*, in contrast, is in many ways already performing that role by casting Kate Jackson as Amanda: Jackson's role as Sabrina Duncan in the jiggle-era classic *Charlie's Angels* would still be fresh in the audience's consciousness, and her transformation from nubile martial artist to vacuum-wielding mother was itself a 'softening' of the female or feminist presence on screen. If the Eighties are "a decade marked by heightened ambivalence about women's sexual and socio-economic status, their personal and professional locations," then the reimagination of an Angel as a divorcée who finds true love and marries while attempting to provide for her family encapsulates that uncertainty perfectly.

Amanda's status as divorcée, mother, and, eventually, wife once more does not, for the first time in the shows I study, reflect negatively on her career as a spy. However, this is not an uncomplicatedly positive change, as the role of the housewife is such a complicated one within the feminist movement. Portraying the housewife as a contributor to the safety of the nation performs some of the same functions that Bonnie Dow identifies in the 1970s sitcom *Mary Tyler Moore*, which

offered a very qualified feminist vision that blended discourses of the 'new woman' – working and living on her own outside of the confines of past domestic sitcoms –

²³⁵ Gillis and Hollows, "Introduction," 2.

²³⁶ Judith Stacey, "The New Conservative Feminism," in *Feminist Studies* 9.3, 559-583, 561.

²³⁷ Ibid, 563.

²³⁸ Elyse Roe Helford, "Introduction," in *Fantasy Girls: Gender in the New Universe of Science Fiction and Fantasy Television*, ed. Elyse Roe Helford (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000, 1-12), 5.

²³⁹ Julie D'Acci, "Defining Women: The Case of *Cagney and Lacey*," in *Private Screenings: Television and the Female Consumer*, eds. Lynn Spigel and Denise Mann (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992, 169-200), 169.

with traditional messages about the need for woman to continue fulfilling traditional female roles as the caretakers and nurturers in the cobbled together 'family' of the workplace.

Scarecrow does not merely make the workforce part of the family for which Amanda is responsible – although she does take on that role, literally marrying into her workplace by the end of the show – but makes the nation itself the family that requires nurturing and cleaning up after. Shows built around single career women nearly vanished in the Eighties,²⁴⁰ and the female spy was particularly needed to bolster gender roles.

Reproducing the Norm in American Television

One of the central conflicts of the narrative of the female spy is the tension inherent between a woman's duty to her family and her duty to her nation. This conflict is made explicit in *Scarecrow and Mrs. King*, though with a twist: rather than following a dedicated spy whose work interferes in her family life – or vice versa – *Scarecrow* details the accidental introduction of a divorced mother of two into the world of Cold War espionage. Amanda King becomes involved in a case only by accident of proximity, but she and loner spy Lee 'Scarecrow' Stetson (Bruce Boxleitner) prove to work so well together that she is engaged by 'The Agency' as his partner on a more permanent basis. Amanda constantly has a difficult time reconciling her duty to her country with her existence as a suburban housewife, especially as 'national security' means she must lie to her mother and children about the nature of the work she does. She is naïve, politically unaware, and enamored of her mental image of espionage as "Danger! Excitement! Intrigue!"²⁴¹ Nonetheless, her fierce loyalty, and occasionally the skillset of the suburban housewife, makes her an invaluable asset to the Agency.

Amanda's occupation as a housewife is placed on a level of equal importance to her work as a spy. The opening credits emphasize this parity. Beginning with a series of shots of locations in Washington, D.C., central to the governance and history of the United States, they cut directly to scenes of Amanda as housewife and mother. The credits sequence places the typical American family home on a pedestal along with other ideological heroes of the nation. In doing so it adheres to a tradition nearly as old as the

²⁴⁰ Dow, *Prime Time Feminism*, 86.

²⁴¹ "Always Look a Gift Horse in the Mouth," *Scarecrow and Mrs. King*, directed by Corey Allan (1983; Burbank, CA: Warner Home Video, 2009), DVD.

medium itself of television acting "as a panacea for the broken homes and hearts of wartime life... to restore faith in family togetherness."²⁴² Though Spiegel is referring to the introduction and growth of television during the Second World War, the quote remains apt in light of the missions *Scarecrow* undertakes during the 'broken' politics of the Cold War. While *Scarecrow* is among many realistic spy genre shows of its era and before, it is the first one discussed in this thesis that takes place in an effective mirror of our world. The outré stylization of *The Avengers*, the satirical humour of *Get Smart*, and the elite superhumans of *Wonder Woman* all provided a reflection of their reality that verged on the carnivalesque. *Scarecrow*, however, holds up a mirror in which we are meant to see ourselves not as we could be, nor as we once were, but as we are. Alan Nadil suggests that Cold War-era American television "had a fundamental role in defining 'un-American' activities... in that it presented messages about non-subversive behaviours and the role models who exemplified it,"²⁴³ and *Scarecrow* adheres to this formula through the importance of the all-American wholesomeness of Lee and Amanda to the success of their missions. By conditioning audiences to this belief, the show can create categories of fact and manipulate that representation, and thus the audience, as it sees fit.

Our Heroes

Lee Stetson, codename 'Scarecrow,' is one of a long tradition of quintessentially American heroes. His very name emphasizes the nature of his archetype. The stetson is "one of the nation's most powerful symbols;"²⁴⁴ it conjures images of the American western, in which the good guys wore white hats and fought to keep their young country from succumbing to lawlessness. The reference is literalized in episode 4.11, "Santa's Got a Brand New Bag," when Lee's agency boss, Billy Melrose (Mel Stewart), receives a white cowboy hat as a Christmas present. More than any of the male agents discussed thus far in this work, Lee is the American equivalent of James Bond. He is a man's man, whose conquests fill not one, but four, little black books; he is the consummate agent, skilled in combat, diplomacy, languages... but not in the art of compromise. He works with Amanda initially only when forced: as she grows as an agent, however, he comes to regard her not only as a valued agent, but as a romantic partner.

²⁴² Spiegel, *Make Room for TV*, 2.

²⁴³ Nadil, "Cold War Television," 149.

²⁴⁴ Michael Coyne, *The Crowded Prairie: American National Identity in the Hollywood Western*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 1998), 1.

'The Agency,' for which Lee works and into which Amanda is inadvertently drawn, is a shadow organization: its relationship to the United States government is never completely defined. "The Agency, wow, I knew you guys existed," one civilian exclaims,²⁴⁵ suggesting it to be an off-the-books outfit. Yet its agents enjoy interagency cooperation with agents from the CIA, the FBI, even the DEA, and Billy appears to have a direct line to the White House. The Agency thus avoids evoking the negative associations held by the audience towards the FBI and the CIA while still portraying the efforts of an agency sanctioned by the government. Carefully walking this line allows the show to capitalize on several trends operating within television at the time of *Scarecrow's* production. In the seasons following the Watergate scandal, American television began to shift in its portrayals of both law enforcement officials and intelligence agents.²⁴⁶ Rather than casting them as beacons of shining American heroism, they were allowed to be fallible and vulnerable to criticism. The Inter-Agency Defense Command in *The New Adventures of Wonder Woman* pre-dated this portrayal; there the producers counted on an association with Wonder Woman's patriotism to convince audiences to consider the IADC in a different light than the untrustworthy CIA or FBI. Conversely, *Scarecrow* played into the tail end of the trend by ensuring the CIA and FBI were visible but often portraying them as less effective as the 'untainted' Agency.

Paradoxically, the show also capitalized on attempts to rebuild the popular media perception of American espionage agencies. After Reagan was first elected and throughout his first-term efforts to increase and utilize the CIA in particular, several new shows appeared in the crime drama genre. These shows – among them *McClain's Law* (NBC, 1981-1982), *Today's FBI* (ABC, 1981-1982), and *Code Red* (ABC, 1981-1982) – "sought to tap into perceived audience needs for strong male authority figures and a return to conservative values," but the majority were commercially unsuccessful.²⁴⁷ *Scarecrow* followed this formula, yet it succeeded where the other shows failed to find popular footing. Shows like *Today's FBI* blended reality and fiction by relying on real agencies to employ their fictional heroes, but their failure suggests audiences were not ready, in the early Eighties, to forgive these agencies their misdeeds so easily. *Scarecrow*, however, created a new target for American adulation, adroitly providing a new American hero in Lee and ensuring that the audience avatar, Amanda, was drawn to his mission without invoking the

²⁴⁵ "Suitable for Framing," *Scarecrow and Mrs. King*, directed by Harvey S. Laidman (1987; Burbank, CA: Warner Home Video, 2012), DVD.

²⁴⁶ Douglas Kellner, *Television and the Crisis of Democracy* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1990), 61.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 60.

spectre of corruption that still dogged the FBI and the CIA. The Agency are presented as the good guys within the narrative and have no external cynicism to contend with in the acceptance of their self-definition, enabling a higher degree of commercial and popular success than that achieved by the shows to which they are contemporary.

Within the narrative, the Agency does gain a three-letter acronym reminiscent of its real world counterparts, but only as a way of preserving its anonymity. The Agency operates under cover as a film company, International Federal Film, or IFF. This means that *Scarecrow* is a media production about a group of spies who conceal their efforts to save America behind a façade of the production of American media. The meta-textuality of this narrative choice reflects an awareness on the part of the producers of the growing relationship between media representation and public perception of politics, particularly in the Cold War era. Nadil charges that at the height of the Cold War, American television's "role as the apparatus of reality merged with its role as a technology of the surveillance state... producing a psychological (and, perhaps, characterological or even spiritual) manipulation of the viewing public."²⁴⁸ Shows like *Scarecrow* were particularly useful in that they not only defined the range of activities construed as subversive, but also portrayed as the norm the patriotic responses to these deviant activities. Amanda's character is a particularly excellent example of this manipulation of the public imaginary: little is as normative as the American housewife. Even her name reflects her role as every(wo)man; 'Amanda' was a highly popular name at the time and was consistently one of the top three female baby names in America throughout the early Eighties.²⁴⁹ Pitting Amanda against the Soviet threat simultaneously emphasizes the Othering of the USSR, reducing any possible popular empathy for them, and builds up the image of the patriotic American participating in the discovery and destruction of Soviet treachery. Casting Lee, Amanda, and their co-workers as intelligence officers under the guise of filmmakers is thus a sophisticated play on the reality of the American experience. While IFF 'produces' works such as a documentary on tractors, its employees heroically protect the conservative way of life enjoyed by middle America's farmers.

Scarecrow engages not only in representations of current-day hostilities, but in historical revisitations and reimaginings of recent events. In early 1987, episode 4.19, "All That Glitters," looked back three and a half years to America's October 1983 invasion

²⁴⁸ Nadil, "Cold War Television," 147.

²⁴⁹ "Top Names of the 1980s," *The Official Website of the U.S. Social Security Administration*, modified 14.05.2012, accessed 11.06.2012, <http://www.ssa.gov/OACT/babynames/decades/names1980s.html>.

of Grenada, an event that was congruent with *Scarecrow's* debut. "All That Glitters" explores the corruption and treasonous behaviour of two high-ranking soldiers involved in the invasion who used it as an opportunity for their own gain and whom the Agency must track down in order to atone for their behaviour. The storyline does not explicitly seek to justify the invasion in retrospect – a job already undertaken in American spy television by a 1984 episode of *Blue Thunder*²⁵⁰ – but does emphasize that corruption in military engagements has the potential to go undetected by superior officers. It also ensures the audience understands that the Agency – the real American 'good guys' – will seek to rectify such inequities the moment they are discovered. This episode is not merely a work of historical revisionism: it also utilizes television's "ability to embody current concerns and priorities within the stories it telecasts about the past."²⁵¹ "All That Glitters" thus simultaneously reminds viewers of (what it casts as) the unqualified success of the Grenada affairs while soothing fears about the continuing revelations of the Iran-Contra affair. These small 'improvements' to the historical view of spy agencies are delivered to an audience whose acceptance of the show demonstrates its willingness to embrace their intelligence operatives once more.

Cleanin' Up the World For You and Me

Although the narrative does not belittle Amanda's occupation, she is often verbally attacked by Francine Desmond (Martha Smith), who is the token female spy in the Agency before Amanda appears and who fits the more typical view of a female spy as glamorous and proficient at handling honeytrap operations. Despite her initial disdain for including a civilian in their operations, Francine is shown to be less competent at spycraft than Amanda is. In episode 1.01, "The First Time," Amanda is able to discover how classified information is being transmitted to enemy agents when the rest of the Agency cannot: the host of a daytime cooking show is encoding the leaked intel in her recipes. Ultimately the leak is traced to Francine, who is being drugged and interrogated during her private cooking lessons with the show's host. Francine's desire as a career woman to learn the skills that are Amanda's by right of her life as a wife and mother leaves Francine vulnerable to enemy attack. Amanda, the civilian, is twice as capable as Francine, the trained agent. Not only does Amanda – unlike Francine – not require rescuing in this

²⁵⁰ Kellner, *Television and the Crisis of Democracy*, 61.

²⁵¹ Edgerton, "TV as Historian," 3.

episode, she actually facilitates Lee's rescue, even piloting a helicopter under his direction while he escapes his bonds. While Francine is portrayed as a highly competent agent later in the series, Amanda easily eclipses her in the pilot. The implication is not that female spies are more capable in this new era: only by transcending the boundaries of the traditional female spy stereotype does Amanda display her true capabilities. The housewife is not a spectre to be feared here: rather, in keeping with the new conservatism I discussed in the introduction, it is the housewife that enables the safety of the nation.

Francine serves as a representation of the stereotypical female agent, in sharp contrast to the squeaky-clean image Amanda presents. Francine is explicitly stated to be one of the Agency's experts in the art of seduction, and one who enjoys her work: she and Lee exchange risqué banter about her talents and successes, implying her duties include not only flirtation and seduction but also consummation.²⁵² Francine is not vilified or shamed for this aspect of her job, however, indicating both the extent to which sexuality has become popularly accepted as a tool of the female agent's trade and the shift in the perceived morality of espionage in the Cold War era. She is clearly portrayed as in control of her sexuality, whether using it on an Agency-mandated mission or on her own initiative, and even embraces the stereotype to the point that it can be played for comedy. In episode 4.20, "Suitable for Framing," she asks a favour of a bespectacled junior agent, who lasciviously suggests he knows how she can pay him back: when she shrugs off her jacket and advances on him agreeably, however, he backs away, overwhelmed, and leaves her to complete her work undisturbed. She also enjoys interrogating prisoners, however, and is capable of playing both the 'good cop' and the 'bad cop' as required: she challenges Lee's ability to question prisoners by pointing out that "Just because I am a woman does not mean I will always be subtle and delicate."²⁵³ Her skill at seduction is thus shown to have its roots in an ability to read people that makes her, along with Lee, one of the Agency's top two agents.²⁵⁴

Francine expresses her criticism of the Agency's desire to involve Amanda, a 'civilian,' in more of their cases than absolutely necessary as a concern about Amanda's lack of training and the possibility that Amanda will be injured or cause the mission to be compromised. Francine appears to be motivated not by altruism, but by jealousy,

²⁵² "There Goes the Neighbourhood," *Scarecrow and Mrs. King*, directed by Rod Holcomb (1983; Burbank, CA: Warner Home Video, 2009), DVD.

²⁵³ "Brunettes Are In," *Scarecrow and Mrs. King*, directed by Christian I. Nyby II (1984; Burbank, CA: Warner Home Video, 2010), DVD.

²⁵⁴ "Suitable for Framing," *Scarecrow and Mrs. King*.

however, as her protests are loudest when Amanda is chosen to attend an elegant event as Lee's date.²⁵⁵ The cattiness Francine displays is one of the ways in which she is shown to be inferior to Amanda: it implies that while Amanda is working for the Agency out of a sense of patriotism, Francine is motivated by her desire to hobnob with the famous and glamorous. Unlike 99 (see Chapter One) – who wears the guises of girl next door, femme fatale, and mother with equal facility – or Diana Prince – who serves America as well in her civilian identity as in her superheroic identity – Francine's skill as an agent is limited by her insistence on clinging to one aspect of her femininity. Amanda, even without training, pulls off several roles, ironically often due to skills she has learned as a mother. This dichotomy is particularly evident in episode 2.16, "Life of the Party," when Francine and Amanda are required to go undercover as maids and waitresses. Agency training does not cover these eventualities, apparently, and Francine does not have the skills required to successfully clean a house or serve unobtrusively at a party: she must defer, if grudgingly, to Amanda's expertise. This dichotomy prefigures the positioning of the female spy as a capitalist figure that Rosie White sees as occurring in the late 1990s.²⁵⁶ While the professional female spy remains aligned with corporate identity, interestingly it is Amanda's blue-collar skills that prove crucial to the mission and carry the cultural capital that White attaches to "spy skills" in later shows.²⁵⁷ Francine is successful, yes, but as a Career Woman she is perhaps too successful: she is literally 'too much woman' for the average man, as her ex-fiancé left her nearly at the altar because her strength and independence made him feel weak.²⁵⁸ Her singleness and refusal to be recuperated into the traditional family – in short, her feminist identity – literally threatens her ability to do her job and keep America safe. Her brashness provides a foil for Amanda's natural talent and allows the role of housewife and mother to develop cultural import. By contrasting Francine with Amanda, the show "works to integrate oppositional and resistant forces, including feminist discourses, but absolving and naturalizing them, usually into dominant discourses of the family, melodrama, and heterosexual romance."²⁵⁹ Francine is impaired by her refusal of cultural norms, while Amanda's absorption into them works to control the strength of the female spy.

²⁵⁵ "Always Look a Gift Horse in the Mouth," *Scarecrow and Mrs. King*.

²⁵⁶ White, *Violent Femmes*, 104.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 116.

²⁵⁸ "A Matter of Choice," *Scarecrow and Mrs. King*, directed by Burt Brinckerhoff (1987; Burbank, CA: Warner Home Video, 2012), DVD.

²⁵⁹ Robert H. Deming, "Kate and Allie: New Women and the Audience's Television Archive," in *Private Screenings: Television and the Female Consumer*, eds. Lynn Spigel and Denise Mann (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992, 203-214), 203.

If Francine is the newest incarnation of the glam superspy first embodied by Emma Peel (see Chapter One), then in many ways Amanda is the inheritor of the multifarious role incarnated by 99, only with a twist: where 99 began as the consummate spy and incorporated the role of mother later, Amanda begins as a mother and only slowly achieves success as a spy. Amanda is constructed as a point of instant identification for the viewing public in a different way from the other spies I have so far discussed. The audience never saw 99's home until she moved in with Max, while both Mrs. Peel's and Diana's flats were more extensions of their mod styles than welcoming retreats and were subject to regular invasions. *The Avengers* deliberately excluded representations of the lower classes,²⁶⁰ while *Get Smart* and *Wonder Woman* demonstrated unproblematic middle-class existences. With Amanda, however, we are immediately invited into the minutiae of an exceptionally ordinary, everyday life. Amanda's home rarely becomes the site of trauma: we enter with Amanda, rather than with any invading forces. The bulk of the time we spend with Amanda's family is in their kitchen, which is, as Julie Czerneda points out in "Over Suds," a site of homely intimacy and housewifely magic.²⁶¹ The recurrence of this setting is meant to remind the audience that Amanda is *just like* them – and they too should do their part to ensure the safety of their country. Every time Amanda picks up the telephone in her suburban kitchen and is summoned to defend the free world, she becomes the televisual equivalent of the British Home Front propaganda posters distributed during the privations of World War II. We're all in this together; do your part, they exhorted, and they too aimed at the housewife in her kitchen as a method of galvanizing the populace from the inside out.

As a divorced mother of two, Amanda lives with her sons and her mother in an idyllic suburban home, complete with backyard treehouse and white picket fence. Her status as a divorcée raising her children in what would then have been referred to as a 'broken home,' and struggling financially to do so, creates a parallel between her and the state of her country: America too, in the midst of the Cold War, is trying to recover from blows dealt by previous alliances. When the show began airing in 1983, it did so to a country where the divorce rate had more than tripled within a generation;²⁶² Amanda's reclamation of the divorced woman reflects national discomfort with this statistic. Still,

²⁶⁰ Brian Clemens, quoted in Rogers, *The Complete Avengers*, 132.

²⁶¹ Julie Czerneda, "Over Suds," in *Alias Assumed: Sex, Lies and SD-6*, ed Kevin Weisman (Dallas: Benbella Books, Inc., 2005), 187.

²⁶² "The number of separated and divorced women grew from 3.0 million in 1960 to 9.6 million in 1983. In 1983, 10.6% of the female population over age 15 was divorced compared to 4.6% in 1960." McLaughlin et al, *The Changing Lives of American Women*, 55.

Amanda is simultaneously able to be a single woman, free to engage in romantic entanglements, and a family woman, driven to continue her work with the Agency by the desire to make her country – and the world – a safe place for her children. Her drives to 'mend' her broken family, to support them, and to help save the world are all facilitated by Lee. Much of Amanda's value to Lee is situational, a result of who she is rather than what she can do. She initially becomes embroiled in his affairs merely by being in the right place at the right time for him to take advantage of her. As early as the second episode, however, Lee admits that Amanda brings skills to the field of espionage that even he cannot equal and that are just as necessary as those he possesses. In episode 1.02, "There Goes the Neighborhood," Lee and Amanda must pose as a married couple in order to crack a smuggling ring operating out of the suburbs. When Amanda is reluctant to join the mission, Lee coaxes her by pointing out that he has done tours in Morocco and Istanbul, speaks French, Dutch, and Urdu, but still needs her because, he claims, "What do I know about everyday life?"²⁶³ Lee's international travel and linguistic abilities cannot help him when his cover must blend in to 'everyday life;' only Amanda's specialized knowledge of and ability to exist in suburbia can ensure their mission will be a success.

Super-Mom to the Rescue

Amanda is the first female agent I have explored in this thesis whose skill at espionage is demonstrably lesser than that of her male counterpart. This distinction is partially the result of selection: had I chosen to examine series such as *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* or *Mission: Impossible*, for example, I would have had a much larger selection of junior agents about whom to theorize. I have specifically focused on shows where the female agent is either equal or superior to her counterpart, however. 99 was far more competent than bumbling Max; Emma held her own with and without Steed's assistance; and as Wonder Woman, Diana far outstripped Steve's not inconsiderable abilities and devotion to his country. At first, Amanda appears to be the exception to the rule, and indeed a regression, as her official role in the Agency once she is initially hired is effectively that of a secretary: she transcribes wiretaps, types reports, and on several occasions cleans Lee's apartment for him in order to better sort his receipts. She does everything except fetch the coffee. She is involved in several operations right from the beginning of her tenure, of course, but her inexperience is always evident. She is

²⁶³ "There Goes the Neighbourhood," *Scarecrow and Mrs. King*.

chronically unable to remember the code words used to gain entry to Agency headquarters, for example,²⁶⁴ and when Lee confides his concerns that there is a mole in the Agency, she is sure she can help because "we had a mole in our garden last winter."²⁶⁵ Her naïveté becomes a problem for the Agency not only when she mishandles investigations,²⁶⁶ but when a retired spy writes a tell-all threatening to expose the dangers of using civilians in intelligence work and uses Amanda as a case study.²⁶⁷ For much of the first season of the show, Amanda's only value to the Agency appears to lie in her novelty.

When Amanda does succeed on an assignment, she does so using skills related to her life as a suburbanite and, particularly, a mother. She escapes from rope bondage using techniques learned from her son's Junior Woodchuck training (1.20, "Weekend"); she navigates through the woods using a Junior Woodchuck map (1.10, "The Long Christmas Eve"); she uses a Little League pin to disarm a nuclear warhead (1.16, "Saviour"). Her involvement in community events enables her to grant the Agency access to places and people they could not otherwise have reached (2.05, "Charity Begins at Home"). Not only are these skills uncertain, however, they can also threaten the Agency and the country as easily as benefit them. In episode 2.13, "Spiderweb," Amanda is accused of being a double agent for the Soviets because she was observed entering the Czechoslovakian embassy as well as visiting a hardware store and purchasing the parts necessary to construct a shortwave radio. The subsequent secret investigation is carried out only reluctantly by the Agency, under orders from a higher power, but the seriousness with which the charge is taken emphasizes not only the Cold War-era mindset that anyone can be a traitor, but also the possibility that Amanda's housewifely skills are powerful enough to pose a serious threat to the safety of the United States of America. There is, of course, a simple explanation: Amanda's purchases were necessary for her son to build his science project. This misunderstanding echoes the misadventures in *Get Smart* occasioned by 99's motherhood affecting her competence as a spy; in Amanda's case, however, her maternal duties do not make her vulnerable to outside threats, but are

²⁶⁴ "The Saviour," *Scarecrow and Mrs. King*, directed by William Wyard (1984; Burbank, CA: Warner Home Video, 2009), DVD.

²⁶⁵ "The Mole," *Scarecrow and Mrs. King*, directed by Russ Mayberry (1984; Burbank, CA: Warner Home Video, 2009), DVD.

²⁶⁶ "The Artful Dodger," *Scarecrow and Mrs. King*, directed by Christian I Nyby II (1984; Burbank, CA: Warner Home Video, 2009), DVD.

²⁶⁷ "Double Agent," *Scarecrow and Mrs. King*, directed by John Patterson (1985; Burbank, CA: Warner Home Video, 2010), DVD.

themselves shown to be dangerous. When considered in this light, Amanda's supposedly meager offerings take on a new importance. The reimagination of the housewife here serves to emphasize its function as a site of undecidability in new visions of domestic femininity.²⁶⁸ The drudgery of housewifery is reinterpreted as a strength rather than a weakness: the housewife is shown to be a threat on par with any foreign spy.

Mr. and Mrs. Spy, Take Two

Starting as early as the fourth episode – nearly as soon as she becomes involved with the Agency on a semi-permanent basis – Amanda attempts to qualify for agent training in order to overcome the problem of her inexperience in the field. Initially the Agency is reluctant to accede to her demands: her value has, after all, been mostly in her unpredictability and non-standard abilities. Once she does begin training, however, her idiosyncratic methods do not disappear. In episode 3.03, "Over the Limit," Amanda consistently fails Agency firearm training because she cannot bring herself to pull the trigger on a human being; to complete the simulation she must fire the gun at least once, so she raises the muzzle and shoots at the ceiling. Later in the episode, when Lee and Francine are being held at gunpoint by an enemy agent, Amanda happens upon a discarded gun and repeats the action, firing at the ceiling: her shot hits a suspension cable and drops a crate on the enemy's head. Her progression into a capable agent is measurable, but also measured; it inevitably results in her shaping the Agency to her moral standards rather than being moulded into the Agency ideal. Her influence is perhaps most visible in her interactions with Lee, and his with her.

Although Amanda's relationship with Lee becoming romantic as well as professional was arguably a foregone conclusion from the show's inception, it is handled relatively subtly. The mutual attraction is built slowly over the course of the series, though it is teased as early as "There Goes the Neighborhood," when they are first undercover as a married couple (a recurring trope throughout the series). Their interest in each other is developed at roughly the same speed as is Amanda's spy training, which means they effectively occur concurrently. Lee's attraction to Amanda is not predicated on her ability as an intelligence agent: it is explicitly shown to predate her training, as in episode 1.07, "Service Above and Beyond," when the suggestion that she must function as a honeytrap makes him jealous. Nor does Amanda's attraction to Lee depend on either a civilian's

²⁶⁸ Stephanie Genz, "'I am not a Housewife, But...' Postfeminism and the Revival of Domesticity," in *Feminism, Domesticity, and Popular Culture*, eds. Stacy Gillis and Joanne Hollows (New York: Routledge, 2009, 49-62), 50.

wide-eyed wonder at his Bond-esque skills or the appreciation of a trained eye for exceptional workplace performance. Nevertheless, the implication remains that only as Amanda becomes a competent spy can she truly be an acceptable partner for him – in both senses of the word. This assumption is emphasized in episode 3.21, "Three Little Spies," in which Lee is forced to work with spies from the USSR and China on a case involving stolen nuclear weapons. Both countries send male agents who bring female 'assistants' with them, and Lee inevitably involves Amanda as well. Ultimately the female assistants prove to be agents in their own right, even, in the case of the Chinese, outranking the male agent. More importantly, however, the episode ends by revealing that both foreign pairs of agents are romantically involved. While relationships with co-workers – or 'dipping into company ink' – may be frowned upon in corporate America, within the world of espionage it may be nearly a necessity in order to circumvent the extensive issues of secrecy and urgency that can arise in the everyday life of a spy and which only another spy can truly understand.

It comes as no surprise that following this unbiased representation of spy relationships, Lee and Amanda's relationship begins to become more concrete. In episode 3.22, "All the World's a Stage," Amanda displays a significant improvement in her training efforts: she learns how to pick the lock of a pair of handcuffs. The training itself, conducted by Lee, appears to have a high-erotic effect on both him and Amanda: they nearly share a kiss during Amanda's practice session, only to be interrupted by a developing mission. Unsurprisingly, Amanda's new skill proves invaluable as she is required to break herself and Lee out of cuffs prior to their inevitable triumph. When they return to the office, then, instead of ignoring their attraction to each other – as had often occurred earlier in the series – Lee finally admits that he believes they should "get to know each other better."²⁶⁹ As they are about to kiss, Billy and Francine come looking for them, but Lee refuses to allow work to interfere: he locks the door and he and Amanda finally embrace. Though the scene is played for humour, it reminds viewers that even when both participants in a relationship are spies, they may endanger each others' careers.

Just as Amanda's increasing immersion in the world of espionage forces her to lie to her family, so too does her relationship with Lee. Moreover, she and Lee keep their romantic involvement a secret at the office as well. There is no explicit reason behind their secrecy, especially as Lee has engaged in office romances before – with Francine, for

²⁶⁹ "All the World's a Stage," *Scarecrow and Mrs. King*, directed by Sidney Hayers (1986. Burbank, CA: Warner Home Video, 2011), DVD.

example, the dissolution of which relationship clearly did not affect their ability to work together. The normalcy of Lee and Amanda's relationship is the only distinguishing feature whose presence might cause them to keep quiet: as opposed to Lee's previous flings and professed status as a solo operator both at work and in his personal life, his relationship with Amanda is a serious one and leads him to become a family man. Whatever the reason, the relationship remains essentially hidden at home and at work even after Amanda and Lee get married.

Interestingly, the marriage proposal follows a theme very similar to that of Max and 99 in *Get Smart*, though with somewhat more explicable background. In episode 4.06, "Night Crawler," Amanda is kidnapped and Lee is captured when he attempts to rescue her. Neither of them expects to escape the death trap they are left in, and with their emotional barriers broken down, Lee proposes and Amanda accepts. They are of course rescued, but are neither embarrassed nor upset by their mutual vulnerability. This setup is the inverse of that seen in *Get Smart*, wherein 99 had to lead Max into admitting his feelings; *Scarecrow*'s emphasis on the traditional family means that Amanda's sexuality is less of a threat if Lee is shown to exercise patriarchal control over it. While in the satirical *Get Smart* Max and 99's relationship becomes the property of the entire CONTROL agency, in *Scarecrow* Lee and Amanda try to keep their professional and personal lives separate.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, espionage is presented as a barrier to family relationships. Lee has his four little black books of previous conquests, but "never a Mrs. Spy, no little spies,"²⁷⁰ as established in the very first episode. Francine too lost her fiancé because of her strength and self-confidence, the very qualities that make her valuable to the Agency. Even Lee, whose preference for working alone is made much of throughout the series, regrets that spying has made it impossible for him to engage in serious relationships. He stays a spy, though, "because it has to be done, and because I'm good at it,"²⁷¹ putting the needs of his nation before his own desires. His decision echoes the dangers to the nation over which Max and 99 must triumph in order to celebrate their marriage; ultimately, however, the choice between work and family is not as inescapably binary as the one Emma Peel was forced to make. Amanda and Lee's difficulty in embarking on and then concealing their relationship is in sharp contrast to the 'Mr. and Mrs. Spy' relationship we

²⁷⁰ "The First Time," *Scarecrow and Mrs. King*, directed by Rod Holcomb (1983; Burbank, CA: Warner Home Video, 2009), DVD.

²⁷¹ "The Triumvirate," *Scarecrow and Mrs. King*.

saw in *Get Smart* in ways that cannot be explained merely by adherence to the different genre conventions of the sitcom versus those of a prime-time drama. *Scarecrow* takes place in an era where the gravity of America's political situation is not in doubt, but the country's ability to escape it often was. National security cannot take a back seat to personal matters, but must be paramount at all times. The willingness Lee and Amanda show to place America above their own personal happiness is an admonishment to the rest of the citizenry and their unwillingness to settle for the stagnation of détente.²⁷² Put your country ahead of yourself, *Scarecrow* advises, and both will succeed: after all, the series ends with Amanda and Lee married and trying to adjust to life with her children. The rebuilding of Amanda's 'broken' home parallels the ultimate resuscitation of America and the country's projected victory in the Cold War. Her marriage to Lee also emphasizes the conservative bent of the programme; while the lower marriage rates and higher divorce rates of the 1980s "point to a decline in the importance of marriage for shaping women's lives,"²⁷³ Amanda demonstrates that spying can not only save the nation, but also save the single parent and return her to the family-oriented 'success' of previous eras.

This Woman's Work

As the end of the Cold War drew near, its impact on the spy genre became apparent. The spy drama appeared to become less relevant: where *Wonder Woman* showed the need for a superhero to combat foreign threats, *Scarecrow* "was more interested in wooing the hero... than in fighting the battles of espionage."²⁷⁴ Diana displays, if in an exaggerated form, the independent woman who is able to support herself, makes her own decisions about how to express her sexuality, and can count on her own strength and intelligence to save her from any trouble she might get herself into – and all without needing a man. To descend into cliché, she is clearly meant to embody the idea that inside every woman there can be a Wonder Woman. Amanda, on the other hand, emphasizes the futility of underestimating the 'average' housewife and her abilities; she uses her homemakers' skills to save the country, showing that the work women do inside the home needs to be maintained in order for the nation to remain stable. Moreover, she manages to navigate parenting as a divorcée and even balances work and family life to

²⁷² John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War: A New History* (New York: Penguin, 2005), 199.

²⁷³ McLaughlin et al, *The Changing Lives of American Women*, 62.

²⁷⁴ Moore et al, *Prime Time Television*, 241.

such an extent that she is able to remarry. She succeeds at her spycraft only through deployment of traditional femininity,

When compared to the two shows from the Sixties that I explored in Chapter One, *The New Adventures of Wonder Woman* and *Scarecrow and Mrs. King* demonstrate a definite progression in terms not only of portrayal, but of theme. Diana and Amanda are allowed to be rounded characters in ways that Agent 99 and Emma Peel never achieved. The directions in which their characters develop shows the way television is moving in its portrayal of the espionage genre. There are two main developments that I will continue to explore in Chapters Three and Four. First is the change in the representation of patriotism. In both *Get Smart* and *The Avengers*, the spy business was in many ways the backdrop to the show. As a setting, it enabled the plots and made it possible for the jokes to be funny, yet neither series took its patriotic duties seriously. 99 was able to replace Max with a Canadian without any ill effects in "Ice Station Siegfried;" despite the foreignness of KAOS, there was rarely any sense that the plot of the day would seriously affect the security of the United States of America. Similarly, in *The Avengers*, Steed and Peel were not really on her Majesty's Secret Service; though their Englishness was integral to several plots, it was also something to be made fun of. *Wonder Woman* and *Scarecrow* change the view of patriotism completely. Though *Wonder Woman* is at least as camp and humorous as either of the previous shows, the patriotic aspect is not part of the general hilarity. Wonder Woman wears her star-spangled costume without irony, a visual representation of her commitment to the American people. She and Amanda both work at espionage agencies without real-life counterparts, but those agencies have clearly-developed ties to the real agencies of their countries. Amanda and Lee serve as representatives of the American people; their devotion to their job and their country does not permit any mockery of their patriotic bent. The nationalism of the Cold War shows clearly on screen in a way not apparent in the earlier shows.

The other notable change developed in these shows is in some ways in opposition to the emphasis on patriotism discussed above. Ironically, despite the increased importance of patriotism and the role of intelligence in keeping the country safe, the actual spy aspects of the female agents' lives are downplayed. They are allowed to have lives outside their agencies. This was definitely not the case with Agent 99, whose life as a wife and mother rarely affected her work at CONTROL and had a negative impact when it had one at all. Nor did Emma Peel manage much of a life outside of work; she could work as an author, but that was more likely to get her in trouble than not, and any relationship she

had either ended badly or caused her to give up her day job. Whereas Diana Prince was the spy, her Wonder Woman identity was just as important. They often worked towards the same goal, but her heroic identity was separate from her identity as an intelligence agent, not only because her methods were quite different. Amanda also had a secret identity of sorts as a mother; unlike 99, her children were never a threat to national security, nor did she have to choose between them and a life as a spy. In the Eighties, she could have it all because she prioritized her personal and home life. Effectively, in these shows space opened up for female spies to inhabit their lives more fully than had previously been possible. Where espionage had necessarily been the consuming event in each spy's life, here they have the option to develop other identities, even identities whose primacy supersedes that of their spying. This slow reduction of the importance of the spy suggests the backlash against working women that typified Reagan-era conservative television. It introduces a postfeminist version of the spy whose retreat from the front lines would become the paradox that underpins the rest of the shows I examine.

Chapter Three: America's Identity Quest

Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, the espionage genre became somewhat destabilized. Its formerly inescapable presence in popular culture faltered, as seen perhaps most clearly in the six-year gap between Bond films *License to Kill* (John Glen, 1989) and the re-imagination of the franchise with *GoldenEye* (Martin Campbell, 1995). While legal problems lengthened the period between films, the production team were also forced to contend with and attempt to overcome the possibility that Bond was no longer relevant in a post-Cold War world.²⁷⁵ The difficulties of reinvigorating Bond emphasize the new conditions spies were forced to contend with in the new geopolitical alignment. As nations were attempting to realign themselves within new power dynamics, the importance of leadership and national identity became a pressing issue. As these frameworks settled, new positions for family structures also began to be required.

The introduction of Judi Dench as M in *GoldenEye* reflects both the new requisites for leadership roles and the fact that female spies were no longer required to be positioned as usurpers or outsiders, but have been granted access to inheritable positions and become members of the espionage genre. Both *La Femme Nikita* and *Alias* demonstrate the insider positions of their female protagonists, but the spies are also forced to pay a price for their entry into the male-dominated intelligence world. Nikita and Sydney Bristow belong to the era of the 'girl-power' hero:

a young, hip, and alluring portrayal of female autonomy that offers implicit contrast to and critique of the second-wave feminist generation that came of age in the 1960s and 1970s. Whereas current stereotype images of second-wave feminists show them as humourless, aging, and passé, media pundits admire the girl-power hero for her intelligence, mastery of martial arts, and sexual appeal.²⁷⁶

The girl-power hero seems to inhabit a space contrary to the "aging and passé" second-wave, one which is thus *more* liberated, *more* empowered. Yet both Nikita and Sydney begin their respective series with the emphasis on the *girl* part of girl-power; though they grow into their strength, they do so under the direction of father figures and within

²⁷⁵ Chapman, *License to Thrill*, 216.

²⁷⁶ Frances Early and Kathleen Kennedy, "Introduction," in *Athena's Daughters: Television's New Women Warriors*, eds. Frances Early and Kathleen Kennedy (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2003, 1-10), 3.

proscribed boundaries. This girification suggests that Nikita and Sydney belong to a postfeminist media era.

The term 'postfeminism' has occupied a contested space for more than two decades now. I lack the space to truly engage in an analysis of its multiple meanings:²⁷⁷ I would like to follow Rosalind Gill in considering it a sensibility rather than a concrete theory, thus emphasizing "the contradictory nature of postfeminist discourses and the entanglement of both feminist and anti-feminist themes within them."²⁷⁸ Thus the figure of the female spy in its post-1990 position can represent in some cases the type of postfeminism that undermines the feminist gains of the 1970s and 80s²⁷⁹ and in others the rhetoric that it is no longer necessary to choose between feminine and feminist goals.²⁸⁰ These contradictions become particularly evident in Nikita and Sydney, and to some extent the spies that follow them. They are both aimed at and representative of "a generation that has grown up taking for granted the feminist victories won by their mothers and thus for whom feminism exists at the level of popular common sense rather than at the level of theoretical abstraction."²⁸¹ As such, I am less concerned with discussing their skills and more with considering how those skills are challenged and constrained.

The constructed family must give way to the real and national identity must be a point of identification in order for female spies to succeed, but more importantly, they must maintain strict gender roles. Their girification and subsequent continued engagement with traditional images of femininity reflect the uncertainty of national identity that characterized the long decade between the fall of the Berlin Wall and the terrorist attacks of 9/11. The two shows that debuted during this time reflect that uncertainty, sending their heroines on identity quests that in turn help to define the new politics of the West.

²⁷⁷ For more detail, see Brunsdon 1991, 1997, 2000; Dow 1996; Gillis and Hollows 2009; Lotz 2001, 2006; McRobbie 1993, 1994, 1996, 2004.

²⁷⁸ Rosalind Gill, "Postfeminist media culture: Elements of a sensibility," in *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 10.147 (2007, 147-166), 149.

²⁷⁹ Angela McRobbie, "Post-feminism and popular culture," in *Feminist Media Studies* 4.3 (2004, 255-264), 255.

²⁸⁰ Moseley and Read, "Having it *All*," 236.

²⁸¹ *Ibid*, 238.

*All the boys wanna know
 If she's got something to hide
 All the girls are relieved
 She's working for the other side
 She's a sinner
 A saint
 She'll run it cool and hot
 She's a secret agent
 You can believe it or not*²⁸²

The New Spy: *La Femme Nikita*

La Femme Nikita's very presence reflects the changes seen in the politics of the worldwide intelligence community; rather than adopting the support of one particular country, it portrays a multi-national, corporate intelligence service that is deliberately anti-patriotic. A co-production between Canada and America, based on a French film (*La Femme Nikita*, Luc Besson, 1990), the show demonstrates its lack of an ideological home country on every level. The only one of the four main characters played by an American actor is the director of Section One, Operations (Eugene Robert Glazer). The other actors were chosen in part for the worldliness their accents brought to the programme:²⁸³ English-Canadian Alberta Watson as Second-in-Command Madeline, French-Canadian Roy Dupuis as top operative Michael, and, of course, Australian Peta Wilson as Nikita. This deliberate refusal to claim a national identity is rare among spy shows; the most inescapably political genre on television, they are also most likely to reflect the politics of the country in which they are initially broadcast.²⁸⁴ *La Femme Nikita* defies that tradition, however; doing so enables the show to make more incisive political commentary than some of its genre compatriots without being targeted as a mouthpiece for indoctrination. Much of the action is set in generic Western countries. Even the location of Section One's headquarters is not made explicit until midway through Season Three, when it is revealed to be in Paris.²⁸⁵ Operatives' homes are similarly untethered; Nikita's neighbours' accents range throughout the series from middle American to south London without explanation. Too, while the main protagonists are Western, the show does not default to the Eastern threat as did its predecessors. With the Cold War over, questions of national security are

²⁸² Melissa Etheridge, vocal performance of "Secret Agent," by Melissa Etheridge and Jonathan Taylor, recorded 2004 on *Lucky*, Island, CD.

²⁸³ White, *Violent Femmes*, 119.

²⁸⁴ Kellner, *Television and the Crisis of Democracy*, 61.

²⁸⁵ "I Remember Paris," *La Femme Nikita*, directed by Terry Ingram (1999; Burbank, CA: Warner Home Video, 2005), DVD.

less defined, as are those who threaten it.²⁸⁶ Many of the villains in the series are themselves Western, often white, successful businessmen with literally cutthroat instincts. Taking them and other threats out often involves agency-sanctioned loss of lives, but Nikita challenges that assumption, seeking to spare civilians regardless of whether she is in downtown America or out in the countryside of the former Eastern Bloc. Section One's mission is to save those whose innocence is defined not by their country's actions, but by their own.²⁸⁷

It is no accident that a show that refuses to define its nationality is of Canadian origin. Though *La Femme Nikita* was co-produced and distributed by the American company Warner Brothers, Jay Firestone of the now-defunct Fireworks Entertainment helmed the project. The series was shot in Toronto with partial funding from the Canadian and Ontario governments. This places it within a history of Canadian television that, since 1951, has been engaged in promoting the "successful resistance to the absorption of Canada into the general cultural pattern of the United States."²⁸⁸ Richard Collins observed in 1990 that Canadians generally found themselves annoyed by American programming,²⁸⁹ as "the Canadian media order [had] overwhelmingly been interpreted as one in which Canada's subordination to the U.S. [was] comprehensive, disadvantageous to Canadians, and part of a pervasive dependence on the U.S."²⁹⁰ The dissatisfaction that many Canadians felt at the time of *La Femme Nikita*'s development (and, anecdotally, still feel) manifests itself in a show that comments on the militarism and patriotism that is seen as obnoxious by quieter Canadians.

La Femme Nikita's debut in 1997 came a mere two years after the 1995 Quebec referendum, during an era in which the Canadian government was focused on producing media with what the Canadian Film Fund described as "visibly Canadian elements."²⁹¹ This urge is no doubt at least partially responsible for Roy Dupuis' casting, which challenges the distinction usually maintained between English- and French-Canadian

²⁸⁶ Lee Fratanuono, "Classical Mythology, Prime-Time Television: Sydney Bristow and the Quest for Female Identity," in *Alias Assumed: Sex, Lies, and SD-6*, ed. Kevin Weisman (Dallas: Benbella Books, 2005), 175.

²⁸⁷ Karen K. Burrows, "Alias America: 9/11 and the Televisual Quest for a National Identity," in *Politics and Popular Culture*, ed. Leah A. Murray (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2011), 130.

²⁸⁸ V. Massey, Chairman, *Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters, and Sciences* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1951), 40-1.

²⁸⁹ Richard Collins, *Culture, Communication, and National Identity: The Case of Canadian Television*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 18.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 15.

²⁹¹ Marusya Bociurkiw, *Feeling Canadian: Television, Nationalism, and Affect* (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2011), 10).

media.²⁹² When viewed through a Canadian lens, *La Femme Nikita* is a scathing commentary on those elements of American culture that are seen as potentially encroaching on Canada and to be avoided at all costs. The iteration of Canadian nationalism backing the show echoes themes that, "heard frequently on Canadian television – that we are better than the US, that we are a peacekeeping nation, that we value ethnic and racial diversity – have gained the status of truth."²⁹³ The indictment of American bloodthirstiness is a particularly Canadian move: *La Femme Nikita* untethers the militaristic, amoral Section from American control to emphasize the senselessness of the violence common to spy agencies. Without the sheen of national pride to disguise the violence, and with the soft heart of protagonist Nikita to unbalance the viewer, the show maintains a faintly disapproving air recognisable as the 'peacekeeping' Canadian passing judgement. Similarly, the use of Toronto to stand in for glamorous locations such as Paris rebuts the perception of the city as "'dead' space, as the negated space of American location shooting,"²⁹⁴ instead positioning it as a city of the world. Yet Canada itself is, in television, a site of uncertainty: *La Femme Nikita* refuses to commit to an identity, thus leaving its protagonist as adrift as its viewers.

Nikita is on a classic identity quest throughout the show. Her search for answers about herself makes her a very different heroine from those I have previously discussed; all the other spies knew who they were even when, as with 99, the audience did not. Unlike them, however, Nikita cannot base her identity on service to a country, as she has no country to be loyal to. Instead she seeks to understand herself through the creation or discovery of a family. This too is in opposition to the female spies we have previously seen: when family was a plot point in the other shows, it was almost inevitably to the detriment of the female spy's service to her nation. In *The Avengers*, for example, the return of Emma's husband meant she had to give up spying and become merely a wife; in *Get Smart* and *Scarecrow and Mrs. King*, 99 and Amanda both nearly caused the failures of several missions due to the needs of their children. Emma's father willed her the company that nearly led to her death; in *Wonder Woman*, Diana must choose between saving her mother and saving America from a nuclear blast; Amanda's mother continually

²⁹² Op. cit, 43.

²⁹³ Bociurkiw, 12.

²⁹⁴ Jen Vanderburgh, "Imagining National Citizens in Televised Toronto," in *Performing Reality: Perspectives on English-Canadian Television*, ed. Zoe Druick and Aspa Kotsopolous (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2008, 269-290), 281.

puts Amanda's cover story in jeopardy. In *La Femme Nikita* and subsequently in *Alias*, family becomes the defining aspect of a female spy's life. This change in attitudes towards family life reflects, to a degree, the successes of the feminist movements in ensuring a woman is free to pursue a career and a family life simultaneously, in theory without having to sacrifice one for the other. It also, however, draws attention to the postfeminist position of "celebrating and understanding conventional modes of femininity as *not necessarily* in conflict with female power."²⁹⁵ The inhabitation of this postfeminist identity is not clear-cut, however; where previous spies had to choose between nation and family, future spies are allowed to have and desire both so long as that desire is harnessed for the betterment of the spy agency. The reality of the importance of family in *La Femme Nikita* is hardly so simple, of course, but the manipulation of false and real information in the course of Nikita's identity quest reveals an alignment of familial and national interests which serves to define the female spy in the newly-corporate world of feminism and upon which *Alias* builds in the future.

Family Matters

At the beginning of the series, Nikita is positioned as completely without national or family ties. We learn in episode 1.01, "Nikita," that she is homeless and living on the streets; her mother cares so little that when Section One fakes Nikita's funeral as part of their recruitment process, no one attends it. Having stripped Nikita of her identity, the pilot episode immediately begins to build it back up, beginning when Michael introduces her to Madeline: "We're going to meet your new mother," he tells Nikita. "And who are you, my dad?" Nikita drawls insolently in response.²⁹⁶ The comparison is apt; Section One's structure deliberately imitates the familial, and it is designed to replicate the support from which Nikita and the other agents have been separated. Operations and Madeline act as father and mother: Operations exercises patriarchal control, overseeing missions and managing intel, while Madeline deals with 'softer' matters such as teaching Valentine agents how to dress and wear makeup or controlling the psychological torture of enemy operatives. Nikita's Section One family includes crazy uncle Walter (Don Francks), the veteran agent in charge of weapons; annoying little brother Seymour Birkoff (Matthew Ferguson), the computer expert; and top agent Michael, the mysterious love interest. By

²⁹⁵ Rachel Moseley, "Glamorous witchcraft: gender and magic in teen film and television," in *Screen* 43.4 (2002, 403-422), 419.

²⁹⁶ "Nikita," *La Femme Nikita*, directed by Jon Cassar (1997; Burbank, CA: Warner Home Video, 2003), DVD.

replacing Nikita's blood family with one that demands her loyalty through proximity rather than consimilarity, *La Femme Nikita* creates an uneasy bond, one that is likely to give under pressure.

In a show that dispenses with national affiliation in order to enable widespread political commentary, the constructed and pre-existing ties of family loyalty take on much greater significance. Each of the major characters in the show is forced to face and, if possible, overcome the blood bonds that are only likely to hold them back from their Section-defined mission to save the world. Tellingly, the family crisis in which Operations finds himself entangled also involves questions of American patriotism and involvement in international espionage. Operations, whose real name we eventually learn is Paul Wolfe, was recruited to Section One from a Prisoner of War camp during the Vietnam War.²⁹⁷ As a result of his recruitment, both his wife and his son have been told Wolfe is presumed dead. This situation is a stark advertisement for the anti-national alignment of Section One, reminding the audience of one of the deepest recent missteps by American intelligence and of the country-splitting dissent that damaged America's political culture at a crucial time during the Cold War. By removing Wolfe from the POW camp, which signifies the failure of the American military push, Section One symbolically repairs the mistakes that characterized the Vietnam War. With the might of Section One untainted by the divisive force of patriotism, Wolfe is able to make the decisive strikes on worldwide terrorist forces that he was unable to achieve as part of the American military organization. That America, and thus his family, therefore believe him dead is also a poignant commentary on America's inability to use and control its resources effectively.

The plotlines involving Wolfe's family have two angles. The first, which involves his wife, reflects the simplicity of perverting national loyalty; the second, which involves his son, emphasizes the danger that soft-heartedness, as provoked by blood ties, poses to Section One's mandate. In episode 3.06, "Love and Country," Section, spearheaded by Madeline, uses Wolfe's wife Corrine (Cherie Lunghi) as a pawn in their pursuit of a terrorist organization. The head of said organization, Nikolai Markali (David McIlwraith), is Corrine's new husband and Section manipulate Corrine into killing Markali. Having lost her tie to America when Wolfe disappeared, Corrine developed an attachment to a foreigner that made her vulnerable. Her willingness to be manipulated and the effect it has on Wolfe demonstrate the reasoning behind Section's policy of severing national ties.

²⁹⁷ "Sympathy for the Devil," *La Femme Nikita*, directed by Brad Turner (2000; Burbank, CA: Warner Home Video, 2006), DVD.

Similarly, the deviations from Section missions caused by Wolfe's relationship with his son in episode 1.16, "Missing," and episode 3.08, "Under the Influence," demonstrate the irrationality caused by family ties. In "Missing," Wolfe learns that his son Stephen (Christopher Kennedy) is a member of a criminal organization being targeted by Section. He tasks Nikita with protecting Stephen and goes so far as to promise her her freedom should she succeed. Though she does save Stephen's life, pressure from other operatives prevents Wolfe from fulfilling his promise. In "Under the Influence," however, Wolfe learns that another Section operative has killed Stephen. When the operative returns, Wolfe shoots him, regardless of the fact that George (David Hemblen), who runs the department immediately superior to Section, is present. Only because Madeline manages to cover up Wolfe's emotional investment by manufacturing evidence that the operative was embezzling from Section funds does Wolfe avoid censure or demotion. Blood family is thus placed above Section family in the hierarchy of importance; it is also shown to distract operatives, derail missions, and endanger Section itself. If *La Femme Nikita* attempts to teach us anything, it is that Section One and its mission must survive at any cost.

Madeline, Wolfe's Second in Command, has a very different relationship with her family, one that plays with and subverts the traditional assumption that (female) spies are somehow abnormal. I will discuss Madeline in greater depth later in this chapter, but this analysis requires the knowledge that Madeline presents as almost sociopathic. Her emotional imperturbability reflects her approach to espionage; she is "the voice of Section One's (lack of) ethics."²⁹⁸ She appears to have no empathy and indeed enjoys torturing enemy and ally alike in order to extract information. Part of the reason behind her reserve is hinted at when Madeline explains the taunts about her sister used by an imprisoned enemy agent:

Madeline: We were fighting over a doll. I pushed her, she fell down the stairs and died.

Nikita: Your sister.

Madeline: Yes.

Nikita: But it was an accident, right, you didn't mean to.

Madeline: I wanted the doll.²⁹⁹

²⁹⁸ White, *Violent Femmes*, 122.

²⁹⁹ "Mandatory Refusal," *La Femme Nikita*, directed by Ken Girotti (1998; Burbank, CA: Warner Home Video, 2005), DVD.

The flat affect she demonstrates directly contradicts her position as 'mother' of the Section family; it is perhaps not surprising that the spectre of family she must confront is in the form of her own mother. In episode 2.11, "Psychic Pilgrim," Madeline has one final chance to see her mother, who is suffering from the final stages of dementia; the disease makes the encounter possible, as she would not remember it. Despite the deathbed nature of the reunion, Madeline retains her customary composure, even when her mother calls her by her sister's name; for the first time, however, the cost of that composure is evident:

Madeline: After Sarah died, I made a choice. Of course, I didn't realize it was a choice at the time, but it was. I chose to be the person you saw, the girl who killed her sister. I still can't say for sure what happened on the landing that day. Maybe it was an accident, maybe it wasn't. When I heard you were dying, it occurred to me that maybe you never blamed me for Sarah's death, that you loved me all along. If that's true, then I created my own hell and have lived in it ever since. I hope it is true. Goodbye, Mother.

Madeline's Mother: *(previously unresponsive, she raises her head as Madeline steps away)* Sarah?

Madeline: *(calmly, without turning around)* Yes, Mother. It's me.³⁰⁰

Both exchanges refuse to clearly answer whether Madeline intended her sister's death, maintaining the uncertainty that surrounds her character. Nevertheless, the backstory demonstrates that family remains the key to shattering Madeline's composure. She is portrayed as unnatural, echoing previous wisdom about the role of the female spy in a male-dominated world. Madeline's success in Section One is suggested to depend on a mindset that would demonstrably sacrifice even her own sister in order to achieve her goals.

Similarly, the plotline involving Michael's family clearly demonstrates the interconnection between the creation of family ties and the question of loyalty to intelligence work. Though Michael and Nikita are immediately set up for a potential romance at the beginning of the show, Michael remains mysterious, refusing to reveal information about his life outside Section One until Nikita uses her newfound espionage skills to tail him. The third season opens with Nikita discovering Michael returning home

³⁰⁰ "Psychic Pilgrim," *La Femme Nikita*, directed by René Bonnière (1998; Burbank, CA: Warner Home Video, 2005), DVD.

after a mission to a wife and child.³⁰¹ At first, this appears to be a direct contradiction to the messages sent by the rest of the series: why can Michael maintain both an exceptional working life and a happy family life when the rest of Section, and indeed the rest of the intelligence community, is founded on the need to choose one over the other? The reality, of course, is far more complicated than it appears. Michael's 'happy families' display is itself a construct, carefully monitored by none other than Section One. Michael is engaged in a long-term honeytrap assignment; he has seduced, married, and had a child with the daughter of an international terrorist in order to provide Section with an entrance into the terrorist organization.³⁰² Michael's apparent contentedness as a family man is in fact another layer of success at his job.

Michael's situation emphasizes that Section One's determination to control familial relations is due to their inability to control or predict emotional attachments. Unlike the endless simulations they run to detect international terrorism or unrest, there are no programs to foresee the results of love and family. Where Section continues to see Michael's wife, Elena (Samia Shoaib), and son Adam (Evan Caravela) as pieces on a playing board, Michael himself comes to recognize them as people and even to care for them, which naturally creates havoc in Section's plans. Michael's love for his son in particular causes him to disobey orders, thus threatening the success of the missions Section sends him on as well as endangering his own life. In order to extract him from the mission, Section forces Michael to fake his own death;³⁰³ their lack of respect for the mental well-being of a boy whose life they are directly responsible for creating – as Adam would not have been born had Section not assigned Michael to marry Elena – demonstrates the disregard with which they treat family bonds. Although Section acknowledges the strength of family ties, the agents in charge use them to manipulate and destroy their enemies as well as their own operatives.

"Their ends are just, but their means are ruthless."³⁰⁴

Building on the New Woman of 1990s corporate culture, *La Femme Nikita* introduces to us the New Spy, presenting a world where the stereotypes of old are re-

³⁰¹ "Looking for Michael," *La Femme Nikita*, directed by Jon Cassar (1999; Burbank, CA: Warner Home Video, 2005), DVD.

³⁰² "Someone Else's Shadow," *La Femme Nikita*, directed by René Bonnière (1999; Burbank, CA: Warner Home Video, 2005), DVD.

³⁰³ "Love and Country," *La Femme Nikita*, directed by Ted Hanlan (1999; Burbank, CA: Warner Home Video, 2005), DVD.

³⁰⁴ From Peta Wilson's voiceover, which played at the beginning of each episode in original broadcast.

imagined as commentary on the new world order. The show's two main female characters, Madeline and Nikita, exemplify different aspects of this cultural change; each represents a generation of female spies, as made explicit in the presentation of Madeline as a 'mother' for Nikita in the pilot episode. As with any generation gap, the difference between Madeline's methods and Nikita's is vast; Nikita's ethos is in many ways guided by her desire to rebel against Madeline's teachings. Yet Madeline herself is in open rebellion, not only against the generations previous to hers but against the very concept of the female spy as culture has presented it in the past. Madeline and Nikita each represent a reaction to the increased appearance of women in positions of power; whether even their changed circumstances lead to any sort of progression in terms of equal gender rights, however, is less clear.

Madeline

Madeline is the Second in Command of Section One, the brutal, enigmatic intelligence agency central to *La Femme Nikita*. She is described in the fourth season as "the old Mata Hari with the fabulous figure,"³⁰⁵ a reference that doubly ties her back to the original stereotypes of the female spy. The comment is meant to point out her cool, calculating manner of dealing with people, intimating that her mission is always more important than her relationships. That the description includes a comment on her appearance as well only serves to emphasize her descent from the spy-seductress archetype that Mata Hari initiated. At first, Madeline does appear almost a throwback to the Mata Hari-type spy whom Western popular culture has tried so hard to shed; she instructs Nikita on clothing and makeup not, as in *The Avengers* or *Get Smart*, in order to draw contemporary fashions onto the screen, but as a means to an end of seduction and information extraction. "Look at yourself. Admire yourself," she tells Nikita in the pilot episode. "See your beauty. You can learn to shoot. You can learn to fight. But there's no weapon as powerful as your femininity."³⁰⁶ Her advice echoes the postfeminist sensibility that "delivers 'empowerment' through a (consuming) girlie femininity and sexuality"³⁰⁷ and thus devalues Nikita's skills and strengths in favour of her appearance. Madeline masterminds 'Valentine missions' – that is, honeytraps – with the same dedicated

³⁰⁵ "Toys in the Basement," *La Femme Nikita*, directed by René Bonnière (2000; Burbank, CA: Warner Home Video, 2006), DVD.

³⁰⁶ "Nikita," *La Femme Nikita*.

³⁰⁷ Jackson and Westrupp, "Sex, Postfeminist Popular Culture, and the Pre-Teen Girl," 358.

dispassion that she displays when organizing rescues or dictating suicide missions. It is this detachment, which characterizes Madeline more than anything else, that marks the difference between the Mata Hari trope and the new spy that Madeline represents.

Mata Hari and her ilk were defined by their hypersexuality, as represented particularly by their careers as dancers; not just Mata Hari but Josephine Baker suffered from the moral judgment that was passed on their fitness for espionage due to their dancing.³⁰⁸ Both were known for 'exotic' forms of dancing as well, which simplified the assumptions about their offscreen personas. This sexually permissive stereotype has been preserved particularly through the James Bond girls. Madeline, in contrast, could not be further from the hyper-sexual. Her outfits, although they are explicitly feminine and do show off her figure, are typical power-suits, usually in black or other dark colours. She rarely wears anything else, and the suits are practically interchangeable; contemporary fashion holds no fascination for Madeline outside of its mission utility. Madeline does not reject her femininity, nor does she shy away from using it; her emphasis is on *control* of her sexuality. In the Nineties, success as a spy means no longer having to allow someone to dictate her sexual advances, a pointed commentary on the trials and harassments women continue to face in the corporate workplace.

Despite her formidable presence, Madeline's control over the direction of her sexuality is not always absolute. If the postfeminist spy is able to choose when to deploy her weaponized sexuality, having it turned against her must be even more a marker of failure. There are several occasions upon which Madeline's love life is unmanageable; each of these occurrences reveals a truth that haunts even the contemporary spy. In episode 2.20, "In Between," for example, Madeline discovers that her husband Charles Sand, a former Section One operative whom she has long believed to be dead, is in fact alive. His survival was deliberately kept from Madeline by Wolfe, her superior; the deception clearly removed the privilege of choice from Madeline, making it impossible to know whether she would have remained married had her husband stayed in Section One. The question of marriage, even among fellow agents, is a fraught one for female spies as it often marks the choice between career and love. Though deprived of that choice initially, Madeline reclaims it later in the episode: when Wolfe declares that Sand cannot rejoin Section One as he could be compromised, Madeline takes it upon herself to execute him with her trademark coolness:

³⁰⁸ Wheelwright, *The Fatal Lover*, 3.

Nikita: He was your husband?

Madeline: Yes, he was.

Nikita: How could you kill him?

Madeline: There was no way to bring him back. His presence outside the Section for so many years would undermine our credibility. And letting him go wasn't an option. He understood that.³⁰⁹

Madeline's answer to the work-family dichotomy is clear and decisive, reflecting her unwillingness to allow anyone, be they superior or spouse, to influence her decisions. Yet the revelation of Madeline's husband – the suggestion that she once chose to chase the feminine mystique – raises questions about the extent to which having that choice taken away from her contributed to her success. Judy Giles claims that domesticity "must be left behind if women [are] to be modern, emancipated figures;"³¹⁰ it was not so much "left behind" for Madeline as it was taken from her – by Wolfe.

As the confrontation over her husband shows, Madeline's relationship with Wolfe, who is nominally her superior officer, is a complex one, suggestive of both sexual and emotional intimacy. Again, the show refuses to provide a clear answer as to the nature of Madeline and Wolfe's partnership, preferring instead to let the ambiguity remain for the audience as well as the characters in the show. Initially, there are hints of emotional involvement, both positive and negative. Wolfe responds with extreme jealousy to the possibility that Madeline is sexually involved with a junior (in years as well as rank) agent in episode 2.16, "Not Was," while Madeline has Renee, an agent from Oversight, removed for flirting with Wolfe in episode 3.14, "Hand to Hand." When Wolfe is shot in episode 2.03, "New Regime," Madeline threatens to kill the surgeons operating on him if he doesn't survive:

Doctor: I'm sorry, but he's not going to make it. It's just a question of how long he stays on life support. Will you be making that decision?

Madeline: I already have. I've decided he's going to recover. His will to live is very strong. Your will to save him must be strong too. I'll help you. (*cocks a gun*) Go back inside, tell your colleagues to do the possible, then the impossible, and then the unthinkable, until he's out of danger. Because when he's finished, Doctor,

³⁰⁹ "In Between," *La Femme Nikita*, directed by Joseph Scanlan (1998; Burbank, CA: Warner Home Video, 2005), DVD.

³¹⁰ Judy Giles, *The Parlour and the Suburb: Domestic Identities, Class, Femininity and Modernity* (Oxford: Berg, 2004), 142.

that room will contain either four living men or four corpses. Do you understand?³¹¹

Similarly, when Madeline is infected with a deadly virus in episode 2.17 "Inside Out," Wolfe breaks Section quarantine to be with her. These examples all demonstrate the strength of the attachment the two share.

At the end of the second season, Wolfe and Madeline engage in a brief rekindling of what was apparently a previous sexual affair.³¹² Their opinions about the meaning of the encounter differ, however:

Madeline: I didn't 'open anything up.' I slept with you.

Wolfe: Okay. Then why did you sleep with me?

Madeline: Because you wanted it.

Wolfe: And you didn't?

Madeline: That's irrelevant. The foreplay was becoming a distraction to both of us.

It was affecting your work, your decisions, and in turn affecting mine.

Wolfe: That's especially cold, Madeline, even for you.³¹³

At this point in the relationship, Madeline clearly retains control, demonstrating her famously cool reserve. In the third season, however, the relationship becomes more disturbing when Wolfe uses Madeline's dismissal of Renee as a means to blackmail her:

Wolfe: Why don't you admit you were jealous [of Renee] and you still have feelings for me?

Madeline: Of course I do. Respect. Admiration. Friendship.

Wolfe: If I thought your feelings went beyond friendship, I'd make this whole thing go away. Otherwise I'll have to let bureaucracy take its course, and that could be very unpleasant.

Madeline: Don't do this.

Wolfe: (*drawing his fingers across Madeline's cheek*) The Tower, tonight, ten o'clock.³¹⁴

³¹¹ "New Regime," *La Femme Nikita*, directed by Jon Cassar (1998; Burbank, CA: Warner Home Video, 2005), DVD.

³¹² "Last Night," *La Femme Nikita*, directed by Clark Johnson (1998; Burbank, CA: Warner Home Video, 2005), DVD.

³¹³ "Adrian's Garden," *La Femme Nikita*, directed by Brad Turner (1998; Burbank, CA: Warner Home Video, 2005), DVD.

³¹⁴ "Hand to Hand," *La Femme Nikita*, directed by T.J. Scott, (1999; Burbank, CA: Warner Home Video, 2005), DVD.

The dubious consent of their continued intimacy both emphasizes the amorality of Section One and questions the viewers' response to Madeline. When we see her bruised from Wolfe's attentions in later episodes, we are forced into sympathy for a character who has previously been unsympathetic at best. That our emotions are triggered by Madeline's femininity and vulnerability is no accident. Ultimately, Madeline subverts our interpretation of her and Wolfe's relationship, revealing it to be an elaborate scam to deceive George, who is head of Oversight, Section's controlling agency.³¹⁵ The presence of dissension in the top ranks of Section allowed Madeline and Wolfe to orchestrate a coup against George, thus ensuring Section's funding levels remain steady. This reveal deliberately plays on the assumption of female sexuality as open to abuse, emphasizing that sexuality can be used as a weapon both directly and indirectly. Madeline displays a postfeminist control and assertiveness³¹⁶ over her own sexuality, yet the ambiguity that is played out within the scenario still troubles the idea of her own choice: we never receive confirmation of just how far she and Wolfe went as part of their deception, but we do see Madeline's bruises.

Iron Maiden

The only time Madeline demonstrates an unambiguous emotional attachment is in episode 4.12, "Hell Hath No Fury." In this episode, Section capture Leon (Colm Feore), who is Madeline's equivalent as master of psychological operations in the terrorist organization Red Cell. The two of them engage in a series of psychologically-twisted mind games that are heavily tinged with seduction, of which Wolfe is decidedly critical. Although Leon is contained in the White Room, a torture chamber designed to provide some sensory deprivation to destabilize captives, Madeline lets her hair down and applies lipstick before interrogating him; though her appearance also serves as a tool in Madeline's arsenal, her responses to his compliments verge on the girlish. Madeline's apparent infatuation with Leon leads Birkoff and Nikita to believe that Madeline's emotions are being controlled by Red Cell, especially after they discover evidence that she has undergone a 'post-thalamic inversion' meant to stimulate the emotional centre of the brain. Wolfe informs them, however, that while Madeline's emotions are indeed compromised, the choice was hers. She hopes that by allowing a genuine attachment to Leon to develop

³¹⁵ "Three Eyed Turtle," *La Femme Nikita*, directed by Jon Cassar (1999; Burbank, CA: Warner Home Video, 2005), DVD.

³¹⁶ Jackson and Westrupp, "Sex, Postfeminist Popular Culture, and the Pre-Teen Girl," 358.

she will be able to discover the location of Red Cell's operating base. Again we see a postfeminist commentary on choice and consent: though Madeline 'chooses' to undergo the procedure, she is subsequently under the influence and unable to give meaningful consent to Leon.

The plan seems to go awry when Wolfe orders Leon killed and Madeline fakes the execution; instead she takes him to what appear to be her living quarters within Section (at no other time do we see Madeline 'at home'). Leon consummates the seduction with a speech that leaves the audience unsure as to whether Madeline is acting on her own desires or under the influence of the procedure:

Madeline: You may not know me as well as you think.

Leon: I know you, Madeline. Maybe better than anyone else. I know how you have to live inside yourself, isolate yourself, because mentally and emotionally, you have no equals here. How more often than not you have to compromise your thinking just to be understood. How you long for somebody with the capacity to meet you where you live, on your level. A day, even a moment, when you don't have to feel so alone. You're not alone, Madeline.³¹⁷

Leon demonstrates a deep understanding of Madeline's psyche not only with his speech but with his reluctance to believe that he has successfully seduced her. Ultimately the episode ends in a showdown, with Madeline protecting Leon from Wolfe with her body. In order to kill Leon, Wolfe first wounds Madeline, recreating the injury she dealt him when escaping earlier in the episode. Madeline is completely distraught, nearly hysterical, over Leon's death; we watch the scene through Nikita's eyes, sharing her uncertainty at seeing the powerful, emotionless woman go to pieces over a man. The discomfort Nikita feels at Madeline's public display of emotion is compounded by the following scene, in which Madeline is once again tightly controlled following the reversal of the post-thalamic inversion. "Did you think I was out of control?" she asks Wolfe calmly, incidentally displaying the sling still holding her wounded arm.³¹⁸ Wolfe does not answer, nor is there an answer for the audience, again leaving us to wonder how much of the relationship was real. Regardless, two facts remain: first, that the emotional openness Madeline displayed was the greatest violation of her self in that episode; second, that Madeline remained in psychological control of her own wantonness, emphasizing that for the new breed of

³¹⁷ "Hell Hath No Fury," *La Femme Nikita*, directed by René Bonnière (2000; Burbank, CA: Warner Home Video, 2006), DVD.

³¹⁸ Ibid.

female spy, her mind is the most important part of her body. This choice, however, still serves to keep focus on Madeline's body as object to be used in ways to which she is not always capable of agreeing.

Madeline represents the generation before Nikita; she is an interim step on the path to successful female domination of the intelligence community. She has clearly benefited from the generations before her: her liberated attitude towards sex, reflected in her liaisons with younger agents, and her rise to Section's Second in Command and Chief Strategist show her benefiting from second-wave feminist politics. *LFN* exists in an era where feminism has been 'successful' to the extent that McRobbie identifies: its main assumptions are largely taken into account by media and organizations as a baseline and a marker of progress.³¹⁹ Yet despite these advances, she remains firmly part of the old system – Second in Command, yes, but no farther. She reflects an extreme view of the sacrifices women must make in order to advance in a corporate workplace as well as in the business of espionage: through she never denies her femininity, she avoids forming a family and eradicates all types of emotional attachment. Though she is described as a Mata Hari, her emotionlessness defies the type; more telling is the term "iron maiden," which is applied to her in "Mandatory Refusal" and which clearly conjures comparisons with the most famous "Iron Lady," Margaret Thatcher. Madeline demonstrates a level of calculation and knowledge of strategy and game theory that is more reminiscent of the stereotypical male spy. During the Cold War, gender roles were militarized to a point requiring "that men be able to kill for their country and that women be prohibited from killing for their country;"³²⁰ Madeline demonstrates the erasure of these roles as well as the nationalistic alignment of the previous era. Her determination to decide her own fate ushers in an era where the female spy is even deadlier and more ruthless than the male.

Nikita

Like all children, Nikita rebels against (those she sees as) her parents. Though she too is an inheritor of the same traditions and stereotypes that shaped Madeline, Nikita reacts against them in different ways, refusing to define herself by the strictures of Section One which Madeline embraces. Where Madeline is a construction, a performance of femininity and espionage talent that has been built up over time, Nikita is wild and

³¹⁹ McRobbie, "Post-feminism and popular culture," 257.

³²⁰ Enloe, *The Morning After*, 17.

unconstrained, at times too earnest. She demonstrates a mixture of naïveté and moral determination that will be picked up by Sydney in *Alias*, but where Sydney has her patriotic duty as an American to serve as a moral compass, Nikita lacks that direction. Madeline believes unreservedly in Section One's ends-justify-the-means imperative, but Nikita remains a humanitarian, determined to force Section's shades of grey into black and white. Nikita is unfailingly pitted against both Madeline and Wolfe; each facet of her personality that is explored seems to mark her as less and less suitable for intelligence work. As with any great spy, however, there is more to Nikita than there originally appears.

If Madeline's defining characteristic is her inability to see Section One agents as people rather than cogs in a machine, then Nikita is the exact opposite: unable to rank agents hierarchically in terms of their value or talents, she nevertheless sees the best of their humanity. This trait can occasionally be harnessed into missions, as in episode 1.03, "Love" when Nikita must pretend to be the long-lost daughter of a terrorist. Her ability to appeal to the woman's desire to mother her allows Section to dismantle the operation. Again, her girification is presented as a positive: pigtailed, popping gum, Nikita both disguises and disarms her own strengths. Idealism is not, however, a particularly useful asset for a spy; it often puts Nikita herself in danger from the corporate machine that is Section. She exposes herself to Section's wrath in several episodes when she attempts to protect innocents (among them 1.02, "Charity;" 1.06, "Missing;" 1.12, "Innocent"); in episode 2.11, "Psychic Pilgrim," she nearly ruins a mission over her unwillingness to exploit the emotions of the man she is meant to be manipulating. Nikita's humanity is as much her refusal of the Mata Hari stereotype as Madeline's coldness is hers; Nikita is incapable of succeeding in Valentine missions because she cannot fake her emotions. She cannot pretend to fall in love; she can only fall in love for real.

Nikita's relationship with Michael is often paralleled with Madeline's relationship with Wolfe; both appear to be constructions designed to hide the reality. Yet where Madeline can fabricate a relationship, Nikita and Michael must create the illusion that no relationship exists in an attempt to hide their growing attraction to each other. The 'realness' of their relationship – whether it is based on genuine emotion or manipulated – is in contention from the pilot: Nikita believes Michael asks her out on a date to celebrate the end of her training, when in reality the dinner is a pretext to position themselves in a restaurant where Nikita can assassinate a man as her final test. The existence of Michael's Section-mandated family also creates doubts, as does the suggestion in episode

3.10, "Under the Influence," that Nikita's attraction to Michael is due to a series of subliminal messages programmed by Section. Nikita cannot be a 'real' spy unless she can inherit the Mata Hari-esque skill of using men and discarding them. In all of these situations, however, Nikita's very lack of subtlety in her work as an agent emphasizes the reality of her feelings for Michael as well as her removal from the spy-seductress stereotype; she cannot be relied upon to produce the sort of emotional manipulation that a honeytrap requires unless she is herself being manipulated. This arc continues to trouble the concepts of choice and consent in the romantic relationships on the show; the ambiguous freedoms that the women are given in which to make their own decisions means it is unclear whether those decisions are free or coerced.

Hard Truths

Nikita's honesty and naïveté initially suggest she is unsuitable for a role in covert intelligence. Spies require the ability to deceive as much as skill in target shooting or martial arts. Nevertheless, like the later attributes, the former too can be taught, and Nikita's appetite for learning proves just as voracious. *La Femme Nikita's* first season portrays the titular femme as an innocent, accidentally absorbed into one of the most callous organizations on or off the books and desperate to escape. In "Nikita," she is framed for a murder; Section 'recruit' her because they are impressed by the viciousness of the crime and hope to harness her skills for their own ends. Though she attempts to prove her innocence, the bureaucratic brutality of Section means that either she works for them and commits murder on a regular basis, or they will 'cancel' – ie, kill – her. She does escape temporarily at the end of the first season, disappearing in episode 1.22, "Mercy," from a mission that was meant to be a suicide run. Only when she returns at the beginning of the second season does her training in the interior landscape of a spy begin; the title of the second season premiere, "Hard Landing," reflects the difficulties she has as well as the determination with which she approaches her target. In Season One, Nikita attempted to prove the truth of her innocence; after re-entry, she begins learning to lie.

Nikita's tenure at Section is constantly marked by deception. She is continually lying to someone, just as she is continually being lied to. These layers of falsehoods reflect the 'top secret' world of intelligence and covert operations, but their import is usually personal, not – or not only – professional. At first Nikita's lies appear to be altruistic, inevitable responses to Section's control: at the beginning of the second season, for example, she and Michael lie to Section about Nikita's whereabouts during the six months

in which she temporarily escaped Section's control. This lie serves two purposes: it keeps Nikita from being cancelled, and it disguises the consummation of Nikita and Michael's relationship that occurred during those six months. This is arguably a minor lie, as it involves collusion with a lover (and, incidentally, with the audience) and has benign intentions. It still marks a watershed for Nikita, absenting her from the childlike senses of wonder and morality that she displayed in the first season and emphasizing the development of her self-interest. By the end of the second season, however, Nikita reveals herself capable of sustaining a lie that deceives not just Wolfe and Madeline, but Michael and the audience as well.

The second season finale sees Nikita's skill at deception honed to perfection. The two-part conclusion, episode 2.21, "Adrian's Garden," and episode 2.22, "End Game," deal with Nikita's readiness to orchestrate the destruction of Section. When she is abducted by Carla (Anais Granofsky), whom Nikita considers her best friend, and brought before a mysterious woman named Adrian (Sian Rees), Nikita's place in the matriarchal line of succession that governs Section One becomes clear. Adrian, Walter explains, is "the mother of Section One;"³²¹ she created the Sections and gave them purpose. Adrian recruits Nikita to go undercover and help remove Wolfe and Madeline from control of Section. Nikita becomes a double agent; she keeps her attempt to dethrone Wolfe and Madeline from even Michael. Here her falsehoods seem tied to her strength of character: her hatred of Section makes her lies palatable. However, her ability to dissemble also marks her kinship with the earlier generations of spies who have smiled sweetly at their lovers and secretly worked against them. Worse, the climax of "End Game" reveals the true extent of Nikita's duplicity, about which she has successfully deceived the audience itself. Though she appeared to be working with Adrian to destroy Wolfe and Madeline, she is in fact a triple agent, helping Section discover and destroy Adrian's network. This revelation is meant to demonstrate the strength of the changes Section has wrought on Nikita since her return from 'outside;' it also serves to disconcert the audience, marking the point-of-view character as inherently untrustworthy and reversing Nikita's alignment.

Nikita's ability to keep a secret from the audience reflects the struggle between her morals and the family identification promoted by Section. In other spy shows – particularly in *Alias*, as will become clear later in this chapter – the audience and the point-of-view

³²¹ Ibid.

character are united by the strength of their belief in the national identity served by the intelligence agency. In *Wonder Woman*, for example, the audience knows of Diana Prince's double identity, while in *Scarecrow and Mrs King* Amanda lies about her job to her family in order to emphasize its importance to the audience. Nikita remains unsure about Section; even after she reveals that she was deceiving Adrian, she puts Wolfe on trial, challenging him and Madeline to justify their methods and existence. Still, she chooses to accept their reasoning, allowing them to continue letting the ends justify the means. Adrian's introduction begins a process whereby Nikita and the audience learn more about Section One's origins and structures while simultaneously creating a slow reversal of Nikita's openness, making her actions much more opaque to the viewer.

Nikita comes to understand more of Section's corporate organization in the third season, when Oversight, the agency in charge of Section's finances, comes to light following Adrian's disappearance. In the fourth season, another layer of bureaucracy is revealed: the strata above Oversight, the Centre, which is run by a man known only as Mr. Jones. These discoveries only further emphasize Section's status as a faceless organization; they epitomize the levels of bureaucracy that devalue the agents' lives and of which Nikita was so critical throughout the series. Particularly emblematic of the deceit is the saga of Mr. Jones: first introduced as Nikita's annoying neighbour Mick Schtoppel (Carlo Rota),³²² Mr. Jones turns out to be yet another decoy, as Schtoppel (whose real name is Martin Henderson) reveals that he is an actor hired to play the role of Mr. Jones in public when needed.³²³ Immediately after his discovery, Schtoppel disappears and is replaced with a new Mr. Jones; where Schtoppel/Henderson had been a white man with an English accent, the new Jones is a Black American, emphasizing the interchangeability of human parts at all levels of the machine of Season One.

Prior to discovering Mr. Jones' non-identity, we learn that Nikita is a double agent for Centre and has been working as a mole within Section since her period 'outside' at the beginning of the second season.³²⁴ The tumultuous shift in perspective that this admission causes the members of Section One is echoed by the audience, creating a kinship between them. That this identification happens just as Section is threatened with destruction by Nikita and Mr. Jones is not coincidental; the show uses the appearance of deceit in the previously-untouchable female agent to draw a point of connection between

³²² "Four Light Years Farther," *La Femme Nikita*.

³²³ "All the World's a Stage," *La Femme Nikita*, directed by Joel Surnow (2001; Burbank, CA: Warner Home Video, 2006), DVD.

³²⁴ Op. cit.

the agency and the cultural audience in a way that had not previously been promoted on the series. The treacherous nature of the female spy is so nearly universalized that it becomes a focal point around which the audience is invited to identify with Section One. Here as with Adrian, however, Nikita's falsehoods are rooted in good intentions. She and Mr. Jones want to streamline the Sections, ensuring they serve their original, pure, purpose. Nikita also seeks to humanize them, reducing their faceless nature and treating the agent with dignity. Having abandoned her black and white morality long enough to lie to everyone for years has allowed Nikita to see the usefulness and necessity of Section. Despite her lies, however, Nikita remains a sympathetic character; we forgive her because of the context of her actions as well as the repercussions they carry for her.

Nikita's lies are an integral part of her identity quest. The atmosphere of deceit in which Section One keeps her corralled suggests that the deceptions she herself subsequently relies on are her only form of self-defence; she turns the mechanism of her capture back against her jailers. Unlike the devotees of Section One, Nikita retains her humanity and purity of intention throughout her falsehoods. Her drive to reform Section from its abuse of its agents excuses many of the missteps she makes; even her fellow agents, many of whom refuse to speak to her after she reveals her double-agent status, eventually call her a "hero" when they learn of the improvements she wishes to make.³²⁵ We are also willing to forgive her because we see the price she pays for her deceptions, especially in her relationship with Michael. After her status as a double agent becomes known, Michael asks Nikita if their relationship was ever real. Nikita denies that it was, but gives Michael the chance to escape Section One:

Michael: Why did you break protocol?

Nikita: I wasn't ready to see you die. [...] I have to go back, but you can make it [out].

Michael: What about you?

Nikita: I'll be all right. I've got a card to play. They owe me this one.

Michael: Come with me.

Nikita: I can't.

Michael: Is that what you want?

Nikita: I don't love you. I never did.³²⁶

³²⁵ "Déjà Vu All Over Again," *La Femme Nikita*, directed by Jon Cassar (2001; Burbank, CA: Warner Home Video, 2006), DVD.

³²⁶ "Four Light Years Farther," *La Femme Nikita*.

This exchange seems to suggest that Nikita has indeed assumed the mantle of Mata Hari, using her relationship with Michael as a way to advance her mandate to take over Section. Yet the pain she shows and her future actions prove that this too is a lie, meant to make it possible for Michael to have what Nikita increasingly believes she will never have: a life outside Section. By preying on the ubiquity of the femme fatale stereotype, Nikita defies it; the fourth season ends with Nikita having martyred herself. The only meaning left for her is the emptiness of Section, echoing the absence of national support and identity that has plagued her throughout the show.

Father Knows Best

La Femme Nikita was cancelled at the end of the fourth season, and thus that season finale was meant to be the show finale as well. A dedicated fan campaign succeeded in securing a truncated eight-episode fifth season, however; these episodes dealt with the answers to Nikita's identity quest, finally revealing to her and the audience the truths she had been seeking throughout the series. These revelations primarily concern Nikita's family and have, unsurprisingly, been disguised with their own set of lies, as when Madeline claims that Wolfe is Nikita's father. This lie is a particularly clever piece of dissimulation, containing as it does part of the truth. The fifth season reveals the truth about the Sections, delving further into the backstory of Mr. Jones and Centre, and simultaneously allows discovery of Nikita's secrets. Her father, she learns in episode 5.05, "The Man Behind the Curtain," is not Wolfe but his superior's superior, the real Mr. Jones. Jones reveals that he was responsible for Nikita's original recruitment into Section One:

Mr. Jones: According to genetics, it was quite clear that you had the ability to succeed. You belonged in Section One.

Nikita: Nobody belongs in Section.

Mr Jones: Nobody wants to be in Section. There is a difference.³²⁷

The parallel this creates between Nikita and the Sections is unmistakable: if Adrian was Section One's mother, then Mr Jones is the father, and so he has moulded his children to his own specifications while remaining largely unseen. The alignment of Section with Nikita's family that was developed in the early seasons proves to be much more apt than anyone expected; rather than freeing Nikita, the truth about her family and identity ties her

³²⁷ "The Man Behind the Curtain," *La Femme Nikita*, directed by René Bonnière (2001; Burbank, CA: Warner Home Video, 2006), DVD.

even more closely to the intelligence agency. Despite Nikita's attempts to assert her humanity, the truth about her family is almost as dehumanizing as the Section she tried so hard to escape. Her own father prioritized Section over her, recruiting her not because she was his daughter but because she fit the shape of the piece he needed to keep the Sections running.

The contrast between the family Nikita wanted for herself and the family she discovers within Section becomes more pronounced in the fifth season. Nikita's quest was driven by her desire to find a truth about herself that would liberate her from Section; that her ties to her blood family merely cement her ties to the intelligence agency echoes the perceptions both of female spies and of working women. The idea of spying running being in a family's blood is not new; indeed, it was so pervasive following Mata Hari's death that rumour insisted she had trained her daughter to take her place despite the fact that mother and daughter had not been in contact for years prior.³²⁸ This story represents the unnatural aspects assumed to be an inevitable part of the work of a female spy; her use of her feminine wiles, as well as her inevitable treachery, mark her as an unfit mother, as the idea that Mata Hari would indoctrinate her own child into the danger of espionage work suggests. Mr. Jones' callous attitude towards Nikita and his willingness to sacrifice her for the greater good carry similar connotations; they also suggest that Nikita is already an ineradicable part of the intelligence community by virtue of her birthright:

Mr. Jones: We are not ordinary people, you and I. There are certain things we have to do.

Nikita: Why me?

Mr. Jones: Because there's no one else who can.³²⁹

The idea that Nikita is destined to be a spy because of her birthright does not seem too far-fetched in context; not only Nikita but other spy-children, including Wolfe's son Stephen and Section-raised Birkoff, either died young or were unable to avoid being yoked to Section. Yet there is one more child who has the chance to escape his apparent destiny: Michael's son Adam.

Although Michael abandoned his family when they reached the end of their usefulness, as mandated by Section, his love for his son was one of the only emotions he demonstrated openly throughout the series; it drove him to defy Section, something he

³²⁸ Wheelwright, *The Fatal Lover*, 128.

³²⁹ "A Time for Every Purpose," *La Femme Nikita*, directed by Brad Turner (2001; Burbank, CA: Warner Home Video, 2006), DVD.

otherwise only did on Nikita's behalf. At the end of the fifth and final season, Adam becomes the emblem for the future of family outside Section. In episode 5.06, "The Evil that Men Do," he is kidnapped by the terrorist organization the Collective in an attempt to destroy not only the Sections, but Centre itself. The lengths to which Nikita and the rest of the agents go to protect Adam reveal the agencies' idealized vision of themselves as defenders of the innocent. Paul Wolfe, Mr. Jones, and, in a way, Nikita all sacrifice their lives for Adam's sake. Wolfe is shot attempting to prevent Adam's abduction, while Jones allows himself to be given to the Collective in exchange for Adam's freedom, knowing the tactic will lead to his death. Jones completes the exchange on one condition, however; he forces Nikita to swear that she will take Wolfe's place in Section One and eventually climb to Jones' own position as head of Centre. "One day you'll realize that it is the right decision. Always trust your father," he tells her.³³⁰ The false family thus gives precedence to the real family; Nikita gives up her hopes of a life with Michael in order to free Adam, seeking to keep anyone else with a pedigree similar to hers from suffering her fate. The final shot of *La Femme Nikita* reveals Nikita standing alone in the Perch, the glass-walled observation room from which Wolfe and Madeline used to oversee their domain.³³¹ The message is twofold; first, Nikita is accepting her new role, literally taking the place of those she once worked for and sought to betray. As the camera pulls away from the Perch, revealing more of the institutional palette of Section One and the steel and wood that frames it, a second interpretation becomes clear: Nikita is trapped by her own position in and identity as the bureaucratic machinery that is Section One.

Conclusion

La Femme Nikita is based on the 1990 film of the same name, directed by Luc Besson. There are significant differences between the film and the programme, however. In the film, Nikita (Anne Parillaud) is a drug addict who kills a policeman while attempting to rob a pharmacy. She is guilty of the crime she commits. This is a stark contrast to the Nikita of the tv programme, who is innocent: for the majority of the show, the audience believes that she was merely in the wrong place at the wrong time, and her humanist bent and reluctance to kill unless necessary is a continual reminder that she was never the trained killer Section believe her to be. At the end of the show, we learn that her arrest for

³³⁰ "The Man Behind the Curtain," *La Femme Nikita*.

³³¹ See David R. Coon, "Putting Women in their Place: Gender, space, and power in *24* and *Alias*," *Feminist Media Studies* 11, no. 2, 2011.

murder was a set-up designed to fool Section into adopting her: though this puts her soft-heartedness into a different light, the fact remains that she was always operating within the laws by which Section itself is governed. Moreover, the film's Nikita never enters into a romantic relationship within her agency, the Centre. Her boyfriend Marco (Jean-Hughes Anglade) knows nothing about her work until the end of the film; when he learns the truth, he urges her to leave the Centre, and she does so.

Some of these differences are the result of the obvious length differential between a two-hour feature film and a five-season television programme: the complexities of the programme could never be played out within the confines of a film. I am most interested in the differences between Nikita's relationships with Marco and Michael. Nikita in the television programme must keep her romantic activity confined to within Section, emphasizing the primacy of the drive for spy reproduction. Moreover, it is that reproduction that keeps her from escaping Section as her filmic counterpart escapes the Centre. Nikita is forced into dual familial roles within Section: she inherits from her father as she saves Michael's son. Though she is not literally a housewife, it is the dual forces of the patriarchal family structure and her inevitable maternity that doom her to remain.

Despite *La Femme Nikita's* focus on the feminine strength Nikita and her compatriots display, at the end of the series all the women of the show appear to be neutralized. Adrian is dead; Madeline committed suicide; and Nikita is imprisoned in Section, bound by her word and her blood. Only Michael and his son remain free, thanks to Nikita's acceptance of her position within Section. This conclusion would appear to support White's claim that *La Femme Nikita's* "story of capture, reform and incorporation alludes to cultural discomfort with the alleged rise of the female professional."³³² I believe, however, that the position of the women as the show draws to a close marks a shift in the portrayal of female responsibility in and to intelligence agencies. For the first time, *La Femme Nikita* provides a view of a matriarchal hierarchy of espionage agents working on the 'right' moral side. Section itself was created by Adrian; only when it submits to a patriarchal structure does it diverge from its intended path. Though the men in the narrative, like Wolfe and Mr. Jones, display leadership at times, they are typically overshadowed by the women with whom they work. Wolfe and Jones both die nobly, but

³³² White, *Violent Femmes*, 105.

they sacrifice themselves only due to exigent circumstances. In contrast, the seemingly defeated women choose the time and place of their deaths.

Though Nikita does not aspire to a position of power, nevertheless she does accede to her place as the heir apparent of the espionage world. The feminist attributes of this portrayal are of course undercut by the fact that she was coerced into taking the position, but the acceptance of her suitability for the position suggests a new allowance being made for the positioning of the female spy within the boys' club of espionage. The intertwining of family identity with the world of intelligence aligns the two positions more clearly than has happened in previous shows, even as it emphasizes that the female spy can only ascend to power as a contained, controlled, and weakened figure within the bounds of the family to which she was born, not the one she chose. Still, Emma Peel was an unsuitable spy when she was a married woman, 99 and Amanda King endangered their intelligence work by prioritizing the needs of their children, and Diana was forced to choose between saving her family and protecting her nation. In *La Femme Nikita*, however, Nikita is a spy because of her family rather than despite it. She is forced into the role she does not desire because she seeks to spare others the responsibility of spying; though it is an altruistic motive, by freeing the next generation from their duties, rather than ensuring a clean line of inheritance, she condemns herself. This narrative insistence on Nikita's acceptance of her spy-abilities informs the roles played in *Alias*, which clearly owes a great debt to the relationship between family and nation established in *La Femme Nikita*.

*We share the same biology
Regardless of ideology
What might save us, me and you
Is if the Russians love their children too*³³³

Corporate America: *Alias*

Unlike Nikita, the grubby street kid whom Section One recruits by force, Sydney is deliberately all-American, a fresh-faced college co-ed who chooses to enter the world of espionage of her own accord, in order to serve her country. Not until she has been working as a spy for seven years does her father, Jack Bristow (Victor Garber), reveal that SD-6, the organization she believes to be an off-the-books section of the CIA, is in fact an enemy of America and has deceived her and her co-workers into working against American interests.³³⁴ Sydney's determination to espouse the American fight for justice is only strengthened when she discovers the truth: she becomes a double agent for the real CIA in order to help dismantle SD-6, a role that her father shares. As a result, by the end of the pilot episode the unapologetically patriotic bent of *Alias* is clear. The CIA is not only portrayed as the bastion of national security and the workplace of true American heroes but is set against the self-serving evil of SD-6, whose greatest crime is that it co-opts would-be American patriots and robs them of the chance to serve their country. The spies at SD-6 who believe, as Sydney originally did, that they are working for a secret division of the CIA are referred to as "bad guys who think they're good guys,"³³⁵ defined not by their beliefs but by their actions. Thus characters can cross the dividing line between 'good' and 'bad' as long as their allegiances are acceptable – that is, to America. Arvin Sloane (Ron Rifkin), for example, who headed SD-6, works with the CIA in later seasons: his mission and methods are the same as they were when he worked for SD-6, yet because he is now serving America, they have been legitimized. Sydney never truly trusts him, but is willing to work with him for the good of her country. Like Nikita, she lives in a world where "deceit, violence, theft, and even murder are justified by assumptions that normally unsavoury and even illegal actions are necessary to fight against terrorism,"³³⁶ but where

³³³ Sting, vocal performance of "Russians," by Sting and Sergei Prokofiev, recorded 1985 on *The Dream of the Blue Turtles*, A&M, CD.

³³⁴ "Truth Be Told," *Alias*, directed by J.J. Abrams (2001; Burbank, CA: Walt Disney Studios HE, 2003), DVD.

³³⁵ "Phase One," *Alias*, directed by Jack Bender (2003; Burbank, CA: Walt Disney Studios HE, 2003), DVD.

³³⁶ Sharon Sutherland and Sarah Swan, "The Good, the Bad, and the Justified: Moral Ambiguity in *Alias*," in Stacey Abbot and Simon Brown, eds, *Investigating Alias: Secrets and Spies* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007), 120.

Nikita questioned the bureaucracy that enforced this view, Sydney herself endorses it on behalf of America.

Post-9/11 Post-Feminism

One of the elements of postfeminism as identified by McRobbie is the reversal of the feminist gains of the 1970s and 1980s,³³⁷ and this is particularly evident in the treatment of the housewife in late 90s and early 2000s television. "Domesticity [becomes] the buzzword of the new millennium," as Stephanie Genz points out, "and housewives, real and fictional, [are] emerging in all areas."³³⁸ These new housewives are not as uncomplicatedly othered as the housewife of the 1960s and 70s; instead, they "undermine static constructions of the housewife by reclaiming domestic femininity as a site of undecidability, of meaning in question."³³⁹ The housewife post-9/11 is again a figure that haunts the female spy, placing her in tension between the professional and personal, home and work, a dichotomy that had been mediated in *Scarecrow and Mrs. King* by the acknowledgement of the housewife's contributions to the work of the spy. Rather than tying the housewife to the performance of domestic labour – a connection that, to the show's credit, was always evident in *SMK* due to Amanda's housework, childminding, and errand-running – the new postfeminist presentations reimagine a very 1950s 'happy families' concept by connecting it to heterosexual romance.

While *La Femme Nikita* does not have a traditionally happy ending, instead implying the inability of the 'career' woman to maintain healthy professional and personal lives, *Alias* provides the working mother's fantasy: as I will show, between comparisons with her own mother and her determination to 'have it all,' Sydney internalizes the postfeminist impetus to do "double duty at home and work, saddling [herself] with both male and female burdens."³⁴⁰ She is both an overachiever and a romantic, but her ultimate decision to retire and raise a family is framed as the dream that drives her career. Her pursuit of the nuclear family that she never had reflects Hilary Radner's commentary on the romance narrative as "the transformation of [the] loss of 'voice' into a dream of love

³³⁷ McRobbie, "Post-feminism and popular culture," 255.

³³⁸ Stephanie Genz, "'I am not a Housewife, but...': Postfeminism and the Revival of Domesticity," in *Feminism, Domesticity, and Popular Culture*, eds. Stacy Gillis and Joanne Hollows (New York: Routledge, 2009, 49-62), 49.

³³⁹ Ibid, 50.

³⁴⁰ Ibid, 55.

and happiness."³⁴¹ Sydney's narrative is not merely about transitioning from an innocent to a successful spy, but also becoming, effectively, a stay-at-home mom. These threads intertwine in a way that makes the latter both the ultimate endpoint and the most relatable element of the show.

The postfeminist influence in *Alias* is also seen in the show's treatment of Sydney's body. Like Nikita, her femininity is both weaponized and objectified, particularly as part of her parade of aliases. Starting in the fourth season, the show's credit sequence directs the viewer's gaze to the spectacle of Sydney's outfits – which have ranged from bikinis and lingerie to snowsuits, but regardless of coverage, still demand that Sydney be the object of the audience's gaze. Sydney's body simultaneously demonstrates her lack of subjectivity in its invitation of the gaze and her strength in its androgyny; she is subject to external and self-surveillance³⁴² in order to ensure she can fulfill her job by performing fantasies. Her hyper-muscular appearance reflects how "the body in postfeminist media is constructed as a window to the individual's interior life."³⁴³ Sydney's strength is undeniable, yet it is hidden under the stereotypical disguises she dons. As "the function of femininity... is to provide cover for the female's Otherness and to distance the female spectator from finding fullness in overidentification,"³⁴⁴ the ridiculousness of Sydney's disguises functions to reduce the desirability of her work. Like Nikita, Sydney is softened by her humanity and by her appearance.

Alias: America

In contrast to the rejection of national identity seen in *La Femme Nikita*, *Alias* deliberately orients itself around the importance of American nationalism. Given that the CIA was, during the time *Alias* was being developed, nearly bankrupt and in decay,³⁴⁵ the agency was in dire need of an image rehabilitation and a way to demonstrate that it was still essential to the health and security of the nation. Thus Sydney and the other 'good guys' work for the CIA, on the side of truth, justice, and the American way – regardless of

³⁴¹ Hilary Radner, "A Dream of Thee," in *Shopping Around*, ed. Hilary Radner (London: Routledge, 1995, 67-104), 67.

³⁴² Gill, in "Postfeminist media culture," explores the role of self-surveillance in postfeminist media. The maintenance of a sexy body is seen as a choice made by, mostly young, women, whose desire to fit into the form of male fantasy is sold as wanting to be healthy and fit for themselves. Although Sydney does have career-related reasons to appear as she does, the emphasis on her appearance repeats this pattern.

³⁴³ Ibid, 150.

³⁴⁴ Rabinovitz, "Ms. Representation," 149.

³⁴⁵ Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes*, 471.

their country of origin. According to official bios, both Sydney's father Jack and her love interest Michael Vaughn (Michael Vartan) were born outside of the United States, Jack in Canada and Vaughn in France.³⁴⁶ Both must have become American citizens in order to be eligible for CIA recruitment; additionally, they must have demonstrably discharged any 'conflicts of interest' in terms of their national loyalties. Where Section One displays a course of assimilation, detethering their operatives from national ties, the CIA requires a rebranding, ensuring its agents demonstrate a glossy sheen of American patriotism. No evidence of outside forces having shaped them remains: despite their foreign origins, both Jack and Vaughn speak with an unremarkable American accent. In contrast, many of the series' recurring characters have foreign accents; those who do are almost inevitably marked as Other. These include Vaughn's duplicitous wife Lauren Reed (Melissa George); Julian Sark (David Anders), a sometime associate of Sloane; and, of course, Sydney's KGB-officer mother and aunts, Irina, Katya, and Elena Derevko (Lena Olin, Isabella Rossellini, and Sônia Braga). Very little effort goes into demonstrating specifics of each character's foreign origins. With the exception of David Anders, whose natural accent is American, all the actors cast as foreign characters have foreign accents. None of the actors share a nationality with their characters, however, nor is any attempt made to ensure they sound as if they do. Australian Melissa George plays British-educated Lauren, for example, and not only are the actresses who play the Derevko sisters not Russian, their accents are not even similar to each other: Lena Olin is Swedish, Isabella Rossellini is Italian, and Sônia Braga is Brazilian. The lack of attention given to 'matching' accent with nationality demonstrates the attitude *Alias* promotes: non-Americanness does not have to be specific to be unforgivable. Conveniently, all the foreigners ultimately fall to the CIA, further proving that it is always best to put one's faith in America.

Following 9/11, television is, according to Spigel, the medium most affected by the conflict between good taste and sensationalism, between "maintaining the image of 'public servant' and the need to cater to the public taste (or at least to what advertisers think the public likes),"³⁴⁷ in the attempt to negotiate the new entertainment environment. *Alias* is in a position not only to justify the necessity of the CIA but also to teach the audience the importance of accepting the inconveniences caused by post-9/11 anti-terrorism measures

³⁴⁶ Paul Ruddits, *Alias: Authorized Personnel Only* (New York: Simon Spotlight Entertainment, 2005), 13

³⁴⁷ Lynn Spigel, "Entertainment Wars: American Television After 9/11," in *American Quarterly* 56.2 (June 2004, 235-270), 236.

such as the USA PATRIOT Act, promoting the value of being American not just for Sydney but for the viewers. The demonstrations of American might and right fit into two categories: first, they enable the important work the CIA does, legalizing the wiretaps Sydney plants or ensuring that suspects can be kept in custody – rather straightforward explanations of how the government is working to keep America safe; second, they show the effects of these new measures on 'ordinary' citizens. It is not just the bad guys who are tripped up by the new legislation: Sydney is handicapped by it as well in episode 1.17, "Q and A," when she is questioned by the FBI over a believed threat to national security and must escape to avoid being detained indefinitely. On the surface, this portrayal of the PATRIOT ACT is not a positive one, as it nearly keeps our heroine from saving the world. It serves several different purposes outside of its narrative function, however. Applying it to Sydney – who is both a white female and the audience avatar – refutes the arguments of racial profiling that dogged the application of the new laws.³⁴⁸ Similarly, Sydney's acquiescence signals to the audience the way they should act: she is threatened and imprisoned despite the work she does for her country, but though she is annoyed, she accepts that the legislation is necessary for the greater good. Sydney is a marker of the new American idealism: her fight for her country is implicitly presented as America's fight for survival. The threads of nationhood and destiny bind Sydney to the CIA and establish her bright American heroism as a commendable example, prompting the audience to emulation or at least adulation.

In *Alias*, the intermingling of national loyalty and family identity is further developed and takes a much more complicated form. Questions of identity dominate the show, "as illustrated by the double (sometimes triple) lives led by Sydney and her fellow spies,"³⁴⁹ and family identity is particularly elusive. According to creator JJ Abrams, *Alias* is at its heart the story of a dysfunctional family, told using the trappings of the espionage genre.³⁵⁰ Moreover, it is a show about the importance, in a tumultuous era, of the traditional family unit to the continuation of America as a nation. In a post-9/11, postfeminist era, the show serves to reinscribe and reinforce narratives about the family and the woman's importance within it. Sydney's identity constantly undergoes extreme shifts following revelations about or by her family members; these admissions are inevitably tied to her sense of national

³⁴⁸ See, i.e., Peter Siggins, "Racial Profiling in an Age of Terrorism," paper presented at the Markkula Center for Applied Ethics, March 12, 2002, in Santa Clara, California.

³⁴⁹ Joyce Millman, "Pieces of Sydney: Espionage, Female Identity, and the Secret Self in *Alias*," in Kevin Weisman, ed., *Alias Assumed: Sex, Lies and SD-6* (Dallas: Benbella Books, Inc., 2005), 6.

³⁵⁰ Edward Gross, "Man on a Mission," *Cinefantastique*, February/March 2005, 34

identity. Sydney's father Jack admits that he is a spy at the same time as he delivers the plot twist that defines the series – the discovery that SD-6 is not the CIA.³⁵¹ Only by re-defining herself as a double agent can Sydney process the destruction of what she thought she knew about her own identity; hiding in the hyper-national identity of a CIA agent allows her to regain a personal sense of self. On *Alias*, the concepts of family and nation are intertwined: threats to the family are equated with threats to the nation because the strength of one depends on the strength of the other.

The saga of Sydney's mother demonstrates the conflation of the traditional American family with America itself that occurs throughout the series. Initially Sydney believes her mother was Laura Bristow, a professor of literature who was killed in a car crash when Sydney was six. As the show progresses, she learns first that 'Laura' was really Russian citizen Irina Derevko; second, that Irina was a KGB agent assigned to spy on and seduce Jack; and third, that Irina is still alive.³⁵² Irina quite literally represents the threat of Mother Russia when she re-enters Sydney's life – and Jack's – in Season Two. By reframing the world in which Sydney operates using the vocabulary of the Cold War, *Alias* achieves two simultaneous aims: it makes the post-9/11 struggle familiar, contextualizing it using a battle in which the West won; and it provides a scapegoat without resorting to the racial profiling for which other shows, such as *24* and *Spooks*, have been criticized. It is worth noting too that an "obsession with women reproducing and mothering saturates American ideology, from its heavy inflection in coverage of the Persian Gulf War (the first war in which women participated as soldiers) to the vilification of crack mothers."³⁵³ *Alias* mediates this obsession by presenting good mothers and bad mothers, tying them in to the fabric of national identity: I will explore later how Sydney's and Irina's identities as mothers are paralleled, but the differences are both generational and tied to citizenship.

Irina's presence also emphasizes that nation and family depend on each other. Irina's disappearance was predicated, years before, by Jack's desire to leave the CIA to spend more time with his family, a move that would have made him worthless as Irina's mark.³⁵⁴ By attempting to abandon his country, Jack destroys his family, and only by

³⁵¹ "Truth Be Told," *Alias*.

³⁵² "The Confession," *Alias*, directed by Harry Winer (2002; Burbank, CA: Walt Disney Studios HE, 2003), DVD.

³⁵³ Rabinovitz, "Ms. Representation," 162.

³⁵⁴ Op. cit.

displaying his uncompromising patriotism can he atone for his mistakes. On one mission, Jack asserts his control over Irina using the trappings of their husband-and-wife disguise,³⁵⁵ by 'gifting' her with a necklace laced with C4 explosive to which he holds the detonator.³⁵⁶ Later, Irina and Jack work together to use the necklace as a weapon against a terrorist group. Accepting Jack's dominance and assisting in his crusade allows Irina to become an ally, if one whose loyalty is a point of contention through the bulk of the show. The threat of the foreign woman cannot be allowed to go unpunished, however: Irina is revealed as a power-hungry terrorist in the series finale,³⁵⁷ a move which I will explore later in the chapter as a complete reversal of her character's development but perfectly in keeping with the pro-American bent of the series. Sydney's ultimate battle is with Irina, and Sydney triumphs over the threat to her country by revenging the betrayal of her father.

Sydney's entire family is involved in spy games on one side of the fence or another: her parents, of course, but also her two aunts, Katya and Elena; her half-sister Nadia (Mia Maestro); and her eventual husband Vaughn. Rosie White locates the "evocation of contradictions inherent in American white middle-class femininity" in the constant cycle of revelations about Sydney's family history that ensures *Alias* "relates the personal to the political, the familial with the social and the private family dynamic to the public question of American state governance."³⁵⁸ While the question of defining femininity remains in play, the import of the family and its position within national security is clear throughout the series. Only those who work within the bounds of the American family can succeed: Nadia is doomed as a child conceived out of wedlock, Katya and Elena fall, unmarried, to the CIA, and Irina is defeated by her Americanized daughter. The traditional family is constructed as the nation's protector, and subsequent generations are brought up in the tradition and literally trained for their futures. When Sydney was a child, Jack enrolled her in a program codenamed Project Christmas that taught skills necessary for espionage.³⁵⁹ Similarly, Sydney's two children with Vaughn, Isabelle and Jack, are seen in the series finale to demonstrate the same aptitude, emphasizing their future ability to keep America safe. Only once she has become a wife and mother is Sydney truly freed from all the

³⁵⁵ Stacy Brown and Simon Abbot, "Can't Live With 'Em, Can Shoot 'Em: *Alias* and the (Thermo)Nuclear Family," in *Investigating Alias: Secrets and Spies*, eds. Stacy Brown and Simon Abbot (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007), 94.

³⁵⁶ "Passage (Part 1)," *Alias*, directed by Ken Olin (2001; Burbank, CA: Walt Disney Studios HE, 2003), DVD.

³⁵⁷ "All the Time in the World," *Alias*, directed by Tucker Gates (2006; Burbank, CA: Walt Disney Studios HE, 2006), DVD.

³⁵⁸ White, *Violent Femmes*, 127.

³⁵⁹ "The Indicator," *Alias*, directed by Ken Olin (2002; Burbank, CA: Walt Disney Studios HE, 2003), DVD.

layers of deception that had characterized her life, both professional and personal: having retired from active duty, she no longer has to don any of the parade of 'aliases' for which the show was named, nor must she lie to her friends about the nature of the work she does.

Becoming a part of the reproductive family whose duty is to ensure the safety and continuation of America reconstructs Sydney's fractured identity. Since the viewer identifies with Sydney, her path to happiness tells us what we ought to accept from, or in service to, the nation. In *Alias*, however, Sydney must be presented as a success to ensure the positive portrayal of America and all it stands for. She is ultimately able to define a new identity for herself because of her service to her country; the marriage of her national and familial identities conveys an important message predicated on Sydney's survival. Her identities are portrayed as organic, arising out of her existence as an American without examining the fact of America's own construction. While "most searches for female identity in classical mythology end with the untimely demise of the woman,"³⁶⁰ Sydney's post-9/11 identity as a procreative, loyal American suffices to save her. Sydney, as audience avatar, is allowed to complete her identity quest because her achievements signal the audience how to support America as it re-imagines its self in an era of new threats. *Alias* demonstrates, via Sydney's family unit, the relationship between the continuation of the traditional family and the survival of America as a nation: when examined in light of its relationship to Nikita, the show clearly reveals the political drive towards self-protection and self-aggrandizement that characterized American politics after 9/11.

Season One: No Man's Woman

Though *Alias* began airing in 2001, shortly after 9/11, its origins and attitude belong clearly to the Cold War era. This homage to history is the main difference between *Alias* and *24*: the former is a reflection of American attitudes over the previous half century, while the latter attempts to negotiate a new path in a new era (see Chapter Four). That *Alias* lasted five seasons while *24* managed eight plus a movie may suggest which of these approaches spoke more successfully to the American public. *Alias*'s deep roots

³⁶⁰ Lee Fratanuono, "Classical Mythology, Prime-Time Television: Sydney Bristow and the Quest for Female Identity," in Kevin Weisman, ed, *Alias Assumed: Sex, Lies and SD-6* (Dallas: Benbella Books, Inc., 2005), 174.

present an America that is literally born out of the Cold War, given the details of Sydney's birth and Soviet-American parentage. Themes of identity and heritage inform the entire show; in many ways, Sydney represents an America that is on an identity quest of its own. As Sydney struggles to come to terms with her inheritances and how, or indeed whether, they define her, so too is a post-9/11 America trying to understand its own new position in a world order that has shifted dramatically.³⁶¹ Like in *La Femme Nikita* – to which *Alias* owes a remarkable debt in its portrayal of shifting identities and complex family-espionage relationships³⁶² – family and nationhood are intertwined in *Alias*. One represents the other, and to betray one is to betray them both.

The pattern of deceit and revelation that characterizes *Alias* appears immediately in the pilot. When we first meet Sydney, she believes she is working for a black ops division of the CIA called SD-6. Over the course of the episode, SD-6 have her fiancé killed and are revealed as a international criminal organization; she learns that her father is a CIA agent; and she volunteers to work for the CIA as a double agent within SD-6.³⁶³ The secret lives that she and her father, also a double agent, must lead and the sacrifices they make form the backbone of the show, particularly in the first season. Sydney's honesty, her bright shining patriotism, casts a light on the deceptions she must practice on her friends and loved ones in order to succeed in her missions. Only to protect the future of America does she accept the need to lie. The threat that SD-6 and its parent organization, the Alliance of Twelve, pose is legitimized by the extent of the sacrifices Sydney accepts in order to combat them.

The Alliance of Twelve is not a nationalist organization, though outside of Arvin Sloane, director of SD-6, it is largely made up of non-Americans. Like in *La Femme Nikita*, the threats Sydney faces are not specific to a particular ethnicity or culture; unlike *La Femme Nikita*, however, they are specifically aimed at America, and not only America but the real-world organization that is the CIA. This technique plays with the anationality that characterized *La Femme Nikita*, but only as regards the enemy; the hero is much more clearly defined, and much less problematized as hero. Sydney as audience avatar *believes* in the CIA, its mission, and its competence. Her patriotic, if naïve, faith in the

³⁶¹ I have further explored the identity quest in these shows in Karen K. Burrows, "Alias America: 9/11 and the Televisual Quest for a National Identity," in Leah A. Murray, ed, *Politics and Popular Culture* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2011), 130.

³⁶² Sergio Angelini, "Endoscopic Spies: Mapping the Internal Landscape of *Alias*," in Stacey Abbot and Simon Brown, eds, *Investigating Alias: Secrets and Spies* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007), 29.

³⁶³ "Truth Be Told," *Alias*.

organization makes it far more real and appealing to the viewers, who empathize with her open, vulnerable presentation.³⁶⁴ The comparison with *La Femme Nikita* shows *Alias*'s determination to portray Sydney as a truly American hero.

The Alliance of Twelve, who form the primary enemy against whom Sydney fights for the first season and a half of the show, is not merely a terrorist or criminal organization. Their anti-American actions are largely motivated by a deeper goal: they are acolytes of the 15th century genius Milo Rambaldi.³⁶⁵ Rambaldi-related artefacts and their weaponization run as a plotline through all five seasons of the show. Protecting American interests is conflated with controlling these unknown items and discovering their meaning. Rambaldi followers thus function as the foreign threat, making it possible for the show to avoid condemning any particular nationality as an American enemy. This portrayal is again reminiscent of *Alias*'s predecessor *La Femme Nikita* but contrary to its contemporary 24, suggesting *Alias* is caught in the moment of a shift in television realities. Embracing the sci-fi aspects of Rambaldi makes a statement about American competencies while avoiding the directly political.

Season One concerns itself with establishing the premise of the show: Sydney's double life, her strained relationship with her father, her attraction to her CIA handler Michael Vaughn, and the importance of Rambaldi to America's national security. The question of Sydney's identity, which will remain in a state of flux throughout the show, is also heavily foregrounded. Sydney learns several harsh truths, starting in the pilot: her father's real job as a spy, SD-6's secret mission, and later in the season the revelations of her mother's duplicity all destabilize Sydney's identity. Aligning Sydney with America while simultaneously making her the subject of a centuries-old prophecy serves to create a parallel between Sydney's importance and America's ascendance as a world power. The Cold War roots both of Sydney's birth and of the groups who seek to control the Rambaldi manuscript continues the parallel, ensuring that the audience sees the antagonistic relationship between America and Russia as the defining attribute of the series' patriotism: the Cold War is, after all, an ideological war that America won and therefore safe to use as a rallying cry. Season One also establishes the series' inclusion in each season of a dark image against whom Sydney is paralleled and with whom she must contend in order to

³⁶⁴ Angelini, "Endoscopic Spies," 30.

³⁶⁵ "Truth Be Told," *Alias*.

keep her own 'bad girl' side under control.³⁶⁶ In Season One the 'anti-Sydney' is Anna Espinosa (Gina Torres), a half-Cuban, half-Russian Cold War baby who is one of the Alliance's Rambaldi converts.³⁶⁷ Anna emphasizes the danger that Cold War-era liaisons – of which Sydney is also a product – can pose if not properly managed in American interests. Between Anna and the revelation in the season finale that Sydney's mother Irina is alive and well and controlling an international criminal syndicate that is also searching for Rambaldi artefacts, Season One firmly establishes the reawakened threat of Mother Russia against which *Alias*'s CIA will define itself.

Season Two: Mother of a Mother

Season One ends with Sydney, captured, coming face-to-face with her mother for the first time since childhood. Season Two begins with the aftermath of that confrontation, in which Irina shoots Sydney, Sydney escapes from Irina's captivity, and Irina subsequently turns herself in to CIA custody, voluntarily choosing incarceration in order to be closer to her daughter.³⁶⁸ This tangled set of circumstances exemplifies the impenetrable motivation that characterizes Irina throughout the show; it also reflects the difficulties Sydney will encounter in the course of her identity quest. The question of whom Irina chooses to betray underlies the relation between nation and family that defines *Alias*.

Season Two also sees several reimaginings of the plot as defined in Season One, forcing Sydney to reconceptualize herself further. Her work as a double agent comes to fruition in 2.15, "A Free Agent," with the destruction of SD-6 and indeed the entire Alliance of Twelve. The removal of her double agent status also makes it possible for Sydney to pursue a romantic relationship with her CIA handler Vaughn; where she previously had to set the needs of the nation against her own, she can now serve her country and follow her heart simultaneously. The importance of heterosexual relationships to the security of the nation is emphasized throughout the season, particularly in Sydney's discovery of Project Christmas. A CIA initiative to train children in the skills they would need as spies, Project Christmas was the reason Irina was sent to spy on Jack. This

³⁶⁶ Millman, "Pieces of Sydney," 7.

³⁶⁷ "Parity," *Alias*, directed by Mikael Salomon (2001; Burbank, CA: Walt Disney Studios HE, 2003), DVD.

³⁶⁸ "The Enemy Walks In," *Alias*, directed by Ken Olin (2001; Burbank, CA: Walt Disney Studios HE, 2003), DVD.

initiative, referred to as the development of "next generation weapons,"³⁶⁹ allows countries to prepare future armies against the day when they may be needed. Sydney's discovery that she underwent Project Christmas training causes her to question her identity further as she struggles with the possibility that her free will was usurped. That her destiny as a spy may have been determined not only by genetics, but by bureaucracy, challenges her sense of self; she takes this anger out on Jack rather than the CIA, however, raising questions about the ability of spies to be effective parents when they are required to choose between their country and their children.

Sydney's alter ego in this season is Allison Doren (Merrin Dungey), another child who was exposed to Project Christmas training, although in this case she is again a Rambaldi follower.³⁷⁰ Along with Sloane and Julian Sark, Allison is part of The Covenant, a group dedicated to building a neutron bomb depicted by some of Rambaldi's plans. This fixation again echoes the Cold War theme of the show, drawing comparisons to the threat of nuclear destruction that America faced from Russia during its height. As part of the deception, Allison uses Project Helix, another of Rambaldi's inventions, which allows her to be remade into a genetic double of another person. The identity she takes on is that of Francie Calfo (Merrin Dungey), Sydney's housemate and best friend.³⁷¹ Stealing Francie's appearance allows Allison to infiltrate Sydney's home life and spy on her there. Allison also seduces Will Tippin (Bradley Cooper), a friend of Sydney's who works as a low-level analyst for the CIA. Allison embodies the Mata Hari stereotype from which Sydney so decidedly deviates, including the fears about 'pillow talk' that Mata Hari made so prevalent (see Introduction). Allison hypnotizes Will while they are in bed together in order to steal information about the CIA's actions.³⁷² She thus literalizes the fear of the spy-seductress who sleeps with a man in order to obtain secrets from him; Sydney is exactly the opposite, and indeed is more likely to *share* secrets with the men in her life. Sydney is distanced from the Mata Hari stereotype by Allison's embodiment of it, but the culpability of male agents in the spread of secrets is also erased. Women have become so dangerous, so adept at lying, that men can no longer prepare sufficiently for the threat they pose.

³⁶⁹ "The Indicator," *Alias*.

³⁷⁰ "Phase One," *Alias*.

³⁷¹ *Ibid.*

³⁷² "Firebomb," *Alias*, directed by Craig Zisk (2003; Burbank, CA: Walt Disney Studios HE, 2003), DVD.

Season Three: Blood Will Out

Season Three begins moments after Season Two concluded, with Vaughn's revelation to Sydney that she has been thought dead for two years.³⁷³ Neither she nor the CIA have any knowledge of her whereabouts during those two years. In the interim, Sydney discovers, not only has Vaughn married National Security Council (NSC) liaison Lauren Reed,³⁷⁴ but Sloane has achieved parole and become the head of the multimillion-dollar philanthropic foundation Omnifam – the name of which, of course, serves to emphasize the overriding importance of family in the series. Additionally, Jack has been imprisoned by the CIA for allegedly working with Irina in attempts to revenge Sydney's presumed death. Once again, Sydney is required to rebuild her entire identity; this time she has the support of the CIA, and both she and the CIA share a common enemy in the form of the NSC.

The introduction of the NSC reflects the growing discontent in American culture of the era about the involvement of the intelligence services in the War on Terror. The NSC on the show is positioned as closer to the US government, providing something of a buffer zone between the CIA and the White House administration. The CIA agents are thus able to be more autonomous, almost maverick, though their patriotism remains unquestionable. Sydney's loyal band of CIA agents consistently attempts to keep the NSC in the dark as regards Sydney's missing two years. The NSC is more closely tied to the excessive force authorized by the American government post-9/11. They are shown to adhere to the rules without question or ability to adapt; in 3.01, "The Two," when Sydney disappears on her first mission after returning to the CIA, NSC liaison Robert Lindsey (Kurt Fuller) classifies her as an enemy of the state despite CIA director Marcus Dixon (Carl Lumbly) insisting she is still amnesiac and traumatized. The differences between the NSC and the CIA's interpretations of the powers of government parallel the uses and abuses of the new laws, such as the USA PATRIOT ACT, introduced in America after 9/11. When the laws are used by honest agents like those of the CIA, their restrictions are worth enduring. When power-hungry bureaucrats such as Lindsey take advantage of them, however, the safety of the nation can be jeopardized by the very measures meant to protect it. The NSC even have a Guantanamo Bay-type facility where torture is frequent, in which they attempt to imprison Sydney in order to interrogate her.³⁷⁵ The intractability of the NSC makes it a

³⁷³ "The Two," *Alias*, directed by Ken Olin (2003; Burbank, CA: Walt Disney Studios HE, 2004), DVD.

³⁷⁴ "Succession," *Alias*, directed by Dan Attias (2003; Burbank, CA: Walt Disney Studios HE, 2004), DVD.

³⁷⁵ "Prelude," *Alias*, directed by Jack Bender (2003; Burbank, CA: Walt Disney Studios HE, 2004), DVD.

vulnerability with which the CIA must contend in its desire to keep the country safe. Nowhere is this clash more evident than in the person of the second NSC liaison, Lauren Reed, who is both Vaughn's wife and Season Three's anti-Sydney.

Lauren's position as Sydney's opposite is not due only to her having usurped Sydney's place in Vaughn's life, nor to her work for the NSC as paralleled to Sydney's work for the CIA. Her very name reveals the truth of her identity. 'Lauren' calls back to 'Laura,' as in Irina's cover identity as 'Laura' Bristow; like Irina, Lauren is a foreign spy assigned to seduce and marry a CIA agent, in this case Vaughn rather than Jack.³⁷⁶ Though Lauren works for a multinational corporation known as the Covenant, she is also foreign, emphasizing the untrustworthiness of non-Americans. Like Sydney, Lauren was born to a foreign spy whose marriage was not precisely a love match; she is thus a reflection of what Sydney could have been had she followed in her mother's footsteps rather than her father's.

Lauren and Sydney are initially presented as physical opposites: Lauren is blonde where Sydney is brunette, curved where Sydney is angular, and of course marked as a foreign body by her accent. The actresses share a similar facial structure, however, characterized by high cheekbones and full lips; as the season progresses and Lauren's true purpose is revealed, she begins to highlight these features, developing an uncanny resemblance to Sydney while at work.³⁷⁷ In contrast, her appearance while on Covenant missions relies on tropes from film noir, emphasizing her bloneness, her curves, and her dangerous femininity. Using advanced technology, each woman temporarily becomes the other in the Season Three finale. Lauren uses a false Sydney mask to shoot Vaughn and bomb the CIA office, while Sydney uses a Lauren mask to interrogate Lauren's lover Sark.³⁷⁸ Their actions while camouflaged as each other reassure Sydney that her essential self is dependent not on appearances but deeds; Lauren-as-Sydney still seeks to destroy America, while Sydney-as-Lauren still works to stabilize it. Though it is Vaughn who kills Lauren, saving Sydney in the process, Sydney's mental triumph over her dark mirror helps her regain the identity that two years of amnesia took from her.

³⁷⁶ "After Six," *Alias*, directed by Maryann Brandon (2004; Burbank, CA: Walt Disney Studios HE, 2004), DVD.

³⁷⁷ Millman, "Pieces of Sydney," 14.

³⁷⁸ "Resurrection," *Alias*, directed by Ken Olin (2004; Burbank, CA: Walt Disney Studios HE, 2004), DVD.

As with all seasons of the show, Season Three contains several new revelations about Sydney's family, first – though perhaps least important – that Jack's investigation of Sydney's supposed death was conducted in partnership with her mother. With Lena Olin unwilling to return to *Alias*, however, the show was forced to introduce an intermediary in the person of Yekaterina 'Katya' Derevko: Irina's sister, Sydney's aunt – and Jack's sister-in-law.³⁷⁹ Like all of Sydney's relations, Katya is involved in espionage; a former KGB agent, her loyalties have become negotiable, except in the case of family. Like Irina, Katya appears to act out of love for her blood-relation, Sydney; unlike Irina, however, Katya's sexuality is not recuperable by the paradigm of heterosexual reproduction. She is neither Sydney's mother nor Jack's wife, though she evinces protectiveness towards the former and desire for the latter. As a single woman without the core of a nuclear family to bind her, she cannot truly be trusted; that she apparently teams up with false wife Lauren only emphasizes their shared duplicitous Mata Hari nature.³⁸⁰

Irina is not the only one who gains a sister in Season Three. Sydney too discovers she has a half-sister: Nadia Santos, Irina's daughter by Sloane via an extramarital affair.³⁸¹ Nadia functions as the anti-Sydney in Season Four, but her introduction in Season Three drives the Rambaldi plotline forward. She shares Sydney's importance in Rambaldi's prophecies; as 'the Passenger,' she and Sydney are destined to be enemies. She too is a spy; taken from Irina as a child, she was brought up in an Argentinian orphanage and eventually joined Argentina's intelligence service (SIDE). As a result of her upbringing, she has a strong Argentinian accent; this marker of foreignness, coupled with her introduction's parallel to that of Katya, suggests doubts about her loyalty that are only compounded by her attachment to her newly discovered father, Sloane. Sloane is able to use her naïveté to set in motion his Rambaldi endgame.

The Season Three finale, as mentioned, allows Sydney to fully reintegrate into the life she lost to amnesia. Where at the beginning of the season she was allegedly dead and in reality a blonde assassin for the Covenant, by the end usurper Lauren, a blonde Covenant assassin, is dead and Sydney has reclaimed her place in Vaughn's arms. *Alias* can never simply allow a happy ending, however; with her identity at least temporarily established, Sydney's family loyalties are drawn into question.

³⁷⁹ "Crossings," *Alias*, directed by Ken Olin (2004; Burbank, CA: Walt Disney Studios HE, 2004), DVD.

³⁸⁰ "Resurrection," *Alias*.

³⁸¹ "Hourglass," *Alias*, directed by Ken Olin (2004; Burbank, CA: Walt Disney Studios HE, 2004), DVD.

Season Four: Pruning the Family Tree

Further complicating the question of whether the show is redefining its presentation of American intelligence is the revelation, in the first episode of Season Four, of Sydney's new work assignment. She is now part of Authorized Personnel Only, or APO, a black ops division of the CIA.³⁸² APO obviously recalls SD-6, which Sydney originally believed was an off-the-books CIA cell; even most of the personnel at APO reflect SD-6, as not only Sydney and Jack but Dixon, Marshall, and even Sloane are part of the task force. This time, however, they are legitimate; the acknowledgement that the CIA run black ops outfits, as well as the prioritization of nation over family, presents a much more complicated picture of the American government's position. There is no SD-6, no NSC, against whose power-hungry example the honest patriotism of the CIA agents can shine. Instead, with convicted felon Sloane at its head, APO itself embodies all the tensions about use and misuse of government resources. Sydney's entire life is once again destabilized: neither her family nor her work can offer the same level of comfort and familiarity as they did previously.

Season Three ended with the discovery that even blood ties are not proof against duplicity. Katya worked with Jack to protect Sydney as easily as she worked with the Covenant against her. Her betrayal emphasizes the threat of the foreign woman; if nation and family are so intertwined, only someone with no national loyalty can so easily betray family. The apparent exception to this seems to be someone whose loyalty to his family overrides that to his family, as Sydney's discovery that Jack has been spying on her implies.³⁸³ Treating Sydney as a project seems to suggest that Jack's patriotism is more important than his role as Sydney's father, which completely changes the audience's perception of him, recasting him – as in Sydney's eyes – as a heartless bureaucrat. The destruction of Sydney's familial safe haven is exacerbated by her further discoveries that Jack applied to the CIA for and was subsequently granted the right to kill Irina, and that he did so without hesitation. In combination with the slight amorality of the CIA in developing its own black-ops division, Jack's portrayal as a threat reflects a marked cynicism on the part of the show regarding the direction of the American government. Nadia embodies the working-out of this cynicism as Season Four's anti-Sydney.

³⁸² "Authorized Personnel Only (Part 1)," *Alias*, directed by Ken Olin (2004; Burbank, CA: Walt Disney Studios HE, 2005), DVD.

³⁸³ "Authorized Personnel Only (Part 1)," *Alias*.

In many ways, Nadia is the closest Sydney-analogue the show has yet produced: another abandoned Derevko daughter, another important figure in Rambaldi's prophecies, another girl trained to serve as her father wants. It is the ways in which she differs, however, that align Nadia with the negativity that seems to be affecting the show's view of the CIA. Unlike Sydney, Nadia's birth was not ameliorated by growing up in America with her father; rather, Nadia was placed in an orphanage as a child. She is thus doubly condemned: her upbringing marks her as a foreigner despite her birth, while being raised an orphan puts her outside the bounds of family ties. She is an agent of Argentine Intelligence when she is first introduced; though she eventually joins APO, she is initially reluctant, and her loyalty was first to another country. Nadia is also sexualized in a way that Sydney is not, perhaps a reflection of her foreign status; though Sydney may don lingerie or latex in pursuit of her targets, she always retains a certain innocence nevertheless. Nadia, in contrast, easily takes to the Mata Hari role; her first mission for the CIA involves betraying a former acquaintance and, it is implied, lover by kissing him while wearing fake lips coated with knockout drops.³⁸⁴ Sydney is 'saved' from inheriting her mother's duplicitous femininity by the spy training her father provides. Nadia's father's reputation and motivations are suspect, depriving her of any safety that might be conferred by his actions, and the Derevko threat in her upbringing is much more pronounced.

Unlike Jack, whose motives in training Sydney were at best to keep her safe and at worst to make her useful in service to her country, Sloane chooses to use Nadia in service of his own power-grab for further Rambaldi knowledge. The duplicitous nature of the father reflects on the daughter: Nadia's loyalties throughout the series, even after she joins APO, are never fully accepted by the rest of the CIA team. Her upbringing in the orphanage originally suggests a complete lack of alignment; in fact, the absence of family allows outside influences free reign. The ultimate villain of Season Four is Elena, the last and most vicious of the three Derevko sisters and another marker of the destabilization of family relations on the show; she is also known as Sophia Vargas, director of the orphanage in which Nadia spent her youth. This discovery emphasizes Nadia's marginal position in her CIA family; not only the uncertain loyalties of her parents, but the influence of Elena, make her suspect. She is additionally seen as a threat due to the Rambaldi prophecy that she and Sydney are destined to be enemies.

³⁸⁴ "The Awful Truth," *Alias*, directed by Lawrence Trilling (2005; Burbank, CA: Walt Disney Studios HE, 2006), DVD.

The threat in Season Four is a family whose locus is Nadia: the virus-triggering Mueller device, located in Sovogda, Russia, which is controlled by Sloane, her father, and Elena, her mother-figure. To combat it requires a family whose focal point is Sydney: her parents, Jack and Irina, and her fiancé, Vaughn. Though Nadia is included in the team, the Rambaldi prophecy considers her an outsider, which is emphasized by the parallel between the two sets of sisters: Sydney and Nadia, and Irina and Elena. That Elena captured Irina and duped Jack into believing he killed her suggests an understanding of the two fundamental principles of the season, and perhaps the show: first, that only family can bring down family, and second, that the heterosexual reproductive family is the most stable unit in a country's defense. In *Alias*, it is always inevitable that good will triumph, but this is even more evident in Season Four. Elena and Sloane are allies only out of necessity; they have no real tie to each other and their attachment to Rambaldi's devices is only to the power they can provide. Their opponents, in contrast, have the weight of both familial attachment and patriotic fervor behind them. Irina's ability to forgive Jack for attempting to kill her emphasizes the importance of the family unit and its continuation: she even gives Vaughn advice about his relationship with Sydney, passing on hard-earned wisdom. With her parents – family past – and fiancé – family future – as allies, Sydney's victory is assured. The only one left out of the unit is Nadia.

The Season Four finale, "Before the Flood," is simultaneously the reestablishment of Sydney's family and the destruction of Nadia's. Irina is effectively brought back from the dead; she and Jack are reconciled. Vaughn and Sydney get engaged, promising a new future. Jack, whose inability to accept Irina's place in Sydney's life has previously been a point of contention, lets Irina go free at the end of the episode rather than recapturing her, thus allowing the family unit to prevail over the good of the state. Nadia, however, suffers all the fates Sydney evades. Elena, her mother-figure, is revealed as uncompromisingly evil and is killed by her sister Irina and Irina's husband Jack, emphasizing the primacy of the marital bond over the single woman. Nadia is infected by the virus Elena manufactures; without the protection of the nuclear family, her ersatz relationships doom her. Just as Sydney's family built itself up, Nadia's self-destructed in reflection of its improper status. Doing so removed the outsider element – Nadia – from Sydney's family, allowing her to reform it into the perfect American nuclear unit. All it lacks is the white picket fence.

Having established the role of the reproductive heterosexual family in the defense of the nation, Season Four ends with a reminder that even the family requires a certain level of commitment and belonging to make it a safe haven. With the threat to the nation – the Mueller device – subdued, Sydney must face a threat to the formation of her future family. She and Vaughn are finally engaged and planning their wedding when Vaughn reveals that he has been less than truthful with Sydney:

Vaughn: I have to tell you something.

Sydney: Okay, whatever it is, I can handle. Just don't tell me you're a bad guy.

[*pause*] You're not a bad guy, are you? [*pause*] Vaughn?

Vaughn: It's no accident that I was the one you can to when you walked into the CIA with your story about SD-6.

Sydney: Vaughn, I don't understand. What are you telling me?

Vaughn: Well, for starters, my name isn't Michael Vaughn.³⁸⁵

He is about to tell Sydney his real name when they are in a car accident: the screen goes black and the credits roll.

This season finale – the last before the series finale of Season Five – maintains a pattern consistent throughout the show. Although the ostensible focus of the spy genre is on national security, the season-ending cliffhangers have always dealt with Sydney's family. Season One ends with her first meeting with her mother, who has just been revealed as an international criminal mastermind. Season Two ends with the dual revelations that Sydney has lost two years and that Vaughn is married. The Season Three finale reveals that Jack has been spying on Sydney her entire life and apparently executed Irina. Season Four, as we see, resolves the danger to America and chooses to use family attachments to build suspense. If *Alias* is a show about a dysfunctional family that happens to be a spy show, this conflation emphasizes the interrelation between identity and nationality that the show proposes and portrays the unquestioned marriage of the two as the route to happiness and safety.

Season Five: All Women Become Like Their Mothers

The final season of *Alias* literalizes its message that the importance of the spy family lies in its ability to provide continuing generations of young spies to be sworn into the unquestioning service of their country. It reveals the endgame towards which the

³⁸⁵ "Before the Flood," *Alias*, directed by Ken Olin (2004; Burbank, CA: Walt Disney Studios HE, 2004), DVD.

Rambaldi plotline has been working: immortality. Simultaneously, it presents a more acceptable way to achieve immortality, as it allows Sydney and Vaughn to become parents. By casting the arcane pursuit of immortal life – and thus, by extension, an eternity in which to amass power – in opposition to the very mortal act of begetting children, *Alias* creates a hierarchy in which natural heritage is prioritized. This parallel resolves the plotlines of all the major players from throughout the series, aligning the on one side of the other of the Rambaldi conundrum as their moral compass demands. Questions of technological prowess and of family values are thus imbued with moral weight, ensuring that the legacy of the show, while not quite as explicitly right-wing as its counterpart 24, remains equally as conservative.

Season Five concerns itself with resolving the stories of three sets of parent-child relationships. It deals with the question of foreign ties – constantly in play throughout the series by way of Irina and Nadia – as well as the moral ambiguity of a child born out of wedlock, through Nadia's relationship with her father, Sloane. It reveals, finally, the answer to Irina's divided loyalties, pitting her against Jack in a duel between duties to family and her own desires. And, finally, it positions the 'good' spies, Sydney and Vaughn, as new parents, asking to what heights their children might aspire should they take heed of the cautionary tales acted out by their relatives. All three of these relationships play out along the axis between mortality and immortality, with service to one's own country lying in the balance.

Nadia's narrative is a cautionary tale, meant to advise against the dangers of a female spy who maintains a foreign nationality and an unbridled sexuality. The Season Four finale makes this clear: while the Bristow nuclear family reunite to complete an American mission and Vaughn finally guarantees the continuance of that family by becoming Sydney's fiancé, Nadia's identity is much more complicated. Nadia slips into a coma at the end of Season Four; unlike Sydney, whose recovery from her amnesiac state at the beginning of Season Three was impelled by her need to do her duty to her country and free her father, Nadia lacks the necessary ties to bring herself back to life. Her predicament remains a plot point, however, as she becomes the impetus that drives her father, Sloane.

In Season Five, Sloane's Rambaldi obsession is temporarily derailed by his desire to find a cure for Nadia's condition. When given the choice between the security of his

nation and the recuperation of his loyalty to the traditional family on the one side and the resuscitation of his 'dangerous' daughter on the other, Sloane fails the test.

His divided loyalties thus mark him as a liability; he demonstrates his untrustworthiness almost immediately when Nadia asks him to choose either her or Rambaldi. He is unable to decide between the "two most important things in [his] life"³⁸⁶ and Nadia, in despair, throws a Rambaldi artefact onto the fire. Sloane knocks her out of the way to rescue it and unintentionally pushes her into a glass table, the shards from which lacerate her jugular vein, killing her. Her loss causes Sloane to recant all loyalties save that to Rambaldi; though she was a weak thread, Nadia was the only tie that held him to the American vision of the future. He subsequently serves and betrays both APO and The Shed/Prophet Five impartially in his ultimately successful pursuit of Rambaldi's final secret, that of immortality.

Sloane's achievement of immortal life is revealed when he survives Sydney shooting him in the head. He is thus positioned as more powerful than the spy-family, an imbalance in the status quo that must be reversed. The promise the show holds out is that of immortality achieved through the successful production of trained, loyal descendants; Sloane's Rambaldi-given immortality challenges that promise, especially as he has demonstrated the amoral attitude towards his own children that made such a quest possible. It ultimately falls to Jack to prevent Sloane's ascension to power: having initially ensured Sydney would be able to access her innate spy skills by enrolling her in Project Christmas, he safeguards her ability to pass those skills on by trapping Sloane under an impenetrable mountain of rubble in a Mongolian cave. "You beat death, Arvin, but you couldn't beat me," Jack says,³⁸⁷ demonstrating that the American patriarch is viewed as a more powerful entity than the forces of mortality. Where Jack would, and does, die for Sydney, Sloane reverses the relationship and sacrifices Nadia to his own goals, positioning him against the American family. She is positioned as the agent of his fate: her skills led him through his Rambaldi quest just as his disregard for her caused his ultimate turn to Rambaldi. The dysfunctional elements of their 'family' led each of them to their death.

Sloane and Nadia's story stands in stark contrast to the divided narrative of the Bristow-Derevko clan, which displays both the repercussions of transgressing against the

³⁸⁶ "30 Seconds," *Alias*, directed by Frederick E. O. Toye (2006; Burbank, CA: Walt Disney Studios HE, 2006), DVD.

³⁸⁷ "All the Time in the World," *Alias*.

family and the glories of achieving the ultimate procreative drive. Irina's cooperation recouped her position in Sydney and Jack's eyes, if not those of the US government. Jack and Sydney themselves certainly seem to believe that the Irina of Season Five is on their side. They greet her with evident joy when they encounter her in 5.11, "Maternal Instinct," and her inclusion on their mission is a foregone conclusion rather than the matter for debate it would have been previously. Yet the audience has a different perspective on the matter, one with far more uncertainty. When Sydney was being held hostage in 5.09, "The Horizon," the audience was able to see what she was not: that one of her captors was Irina. Even this revelation is ambiguous, as Irina, overseeing the experiments Prophet Five were performing on Sydney, was functioning as the voice of reason, supervising them to ensure they did not injure Sydney's child. Was her purpose to encourage the experiments or ensure Sydney would survive and escape? When she returns in "Maternal Instinct," no answers are forthcoming, but the matter clearly revolves around the question of Sydney's baby.

Like many single mothers, Sydney works until she goes into labour; unlike those in most other professions, she gives birth while on a covert mission, in enemy territory, and holding a gun on her mother. The birth scene is reminiscent of the *Get Smart* episode where Max must contend with believing that 99 is in labour while he is on a mission (see Chapter One). While 99's impending labour was almost dangerously distracting for Max, Sydney's labour barely slows her down. She is bearing the state children who will serve it later in life, which means she is not a threat; her labour thus does not detract from the spy business she must conduct. The family legacy of espionage into which the child is born is literalized by its birth story: not only is Sydney on a mission when her daughter is born, but she is attended at the delivery by Jack and Irina. Rather than an affirmation of the generational identity passed down by the Derevko-Bristow spy women, however, Sydney's daughter's birth becomes a reflection of the dangers of female sexuality. While assisting Sydney to give birth, Irina reveals that she herself only became a mother because the KGB ordered her to bear Jack a child and thus strengthen her influence over him:

Irina: You should know something, Sydney. I never wanted to have a child. The KGB demanded it. They knew it would ensure your father's allegiance to me. You were simply a means to an end. And then when the doctor put you in my arms and I looked at you, so fragile, all I could think was, how could I have made such a terrible mistake. And at that moment I was sure of one thing. I couldn't be an agent

and a mother. I'd either fail at one or both. And I chose to fail at being a mother.

[...] In time you learn – you can't do both.

Sydney: Watch me.³⁸⁸

Irina's revelation reflects the fear of 'good' agents falling prey to seductive Mata Hari types, as seen in the World War II propaganda posters; it also emphasizes Irina's essential foreignness, which her accent ensures is never fully forgotten. Irina's choice was between nation and family, and she chose her nation. She reflects the Cold War-era mother, signifiers of "boundary invasion, body destruction, and apocalypse" rather than warmth and love.³⁸⁹ Her apparent lack of a maternal drive is emblematic of her misplaced loyalties. It also allows the show to emphasize American superiority: rather than choose between her daughter and her duty, as Irina claims was inevitable, Sydney is determined to have it all, and her status as an American makes that not only possible but likely. The comparison between Irina and Sydney reflects the postfeminist portrayal of 'choice' as the differentiating factor between it and second-wave feminism. Irina –who, after all, succeeded in her career only under the alias 'The Man' and comes to her end by falling through a literal glass ceiling – is the representative of an outmoded, aging, passé second wave³⁹⁰ that forced women to choose between personal happiness and professional success.³⁹¹ Sydney, however, not only can have it all, but is practically required to do so both by the constraints of her romantic dream and by her position as an 'empowered woman.'

Having revealed her true motives, Irina uses the distraction of Sydney's daughter's birth to escape with a Rambaldi artefact known as the Horizon. Like Sloane, she too is interested in using it to claim immortality, and like him, she must decide between the power it offers and the promise of her family. As suits a woman who has admitted to having a child as nothing more than a business transaction, however, Irina becomes the agent of her own destruction; having "relinquished her 'natural' role as a mother... her desire for power ultimately destroys her."³⁹² When the Horizon is flung onto a precarious glass skylight, Irina is driven after it by her own hunger for immortality, despite the danger to herself. She is literally positioned between Sydney, reaching out to save her, and the

³⁸⁸ "Maternal Instinct," *Alias*, directed by Tucker Gates (2005; Burbank, CA: Walt Disney Studios HE, 2006), DVD.

³⁸⁹ Michael Rogin, "Kiss Me Deadly: Communism, Motherhood, and Cold War Movies," in *Representations*, no.6 (Spring 1984), 9.

³⁹⁰ Early and Kennedy, "Introduction," 3.

³⁹¹ Dow, *Prime Time Feminism*, 145.

³⁹² White, *Violent Femmes*, 144.

Horizon, tantalizingly near to being within her reach. Ultimately, her own misjudgments doom her when the glass ceiling gives way beneath her and she plunges to her death, having overreached her bounds.

Despite its implications, this solution to Irina's arc is out of keeping with her character; it effectively reverses the situation that has been developed in the previous three seasons. Irina's actions have been ambiguous, yes, but her love for Sydney and Jack, and also Nadia, consistently drove her to alternate, even self-sacrificial, ends. In 2.18, "Truth Takes Time," for example, she risks death in order to draw Sydney out of a building that was rigged to explode, while she offers to surrender herself to Jack's custody in 4.22, "Before the Flood." Her catchphrase, "truth takes time," implied that her endgame was not so easily discerned as the CIA initially assumed. Despite the careful work done previously to differentiate the character, Irina remains enough markers of 'other' to be recast as the danger in Season Five. Her dual identity as a foreign female spy marks her as open to being inscribed with acceptably villainous tendencies; it is motivation in and of itself. By returning her to the position of villain and relying on those particular markers to lead to her death, *Alias* shows how prevalent the negative view of the female spy remains and how eager the American audience is to embrace it.

While Nadia failed as a daughter and Irina failed as a mother, Sydney is determined to excel in both roles. Though White presents all spy-mothers as untrustworthy and sinister,³⁹³ *Scarecrow and Mrs. King* defies this logic. Only in the era of the New Spy has motherhood become a burden to intelligence agents, with *La Femme Nikita*'s Madeline and all three Derevko sisters choosing their career over their families. Sydney, however, intends to have it all, bolstered by her patriotic attachments. Irina claims it is impossible to be a successful mother and a successful spy simultaneously, but we have already seen Sydney deftly managing both identities. Sydney's attitude towards her pregnancy and the way she integrates it into her identity as a spy is still remarkable, however, and the show's marketing plays on its uniqueness. One advertisement for Season Five presents a barely pregnant Sydney, her hand covering her abdomen protectively, with the caption 'Expect more.' If it is Sydney from whom we are supposed to expect more, we certainly receive it. She uses her pregnancy as part of the outlandish disguises for which the show is known. In episode 5.04, "Mockingbird," Sydney is

³⁹³ White, *Violent Femmes*, 143

chastised by a security guard for her undercover presence in a Monte Carlo casino while pregnant; her retort, "I'm not that kind of mother," is emblematic of her approach to her pregnancy.³⁹⁴

The ambiguity of the advertisement's message – expect more – leaves the possibility that the person of whom 'more' is to be expected is not Sydney at all, however, but instead her child: her daughter, Isabelle. The final scene of the season – and thus the show itself – deals with this prospect. Flashing forward seven years, the scene shows Sydney and Vaughn enjoying their richly deserved domestic bliss in a cottage on the waterfront with Isabelle and her younger brother Jack.³⁹⁵ When Dixon arrives, we learn both that Sydney and Vaughn are retired and that Sydney is still important to the CIA; motherhood has not reduced her value, as Dixon has come to ask for her assistance on a case. Importantly, motherhood (and wifedom) does not immediately come first in Sydney's estimation; though she does not instantly agree to assist Dixon, neither does she refuse. The myth of motherhood and happy families comes into play here again. Sydney appears to still have a 'voice' rather than having sacrificed it for the heteroromantic procreative dream.³⁹⁶ However, the scene shows that Sydney's carefully constructed myth remains penetrable by the male-dominated spy world. Dixon's appearance countermands Sydney's desire to retire, placing his needs – and the country's – above hers. More, Sydney is only 'allowed' to retire because she is taking on another role: that of provider for the nation's future needs.

During this exchange, the focus of the scene shifts to Isabelle, who is playing with a three-dimensional puzzle. While the conversation about Sydney's exceptional spy skills continued in the background, Isabelle assembles the puzzle quickly and confidently. As she finishes, the camera reveals it to be the aptitude test for spatial awareness that Sydney remembers from her own childhood; her ability to complete it was the deciding factor in her father's choice to enroll her in Project Christmas, the childhood training school for future spies. The revelation of Isabelle's latent spy talents – of which her parents appear to be unaware, as she knocks the puzzle over before the scene ends on her joining them outside – opens up several questions even as it resolves others. The show refuses to clarify why Sydney has the puzzle in her house at all. Is it a harmless remembrance of her father and the career they once shared; is she unaware of Isabelle's demonstrated skill

³⁹⁴ "Mockingbird," *Alias*, directed by Frederick E. O. Toye (2005; Burbank, CA: Walt Disney Studios HE, 2006), DVD.

³⁹⁵ "All the Time in the World," *Alias*.

³⁹⁶ Radner, "A Dream of Thee," 67.

in assembling it? These possibilities seem in keeping with Sydney's fierce desire to be a better mother to Isabelle than Irina was to her. Yet it is equally likely that Sydney's loyalty to the CIA was and is just as fierce. Her ownership of the spatial puzzle suggests that it is indeed Isabelle of whom we should expect more; the product on both sides of her heritage of at least two generations of spies, she is certain to be exceptional. Much like Nikita learned of her father in *La Femme Nikita*, much like Sydney herself underwent with Jack's encouragement, the presence of the puzzle somewhere accessible to children demonstrates Sydney's continuing ties to what remains the family business. Sydney exists in a liminal space between retirement and active status, where she lives an idyllic family life but is still available to the CIA should they but ask. This uncertainty represents not a divided loyalty, however, but one that is doubly intense. Sydney's loyalty to her child does not supersede her loyalty to her country because, after all, her child will eventually come to serve her country, taking up the role by which Sydney so long defined herself.

Read dispassionately, this scenario seems to parallel the one for which Irina was so decisively punished earlier in the episode. How is the KGB ordering Irina to bear Jack a child as part of her undercover duties any different than Sydney having children who, the show implies, are being raised into the service of the CIA? The answer lies in the emotions, or lack thereof, associated with the act. Irina, we are meant to believe, never truly loved either Jack or Sydney; she was merely doing her duty. Sydney, on the other hand, is a creature of passion: for Vaughn, for Isabelle, for the CIA and the USA. The America of *Alias* is portrayed as worthy of that type of emotional investment in a way that the grey bleakness of Communist Russia could never be. In her role as a spy, Sydney is simultaneously defending her country and ensuring her descendants have a home to serve and protect, one that will provide for them and keep them safe in turn. Her recuperation into the prefeminist myth of home- and baby-maker is thus excused within the show both by a postfeminist narrative of choice and by its representation as yet another type of higher calling. Motherhood *qua* motherhood is not enough, but motherhood for the sake of nationhood is a role any true American should undertake with gratitude.

The Same Biology

The title of the show, *Alias*, does not refer only to the myriad identities Sydney must assume while carrying out her duties. It also references the multiple lives that Sydney rejects in favour of the identity she ultimately builds for herself. The 'anti-Sydney'

characters provide poles against which the viewer understands Sydney and around which the themes of each season circle. There is one anti-Sydney against whom Sydney defines herself throughout the show and, in that self-definition, reaches the self-identity that the show insists upon as an obedient American patriot and the good wife. Sydney's determination to achieve these goals stems from her desire not to become her mother.

Irina Derevko is a clear embodiment of the Mata Hari spy-seductress archetype, designed to revive and fulfill the worst of America's Cold War paranoias. Joyce Millman describes her as "both creator and destroyer... the ultimate good girl/bad girl, the archetypal Madonna/whore,"³⁹⁷ and Irina's ability to slide between all these poles demonstrates her aptitude for espionage. Irina literalizes the threat of Mother Russia; her return suggests the continued potential of the Red Menace to disrupt the lives of honest, hardworking Americans. Moreover, Irina allows the show to present a cohesive, convincing enemy without courting political positioning. This careful management of the enemy identity, particularly after 9/11, allows *Alias* to marshal the force of American patriotism and demonstrate its effectiveness against a common enemy. Compare this to the corporate anti-nationality of its predecessor *La Femme Nikita* or the blatant anti-Muslim bias of its contemporary *24*: *Alias* dances a line of nationalistic jingoism that *24* is criticized for crossing, yet manages to tie the importance of nation and family together in a way that *La Femme Nikita* cannot. Irina is the figure who allows this balance to succeed.

Irina's relationship with Jack undergoes several metamorphoses over the course of the series, but its defining feature remains Irina's deception. "She betrayed our marriage, and she betrayed this country," Jack says of Irina,³⁹⁸ not specifying which offense is worse. His statement illustrates the conflation of nation and family that *Alias* promotes. A Russian citizen, Irina could not have 'betrayed' America, as she owed it no allegiance in the first place and was in fact acting in a manner that her own country would deem patriotic. Her marriage vows, however, were indeed hers to betray; making a mockery of the institution that is the American family automatically places Irina in contempt of America itself. Irina's deceptive nature is also shown to threaten the fabric of American society as represented by the family unit. Jack's gullibility renders him suspicious: agents are cautioned of and trained to avoid honeytraps, but Jack's situation suggests that such training is not sufficient. Rather than admit flaws in their program, the CIA confers judgment on Jack; they imprison him several times on suspicion of working with Irina, both before and during

³⁹⁷ Millman, "Pieces of Sydney," 9.

³⁹⁸ "The Passage (Part 1)," *Alias*.

the series. Worse, revelations of Irina's actions constantly cause strife between Sydney and Jack, who should, in the show's mythology, form a family unit as basis for the next generation of national protectors.

In Season Two, Irina turns herself in to the CIA, meaning that she is technically under their control. Even governmental strictures are insufficient to prevent her from using her feminine wiles to affect, not only Jack, but also Sydney: her attempts to become part of Sydney's life are reminiscent of a slow seduction rather than the expression of maternal impulse.³⁹⁹ Jack's initial reaction to Irina's presence in Sydney's life and in the CIA's cells suggests that he remains unwittingly drawn to her; despite being confined in a maximum-security cell, she is still able to disrupt his life and his relationship with Sydney. His concern over Irina's influence drives Jack to sabotage the intel Irina supplies the CIA; he uses his position to create a lethal trap that nearly catches Sydney, making it appear as though Irina had attempted to kill her own daughter.⁴⁰⁰ Irina is subsequently removed from CIA custody and sentenced to death; her absence allows Jack and Sydney to become closer, but when Jack's deceptions are revealed and Irina is released back to the CIA, Sydney once again concludes that he is untrustworthy.⁴⁰¹ Irina introduces into the strictly-regulated governmental bureaucracy of America a chaos element that cannot be controlled. Jack Bristow, who stands as the embodiment of the patriotic CIA, cannot fully resist her charms, which emphasizes the strength and insidiousness of the female spy-seductress.

Sydney's ability to balance Irina's machinations becomes apparent in episodes 2.08 and 2.09, "Passage," when she and her parents must travel to Pakistan and recover several nuclear weapons. The mission requires that Jack and Irina share operational control, yet Jack cannot bring himself to trust Irina and Irina cannot accept that she must take orders from Jack. Initially, the three spies are positioned as a family unit, travelling incognito as a married couple and their daughter (a disguise which, ironically, conceals the truth, as Jack and Irina have never divorced). This configuration suggests that Sydney, the child, should symbolically be the most subservient, least authoritative member of the team. Instead, she is twice able to prevent the mission's failure by interrupting her parents' arguments and redirecting their course of action. Sydney's ability to see past her convoluted family circumstances and achieve their goal proves not only that she is a

³⁹⁹ Catharine Tunnacliffe, "Daddy Knows Best," in Kevin Weisman, ed, *Alias Assumed: Sex, Lies and SD-6* (Dallas: Benbella Books, 2005), 33.

⁴⁰⁰ "Dead Drop," *Alias*, directed by Guy Bee (2002; Burbank, CA: Walt Disney Studios HE, 2003), DVD.

⁴⁰¹ "The Indicator," *Alias*.

talented spy, but that her strength as a *female* spy is comparable to her mother's. The CIA cannot stand against Irina, but Sydney is able to do so. Her skills, combined with the force of her commitment to duty, are enough to challenge Irina. The ideological clash between the two female spies – one innocent, one 'evil' – recurs throughout the show's run.

Only Sydney's stabilizing influence allows Jack to maintain equilibrium with Irina when they are outside the protection of the CIA, as seen when Jack and Irina attempt to trap Sloane using a Rambaldi manuscript in 2.17, "A Dark Turn." The two must first work together to retrieve the manuscript; this involves Irina reconnecting with a former criminal contact in a nightclub in Shanghai. The scene emphasizes Irina's dangerous physicality: in a skintight leopard-print dress with her hair flowing free and LaTour's "Blue" – best known from the nightclub scene in *Basic Instinct* (Paul Verhoeven, 1992) – playing in the background, Irina commands Jack's gaze and that of the camera. To discover the location of the manuscript, she first submits to her contact Karpachev (Ravil Isyanov), inviting him to "play with her,"⁴⁰² then reverses the power dynamic, using the knife he was playing with to slit his throat and kill his guards. The success of the mission brings Jack to a point where he believes that even without Sydney to act as balance, Irina is trustworthy.

In order to maintain Irina's cover yet ensure the CIA can track her, she is injected with a subcutaneous transmitter prior to the mission to Shanghai. After winning Jack's trust, one of Irina's first requests is that he remove it before her meet with Sloane, who will, she contends, scan her for any such devices. Jack cuts the implant out of her shoulder; he causes her pain, but at her request, symbolizing her willingness to make amends for the hurt she has caused him. The symbolic rapprochement leads to a more literal one as the two kiss, sinking down on the bed as the scene fades to black. The next day, Irina takes advantage of the tracker's removal to double cross Jack and the CIA, escaping with the Rambaldi manuscript to team up with Sloane. Though the rest of the season refuses to conclusively answer the question of Irina's true motivation, this episode proves that only Sydney's stabilizing influence can overcome the wiles Irina employs. Despite being under CIA surveillance, despite Jack having no reason to trust her and ever reason not to, she is still capable of seducing and duping him. Irina represents the full power of the female spy and shows what that power can destroy when it is used recklessly.

In Season Four, Irina, newly returned from the dead, joins Jack, Sydney, and Nadia on a CIA mission to stop her sister Elena from unleashing Rambaldi's Mueller device.

⁴⁰² "A Dark Turn," *Alias*, directed by Ken Olin (2003; Burbank, CA: Walt Disney Studios HE, 2003), DVD.

Suspicion is shifted to another foreign woman, temporarily opening a liminal space in which Irina can operate within the CIA and the Bristow family unit, but only on sufferance. When Elena is erased, so too is that space; Irina is once again excluded, reduced to the Season Five caricature that defines the show. Notably, this happens as Sydney and Vaughn manage to carry on the spy-family future, while Jack dies to protect his daughter and his country. Sydney no longer 'needs' her mother, having determined to succeed her by being a better mother, while Jack is no longer present to provide any potential attraction to America. Without these ties, Irina cannot be accepted into the American paradigm; she is marked as unforgivably other and removed from Sydney's life to ensure that the next generation of future spies can be raised in an environment entirely free from foreign influence. Having provided the necessary genetic material and the imperative to continue the spy-dynasty, she is recast as the ultimate enemy and erased in favour of an uncomplicated Americanized heterosexual family narrative.

Spy Barbie Goes to Washington

As a post-9/11 show, Abrams' *Alias* is a confusing mix of progressive and conservative elements. Like *La Femme Nikita*, it emphasizes the strength, intelligence, and self-sufficiency of the female spy; while it inevitably dresses her in revealing clothing, it draws attention to and mocks the trope, ensuring Sydney uses her appearance to her own advantage. There is a clear emphasis on the female spy as competent in her own right, as opposed to positioning her as an adjunct or outsider. The popularity of the show even seems to have penetrated the real-life CIA and its opinion of the female spy: while in 1999, the agency's view of female trainees and spies was that they were "a security risk... weak"⁴⁰³ and more suitable to completing paperwork than working in the field,⁴⁰⁴ by 2003 the agency was attempting to capitalize on *Alias* by having Garner film a recruiting video aimed at women.⁴⁰⁵ Similarly, the show uses the feminist dilemma of deliberating between a career and a family by killing Sydney's fiancé Danny in the pilot episode, yet reverses its stance in the finale to allow her wedded bliss and motherhood alongside a lasting reputation in the CIA. Yet even these positive representations of femininity are constrained by the framework within which they are forced to operate. The dream of motherhood and romance is what Radner would call "a masochistic fantasy... that

⁴⁰³ Lindsay Moran, *Blowing My Cover: My Life as a CIA Spy* (New York: Berkeley Books, 2005), 31.

⁴⁰⁴ *Ibid*, 133.

⁴⁰⁵ "Garner's new alias: recruiter," *People* (September 15, 2003), 22.

culminates not with the evolution of a caring male but with the obliteration of feminine subjectivity."⁴⁰⁶ Sydney's life of wedded, maternal bliss is portrayed as a reward for a successful career. Having vanquished the spectre of her mother's failure, she no longer has to 'have it all' but can give up her professional identity in order to have a fulfilling personal life. It is the culmination of a fantasy "whose perverse and disturbing nature is masked by the centrality of the romantic paradigm to cultural norms of heterosexuality"⁴⁰⁷ and by the centrality of reproductive futurity to the rallying call of American national identity. Sydney's success is portrayed as a victory over the myth of the foreign seductress. Irina, Lauren, and Nadia particularly represent this threat in their ultimate failure to be incorporated into the happy American family. Their presence destabilizes and challenges the family identity that forms the core of the show's American ideology, making explicit the conflation between national and family identities, and thus they must be neutralized.

In both *Alias* and *La Femme Nikita*, nation must always come first; sacrifices to ensure the continuity of the spy organization are always borne by women. Nikita sacrifices her autonomy to protect the future generation, while Sydney achieves happiness through the suggested sacrifice of her daughter's future. Only by belonging to and perpetuating the heterosexual reproductive family unit can the danger posed by the female spy be mitigated. Her sexuality is not regulated by the state, but rather turned to its service, both in her use of it during missions and in her ability to continue providing soldiers to take up its defense down the line. She is allowed to have both work and family because they both serve the same end. Nikita could not claim the same clarity of purpose due to her organization not being attached to a particular country; in a post-9/11 world, however, only nationality can drive a spy's desires. Sydney is allowed to conflate nationality and familial love in order to symbolically neuter her dangerous femininity and make her suitable to defend the USA. The men who follow do not require the same guarantees of safety: for Jack Bauer of *24*, among others, the bright light of patriotism is the only warmth necessary.

⁴⁰⁶ Radner, "A Dream of Thee," 99.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid.

Chapter Four: It's a Man's World?

War and militarization are highly dependent on gender roles that are themselves reinforced by popular culture.⁴⁰⁸ Following 9/11, even before the official declaration of the 'War on Terror,' these gender roles reappear on television in America and Britain. Their instant appearance emphasizes the close relationship between television and popular political culture; more, they reveal the importance that television plays in mediating ideas of gender in wartime. Popular spy dramas in both America and Britain embrace regressive gender models: in order to avoid appearing feminine, i.e. weak, they re-engage with the concept of the male action hero as national icon. In America, this means countering the perception prevalent since the Vietnam War of a feminized military⁴⁰⁹ with an über-masculine protector in *24*. Britain, meanwhile, has with *Spooks* returned to an era where the gentleman spy, as epitomized by Bond, leads the empire's defense. The move is not complete, as some level of engagement is allowed to the female spy, but overall the espionage genre draws men to the forefront as protectors, complicating and erasing female roles. The nation remains the most important force behind a spy's actions and impulses; placing anything else before the nation's best interests must be punished.

While male spies are brought once more to the central role, female spies are presented as untrustworthy because they are likely either to place family ahead of the nation's interests or to lure the male spy into doing so himself. Here, the role of the housewife is not a safe haven for the women who would be spies, or even for those who wouldn't. Housewifery becomes yet another role at which women fail, often because they are spending too much time in their careers (only to fail there as well). Although the return to the male spy has its source in concerns about the militarization of the 'protector' role, the devalorization of women's skills has its roots in conservative concerns over women splitting their time between home and work to the detriment of both. These are not postfeminist housewives who insist on reclaiming domestic femininity;⁴¹⁰ they are forced into failure in every attempt they make. Similarly, this version of the female spy recalls her appearance in the early years of the espionage drama as "[m]otivated by the desire for sexual and material power rather than patriotism, women are thought to prize the

⁴⁰⁸ Enloe, *The Morning After*, 3.

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid, 7.

⁴¹⁰ Genz, "I am not a Housewife, but...", 50.

overthrow of men above the call of duty."⁴¹¹ To an extent, the view we see in both *24* and *Spooks* parallels the way female spies were being treated in real life at the time. The Valerie Plame⁴¹² affair in 2003 demonstrated that the female spy was both less important than the male and that her untrustworthiness was tied to her marital state. Plame, who described herself as a "mother and part-time spy,"⁴¹³ was an active agent with the CIA at the time of 'Plamegate,' in 2003. When Plame's husband Joe Wilson published an op-ed contradicting then-President George W. Bush's comments on weapons of mass destruction – Plame's area of work within the CIA, though the article relied on Wilson's own knowledge and education – *Washington Post* columnist Robert Novak sought to discredit Wilson by blowing Plame's cover.⁴¹⁴ Plame was outed, she believes, "in retaliation for [Wilson's] having angered the administration and frustrated their attempts to portray the war and the run-up to it strictly on their own terms."⁴¹⁵ The forced outing led to a four-year long series of lawsuits that ultimately culminated in nothing more severe than a fine for Scooter Libby, then the Chief Of Staff to the Vice President. Plamegate reveals the political climate in which the female spy, particularly in America, was operating: seen as disposable, she is again removed from the narrative of citizenship and forced once more to prove her worth. Her loyalty remains uncertain, but more, she is likely to commit the ultimate crime of tempting otherwise loyal men to abandon their principles. This characterization is extremely regressive, relying as it does on Mata Hari-era stereotypes, yet it perfectly suits the focus on previous successes that characterizes Western television after 9/11.

⁴¹¹ Miller, *Spyscreen*, 155.

⁴¹² Plame is properly known by both maiden and married names, as Valerie Plame Wilson, but the scandal and subsequent developments use merely her maiden name, and for simplicity so do I.

⁴¹³ Valerie Plame Wilson, *Fair Game: How a Top CIA Agent was Betrayed by Her Own Government* (New York: Pocket Star Books, 2007), 88.

⁴¹⁴ *Ibid*, 142.

⁴¹⁵ *Ibid*, 160.

*Beware of pretty faces that you find
 A pretty face can hide an evil mind
 Ah, be careful what you say
 Or you'll give yourself away
 Odds are you won't live to see tomorrow*⁴¹⁶

The Spy Western: 24

Like *Alias*, *24* debuted shortly after 9/11, premiering on Fox on 6 November 2001. Unlike *Alias*, whose ethos belong to the Cold War-era school of espionage thrillers, concerned with the Russian threat and the technological arms race, *24* is written to be contemporary, set firmly in the right-leaning America that had just elected George W. Bush to his first term as president. *24* does call back to the right-wing 1980s but is concerned less with its politics than with its sensibility, bent on recapturing the era of Regan and Bush Sr., when the cowboy swagger of the West defined the hard line on law enforcement that kept the country safe. Bush Jr. adopted this persona, playing up his Texan background, and it appears as well in the philosophy espoused by *24*'s protagonist, Jack Bauer (Kiefer Sutherland). Bauer inherits cultural associations with the Wild West as well as Clint Eastwood's subsequent work as Dirty Harry. Like Dirty Harry, who emerged to combat public fears about police ineffectiveness, Bauer "taps into the public's need to see a hero successfully responding to what was going on in the world at the time [and] reflects the frustrations of those who believe the government's response to terrorism is often hamstrung by legal technicalities and political constraints."⁴¹⁷ The first several seasons of the show are set in Los Angeles, emphasizing its association with the American West rather than the more civilized governing centre of the East, and though Bauer is affiliated with the fictional Counter Terrorism Unit (CTU), he is more often a loner, required to operate outside the bounds of a governmentally approved mandate in order to achieve the necessary result. Bauer's maverick methods typically get results, ensuring he is seen as effective even outside the law and regardless of whether or not his colleagues agree with him. A cowboy for modern times, he epitomizes the 'ends justify the means' philosophy of the show: America's safety is paramount and nothing, not even America's own laws, will prevent it.

⁴¹⁶ Johnny Rivers, vocal performance of "Secret Agent Man," by Steve Barry and P.F. Sloan, recorded 1966 on ...*And I Know You Wanna Dance*, Imperial 66159, 45 rpm.

⁴¹⁷ Loire Byrd, "Jack Bauer is the Dirty Harry for the Age of Terrorism," in Richard Minitier, ed, *Jack Bauer for President: Terrorism and Politics in 24* (Dallas: Benbella Books, 2008), 68.

Not only is *24* much more concerned with remaining contemporary, it is also much more closely tied to the politics of its day and much more clearly influenced by the culture of fear so pervasive in America following 9/11. *Alias* debuted mere days following 9/11; that timing and the intricacies of the arc that framed the first season and continued into the next, particularly involving Rambaldi, reflects the level of planning that went into *Alias* before it aired. Though the show incorporated some aspects of American political culture, as in its use of the USA PATRIOT Act, there was little room for the narrative to be influenced even after it had been on the air for some time. *24*, in contrast, benefited from the two months between 9/11 and its debut, ensuring it rode the wave of public opinion and reflected an ethos that comforted and resonated with the American public. From its inception, it "supported the Bush Doctrine by building, into the very concept of the show, the threat of utter destruction facing the United States should terrorist plots succeed,"⁴¹⁸ creating an association between the show and the new way of life Americans were attempting to comprehend. In addition, Fox originally ordered only thirteen episodes of *24*; not until the popularity of the show was apparent did the network pick it up for a full season of a further eleven episodes, ensuring there was time to develop plots that spoke to the American public. Following 9/11, co-creator Joel Surnow claims that the production team "felt like we weren't in a fictional world any more. We felt like we were in the real world,"⁴¹⁹ a factor that allowed *24* to reflect the feelings of America at the time so accurately that the show, and particularly Jack Bauer, became aligned in the public consciousness with the War on Terror.

WWBD: What Would Bauer Do

The depths to which *24* entered the American political culture is frankly astonishing. Although the show won fans from across the political spectrum, the American right in particular came to adopt Jack Bauer as a kind of mascot, endorsing his violent but effective methods as a way to protect America from the terrorist threat; conservatives and conservative organizations from "Rush Limbaugh to the Heritage Foundation [saw Bauer] as the ultimate hero who legitimized the prevailing arguments in the Bush administration

⁴¹⁸ Aaron Thomas Nelson, "Simulating Terror: Why Bush's Critics Love *24* Even Though it Supports the Bush Doctrine," in Richard Miniter, ed, *Jack Bauer for President: Terrorism and Politics in 24* (Dallas: Benbella Books, 2008), 82.

⁴¹⁹ Joel Surnow et al, "Museum of Television and Radio: The William S. Paley Television Festival 2003: *24*," 19 February 2003, Los Angeles, California.

about how to rightly and effectively combat terrorist aggressors."⁴²⁰ Bauer became so emblematic of the (mostly) Republican attitude towards terrorism that he was invoked in the House and as part of the presidential campaigns leading to the 2008 election.⁴²¹ His use of torture to extract time-sensitive information from enemies was so effective on screen that it became part of the American military, with 'interrogators' at Guantanamo Bay modelling their methods on those shown in *24*⁴²² and Amnesty International commenting on the show's realism.⁴²³ Brigadier General Patrick Finnegan, then-dean of the U.S. Military academy at West Point, "accompanied by three experienced military and FBI interrogators, flew to Hollywood to implore the show's producers and writers to scale down the torture scenes" due to their effect on cadets.⁴²⁴ Regardless of the truth of these charges, they reflect both the mythologizing of Jack Bauer and the seamless conflation of *24*'s reality with that being lived in America. Jeanne Cavelo explains the show's popularity as a function of its therapeutic properties, relieving audience fears about America's inability to withstand future terrorist attacks; she claims that when Bauer "defeats the terrorists, he is providing [the audience] with an alternate scenario to September 11"⁴²⁵ that eases national insecurities. Even following *24*'s finale in May 2010, Bauer's ghost still haunts American politics, if no longer in the official records then certainly in popular memory: on 2 May 2011, immediately after the capture and execution of Osama bin Laden by American troops, 'Jack Bauer' was one of the top ten topics trending worldwide on the social networking website Twitter.⁴²⁶ TIME's television critic James Poniewozik described the continued referencing – which persisted for more than twenty-four hours – as

more than an easy pop-culture joke.... There's something more primal about knowing that there was a human agent of justice at hand – more bluntly, it just felt

⁴²⁰ Dale, "The Revolution is Being Televised," 31.

⁴²¹ Eric Greene, "Jack Bauer Syndrome," in Richard Miniter, ed, *Jack Bauer for President: Terrorism and Politics in 24* (Dallas: Benbella Books, 2008), 172.

⁴²² Adam Greene, "Normalizing Torture on '24'," *The New York Times*, published 22 May 2005, accessed 15 June 2012, http://www.nytimes.com/2005/05/22/arts/television/22gree.html?_r=1.

⁴²³ Anne-Marie Cusac, "Watching Torture in Prime Time," *The Progressive*, published August 2005, accessed 15 June 2012, http://www.progressive.org/?q=mag_cusac0805.

⁴²⁴ Timothy Dunn, "Torture, Terrorism, and 24: What Would Jack Bauer Do?," in *Homer Simpson Goes to Washington: American Politics Through Popular Culture*, ed. Joseph J. Foy (Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 2008), 171.

⁴²⁵ Jeanne Cavelo, "Living with Terror: Jack Bauer as a Coping Mechanism in Post-Traumatic Stress Disordered America," in Richard Miniter, ed, *Jack Bauer for President: Terrorism and Politics in 24* (Dallas: Benbella Books, 2008), 12.

⁴²⁶ Christian Wolan, "Jack Bauer Trending on Twitter After Osama Bin Laden's Death," *Forbes Magazine*, published 02 May 2011, accessed 14 June 2012, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/christianwolan/2011/05/02/jack-bauer-trending-on-twitter-after-osama-bin-ladens-death>.

better knowing that someone had *popped* the son of a bitch – and that was what 24 tapped into. (italics in original)⁴²⁷

The internalization of Jack Bauer's identity as the violent, yet human, protector of America reflects the impact his show had on audiences of the time; what remains to be seen is how it reimagined the female spy.

24 itself shares a creative team with *La Femme Nikita* and is in fact *La Femme Nikita*'s direct successor, as it went on air only six months after *La Femme Nikita*'s final season concluded. Executive producers Joel Surnow and Robert Cochrane transferred directly from *La Femme Nikita* to 24, and yet the only apparent evidence of the connection is the design elements that the operational hubs of *La Femme Nikita*'s Section One and 24's CTU show. Both headquarters are characterized by glass-walled offices and dark, labyrinthine corridors, yet the missions that are assigned within those confines are thematically in diametric opposition. 24 is a reversal of everything that characterized *La Femme Nikita* and made it a unique addition to the espionage genre. Where Section One was an unsanctioned agency, operating freelance throughout the world, CTU is again associated with the American government and on orders to protect America specifically, regardless of the cost. Though unlike *Alias*, 24's CTU does not have a direct analogue in the real world, still the show taps into the need to prop up a struggling security force. The real CIA was, through most of 24's run, still struggling to recover from its failure to predict 9/11, its inability to find the truth about weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, and its drop in the court of public opinion.⁴²⁸ The violence of Bauer's patriotism is a reaction to the apparent disapproval levelled at the agency and an attempt to make it relevant again; the move from the deliberately anti-patriotic *La Femme Nikita* to the rabidly pro-American rhetoric of 24 reflects the reversal of the American political climate more clearly than any other aspect of the show, demonstrating the freedom the country's swing to the right gave Surnow and his team to unleash their inner Republicans. The only real point of comparison between the two shows is the shared dedication on the parts of Section One and CTU to ensuring their missions succeed no matter the cost. There too they diverge, however; Nikita was never willing to blindly compromise her integrity to fulfil her assignments from her superiors, where Bauer risks all regardless of whether an innocent

⁴²⁷ James Poniewozik, "Bin Laden's Death, Reported by a Media His Attacks Shaped," *TIME.com*, published 02 May 2011, accessed 14 June 2012, <http://entertainment.time.com/2011/05/02/bin-ladens-death-reported-by-a-media-his-attacks-shaped>.

⁴²⁸ Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes*, 505.

might get in his way. This difference may be at the heart of the switch from a female to a male protagonist: Bauer has no compunctions about violence, which is not always true of Nikita and is a return to the stricter gender roles of the Cold War and earlier eras.⁴²⁹ Too, it is easier for Jack to inherit the role of lawmaker from the cowboys of yore: the American right-wing is traditional and not necessarily ready to embrace a female maverick embodiment of the American right to bear arms. Stacy Takacs argues that "the combination of pure motives and practical effectiveness makes the hero-figure into the moral centre of the fictional universe and establishes a moral economy that exceeds the bounds of the law" in post-9/11 television,⁴³⁰ and Bauer is an extreme example of this: the ultra-violence he espouses is only excused because of his dedication to America.

Though CTU is fictional, its first mission in Season One is potentially all too real: they and Bauer are called in to protect the President of the United States from an assassination attempt. The specificity and aim of the threat serve to ground the show in reality, providing a hook with which to draw the audience in. The hyper-real is seen in many programmes in the post-9/11 era and serves to "justify the War on Terrorism and the identification of the U.S. public with its goals, specifically the militarized extension of U.S. hegemony" in the audience's minds.⁴³¹ Thus the extreme dedication to reality of *24* not only drives sympathetic irony in the audience, but causes them to conflate Bauer and his co-workers with American national interests and achievements. The show's central conceit, from which it takes its name, is the idea that the characters and the audience can share portions of the experience: each season of the show is made up of twenty-four episodes, one for each of the twenty-four hours in a representative day of Jack Bauer's life. Each episode introduced this concept in voiceover and the show is presented in real time, with an on-screen clock counting down the minutes to the end of each hour. This method aligns the viewer with the action, ensuring their realities run parallel and urging further identification between the two. The use of the clock and of *24*'s other emblematic technique, the deployment of multiple split screens to display simultaneous events, creates a sense of urgency echoed by the show's frenetic pacing. There is always one more threat to be extinguished before the clock rolls over; it recalls the ticking of a countdown or a bomb and imparts the same panic, which itself justifies the more and more violent methods Bauer employs. These tactics create a sense of empathy among the audience,

⁴²⁹ Enloe, *The Morning After*, 17.

⁴³⁰ Stacy Takacs, *Terrorism TV: Popular Entertainment in Post-9/11 America* (Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2012), 67.

⁴³¹ Takacs, *Terrorism TV*, 7.

ensuring they read Bauer's actions as necessary.⁴³² This sense of urgency, as well as the renewed emphasis on American patriotism that the show demands, emphasizes the realism of the show, making it possible to elide the America of the show and the real-life issues the country faces.

Return to the Hypermasculine

The switch from a female to a male protagonist deviates from the pattern I have been drawing out throughout this thesis; though by necessity I have not been able to analyze every spy genre show on television, nevertheless I have chosen a representative sample. Since 1965, the most successful television representations of the spy genre – those that ran for multiple seasons, that influenced the cultural zeitgeist, that remain popular enough to have been released on DVD – have inevitably been those shows that starred woman. The move from Sydney Bristow to Jack Bauer shows a regressive action, similar to the election of a conservative right-wing government in the 2000 American election, and is in keeping with the rhetoric deployed around gender roles in the real world immediately following 9/11 and thereafter, as used even by then-President George W. Bush himself, which painted men as heroes, usually first responders, and women as victims, often pregnant and/or widowed.⁴³³ Reading *24* in parallel with *Alias* reveals the differences between a female-driven series and a male operating in the same era. It is particularly worth noting that while both series were successful, *24* not only out-performed *Alias* but became the longest-running espionage series ever: *Alias* achieved a perfectly respectable five seasons, but *24* managed eight seasons, a movie, and a revival in miniseries form currently emphasizing the continuing gap in American popular culture left by the show's conclusion. Yet the difference in longevity cannot be attributed merely to the gender of the shows' protagonists. Both shows tackle similar themes; the way these themes are played out suggests the strength of the audience alignment with each series of characters as metaphors for the American public.

24 is aligned with *Alias* and the inheritor of *La Femme Nikita*, and like both those shows it struggles with the questions of family identity, national identity, and the primacy of one's career. All these themes, though particularly the last, are gendered issues: the trials and resolutions that the female spies must endure are far different than those Bauer

⁴³² Jacqueline Furby, "Interesting Times: The Demands 24's Real-Time Format Makes On Its Audience," in *Reading 24: TV Against the Clock*, ed. Steven Peacock (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007), 70.

⁴³³ Spigel, "Entertainment wars," 259.

undergoes. In *La Femme Nikita* and *Alias*, family is a point of definition. Only by discovering the truth about their families do Nikita and Sydney come to understand themselves and their positions within the intelligence world. Both women seek to form or at least understand their family identity over the course of their show; their identity as a spy is at least partially contingent on their being part of a line of intelligence officers and demonstrating the fortitude to achieve their inheritance. Bauer, on the other hand, begins *24* as part of a family already; moreover, as the patriarch, he is the lynchpin that holds the family unit together. His absence inevitably leads to trials for the rest of the family members. Bauer does not need to inherit his mandate from his ancestors. He is himself sufficient to demonstrate engagement in and desire for a career in intelligence. Rather than a safe haven, however, Bauer's family become a liability and a target; he seems able to resist torture except when his family is involved,⁴³⁴ making them a danger to their country.

Similarly, though national identity is certainly one of the themes of *24*, it is never in question for Bauer the way it is for Nikita and Sydney. Even at the end of *La Femme Nikita*, Nikita has no nationality, while Sydney must first battle with being duped into fighting against her country and then come to terms with her Russian heritage threatening her perceived loyalty. Bauer, however, never has any questions about where he belongs or where his duty lies. He is anointed from the outset by no less an authority than the President of the United States himself. As a white man, Bauer's identity is the norm; there is never a question of whether he is worthy to defend America. His right to identify as American and to use whatever methods necessary to defend his country do not have to be earned; he is accorded them by virtue of his existence rather than through a quest. He is on occasion denied these rights, as when he is imprisoned by the Chinese between Seasons Five and Six, but even then his captivity makes him a further symbol for his country. Each trial Bauer survives allows him to become more powerful than before.

Unlike Nikita and Sydney, Bauer rarely has to make sacrifices; rather, he has things taken from him, a fine but important distinction that becomes particularly evident when considering his career as a spy. Nikita sacrifices her chance to build a normal life in order to remain a spy. Sydney sacrifices her relationship with Vaughn to the necessity of bringing SD-6 down and subsequently sacrifices her parents to stop Sloane's Rambaldi quest. Bauer begins the series with a career and a family; though neither situation is

⁴³⁴ Paul Lytle, "Honey Traps, Romeos, and Blackmail: Love, Sex, and Family in Espionage," in Richard Minter, ed, *Jack Bauer for President: Terrorism and Politics in 24* (Dallas: Benbella Books, 2008) 43.

perfect, nevertheless he has already achieved what the female spies – not just Nikita and Sydney, but many of the rest – spent their lives working towards. This makes him vulnerable to loss, but the losses he suffers are due to the failures of others rather than to anything he does or fails to do. This dichotomy is obvious in terms of his romantic life. Like the female spies in other shows, Bauer finds it nearly impossible to maintain a romance as well as a career, yet his position is not the precarious one; he suffers because the woman with whom he attempts to become involved cannot themselves achieve the necessary work-life balance.

War on the Home Front

Though the series was critically acclaimed from its inception, it was also criticized for its presentation of minorities and its focus on the white male to the exclusion of other groups.⁴³⁵ Subsequent seasons attempted to address this imbalance by deliberately including female and minority characters. The female spies and other women who appear in the first season can thus be seen to represent the show's vision of women before it was influenced by outside opinions. The women in Season One are inevitably caricatures of one sort of another, relying on stereotypes previously exploded by other spy shows to establish their relationship with Bauer. They are vulnerabilities and threats, defined only by the men in their life; the women of *24* "may place their trust in a man, often at considerable personal risk, but not each other; and if they are not working under male supervision and/or with the men, then they are invariably up to no good."⁴³⁶ While I am of course concerned largely with the female spies in the narrative, there are so few of them and the other women, particularly those who are related to the male protagonists, so define the narrative that I believe it is necessary to analyze both sets of women together. It is also useful to see how the women who are not directly involved with the espionage community at the beginning of the series influence the women who are introduced later on or, in some cases, themselves develop to be part of the world of intelligence.

In Season One, the women who are the most central to the plot are connected to Bauer in some way: his wife Teri (Leslie Hope), his daughter Kim (Elisha Cuthbert), and his second-in-command and ex-lover Nina Meyers (Sarah Clarke). Teri and Kim are

⁴³⁵ "24 under fire from Muslim groups," *BBC News*, published 19 January 2007, accessed 14 June 2012, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/entertainment/6280315.stm>.

⁴³⁶ Janet McCabe, "Damsels in Distress: Female Narrative Authority and Knowledge in *24*," in *Reading 24: TV Against the Clock*, ed. Steven Peacock (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007), 151.

important only in terms of their value to Bauer; their function is to be threatened and thus impel Bauer to action. First Kim and then Teri are abducted as part of a terrorist plot to force Bauer to assassinate presidential candidate Senator David Palmer (Dennis Haysbert), but particularly notable is the narrative surrounding those abductions. In the pilot episode, "12:00a.m.-1:00a.m.," Kim, the rebellious teenager, sneaks out of the house and joins a friend on an illicit assignation with two so-called 'college boys.' This date is explicitly for the purpose of 'hooking up' and Kim is highly sexualized in dress and manner. Through her disobedience and her quest for underage drinking and sex, she puts herself in danger; the two boys are in the employ of Bauer's enemies and use Kim's desire to rebel against her parents, particularly her father, to simplify their abduction of her. The subtext here is clear: failure to adhere to the rules of the patriarchy will put citizens in danger. It is also troubling to see that Kim's attempts to control her own sexuality lead directly to her victimization. The attention paid to her dress and makeup and the deliberately sexual aspect to her abduction suggest she is culpable in her own endangerment and, in fact, that she 'deserved it.' Her kidnapping is a rape parallel, yet the audience is not supposed to sympathize; rather, we are meant to castigate her for being so mistaken as to endanger herself and thus affect her father.

Bauer discovers Kim's absence at the same time as he is summoned to CTU to unravel rumours of an assassination attempt aimed at Palmer – the same attempt that we will later discover he is to be blackmailed into committing. The simultaneous rise of the two crises forces Bauer to divide his attention between his family and his work. For a dedicated spy, there is no question: work must come first, and Bauer leaves Teri to wait at home for information on Kim while he goes off to save the world. The split screen technique that is used throughout the series debuts here as Bauer must juggle his duties at CTU while remaining in contact with Teri: a split screen for Bauer's split focus. Having a wife and child at home is a luxury that the male spy can rarely afford. In fact, given the way that Teri and Kim are used against Bauer, their existence literally puts the country in danger, first by acting as a distraction from Bauer's real duties and then by providing the leverage that nearly manipulates him into attacking Palmer. The use of Bauer's family to drive audience empathy and to parallel the lengths to which he will go for family to those to which he will go for the nation draws attention to the particular form of nation-family conflation seen in post-9/11 television:

Osama Bin Laden was identified as the mastermind of the plot, and his enmity towards the United States was presented as ontological, driven not by what the

United States had done but by 'who we are.' He attacked husbands and fathers, wives, mothers, and children, and his goal was to deprive 'us' of the comforts of (heterosexual) family life. Such discourse draws directly on earlier representations of terrorism in the media, which turned the 'family under siege' into a prominent visual and narrative trope in order to enlist popular support for extreme forms of counterterrorism. If the nation is a family under siege, then a paternal government is authorized to take any steps necessary to protect the family.⁴³⁷

Bauer's family normalizes him as the 'right' kind of American even as it opens him to external threats. Focusing the first season of *24* around simultaneous realistic threats to America – none more serious than a presidential assassination – and family provides Bauer with an almost inviolable 'pass' in terms of his actions in the future. His willingness to fight for his family places him in opposition to the foreign and in alignment with family values. For Bauer, his wife and daughter are a weakness rather than a measure of success, but they are also measures of his acceptability as an American defender.

With Bauer at work, Teri must take over at home, first waiting to hear from Kim and then later attempting to track and rescue her. Teri, a freelance interior designer, is not trained in tracking or reconnaissance. When Bauer goes out of contact in episode 1.02, "1:00a.m.-2:00a.m.," Teri, who could not possibly succeed on her own, aligns herself with another man: Alan York (Richard Burgi), who presents himself as the father of the girl with whom Kim snuck out. The two form a team to seek their missing children, highlighting Bauer's absence as well as Teri's perceived incapacity; she sat passively at home until York contacted her and drew her into action. Her involvement only complicated the situation, as York is of course another member of the kidnapping team sent to control Teri and Kim; in 1.03, "2:00a.m.-3:00a.m.," he takes Teri to her daughter, but imprisons them both. Moreover, Teri's collaboration with York reveals the true extent of the threat she poses to Bauer. Not only do her amateurish attempts to track Kim distract him from his real work, her partnership with York suggests she would be willing to replace Bauer in more ways than one. Upon learning of York's presence, Bauer's first response is not gratitude for the assistance in searching for his daughter, but anger that his wife is working with another man to deal with family matters, a move that might lead to a romantic attachment. Teri taking on even a limited amount of agency leads Bauer to question the possibility that his masculine virility could become redundant. This concern is rather

⁴³⁷ Takacs, *Terrorism TV*, 59.

hypocritical given that Bauer himself recently had an affair – with his second in command, Nina Meyers.⁴³⁸

Nina is another collection of female spy clichés, representing the worst of previous eras. She appears to be sexually voracious and willing to use her sexuality to further her career ambitions: not only did she have an affair with Bauer prior to the series, but she and fellow CTU agent Tony Almeida (Carlos Bernard) are romantically involved during Season One. Though Bauer and Teri were separated at the time, Nina is nevertheless portrayed as a homewrecker; she poses a threat to Bauer's country as well as, or perhaps because of, threatening his marriage. Nina is also a mole, planted in CTU by the same group responsible for attempting to blackmail Bauer.⁴³⁹ Like Irina in *Alias*, Nina conflates an attack on the American family and patriarch with one on America as a country; where Irina was motivated by a patriotic attachment to her own country, Russia, Nina's motives are not so altruistic. Instead she seems to be entirely mercenary, having sold her country out for money. Bauer describes her as "worse than a traitor.... You don't even have a cause. You don't believe in anything."⁴⁴⁰ She is not given any further motivation; Nina is merely a caricature of the spy-seductress, with no loyalty to anyone but herself and no compunctions about using her sexuality to further her cause regardless of who she injures in the process.

Though Bauer stops Season One's blackmail and assassination attempts, Nina manages to escape; she remains at large through Season Two, a reminder of Bauer's indiscretions, until she is captured and killed in Season Three. While Bauer foils all of her attempts to attack America itself, she nevertheless extracts a price from him for having been so foolish as to fall prey to her entrapment. At the end of Season One, Bauer appears to have succeeded in his mission and managed to rescue his family: with Kim and Teri back at CTU headquarters, it only remains for him to discover the mole he knows is hidden in the government. Yet ironically it is Teri who uncovers Nina's treachery; having been deceived once by Nina when she and Bauer were sleeping together, Teri is deceived again until she overhears Nina speaking in German as she prepares for extraction.⁴⁴¹ In

⁴³⁸ "2:00p.m.-3:00p.m.," 24, directed by Jon Cassar (2002; Los Angeles, CA; 20th Century Fox Television, 2002), DVD.

⁴³⁹ "2:00a.m.-3:00a.m.," 24.

⁴⁴⁰ "1:00p.m.-2:00p.m.," 24, directed by Jon Cassar (2002; Los Angeles, CA; 20th Century Fox Television, 2003), DVD.

⁴⁴¹ "11:00p.m.-12:00a.m.," 24, directed by Stephen Hopkins (2002; Los Angeles, CA; 20th Century Fox Television, 2002), DVD.

order to escape, Nina kills Teri.⁴⁴² Teri's death "stems from her inability to understand protocol, acquire relevant information, read the narrative clues, impose meaning without male assistance – and wandering into a narrative terrain unaided by Bauer;"⁴⁴³ she is punished for presuming on her marriage to allow her the authority to act within the world of espionage and for literally overstepping her bounds. Only when Bauer discovers Teri's body does the extent of Nina's treachery become clear; her death functions to impel Bauer into righteous anger on behalf of his country. She is taken away as punishment for his transgressing his marital bonds; he must rededicate himself to his country's defence to make up for his lack. By the end of Season One, then, the two most prominent women in the show are either dead or evil: Teri, too weak to survive, killed as a demonstration of Nina's amorality and self-interest. These absences leave space for the inclusion of new female roles.

Lonely at the Top

There are several women allowed to work with Bauer on the side of the angels, but even they are inevitably punished for or prevented from having their life outside of CTU. The most obvious connection between success as a spy and failure as a woman comes in the person of Erin Driscoll (Alberta Watson), Special Agent in Charge of CTU at the start of Season Four. Driscoll is the first woman we see assume more than provisional charge of CTU; she is also responsible for firing Bauer in the period between Season Three and Season Four. Bauer's termination occurs in a prelude to Season Four that appeared on the Season Three DVD set. In it, Driscoll claims first that she disapproves of his inability to adhere to procedure while on missions; she then admits that her true motive is that the heroin addiction Bauer developed while undercover for CTU makes him weak. "I don't tolerate any weaknesses," she tells him. "That's not how I work."⁴⁴⁴ Though she offers to help him find a new job, Bauer rebuffs her: "I can find my own fucking job,"⁴⁴⁵ he insists, an utterance that marks the only use of serious profanity in the series. Bauer's contempt towards and disinclination to accept female authority colours our interaction with Driscoll; as audience members meant to be aligned with Bauer, we are thematically placed in opposition to Driscoll before the season even starts.

⁴⁴² Ibid.

⁴⁴³ McCabe, "Damsels in Distress, 155.

⁴⁴⁴ "Season 4 Prequel," 24: *Season Three* (Los Angeles, CA: 20th Century Fox Television, 2004), DVD.

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid.

In Season Four, America faces a nuclear threat masterminded by a Middle Eastern terrorist; the primary conflict in the season is initially that between Bauer and Driscoll, however. Their antagonism is the defining feature of Driscoll's reign over CTU; she is remembered more for her relationship with Jack than for anything she achieves operationally. She is consistently discredited in terms of her decisions as related to Bauer, beginning in 4.02, "8:00a.m.-9:00a.m.," when Bauer pressures her to rehire him and is backed up by other CTU members insisting that he is the only man who can save the country. Although she does bring him back on board provisionally, restricting his operational control and ensuring he understands it is merely a temporary appointment, the move still undermines her credibility as CTU's leader. Her reversal of position is explicitly tied to her admission that, despite her misgivings about Bauer's methods, they work and are necessary to solve the situation in which America finds itself. Giving in emphasizes the importance of Bauer's methods to America's self-identity.⁴⁴⁶ This capitulation is the show's answer to the growing media critique of Bauer's heavy-handed use of torture. Driscoll represents the groups calling for a more reasoned approach; even though she comes to understand that the means to justify the ends, she must be revealed as a hypocrite, castigated, and disgraced before the season concludes in order to properly emphasize the depths of her misconceptions. That the role of left-wing representative goes to a woman is an interesting move; it serves to emphasise the opposition between Driscoll and Bauer. Driscoll's femininity may also suggest the alignment of more traditionally humanist values with a political left that is weak and ineffective. The revelations about Driscoll's personal life that develop through the season reaffirm this reflection.

While Driscoll is involved in coordinating a mission to prevent terrorists from forcing all of America's nuclear plants into a simultaneous meltdown, she begins receiving personal calls from home concerning her daughter Maya (Angela Goethals).⁴⁴⁷ Maya is schizophrenic and unwilling to take her medication, making her a danger to herself and a perceived threat to Driscoll's neighbourhood. Driscoll is unable to control her daughter; one of the calls she receives is from her next-door neighbour, who says that Maya was frightening his son and he will call the LAPD and have her arrested. This setup continues

⁴⁴⁶ "Violent sacrifice under state discipline in the name of the nation – this seems to get very close to what many Americans... understand to be the essential criterion for first-class citizenship." Enloe, *The Morning After*, 202.

⁴⁴⁷ "Day Four: 9:00a.m.-10:00a.m.," 24, directed by Brad Turner (2004; Los Angeles, CA: 20th Century Fox Television, 2005), DVD.

to undermine Driscoll's competency: she is professionally dedicated to keeping America safe for the next generation, yet her failure as a mother not only affects her personal life but causes discord in the very homes and neighbourhoods she is committed to protect. Maya's unruliness, itself a reflection of Driscoll's inability to maintain a home life, forces Driscoll to abuse her position; rather than allow the LAPD to take her daughter into custody, she uses her authority to have Maya brought to CTU and confined to the infirmary.⁴⁴⁸ The simultaneous private and public crises Driscoll is forced to handle split her focus; she is unable to deal successfully with either. When she is in the infirmary with Maya, she is abandoning her post and allowing the terrorist threat to progress, while when she leaves to attend to her job Maya declares that Driscoll does not love her, that she is unimportant, and that she is a failure as a daughter.⁴⁴⁹ Driscoll's incompetence and distress is in complete contrast to Bauer's behaviour in Season One, when his own daughter was in danger while he had to prevent Palmer's assassination. Bauer's ability to maintain focus on his job ensures his professional success; he is thus marked as worthy and Kim survives the night. Driscoll's split focus, however, endangers the country as well as her daughter.

Maya ultimately commits suicide while Driscoll is supervising a mission.⁴⁵⁰ Though Driscoll attempts to keep working, the loss of her daughter renders her emotionally unfit for the job and she gives in to the concerted urgings of the other men in CTU who are concerned for her welfare.⁴⁵¹ Her dismissal is punishment "for failing to take care of her schizophrenic daughter, Maya, but also in part – and possibly more importantly – as textual reckoning for dismissing Bauer over that small matter concerning his heroin addiction."⁴⁵² Upon agreeing to remove herself from her post, she also admits her earlier fault in attempting to undermine Bauer; having done so, she vanishes, not to be spoken of again. Driscoll's storyline emphasizes the outdated representation of women on 24; the regressive gender politics the series displays reflects how "women have come to be expected to participate in the military, national defense, and war efforts, but their

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁹ "Day Four: 1:00p.m.-2:00p.m.," 24, directed by Ken Girotti (2004; Los Angeles, CA: 20th Century Fox Television, 2005), DVD.

⁴⁵⁰ "Day Four: 5:00p.m.-6:00p.m.," 24, directed by Jon Cassar (2004; Los Angeles, CA: 20th Century Fox Television, 2005), DVD.

⁴⁵¹ "Day Four: 6:00p.m.-7:00p.m.," 24, directed by Jon Cassar (2004; Los Angeles, CA: 20th Century Fox Television, 2005), DVD.

⁴⁵² McCabe, "Damsels in Distress," 155.

participation has come to be understood as passive, feminine, and even demure."⁴⁵³ Driscoll does not understand the importance of torture to American militarism; she cannot maintain a high-powered career and a successful family life regardless of the fact that spies like Amanda King and Sydney Bristow had already shattered that barrier. As she is unable to save her daughter, so too, it is suggested, is she unable to contemplate the lengths to which America's defenders need to go to save the country. If 9/11 has been reframed as an attack on "(heterosexual) family life,"⁴⁵⁴ as discussed earlier in the chapter, then the apparently single-mother Driscoll with an 'imperfect' daughter is no one's choice as champion. Her reaction to her daughter's death also stands in stark contrast to Bauer's reactions to his many personal losses throughout the series. Driscoll's emotionality is crippling, serving to alienate the audience from her failures. Bauer's emotions, in comparison, are displayed in order to make him more relatable and to further advance his missions. The losses of his wife and subsequent lovers have no narrative meaning save to spur Bauer to greater fervour in his quest to save his country. His losses come to symbolize the losses that America herself has suffered as a result of terrorism; rather than normalizing his experiences, however, his reactions emphasize how exceptional he is.

America as a country has suffered, but only Bauer has suffered his particular losses, and only through the lens of Bauer's pain can America conceptualize its tragedy. These losses, particularly those of Bauer's lovers, emphasize a breakdown in his masculinity: he does not mourn (only) for the women in question, but for his failure in protecting them as a man is meant to do. Where Bauer's losses show how important it is that he redeem himself by protecting the country the way he failed to protect his lovers, Driscoll's loss demonstrates her unfitness to protect America. By placing Bauer in contrast with Driscoll, 24 emphasizes the differences it embodies between the former female-led character of the spy genre and its new masculine aspect. Casting Alberta Watson – the stoic, pathologically unemotional second-in-command Madeline of *La Femme Nikita* – in the role of the emotionally-impaired Driscoll immediately brings the previous series into the dialogue. Fans of the spy genre as well as of the creative team would be familiar with *La Femme Nikita* and Watson's character, who was a challenge to the traditional representation of power and femininity (see Chapter Three). Her impact on the contemporary spy genre can be seen in Watson's return here as well as in the 2010 *The*

⁴⁵³ Laura Sjoberg, "Gendering the Empire's Soldiers: Gender Ideologies, the U.S. Military, and the War on Terror," in Laura Sjoberg and Sandra Via, eds, *Gender, War, and Militarism: Feminist Perspectives* (Santa Barbara: Praeger Security International, 2010), 216.

⁴⁵⁴ Takacs, *Terrorism TV*, 59.

CW series *Nikita* (see Conclusion). By casting a recognizable face in such a different role, and one in which she is placed at odds with the series protagonist, 24 declares its presence as a new form of spy drama, one where women are returned to a subservient position. Unsettling as she was, Madeline might have been trusted with the fate of the world. With the rise of a present threat to America, however, only a return to the virile masculinity that protected the Wild West will do.

An Inherited Condition

This is not to say that women are entirely exempted from the work of serving their country; as Driscoll's storyline shows, the female spy is not erased completely. Nevertheless, her stories are typically generic and rarely successful, lacking the specific and celebratory aspects that characterize Bauer's narrative. There is little room for femininity in 24, as its alignment with "the hypermasculinity of the current militarized masculinity shows the intense focus on power and virility in the United States today, while the emphasis on traditional femininity shows the need to appear (tender and) just."⁴⁵⁵ Women gain only transient places in the series; save for those defined by their relationship to Bauer, they almost never appear in more than one season. Given the show's real-time conceit, where each season represents only a single day, the inconsequentiality of the female presence is even more sharply evident than is immediately apparent. Their influence is negligible at best save for when it is negative: Bauer's double-agent mistress Nina, the power-hungry First Lady Sherry Palmer (Peggy Johnson Jerald), and assassin-for-hire Mandy (Mia Kirshner) all survive to trouble Bauer for more than one season, whereas most other women, including his loyal American lovers and even his wife, rarely last even a full twenty-four episodes. Like Driscoll, who disappears halfway through Season Four, these women have no real impact. Even those who manage to stay around for more than one 'day' rarely manage to survive unscathed.

24 is so committed to the reinvigoration of the long-dead trope wherein female spies are either evil or subordinate to their male superiors that it is unable to achieve coherent characterizations for women outside of the world of espionage. Bauer's wife Teri is one of these women: she is effectively a blank slate to begin with, as we are not told anything about her save that she is Bauer's wife and Kim's mother. This enigmatic state is

⁴⁵⁵ Sjoberg, "Gendering the Empire's Soldiers," 216.

literalized when she suffers amnesia after a car accident.⁴⁵⁶ There is so little to her personality that it can be erased instantaneously. She functions only as a spur for Bauer's actions. Her existence is so difficult for the creative team to manage that they instead choose to kill her off. While her death primarily serves to punish Bauer for straying outside of his marriage vows, it is also, of course, a form of punishment for Teri herself: she must suffer for creating the crack in Bauer's happy all-American family through which Nina was able to take advantage. Teri's murder functions as emotional development for Bauer; it emphasizes the danger to him personally and to the world in general if he fails at his job. Further, it allows him to be the 'tortured hero,' ensuring he has a personal stake in taking revenge against the terrorists who killed her. Teri functions as a more successful site of meaning dead than she does alive, which is a telling glimpse into the roles of women inherit in the fiercely masculine world of espionage in *24*.

Bauer's daughter Kim is, again, a character the show seems unable to decide how to handle following the success of the first season. Her initial characterization is inconsistent; she moved between seasons from insolent party girl to emancipated minor, beginning Season Two as a high school dropout working as an *au pair*.⁴⁵⁷ She has effectively traded one overbearing patriarch for another; there is no escape from the ultimate authority of the father figure in this universe. With no apparent place for Kim outside the structure of the espionage world, the show then chooses to bring her into the spy 'family.' Unlike similar plotlines in *La Femme Nikita* and *Alias*, Kim shows neither aptitude for nor interest in espionage before she is recruited, seemingly without reason. Her appearances in Season Three as a CTU computer tech allow the show to keep her in the narrative without having to imagine a new role for her. That she is ill-suited to the work and unlikely to choose it for herself is immaterial: her only real function within the plot is to represent the distraction that family poses and simultaneously allow Bauer to martyr himself by putting the country's needs ahead of his family's.

Like Nikita and Sydney, Kim represents a 'next generation' of female spies. Unlike both of those women, however, she appears to be an interim step rather than someone who will serve the organization as whole-heartedly as her forebears. Whether within the world of CTU or outside it, Kim's overbearing concerns are with children, both her own and those of other people. When she is estranged from Bauer in Season Two, her *au pair*

⁴⁵⁶ "3:00p.m.-4:00p.m.," *24*, directed by Stephen Hopkins (2002; Los Angeles, CA: 20th Century Fox Television, 2002), DVD.

⁴⁵⁷ "Day Two: 8:00a.m.-9:00a.m.," *24*, directed by Jon Cassar (2002; Los Angeles, CA: 20th Century Fox Television, 2003), DVD.

work is for a family whose daughter Megan (Skye McCole Bartusiak) is not only developmentally disabled but, during the course of the season, is injured by her abusive father,⁴⁵⁸ causing Kim to take responsibility for the girl and risk her own safety during the nuclear threat her father is attempting to halt. In *Alias*, children are more than usually capable; by as young as eight they are being assessed, recruited, and trained by spy agencies in the West as well as the East.⁴⁵⁹ In 24, however, children are a liability; Kim is as dangerously distracting to Bauer as Megan is to Kim. Her preparation for traditionally feminine roles is punished because she is attempting to steal her labour from the state, who should be entitled to it by virtue of her heritage. Even in Season Three, when she is inexplicably part of CTU, Kim serves only to split Bauer's focus when she is involved in what he considers an inappropriate relationship with another agent by the name of Chase Edmunds (James Badge Dale). Part of Chase's unsuitability rests in the fact that, although he is concealing her from Kim, Chase already has a child: another daughter, Angela.⁴⁶⁰ Not only is Kim not meant to be part of CTU, but she is not even necessary for the production of future agents. Though she leaves CTU at the end of Season Three to help Chase raise his daughter,⁴⁶¹ they do not remain together. Instead, in Season Seven we discover where Kim's true importance lies.

By Season Seven, Kim and Bauer are once again estranged. Kim has completely separated herself from the world of espionage; she is no longer with Chase and has in fact met, married, and had a child with a different man.⁴⁶² In a move symbolic of the show's reductive conservatism, she has traded a career for a family. Kim does not initially tell Bauer that he has a granddaughter, however, because she claims she "doesn't want to want to cause him pain."⁴⁶³ This statement, delivered when Bauer is believed to be on his deathbed, can be read in multiple ways. Kim may have kept her daughter's existence from Bauer to free him from regrets that he will not be able to be part of her life as she grows up. However, the idea of Bauer being 'pained' by the knowledge of a new addition to his family suggests a deeper concern. Kim has absented herself from the world of the CTU

⁴⁵⁸ "Day Two: 9:00a.m.-10:00a.m.," 24, directed by Jon Cassar (2002; Los Angeles, CA: 20th Century Fox Television, 2003), DVD.

⁴⁵⁹ "The Indicator," *Alias*.

⁴⁶⁰ "Day Three: 4:00p.m.-5:00p.m.," 24, directed by Ian Toynton (2003; Los Angeles, CA: 20th Century Fox Television, 2004), DVD.

⁴⁶¹ "Day Three: 12:00p.m.-1:00p.m.," 24, directed by Jon Cassar (2004; Los Angeles, CA: 20th Century Fox Television, 2004), DVD.

⁴⁶² "Day Seven: 1:00a.m.-2:00a.m.," 24, directed by Brad Turner (2009; Los Angeles, CA: 20th Century Fox Television, 2009), DVD.

⁴⁶³ "Day Seven: 7:00a.m.-8:00a.m.," 24, directed by Jon Cassar (2009; Los Angeles, CA: 20th Century Fox Television, 2009), DVD.

both literally – she lives in New York – and figuratively – marrying without Bauer's blessing represents a defiance of the patriarchal structure of the unit and of America in general. Not only has she refused her birthright, but she has also begun to have children who will be similarly exempt from the burden of responsibility that spy families are expected to take on. Instead, Kim's daughter Teri – named for Kim's mother, who similarly could not survive in the world of espionage – will be merely another soul dependant on the protection Bauer must sacrifice himself to provide. Kim's inability to embrace the profession of which her family is so proud is indeed likely to be a source of further pain to Bauer.

Despite her disinclination to fulfil the genetic imperative to continue the spy-family line, Kim still has some use within the male-dominated spy world. She cannot pass on the gift of her heritage and must instead effectively return it, thus making amends for her imperfect adherence to her inheritance. In Season Seven, Bauer suffers from exposure to a biological weapon being developed by that season's group of terrorists. The virulence of the weapon is such that Bauer has mere hours to live unless he asks Kim to undergo a potentially life-threatening procedure to donate some of her stem cells, which could be engineered to repair the damage done by the weapon. Bauer, still focused on protecting his daughter, chooses to die rather than ask her to risk herself; Kim defies his wishes and volunteers herself when he is near death.⁴⁶⁴ Her genetic material is able to cure Bauer and return him to a physical condition where he is able to continue serving the nation. While she cannot serve herself nor provide future soldiers to continue the fight, Kim is still able to redeem herself by using her body, if in a different way than is traditional. More, her role is now to ensure Bauer continues the fight for which she has re-equipped him. In Season Eight, Bauer seeks to return to LA with Kim as part of her family unit until CTU asks him to undertake another mission. While Bauer is reluctant to abandon his newly reclaimed family, Kim insists. She makes reparations for her failure to place nation above family by ensuring Bauer does so instead. Her greatest value to the nation lies in her ability to diminish her own worth, rather than in the skills she does possess.

Kim's unsuitability for espionage is a specific, rather than a general, trait. There are women who are allowed to participate in America's defence, such as Driscoll and the occasional other female CTU agents who appear through the series. Many of these women turn out to be traitors, many more die, but those who understand that they need to ally themselves with and work towards the same goals as Jack Bauer prove themselves

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid.

invaluable. It is doubtful whether the price they have to pay in order to be of service is worth the honour, however. Jack is presented as the only person who can understand loss; his losses are losses to the country, and his extreme emotional responses are justified due to their enormity. Women in the show undergo similar losses, yet they are punished for their inability to control their emotions.

You Can't Have It All

Bauer appears in each of the 192 episodes of the show. No other character equals that number, but the one who comes the closest describes a narrative arc that calls into question the sacrifices women must make in order to serve in the CTU. Chloe O'Brian (Mary Lynn Rajsckub) first appears in 3.01, "Day Three: 1.00p.m.-2:00p.m.," and subsequently features in 125 episodes of the show. Initially a computer specialist and senior analyst whom Bauer uses to gain intel within CTU, she becomes his most highly regarded assistant. Her career with CTU is uneven, but most of her setbacks result from her loyalty to Bauer, while her successes are largely measures of her own competence. Chloe's most valuable asset is her intelligence; she is not a field agent, but rather a computer expert with highly specialized knowledge of the CTU systems and networks. She holds a position of relative power, given her essential skills; her intelligence and lack of field experience, alongside her unassuming, rather geeky appearance and attitude, mean that she is positioned as the antithesis of the dangerous Mata Hari stereotype by which female agents are regularly defined. This opposition along with her status as subordinate and fiercely loyal to Bauer, makes her an acceptable member of CTU. She is smart rather than sexy, occupying the typically male role of technology wizard, and is thus almost androgynous, at least in her first season. Muting the danger of her sexuality allows her to survive, if perhaps not thrive, in the world of espionage.

Chloe is able to develop a sexual persona after several seasons. Even in this, however, her naïveté is foregrounded, particularly when her ex-husband Morris (Carlo Rota) is introduced in Season Five.⁴⁶⁵ Morris's loyalties are ambivalent; he has had previous contact with CTU, though in what capacity is left unexplained, and Chloe secures security clearance for him only with difficulty. He becomes a member of CTU in Season Six, but he remains a liability, caving under torture and assisting the season's terrorist

⁴⁶⁵ "Day Five: 5:00a.m.-6:00a.m.," 24, directed by Jon Cassar (2006; Los Angeles, CA: 20th Century Fox Television, 2006), DVD.

group in arming a suitcase nuke, which they use to threaten Los Angeles.⁴⁶⁶ He also forces Chloe to admit to her superior that she is secreting information for Bauer against CTU's mandate.⁴⁶⁷ Morris simultaneously suffers from a relapse into his alcoholic past. Where Chloe has previously disobeyed orders only to assist Bauer, when Morris appears she is torn between her duty to CTU and her former husband. The uncertain nature of their relationship reflects the challenge it poses to the interaction between Bauer and Chloe; Bauer, and by extension her job at CTU, should be the most important aspect of Chloe's life, but her continued attraction to Morris places that attachment under strain and emphasizes the extent to which unsanctioned sexual attraction affects a female spy's judgment and ability to do her job.

Although it appears in Season Six that Chloe has been able to balance work and a romantic life, Morris's unsuitability for espionage, as reflected by his inability to withstand torture, causes him to end their relationship. When Chloe discovers she is pregnant and reveals this fact to Morris, however, she immediately becomes subordinate to his wishes.⁴⁶⁸ Their relationship rekindles and they remarry, which requires Chloe to give up her work at CTU. Rajskub subsequently describes her character as a stay-at-home mom,⁴⁶⁹ a marked contrast to her previous role as an intelligence expert. By becoming pregnant with the child of someone unable to assist the espionage world, as Morris has demonstrated himself to be, Chloe absents herself from her responsibilities. The child is not likely to inherit her spy skills, thus she, and it, are no longer allowed to participate in the defence of the country. Her resignation echoes Emma Peel in *The Avengers*, who gave up working with Steed when her husband returned. However, in 2007, Chloe's choice is less about societal mores and more a demonstration of a "post-network" era in which "feminist themes about women's professional status [being] systematically ignored and undercut in favor of a focus on the details of women's romantic personal lives, in narratives that could just as easily have been featured in a Rock Hudson-Doris Day comedy of the 1950s."⁴⁷⁰ Chloe does not seem to have a choice about being recuperated

⁴⁶⁶ "Day Six: 12:00p.m.-1:00p.m.," 24, directed by Jon Cassar (2006; Los Angeles, CA: 20th Century Fox Television, 2007), DVD.

⁴⁶⁷ "Day Six: 4:00a.m.-5:00a.m.," 24, directed by Brad Turner (2007; Los Angeles, CA: 20th Century Fox Television, 2007), DVD.

⁴⁶⁸ "Day Six: 5:00a.m.-6:00a.m.," 24, directed by Brad Turner (2007; Los Angeles, CA: 20th Century Fox Television, 2007), DVD.

⁴⁶⁹ Don Kaplan, "'24' preview in Times Square," *New York Post*, published 25 October 2007, accessed 20 April 2011, http://www.nypost.com/video/?vxSiteId=0db7b365-a288-4708-857b-8bdb545cbd0f&vxChannel=NY%20Post&vxClipId=1458_183299&vxBitrate=300.

⁴⁷⁰ Press, "Gender and Family," 144.

into the heteronormative paradigm of the nuclear family, even to the point where Morris, despite having been proven untrustworthy, becomes the 'head' of the family and the sole breadwinner. The foolhardiness of this action is proven at the beginning of Season Eight, when Chloe must return to work as Morris has lost his job.⁴⁷¹ She rejoins CTU out of necessity rather than patriotism and is thus punished not only for leaving the spy world, but for failing at heteronormativity in such a way that she is once more forced to seek out the gender-challenging world of espionage.

While CTU does allow Chloe to return, they emphasize her reduction in value by demoting her from her former position. When she left CTU, it was as Head Analyst, but she returns as a mere analyst, subordinate to the person who has filled her old job. Dana Walsh (Kate Sackhoff) represents the ideal female intelligence officer; having dedicated her life to the service, she is thus eligible to supervise Chloe, who has betrayed the service by bearing children who distract her from the country that needs her protection. As the season progresses, Chloe demonstrates that her skills are still intact and is able not only to reclaim her former position,⁴⁷² but to succeed it and ascend to Acting Director of CTU.⁴⁷³ This position makes Bauer her subordinate. Like the other women who have held the same office, however, Chloe's authority is adulterated by her gender. Though Chloe is loyal to Bauer, he has no demonstrable loyalty to her and disobeys her orders with the same impunity he showed all of the other Directors. In fact, Bauer's gender ensures that despite his subordinate position, he is still functionally superior to Chloe. Despite her position as Director, Chloe accedes to Jack's plan to place all responsibility for their insubordinacy throughout the season on him. He becomes an exile and flees the country to protect himself. This action seems to protect Chloe, but it also removes her from the chain of command to which she had so laboriously ascended; Jack is able to override her even when he has no rank within CTU. Chloe's attempts to overreach her gendered position must have consequences, much as it did for the other women who inhabited the glass office. The epilogue to Season Eight, available on the DVD boxset, reveals that Chloe is forced to pay for her presumption. Her acquiescence to Jack's rule-breaking leads to her arrest by the FBI.⁴⁷⁴ She is liable to receive up to fifteen years in prison for

⁴⁷¹ "Day Eight: 4:00p.m.-5:00p.m.," 24, directed by Brad Turner (2010; Los Angeles, CA: 20th Century Fox Television, 2010), DVD.

⁴⁷² "Day Eight: 5:00p.m.-6:00p.m.," 24, directed by Brad Turner (2010; Los Angeles, CA: 20th Century Fox Television, 2010), DVD.

⁴⁷³ "Day Eight: 8:00a.m.-9:00a.m.," 24, directed by Mila Cheylov (2010; Los Angeles, CA: 20th Century Fox Television, 2010), DVD.

⁴⁷⁴ "Season 8 Epilogue," 24: *Season Eight* (Los Angeles, CA: 20th Century Fox Television, 2010), DVD.

her role in saving the country; unlike Bauer, who is regularly all but canonized, Chloe is reduced to a common criminal, arrested in front of her home with her husband and child watching. Situating the arrest in her private sphere ensures that she is punished for failing both as a spy and as a mother, much as Irina warned Sydney would happen to her (see Chapter Three). Without the moral duty of providing heirs to the intelligence community to anchor her, as Sydney had, Chloe fulfils Irina's prophecy.

Do You Feel Lucky?

Steven Rubio argues that Jack Bauer is the Dirty Harry of our post-9/11 world, more concerned with the rights of the American people to be free of terrorism than with the rights of those accused of perpetrating terrorist acts.⁴⁷⁵ Bauer comes, over the course of the show's nine-year life, to reflect the American audience's frustrations with what it sees as an increasingly ineffective government. The John Wayne-Dirty Harry paradigm Bauer embodies casts him as unambiguously American and yet allows him to operate as a maverick, ensuring a patriotic resolution to the threats he faces even while he operates outside of governmental mandates.

24 explores the concept of family identity, as did the shows preceding it. In 24, however, the family takes on a dual role: it is nominally the ideal unit, the acquisition of which is the aim for 'healthy' citizens; for the spy, though, families are a luxury. Moreover, for the female spy, families are dangerous, indicating a loss of control and of focus. In previous series, particularly *La Femme Nikita* and *Alias*, the family unit has been a vital part of the spy's identity, often representing a route by which her ability to excel as an agent is attainable. This equation holds somewhat true for Bauer in 24, especially as his daughter's genetic material enables him to survive and remain an agent. For Kim and the other women in the show, however, family, particularly children, is a distinct liability. Children are portrayed as elements of chaos with which women are emotionally unfit to cope. This emotionality draws across their career lines and renders them unsuitable for the defence of their country. The parallel between Bauer and Driscoll in particular emphasizes this: both face a child whose actions destabilize them while on the job, yet Bauer is able to compartmentalize and succeed while Driscoll becomes overwrought and must step down. Bauer cracks under pressure on occasion, succumbing to bouts of

⁴⁷⁵ Steven Rubio, "Can a Leftist Love 24?," in Richard Minitier, ed, *Jack Bauer for President: Terrorism and Politics in 24* (Dallas: Benbella Books, 2008), 24.

'manly' tears, but returns to the job immediately; Driscoll, in contrast, is professionally crippled by hysteria. In *24*'s view, children are acceptable risks only when they are kept under the control of a responsible male adult. It is no longer enough for the state to direct women's sexuality towards rearing children in its service; now, they and their children must be removed from sensitive positions and their actions policed.

Though consequent to *La Femme Nikita* and concurrent with *Alias*, both of which demonstrate many of the attributes that McRobbie, Gill, Moseley, et al use to define the postfeminist era, *24* does not demonstrate a postfeminist sensibility. Not only do the women on the show not only do not achieve 'girl power' status, their aspirations thereof are dangerous and damaging; though the show does in fact fit McRobbie's description of postfeminism as "an active process by which feminist gains of the 1970s and 1980s come to be undermined,"⁴⁷⁶ it does not do so in the name of further choice or empowerment. The women in *24* are not simply contained within the housewife role but actively punished for considering attempts to break away from them. While, as is reminiscent of the backlash readings that criticized early postfeminist shows like *Ally McBeal*, they are identified as "having pursued *feminist* goals instead of *feminine* ones,"⁴⁷⁷ they are not allowed to succeed at being either feminine or feminist. Their inheritance from the previous generations seems to be only those negative tropes that support the re-establishment of the patriarchal family and thus the patriarchal nation-state. The male spy has never been allowed to trust foreign women, but for *24*, even American women are suspect.

Thankfully, Jack Bauer is there to demonstrate that there are still men willing to make the tough choices that the American government will not in order to defend its borders. Women are excluded from positions where these choices are actually made; although the series ends with Chloe as Director of CTU and Allison Taylor (Cherry Jones) as President of the United States, both women are overruled by Bauer's determination to martyr himself. Women, in the world of *24*, are not fit to head countries, but neither are they fit to head families; rather, they must submit to the will of the men in their lives, who know better than they what they need and how to achieve it. *24* stands in stark contrast to its immediate predecessors *La Femme Nikita*, which ends with Nikita as Head of Section, and *Alias*, which concludes as Sydney works to balance her idyllic home life with her desirability as an agent. It predicates a world where male-driven violence is the only

⁴⁷⁶ McRobbie, "Post-feminism and popular culture," 255.

⁴⁷⁷ Moseley and Read, "Having it *Ally*," 236.

response to same and women are not capable of understanding or surviving the lengths to which Bauer must go in order to keep the country safe. They are cushioned from the worst of the truth, yet simultaneously punished for not going far enough to support Bauer's crusade. The show reduces women's autonomy, positioning them as unsuitable guardians of America and, in fact, in need of protection themselves. That the show resonated with viewers enough to make Bauer a household name demonstrates both America's fears about its own future and its return to established patterns of behaviour. In a post-9/11 America, security must be pared down to its essentials, and women have not proven their credentials in the same way that the American 'cowboy' has. This unwillingness to grant women full citizenship rights is echoed in *Spooks*; like the formulaic Bond, whose presence following the Second World War helped men navigate post-war conventions of masculinity, the agents of *Spooks* present the British audience with a pattern in which women's lack of fitness to serve is constantly demonstrated.

*Don't take this the wrong way, I know it might sound odd
I'm the next double-oh, I'm the right man for the job
So I wish I was James Bond, just for the day
Kissing all the girls, blow the bad guys away*⁴⁷⁸

Her Majesty's Secret Service: *Spooks*

Spooks began airing on 13 May 2002. Less than a year had passed since 9/11, but *24* was already firmly established as the breakout hit of the 01-02 American television season.⁴⁷⁹ *Spooks* capitalizes on *24*'s popularity, but is much more than a mere copy of the earlier series' format. Where *24* centres on Jack Bauer and his personal moral dilemmas in the race to protect America, *Spooks* is an ensemble show. It shies away from the maverick sensibility Bauer embraces and instead presents the Security Service's work of protecting the country as an exceptionally difficult office job made possible by a dedicated team of highly trained individuals. The cast is roughly gender-balanced throughout the show, reflecting the public face of MI5 since the Rimington era. In the first season, the ensemble is balanced as well between experienced career spooks like Harry Pearce (Peter Firth) and Tessa Phillips (Jenny Agutter), both of whom have been with MI5 for decades, and newer, up-and-coming agents including Tom Quinn (Matthew Macfayden), Zoe Reynolds (Keeley Hawes), and Danny Hunter (David Oyelowo). The team share Bauer's dislike for bureaucracy and commitment to protecting their country regardless of their occasionally morally-grey methods, but are typically committed to working within their mandate rather than going rogue. Despite the gender parity, the show still replaces Jack Bauer with James Bond, reproducing what Rimington described in the Eighties as an attitude "in the male-dominated security service... that few woman could accept the long hours, separation from friends and family... and the risk of violence."⁴⁸⁰ *Spooks* reflects contemporary attitudes by representing the masculine figure as the pinnacle to which British spooks should aspire.

The distance between *24* and *Spooks* is evident in the show's attempt to expand the scope of the terrorism with which MI5 concerns itself. Season after season, Bauer and CTU confront terrorists whose sole desire is to blow America up by whatever means possible. In *Spooks*, however, the threats are multifarious; Bauer's methodology will not

⁴⁷⁸ Scouting for Girls, vocal performance of "I Wish I Was James Bond," by Roy Stride, recorded 2008 on *Scouting for Girls*, Epic Records, CD.

⁴⁷⁹ Christopher Heard, *Kiefer Sutherland: Living Dangerously* (Montreal: Transit Publishing, 2009), 15.

⁴⁸⁰ Quoted in Gordon Thomas, *Inside British Intelligence: 100 Years of MI5 and MI6* (London: JR Books, 2009), 232.

suffice. Despite following closely on *24*'s debut, the pilot episode of *Spooks* emphasizes its difference from its immediate predecessor and positions itself on the opposite end of the spectrum from the right-wing show. Episode 1.01, "Thou Shalt Not Kill," sees the spooks combating the threat of the American right as represented by Mary Kane (Lisa Eichhorn), a pro-life activist whose preferred method of protest is bombing abortion clinics. With *24* creating waves in American television, attacking the extreme right-wing allows *Spooks* to define itself against that show's politics. This storyline also displays the ensemble nature of the case as well as its gender balance. The plot not only highlights the female members of the team, but also ensures that the range of their skills is evident from the show's inception. Zoe, who is one of the more junior agents, is nevertheless particularly competent at undercover work; the official tie-in reference book *Spooks: The Personnel Files* presents her as an expert honeytrap operative.⁴⁸¹ Yet in the pilot she uses those same talents to create an entirely different character and infiltrate Kane's pro-life group. As an innocent girl ingratiating herself with another woman – rather than a worldly seductress extracting information from a man through the use of sexual wiles – Zoe is the key to the mission's success. This approach clearly demonstrates the versatility of the female spy's skills; as a modern organization, MI5 is aware that the times have changed and the usefulness of a spy is not limited by his or her gender.

Across the Pond: Britain Post-9/11

After the Cold War, MI5 began the transition from a counter-espionage to a counter-terrorism organization. This change corresponded roughly with the 1992 appointment of Stella Rimington as Director General, making MI5 "the first female head of any of the world's leading intelligence or security agencies."⁴⁸² Despite the fact that MI5 had already been recruiting and promoting a higher percentage of women at executive level than any other branch of the British government,⁴⁸³ Rimington's appointment did not usher in a new age of respect for the female spy. When her appointment was revealed, newspapers and broadsheets dogged every detail of her private life, including her weekly shop at Marks and Spencer, under headlines such as "Housewife Superspy" and "Mother of two gets tough with terrorists,"⁴⁸⁴ while Jon Snow commented on *Channel 4 News* that

⁴⁸¹ *Spooks: The Personnel Files* (London: Headline Publishing Group, 2006), 327.

⁴⁸² Christopher Andrew, *Defend the Realm: The Authorized History of MI5*, (New York: Knopf, 2009), 774.

⁴⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 775.

he had expected her to be more like Rosa Kleb from James Bond.⁴⁸⁵ Nevertheless, Rimington took advantage of the scrutiny to reveal more about MI5 to the public, modernizing its approach to recruitment as well as communication. Despite her openness, however, the Nineties were marred by budget cuts, staff losses, and drops in morale, and Rimington's tenure as DG lasted only until 1996, leaving MI6 in a similar state to the CIA of the time. Following 9/11, however, the organization was revitalized. It was particularly characterized by a renewal of the 'special relationship' between Britain and America and a further reduction in MI5's counter-espionage activities. 2002 also saw the promotion of a second female DG, Eliza Mannheim-Buller, who would serve until April 2007, through the formative years of *Spooks*.

Spooks echoes many of the concerns that MI5 actually faced during the era, including the rise of home-grown terrorism, the increase in Islamic terrorism, and the threats of moles or defectors. The greatest threat, however, seems to come from the women within it. *Spooks* is not as blatantly misogynistic as *24* can be at the heights of its outrage, but it again mobilizes the figure of the housewife – and not always the 'housewife superspy,' as the *Sun* would have Rimington – as a containment device. The show inherits MI5's history with female DGs, yet it manages to undermine the strength of almost all the women it encounters within the service. The housewife is deployed as the foil to the spy, but unlike *Scarecrow and Mrs. King*, where she is useful to spycraft, *Alias*, where she can at least coexist, or even *24*, where she is at best useless and at worst a distraction from intelligence work, in *Spooks* she is a threat not just to the nation, but to the female spy herself.

Female Spy Archetypes

The relative gender parity that *Spooks* achieves does not mean that the show actually presents equality; excessive chauvinism has always characterized the British espionage genre and is still apparent here.⁴⁸⁶ Women on the show are more likely than their male counterparts to fail in their missions or cause problems within the service. The show is violent and characters of both sexes are killed regularly, but while men typically die heroic deaths, women's deaths are wasteful and often disturbing. A particularly graphic example occurs in 1.02, "Looking After Our Own," and sets the tone for the rest of

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid, 777.

⁴⁸⁶ Miller, *The Avengers*, 96.

the show. When Tom requires a wife to complete an undercover assignment as a married couple, the only woman available is an administrative officer, Helen Flynn (Lisa Faulkner), who is not field trained. Female spies seem to be interchangeable, however, especially when they need only 'play housewife;' thus Helen goes undercover despite her inexperience. Unsurprisingly, her lack of training renders her vulnerable to the right-wing racist Robert Osborne (Kevin McNally) about whom MI5 is collecting information. Her inability to maintain the cover story compromises her and Tom's mission and they are taken captive. Osborne attempts to use Helen as a tool to extract information from Tom, demonstrating that women are inevitably the weak point within the service. When Tom refuses to give in, Osborne forces first Helen's hand and then her entire head into a deep fat fryer, leaving her in agonizing pain for several moments before shooting her. The scene drew a record number of complaints to the Broadcasting Standards Commission.⁴⁸⁷ Helen's death is neither noble nor meaningful; it is the direct result of the Service sending an untrained agent into the field. The message the episode conveys is that women are incompetent, detrimental to the mission and the Service, unimportant, and replaceable. Helen had barely been around long enough for the audience to become attached to her; her death is part of Tom's character development. More, before the end of the episode, she is replaced as Danny's flatmate by Zoe, emphasizing their literal interchangeability.

Foreignness: The Throwback

The trope of the foreign spy-seductress is embedded in the show, but here again provides a chance to react against the primacy of *24*, as several of the foreign spies with whom MI5 agents become entangled are CIA agents. In Season Two, Tom begins a relationship with CIA liaison Christine Dale (Megan Dodds)⁴⁸⁸, only to have Harry declare fraternizing with foreign agents inappropriate.⁴⁸⁹ Their relationship elicits disapproval from each of their respective agencies, but the CIA proceed to take advantage of it, using Christine to plant information that enables them to frame Tom for the murder of the Chief of the Defense Staff.⁴⁹⁰ Though the relationship begins as an honest one, it is easily

⁴⁸⁷ "Spy show draws record complaints," *BBC News*, published 17 July 2003, accessed 15 June 2012, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/entertainment/tv_and_radio/3073921.stm.

⁴⁸⁸ "Without Incident," *Spooks*, directed by Justin Chadwick (2003; London, England: Entertainment One, 2004), DVD.

⁴⁸⁹ "Smoke and Mirrors," *Spooks*, directed by Sam Miller (2003; London, England: Entertainment One, 2004), DVD.

⁴⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

transformed into a honeytrap despite Christine's distaste for lying. She subsequently resigns from the CIA in 3.01, telling Tom that the work is destroying her, and begs him to do the same; their relationship deprives her of her job and serves as impetus for Tom's departure from the series.⁴⁹¹ *Spooks: The Personnel Files* claims that the two of them married following Tom's departure from MI5.⁴⁹² That their relationship is so easily subverted by the weight of their professions but is able to thrive once they have left spying reiterates the genre's contemporary view that romance and intelligence work are incompatible.

In Season Eight, Tom's replacement Lucas North (Richard Armitage) similarly begins a relationship with Christine's replacement as CIA liaison, Sarah Caulfield (Genevieve O'Reilly).⁴⁹³ The two women are even physically similar, both blonde with exaggerated 'deep South' American accents. The distaste the show evinces towards foreign influences has become more pointed, however; where Christine at least had been loyal to the CIA, Sarah is in fact a double agent, working instead for the terrorist group known as Nightingale. As Christine was used to convey false intel to Tom, so too is Sarah ordered to use her relationship with Lucas to spy on MI5. Rather than submit, however, Sarah reveals her double agent status by throwing her superior off a walkway to his death.⁴⁹⁴ She continues seeing – and sleeping with – Lucas, but to her own ends, rather than allowing her sexuality to be used in service to her nation. She plays on her appearance to emphasize her vulnerability, ensuring that she is able to overpower Lucas.⁴⁹⁵ While she claims that she must kill him or be killed by Nightingale, she chooses to leave him alive and attempt to escape, which does ultimately lead to her death; her unwillingness to kill him is not distaste at murder, as proven earlier, and suggests that their relationship was not entirely an act and that she is in fact affected by the honeytrap operation. Even as a dedicated double agent, she is vulnerable, as a female spy, to disloyalties caused by love. Once again, Sarah demonstrates that foreign women from even allied nations demonstrate a degree of duplicity that makes them untrustworthy.

The United States is not the only country whose impact on female agents destabilizes the work MI5 seeks to do. Connie James (Gemma Jones) is introduced in 6.02, "The Virus (Part 2)," as a career MI5 agent, who joined as a secretary and never

⁴⁹¹ "Project Friendly Fire," *Spooks*, directed by Jonny Campbell (2004; London, England: Entertainment One, 2005), DVD.

⁴⁹² *Spooks: The Personnel Files*, 250.

⁴⁹³ "Episode 2," *Spooks*, directed by Alrick Riley (2009; London, England: Entertainment One, 2010), DVD.

⁴⁹⁴ "Episode 4," *Spooks*, directed by Sam Miller (2009; London, England: Entertainment One, 2010), DVD.

⁴⁹⁵ "Episode 6," *Spooks*, directed by Edward Hall (2009; London, England: Entertainment One, 2010), DVD.

followed the 'typical' female agents' route of leaving to get married.⁴⁹⁶ Her years of apparently loyal service are undermined when she is revealed to be a double agent in episode 7.07, "The Mole." Connie's status as a Russian mole dates back to a deep cover operation during the Cold War, in which she determined that maintaining Russia's influence in world politics would balance the emerging Western superpowers.⁴⁹⁷ She is another example of a woman who, having been sent undercover, adopted aspects of her cover identity into her own persona; this inability to maintain a distinction between role and self reflects the danger of female emotionality. She also uses honeytrap tactics to further her goals, cultivating a relationship with a high-ranking MI5 operative both as cover for her status as a double agent and in order to gain access to privileged information.⁴⁹⁸ Connie's narrative parallels that of Lucas, whom we learn in 9.02, "Episode Two," is also a double agent for the Russians; as a result of an MI5 mission, he was imprisoned in a Russian jail for eight years, and was thus turned against Section D because he blames Harry for his incarceration.⁴⁹⁹ Both even attempt to atone for their actions through suicide: Connie dies in order to disarm a nuclear bomb in 7.08, "Nuclear Strike," while Lucas jumps off a building rather than kill Harry in 9.08, "Episode Eight." While this parallel would seem to excuse Connie's weakness by marking it as a shared flaw between male and female spies, in fact Connie is to blame for both. Before sacrificing herself in "Nuclear Strike," she confesses that though Lucas believes Harry set him up in Russia, it was actually Connie's fault that Lucas was imprisoned there and ultimately turned. Her revelation shows that female spies are dangerous not just as seductresses; they are also able to corrupt other agents, undermining the strength of the Service in multiple ways.

Connie emphasizes that even British female agents cannot be fully trusted, and the representation of Section D's female spies reinforces this view in several ways. There are several women in the series who do achieve major character status and the chance to headline their own narratives. As in *24*, none of these women are present throughout the entire show, rather arriving in and departing from the plot as is required. Unlike *24*, there are many major male characters who appear and disappear as well, yet the treatment of the female characters, particularly their departures, differs from that of the male characters in terms of the import they are granted. Women are typically allowed one of two

⁴⁹⁶ Keith Jeffery, *MI6: The History of the Secret Intelligence Service, 1909-1949*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2010), 57.

⁴⁹⁷ "The Mole," *Spooks*, directed by Sam Miller (2008; London, England: Entertainment One, 2009), DVD.

⁴⁹⁸ "On the Brink," *Spooks*, directed by Edward Hall (2008; London, England: Entertainment One, 2009), DVD.

⁴⁹⁹ "Episode 8," *Spooks*, directed by Edward Hall (2010; London, England: Entertainment One, 2011), DVD.

characterizations, both of which stem from deep-seated stereotypes about the female spy: the betrayer, like Mata Hari, or the naïf, as in Edith Cavell. The pilot episode introduces us to one of each, senior seductress Tessa and junior ingénue Zoe, and subsequent seasons typically maintain a balance, replacing lost characters with another in the same mould as necessary. All spies in the show grapple with the morality of loyalty to their country and loyalty to their family, but the women in particular are inevitably brought down by the conundrum. Despite the show's apparent embrace of equality, it ultimately reflects the desire for 'the next double-oh,' a Bond-esque macho-man with no lingering romantic entanglements, to step forth as the nation's protector. Each of the women it embraces is in one way or another unable to achieve the same position as the men with whom she works.

Tessa: The Turncoat

Tessa Phillips is one of the first two senior MI5 agents introduced on the show, reflecting the gender parity it displays. Having joined the service during the Cold War, she models a successful career and demonstrates that anyone can aspire to the top jobs. Tessa once headed her own division within MI5; when the show begins, however, she is second in command of Section D under Harry, a posting that is not without some occasional acrimony. Tessa parallels the career path that Stella Rimington took before being promoted to DG;⁵⁰⁰ instead of proceeding to the top job, however, she is placed in a subordinate role. Other agents look up to Tessa; Zoe describes her as "fabulous... everything I want to be,"⁵⁰¹ but Tessa's success at the office is not without its cost. She has neither a long-term partner nor any children. Unlike Zoe, who approaches her job with a wide-eyed dedication to her country, Tessa displays a more jaded, occasionally irreverent attitude, yet her work is typically excellent. When her personal life begins to impinge upon her professional duties, however, the stress reveals several cracks in her façade.

Episode 1.03, "One Last Dance," features a threat to the anonymity of all of MI5's agents when the security of their banking is compromised. When the banker who controls MI5's payroll is abducted, Harry and Tessa realize that everyone whose details are in his possession, from agents to administrative staff to informants, is in danger of having their

⁵⁰⁰ Andrew, *Defend the Realm*, 774.

⁵⁰¹ "The Rose Bed Memoirs," *Spooks*, directed by Andy Wilson (2002; London, England: Entertainment One, 2003), DVD.

identity revealed. They identify the blackmailer who is masterminding the scheme as supposedly deceased informant Johnny Marks (Christopher Fulford), who is also Tessa's former lover. This relationship skirts the bounds of MI5's unwritten rule that agents should seek relationships with others within the service;⁵⁰² its borderline respectability and Tessa's apparent fascination with pushing its boundaries make it dangerous. Tessa is the weak link that allowed Marks to develop his plan; she once let slip the intricacies of the MI5 pay system. Even as a seasoned agent, Tessa is still vulnerable through her romantic relationships; more, her misstep endangers the entire service. Tessa is not the only agent whose search for romance has unintended consequences: Tom, for example, breaks up with a woman who then papers Soho with flyers advertising him as a male prostitute, which jeopardizes several missions.⁵⁰³ Only Tessa, however, makes an error so grave that it threatens MI5 itself.

Not even by working together can Harry and Tessa mitigate Tessa's past mistake; they are forced to pay Marks the ransom he demands and even then face the continued threat that he might still release the names to which he had access. Marks later breaks into Tessa's flat and challenges her over the resolution of their prior relationship. When she reveals that she was once pregnant with their child, only to miscarry, Marks is moved to abandon his scheme; though he takes the ransom money, he leaves Tessa the file containing the agents' identities. The use of Tessa's failed pregnancy to partially mitigate the danger posed by her former lover suggests both the strength of the procreative relationship – that it might have redeemed both of them – and the uncertainty of a union not formalized by marriage. Tessa's lost child is a symbol of her refusal to accede to the roles available to female agents. Instead, she is determined to carve her own niche. In doing so, however, she oversteps the boundaries within which female spies – and, indeed, feminists – are meant to operate in a postfeminist culture. Though post-millennial television does not present a feminist backlash as much as Eighties television did, the tension around motherhood and children still exists. Pushing too hard for autonomy at the cost of the mother and child is an antagonistic move,⁵⁰⁴ and one that can unsettle at the cost of other gains.

Tessa's sexuality is dangerous; both her willingness to abuse her knowledge of the camera dead zones for a quickie in Thames House and the ease with which she

⁵⁰² "Traitor's Gate," *Spooks*, directed by Rob Bailey (2002; London, England: Entertainment One, 2003), DVD.

⁵⁰³ "Without Incident," *Spooks*.

⁵⁰⁴ Stacey, "The New Conservative Feminism," 563.

orchestrates the death of a Russian spy who might threaten her lover of the moment demonstrate her ability to suborn the service for her own gain, regardless how minor. The threat she ultimately poses is not directly linked to her sexuality, though there is an oblique connection. As suggested by the tension surrounding the agent payroll in "One Last Dance," the danger Tessa presents to MI5 is actually economic. In 1.04, "Traitor's Gate," she is forced to confess to Zoe that she has been running phantom agents – fabricating contacts and pocketing the money she is given to pay for their intel. Not only is this stealing from the Service, it endangers the lives of agents dependant on the veracity provided by Tessa's supposed contacts. She is concerned only with the money, however; a veteran of years of unequal salary, Tessa revenges herself on the service's misogyny by making them literally pay.

Tessa attempts to make Zoe complicit in her lies by seducing her monetarily, offering a £10,000 bribe for Zoe's silence.⁵⁰⁵ This action and Zoe's indecision over whether or not to report it demonstrates the further threat of women like Tessa. Not only does Tessa herself betray MI5, but she also tries to coax other agents, specifically women, into joining that betrayal. As with the masterminds of SD-6 in *Alias* (see Chapter Three), her worst act is not merely *not* serving her country, but interfering with the patriotism of those whose dedication would otherwise go unquestioned. When Zoe does finally reveal the truth, Tessa's punishment is explicitly explained to be more severe than those usually meted out to misbehaving agents: Harry states that he is "throwing her to the wolves."⁵⁰⁶ She is punished for her actual crime as well as for the crime of attempting to remake Zoe in her own image. Though she tries to blackmail Harry into allowing her to keep her job, he refuses to believe she could pose a further danger to MI5 and fires her.

In Season Two, Harry's hubris returns to haunt him as Tessa continues to cause trouble even after her dismissal from the service. Rather than be defeated by her loss, Tessa uses the knowledge she gained at MI5 to run her own private security firm, thus continuing to profit off her service to the country. She poses an even greater threat when outside the nominal control of MI5; she is still able to penetrate the layers of protection around the Service and render it vulnerable. Again, her angle of attack involves another female agent; women are marked as dangerous both through their threats to the system and through their embodiment of weak spots at which those attacks can be targeted.

⁵⁰⁵ "Traitor's Gate," *Spooks*.

⁵⁰⁶ "Lesser of Two Evils," *Spooks*, directed by Andy Wilson (2002; London, England: Entertainment One, 2003), DVD.

Tessa takes advantage of a junior agent's naïveté and the culture of betrayal fomented in MI5 to revenge herself on Harry. She convinces Sam Buxton (Shauna Macdonald) that she is part of a double-blind operation that requires her to pass to Tessa intel about a mission Tom and Zoe are running.⁵⁰⁷ Tessa in turn uses the contacts she has built up in MI5 to provide counter-intel to the Colombian drug cartel Tom and Zoe are attempting to infiltrate. Her treachery results in the mission's failure as well as the death of innocent civilians, but she profits from selling the information and uses the money to flee the country. Her last act is to send Harry a video gloating over her actions⁵⁰⁸ (though unlike Bond villains, she at least waits until she has escaped before revealing her master plan). Her transformation from valued career agent to callous traitor takes less than two seasons and demonstrates that female agents can never fully be trusted: their treachery can remain hidden for decades before they reveal their true, selfish loyalties.

Zoe: The Ingénue

Along with Danny, Zoe is one of two early-career agents working under Tom Quinn. Though both show great promise, Zoe is the senior of the pair, yet often seems unable to make decisions without conferring with Danny. When Tessa attempts to buy her silence regarding the phantom agents, Zoe cannot handle the stress; she gets drunk and confesses to Danny.⁵⁰⁹ Danny then takes charge of sobering them up and instructs Zoe to tell Harry the truth. Zoe is blinded to the depths of Tessa's treachery by her own hero worship of another female agent, while Danny, as a male spy, is more attuned to the danger Tessa might pose. He is able to convince Zoe that she is being manipulated when she is unwilling to trust her own instincts. Zoe is young, female, and appearance-conscious: given her drinking, uncertainties, and occasional moan about her relationship status, she is an inheritor of that prototypical British postfeminist, Bridget Jones.⁵¹⁰ Her inability to trust herself is at odds with her professional demeanour and often leads her into trouble. The conflict between emotion and espionage is frequently explored through the women in *Spooks* and is rarely to the female spy's advantage.

Zoe's key skills are in undercover work, as demonstrated in the first episode when she infiltrates Mary Kane's anti-abortion underground. Her prowess leads the MI5 training

⁵⁰⁷ "The Seventh Division," *Spooks*, directed by Andy Wilson (2003; London, England: Entertainment One, 2004), DVD.

⁵⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁹ "The Rose Bed Memoirs," *Spooks*.

⁵¹⁰ See Gill, "Postfeminist media culture," for more on Bridget Jones as postfeminist archetype.

program to recruit her to lecture the trainee agents on the subject; one of her lectures is reprinted in *Spooks: The Personnel Files*. It deals specifically with working as a honeytrap operative, at which Zoe is considered an inter-agency expert, and emphasizes that honeytrap operatives "get much closer to their targets than usual. This puts [them] at huge risk. It's a serious business."⁵¹¹ She is regularly positioned as a honeytrap during the series, as in episode 2.03, "Hackers," when she is placed in a school as an English teacher and instructed to seduce the computer teacher, Gordon Blaney (Chris Fairbank), who is suspected of hacking into MI5's secure database. The gender disparity is evident, with Zoe taking the soft 'humanities' role while her target is positioned in the masculine area of computer sciences. Zoe's commitment to the role is such that she becomes attached to the students she is teaching and is almost reluctant to leave them in order to continue her investigation. Zoe humanizes the role of honeytrap, at least in the early seasons; she displays empathy for her marks, challenging the notion that female spies see even governmentally-dictated sexual liaisons as opportunities to mock their male targets.

In the third season, Zoe does encounter a man with whom she attempts to have a serious relationship. Will North (Richard Harrington), a freelance photographer, meets her on a mission and immediately recognizes her as a secret agent,⁵¹² which makes it unnecessary for her to play a part with him; she dutifully waits for the Service to perform a background check on him and leaps into bed with him the moment he clears it.⁵¹³ He proposes marriage in 3.04, "A Prayer for My Daughter," and she accepts. This whirlwind romance illustrates her fear that she might never find another man who accepts her job. Even going through the proper channels to declare her intent does not prevent Zoe's relationship from posing a danger to MI5, however. Her infatuation has minor effects, such as making her late to work or influencing her to change the subject of a speech on the impossibility of forming relationships with people outside the Service: "It's just... great," she says to a group of confused new recruits as their trainer rolls her eyes in the background.⁵¹⁴ More threatening, however, is that Will becomes a vector by which Zoe's work is exposed to the public; he draws Will into her professional life by using his services as a photographer to procure compromising photographs of their investigation's target. Will's brother Andy (Huw Rhys) discovers the photos and seals one to sell to a tabloid,

⁵¹¹ *Spooks: The Personnel Files*, 116.

⁵¹² "The Sleeper," *Spooks*, directed by Jonny Campbell (2004; London, England: Entertainment One, 2005), DVD.

⁵¹³ "Who Guards the Guards?," *Spooks*, directed by Cilla Ware (2004; London, England: Entertainment One, 2005), DVD.

⁵¹⁴ "Who Guards the Guards?," *Spooks*.

thus undercutting the sting Zoe is orchestrating. The theft occurs while Zoe and Will are distracted by celebrating their engagement; although the damage is contained, nevertheless Zoe's relationship, and specifically the threat that it might be more serious than her commitment to MI5, poses a clear danger to her work. Zoe's workplace and her position in it are ambiguously portrayed once she discovers the possibility of a 'real' romance; her professional gains are undercut by "a sense of nostalgic yearning for the love and family life that they [are] seen to have displaced."⁵¹⁵ This postfeminist term draws attention from Zoe's career onto her desire to become a housewife, a desire which it portrays as 'saving' her from a career for which she is too feminine.

Zoe's work as a honeytrap suffers when she becomes involved with Will and is shown to endanger MI5 in episode 3.06, "Persephone," when she is placed on trial as a representative of the Service and charged with involuntary manslaughter. She is forced to serve as a scapegoat in part due to the politics of the mission; it led to the death of an undercover police officer and her trial is used to ensure that MI5 is not seen as above the law of the land. She is ironically thus presented as both dangerous and expendable. Her work as a honeytrap operative leads directly to her trial. The prosecution allege that Zoe's assignment to seduce Turkish mafia member Sevilin Ozal (Kayvan Novak) led directly to his murdering the head of the operation, MI5's ultimate target, Emre Celenk (Haluk Bilginer) and resulted in the death of undercover officer Hasan Doyan (Cosh Omar). Although MI5 present the trial as a political farce, Zoe confesses to Danny that she is in fact implicated in the murders. Her complicity is directly linked to her moral repulsion at performing her honeytrap operation effectively, which marks the role as dangerous and not fully suitable for a woman on the 'right' side of the law. Zoe worries that she has given herself away to Celenk via her interaction with a young girl on the train platform; the bleedthrough of Zoe's desire for a child into her undercover identity emphasizes the destabilizing influence of her formation of a family. Zoe's emotional openness is both an asset and a disadvantage; her professional skill as a honeytrap depends on the same qualities that blow her cover. The traits she exemplifies – empathy, nurturance, emotionality, intuition – are inherently gendered feminine: they define her professional role, yet by using them to bring about her downfall *Spooks* is able to alleviate twentieth-century anxieties about female strength.⁵¹⁶ Zoe's inability to maintain her cover around Celenk and

⁵¹⁵ Press, "Gender and Family in Television's Golden age and Beyond," 148.

⁵¹⁶ This observation is informed by Lynne Joyrich's discussion of women in *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. See Joyrich, *Re-Viewing Reception*, 5.

the repugnance she feels at his amoral business techniques drive her to break mission protocol and use the promise of herself as a sexual object goad Ozal into killing Celenk. She subsequently lies under oath both to conceal her indiscretion and to prevent the public from realizing the enduring power that honeytrap operations and operatives still hold.

Although Harry extracts from the Attorney General Lord Young (James Laurenson) a promise that Zoe will receive only a "slap on the wrist,"⁵¹⁷ she is pronounced guilty and sentenced to ten years in prison. Her failure as a honeytrap marks her as unfit for further duty regardless of her record of successes with MI5. Harry refuses to allow her to serve what he sees as a ridiculous sentence, but the only way for her to avoid it is to go into exile with a new identity, never to see her home or any of her friends again. She is able to achieve some happiness, but only because Danny ignores regulations and informs Will of her destination. She and Will marry and begin a family in exile⁵¹⁸; once she has been discharged from MI5 and removed from the necessity of using her sexuality in service to the state, she can manage a romantic relationship and become a mother. Her situation is directly analogous to that on television in the 'backlash' Eighties. As Dow says of *Murphy Brown*, "personal happiness and professional success are incompatible... implicitly arguing that, for women, the qualities the public world requires are radically different from those necessary for success in the private world of relationships."⁵¹⁹ This stricture holds true even for Zoe, who is supposedly of a new generation of spies, demonstrating how little has changed since the years when MI5 hired women as secretaries who would then retire upon marriage and how far back the post-9/11 era has regressed in its search for reassurance about the working woman.

Fiona: The Wife

In the first three seasons, Tom and Zoe, among others, sought romantic relationships outside the Service, with varying levels of success. In Season Three, the writers chose to introduce what they describe as a more 'realistic' relationship: a marriage between two agents.⁵²⁰ Adam Carter (Rupert Penry-Jones), Tom's replacement, is not only a husband but a father; when Zoe disappears following her trial, Adam's wife Fiona

⁵¹⁷ "Persephone," *Spooks*, directed by Justin Chadwick (2004; London, England: Entertainment One, 2005), DVD.

⁵¹⁸ *Spooks: The Personnel Files*, 327.

⁵¹⁹ Dow, *Prime Time Feminism*, 145.

⁵²⁰ Simon Collins Crawford et al, "Rupert Penry-Jones Featurette," *Spooks: Series 3* (London, England: Entertainment One, 2005), DVD.

(Olga Sosnovska) follows him from MI6 to take Zoe's place in Section D. Fiona's transfer to MI5 is partly determined by her desire to create a more stable home atmosphere for her and Adam's son Wes (James Dicker):

Fiona: If I come over to Five I can have a life with you and Wes here in this house.

Adam: I don't want you working in the field here or anywhere.

Fiona: Come on, let's just see how this goes, all right? I need to be in the field,

Adam, it's who I am, it's what I do.

Adam: It'll get you killed one day.⁵²¹

Despite their attempt to build a proper home, Adam and Fiona keep Wes scrupulously separate from their professional activities: not only does Wes not know his parents are spies, he does not even know Fiona's real name. His lack of knowledge is not unusual; few of the 'spy parents' in series like *La Femme Nikita* or *Alias* share the truth of their employ with their children. Even in these secretive environments, however, the spy family is a unit, as emphasized by the trials to which Amanda's sons occasionally lead her in *Scarecrow and Mrs. King*. Fiona and Adam are both relatively separated from Wes; Fiona particularly is dedicated to her career. Though she might adjust it for Wes's sake, moving from MI6 to MI5, she refuses to give in to Adam's idea of what work a wife and mother ought to do.

Though Fiona and Adam are referred to as "the power couple of the British Secret Services,"⁵²² Adam consistently undermines her agency, particularly in the field. He questions her decision to move back to fieldwork; his concern for her safety leads him to act in ways that jeopardise her operations. When she is undercover in the home of a rock star, for example, he chides her for using cocaine to maintain her cover and questions her ability to resist its effects; he is unable to accept her own bodily authority.⁵²³ His focus on Fiona's welfare distracts both of them from their mission. Their quarrel is reminiscent of Max's inability to focus when 99 distracts him in *Get Smart* (see Chapter One); where 99 was usually guilty of interrupting Max, Fiona is a distraction to Adam merely in the course of doing her job. Adam's inability to relate to Fiona as an agent first and his wife second reflects worries about the role of women in the field. Their continued perception as 'the weaker sex' makes it more difficult for men to accept them as colleagues and suggests that male agents will thus be doubly responsible, not only for their own missions but for

⁵²¹ "Celebrity," *Spooks*, directed by Bill Anderson (2004; London, England: Entertainment One, 2005), DVD.

⁵²² "Love and Death," *Spooks*, directed by Justin Chadwick (2004; London, England: Entertainment One, 2005), DVD.

⁵²³ Ibid.

managing those that women are unable to complete. The housewife who works is a dangerous distraction for her husband in this scenario: though Fiona is perfectly professional, just her presence unbalances Adam.

In episode 3.10, "The Suffering of Strangers," Fiona and Danny are kidnapped by an Iraqi terror cell whose leader Ahmed (Zubin Varla) intends to execute one of them on television as a warning to Britain about the ramifications of supporting the war in Iraq. Fiona is presented as capable, but not capable enough to make a contribution as an agent. She is able to pick the locks on her and Danny's handcuffs and free them for an escape attempt, but she is also not fast enough to complete the escape. She is recaptured by members of the cell; Danny might have escaped, but returns to captivity in order to protect Fiona and ultimately sacrifices himself to save her. As punishment for their escape attempt, Ahmed demands that Adam choose one of them to die. When he cannot, Danny insults Ahmed, angering him enough that he shoots Danny rather than Fiona. Again, it is Fiona's weakness that makes Danny willing to risk his life. Her role as a mother is also emphasized during their imprisonment; she and Danny talk about the Winnie the Pooh stories that Fiona reads her son, and Danny references them when he taunts Ahmed into shooting him. Fiona's narrative is reinforced by that of the sole female member of the cell, Khatera (Badria Timimi), who is assigned to Adam while Fiona and Danny are behind held hostage. She is initially committed to the cause, but Adam is able to undermine her determination by referencing the bodily attacks she has undergone, particularly in the implantation of explosives within her abdominal cavity. Khatera concedes to Adam's urging, enabling him to rescue Fiona just at the moment when Ahmed is about to burn her alive. As a wife and mother, Fiona is more of a danger than an asset to the Service.

Fiona's identity as a wife is again problematized in 4.07, "Syria." Her past exploits present a danger to her, to Adam, and to the entire Service when her former husband Farook Sukkarieh (Darrell D'Silva), a Syrian terrorist, discovers she is alive and happily married. Fiona is retrospectively marked as foreign through her previous marriage and beliefs; she explains that Sukkarieh "wanted me to convert to Islam, which I did. I even changed my name from Amelia – that's my real name – to Amal."⁵²⁴ The revelations in this episode destabilize the representation of herself as a faithful wife and mother that Fiona had created in her previous appearances; her identity is rewritten, down to the disclosure

⁵²⁴ "Syria," *Spooks*, directed by Omar Madha (2005; London, England: Entertainment One, 2006), DVD.

of her real name. Her alignment with Syria makes her suspect as an agent. More, she is shown to be disloyal in matters of sexuality: her affair with Adam began in Damascus while she was still married to Sukkarieh, which suggests that she is able to discard sworn oaths like those of marriage without compunction. The threat of the foreign Other is once again tied to female sexuality. Fiona's sexual history is represented as aberrant and not under her own control, as she had previously believed Sukkarieh to be dead, hanged as an Israeli spy; the revelation of his survival transforms her from lawfully married wife to bigamist, further invalidating her identity. The battle over who 'owns' Fiona's sexuality – her first husband, her current husband, or her place of employment – is mapped onto the staging ground of world espionage operations.

Fiona attempts to step into the role of protector and keep Adam from learning of either Sukkarieh's survival or his desire to capture her and return her to Syria with him; Sukkarieh once tortured Adam while they lived in Damascus and she does not wish him to risk himself for her. Though she subverts MI5 resources to find Sukkarieh, she does not reveal his existence to any of the other agents, choosing instead to confront him herself. Her solitary operation is doomed to failure not only because of her gender, but because she seeks to absent herself from the team structure integral to Section D; as a solo female operative, she is without resources. Though Adam and the rest discover her ruse, they are unable to keep Sukkarieh from abducting her. The climax of the episode is the confrontation between Adam and Sukkarieh, Fiona's present and past husbands. As in "The Suffering of Strangers," Fiona is capable enough to wound her captor and make an escape attempt, but is not successful; Sukkarieh shoots her, and Adam shoots and kills him. Fiona bleeds out in Adam's lap. Her last words are that he must keep Wes safe, highlighting the inability to balance her work-life with her personal-life; the confusion of identities displayed in this episode demonstrate the impotence of the female spy. Fiona's death does not end the danger she poses to the Service, however; Adam's grieving process renders him irrational, even suicidal, throughout Season Five. Even as wife and mother, Fiona is replaceable, however; Adam does not truly overcome Fiona's death until he begins sleeping with Ros Myers (Hermione Norris) in episode 6.01, "The Virus (Part 1)."

Ros: The Warrior

Season Five introduces a woman who initially seems to be made in the Tessa Phillips mould, a cold-hearted mercenary, but whose hysterical emotions are eventually

her undoing. Ros first appears as an MI6 agent in episode 5.01, "Gas and Oil (Part 1)." Along with her then-superior, Michael Collingwood (Nicholas Jones) and her father, Sir Jocelyn Myers (John Castle), she is part of a conspiracy designed to reduce civil liberties and destabilize the Prime Minister, though Ros is unaware of the extent of the plans involved and their mercenary nature. When she discovers that her father and Collingwood intend to force the government to declare martial law by committing terrorist acts on British soil, she immediately switches sides and informs MI5; though she is moving to the 'right' moral side, this introduction emphasizes the affinity with betrayal that *Spooks* situates within its female agents. At the end of episode 5.02, "Gas and Oil (Part 2)," Collingwood and Sir Myles are both arrested; Harry and Adam offer Ros a permanent position in MI5. Ros passes from being controlled by the patriarchy in the guise of her own father to working under its figurative control with the two men heading Section D – but only once she has proven her worth.

Ros's willingness to inform demonstrates her dedication to her country even above her family; she is the ultimate honeytrap, able to deceive even her own flesh and blood. Though she presents as stoic, the men who control her see her potential emotionality as a danger and act to reduce it. In episode 5.04, "World Trade," Harry and Adam conspire to keep news of her father's lengthy prison sentence from her until after a mission is complete; they do not trust her to be able to concentrate on her assignment if distracted. The value of a female agent is dependent on her careful handling and deployment by her male superiors. More, Ros functions not only to replace a lost female agent, but as a stabilizing force for a male. Following Fiona's death, Adam is unstable, nearly unable to complete his missions. He nearly causes his and Ros's own deaths in the Season Five finale, when he succumbs to depression while attempting to flee a flooding tunnel.⁵²⁵ They escape at the last moment, just before the fadeout; Season Six begins with Adam and Ros in bed together. Ros is positioned as the impetus for Adam to regain his equilibrium, but the effect on her is unclear. She moves from her father's patriarchal control to that of MI5 and then into a sexual relationship, all of which position her as a subordinate.

Though Ros, like Tessa and Zoe before her, is exiled with a new identity at the end of Season Six, she is not released from MI5's control. Instead her usefulness is retained; she is sent to Russia to function in a long-term deep-cover assignment. She returns just in time to see Adam heroically sacrifice himself by driving a car full of explosives to an

⁵²⁵ "Aftermath," *Spooks*, directed by Julian Holmes (2006; London, England: Entertainment One, 2007), DVD.

unoccupied area, only to be caught in the blast.⁵²⁶ Adam's loss unsettles Section D, including Harry, who vows he will have revenge on the bombers no matter how long it takes or what dubiously legal paths he must take.⁵²⁷ With Adam dead, Ros is the next most senior officer; when she asks to be promoted to Chief of Section D in his place, Harry is reluctant, cautioning her against allowing her emotions to influence her professional persona.⁵²⁸ Though she assures him there is no likelihood of her judgment becoming clouded, she breaks down upon returning to her hotel room, destroying furniture in a grief-fuelled rage.⁵²⁹ Her reaction and Harry's are set against each other, much like Bauer and Driscoll in 24; although Harry claims not to trust his own judgment, he remains rational while Ros succumbs to hysteria. Although she does replace Adam as the head of Section D, the instability she displays heralds a theme that ultimately leads to her downfall. She is paralleled with Adam: her honeytrap encounter with Alexis Mynell (Paul Rhys) disgusts her enough that she risks death when confronting him.⁵³⁰ While this reflects Adam's loss of control following Fiona's death, Ros's inability to handle honeytrap work is not merely a personal failure, but a professional one.

In 8.03, "Episode 3," Ros accidentally causes Jo's (Miranda Raison) death; Jo sacrifices herself to end a hostage situation by manoeuvring the lead terrorist into position for Ros to shoot him, but the bullet passes through his body and injures Jo as well, killing her. Again, Ros is represented as overly emotional in the wake of Jo's death. Her determination not to cause any more deaths reflects Nikita's desire to save innocent lives in *La Femme Nikita* (see Chapter Three), and she is similarly castigated for it.⁵³¹ Ros is determined to make up for her failure as an agent, but her ineffective attempts to do so merely lead to further dangers. Her death in 8.08, "Episode 8," is a direct result of both her guilt-induced determination to atone for Jo's death by saving everyone else and her inferiority to male spies. Terrorist organization Nightingale attempt to assassinate Home Secretary Andrew Lawrence (Tobias Menzies) and President Mudasser (Nicholas Khan) of Pakistan by paralysing them and setting a bomb in the hotel room where they are meeting. Ros and Lucas cannot disarm it; with little time left on the countdown, they must physically

⁵²⁶ "New Allegiances," *Spooks*, directed by Colm McCarthy (2008; London, England: Entertainment One, 2009), DVD.

⁵²⁷ Ibid.

⁵²⁸ "Split Loyalties," *Spooks*, directed by Colm McCarthy (2008; London, England: Entertainment One, 2009), DVD.

⁵²⁹ "New Allegiances," *Spooks*.

⁵³⁰ "On the Brink," *Spooks*.

⁵³¹ "Episode 6," *Spooks* (2009).

remove the two men from the vicinity. Lucas easily carries Mudasser, but Ros is not strong enough to lift Lawrence; she must drag him, stumbling in her stiletto heels. Next to Zoe, Ros is perhaps the most conventionally feminine beauty in *Spooks*; her attention to her appearance undercuts her skills by placing them in the postfeminist 'girlpower' category.⁵³² Her feminine fripperies are quite literally part of the cause of her death, alongside hysterical emotionality. Though Lawrence tells Ros to leave him, she will not, determined not to cause the death of another ally as she is convinced she caused Jo's. As her emotions become more intense, they disable her further, until she is no longer able even to drag Lawrence but merely sits with him in the hotel corridor and weeps. She is positioned as weaker both mentally and physically than the male spies with whom she works and is unable either to save herself or to complete her mission. The season ends with the hotel consumed in the explosion, a visual representation of Ros's failure as a female spy to lead the fight for her country.

Ruth: The Heart

Ruth Evershed (Nicola Walker) joins *Spooks* in Season Two. Though she is absent for Seasons Six and Seven,⁵³³ she is credited in fifty-seven of the show's eighty-six episodes, the most of any female character. The only major character who appears more often is Harry. Her comparatively constant presence within the team allows her to take on a role as its moral compass; she becomes integral to the heart of the department. It is Ruth who is allowed to mourn without being weakened by it and who retains a semblance of humanity in a job that so often strips the other officers of the capacity to demonstrate compassion. Hers is not always a stabilizing presence, nor is she exceptionally qualified as an agent: her ideas are often unsuitable, possibly because she is trained as an analyst rather than a field agent. Yet over her sojourn in Section D, she demonstrates a character growth that few other agents are granted the longevity, much less the development, to achieve.

Where the tendency towards betrayal associated with *Spooks*' female agents typically takes time to surface, with Ruth it is a part of her character from the beginning. She is introduced in 2.02, "Nest of Angels"; in 2.04, "Blood and Money," Tom discovers that Ruth is spying on Section D for the Government Communication Headquarters

⁵³² Jackson and Westrupp, "Sex, Postfeminist Popular Culture, and the Pre-Teen girl," 358.

⁵³³ Walker left the show to have a child, then returned in Season Eight.

(GCHQ), another of Britain's intelligence agencies. Her motives appear pure, however; she claims to have sought any chance to be assigned to MI5, and only took the assignment as a spy as a means to an end. Rather than turn her into a double agent or fire her, Tom and Harry accept her into Section D as a trusted analyst; having passed through a period of divided loyalties, she is able to detect them in others. Ruth is the only agent to suspect that Lucas North (Richard Armitage) is a double agent in Series Nine; though she is castigated by Harry for investigating Lucas without cause,⁵³⁴ her instincts prove true. As in *Alias*, betrayal is acceptable as long as it is in the service of the 'right' agency, and Ruth's loyalties remain with MI5.

Ruth's chief value to MI5 lies not in her abilities in the field, but in her intellect and her emotions. Like Chloe of 24, she acquits herself acceptably in the field on occasion, but is just as often outclassed. Here too she inverts expectations, however. After she exposes Lucas's deception, he kidnaps her and forces Harry to trade state secrets for her safe return. While it appears that once again, the nation's security has been compromised for the sake of saving a female agent, Harry actually provided fake information; he uses the subsequent investigation to promote Ruth to a position as the Security Advisor to the Home Secretary. Her value is not diminished by her need for rescue. Moreover, when she is able to save herself, she demonstrates previously unexpected ingenuity and determination. When she is captured by a Mafia boss in 9.07, "Episode 7," she breaks free from her bonds using a hot iron and stabs her captor to death with a kitchen knife, assembling deadly weapons out of a woman's tools of domesticity. Harry attempts to counsel her over what he perceives to be her sorrow for having caused a man's death by telling her that it is all right to show emotion. She retorts:

Far better to be like us, strong, stable, and dead inside. You think I haven't forgiven you for George, that I still grieve for him, for Nico's loss, for the life I've left behind.

The truth is much worse. That I'm fine. That I'm ready to go back to work. That's what's worse. That I killed a man last night and I'm fine.⁵³⁵

Where the other female agents in the show largely became less competent as their tenure progressed, Ruth demonstrates a clear progression towards a position of higher value and skill, shown in her ability to compartmentalise rather than succumb to her emotions. She is contrasted with Zoe and Ros, both of whom allowed their emotions to define them. Like Zoe, Ruth takes on nurturing and otherwise traditionally-feminine roles in the workplace,

⁵³⁴ "Episode 7," *Spooks*, directed by Edward Hall (2010; London, England: Entertainment One, 2011), DVD.

⁵³⁵ *Ibid.*

but she is allowed to do so and survive because she refuses to allow romantic relationships to define her working life.

Ruth's love life is not without its complications; it does intersect with her profession upon occasion, most notably when she breaks MI5 protocol to meet a man whose communications she had been responsible for monitoring.⁵³⁶ Convinced from eavesdropping on him that they would be compatible, she uses Section D's resources to set up an encounter in person but decides not to pursue a relationship. To do so, she would have to sacrifice her job; instead, she chooses to sacrifice her romantic life. Ruth does have a lengthy flirtation with Harry, but again, her self-sacrificing nature comes into play. Where usually these relationships have threatened one if not both partners, Ruth's interest in Harry actually benefits him. They make an attempt at a relationship, but Ruth chooses not to take it further because she fears it would compromise her status at work; she would rather be known for her skill, not for sleeping with the boss.⁵³⁷ She is aware of the stigma that surrounds the female spy and determined not to participate in it. Despite this decision, Ruth still values Harry's work above her own. In episode 5.05, "The Message," Ruth is framed for the murder of a prison guard. Harry attempts to assume the blame in order to prevent her from going to prison, but Ruth refuses, instead incriminating herself and thus ensuring that Harry will be free to remain at MI5. She fakes her own death and voluntarily exiles herself from Britain. Both Tessa and Zoe chose a similar fate, but both did so in service of their own interests. Ruth's decision suggests she too believes that male agents are more important than female; she will not give up her profession in order for a chance at romantic love, but she does so to keep Harry at his desk.

Ruth returns to MI5 in 8.01, "Episode 1." She has created a new life for herself in Cyprus with a partner and stepson, but is drawn back into espionage when targeted by terrorist group the Sacred Army of Righteous Vengeance, who murder her partner in order to extract information from her. Ruth's position as housewife is a complicated one: unlike Zoe, who appears to have left MI5 because of her burning desire to be a wife and mother, is excused because her defection allows traditional narratives about career versus family to play out. Ruth, however, does not see being a housewife as a calling. Her partner must suffer because she is merely playing at the domestic role: her true interests remain with espionage. Ruth reflects the stereotype that romantic relationships are only possible for spies when they are outside of the world of intelligence: her job prevents her from

⁵³⁶ "Love and Death," *Spooks*.

⁵³⁷ "The Cell," *Spooks*, directed by Julian Simpson (2006; London, England: Entertainment One, 2007), DVD.

becoming involved with Harry and is also responsible for destroying the happiness she does find during her exile. Her job is her defining feature: "Outside my work, my life has been... small," she claims.⁵³⁸ Yet even having been the cause of her partner's death, she is comfortable back within the world of espionage; she is, as she insists in 9.07, "fine" with the demands of the job, even as she recognizes that her acceptance is itself problematic.

Harry seeks to restart their relationship, even asking Ruth to marry him at Ros's funeral,⁵³⁹ which is in itself an unfortunate comment on the positioning of the female spy: having lost one at work, he seeks to tie another to him personally. Ruth continually refuses Harry because she believes there is no way for two spies to be honest with each other. "Everything that's happened between us – it's too much,"⁵⁴⁰ she says. "It's too hard to love someone you don't actually know."⁵⁴¹ The distance between them becomes more pronounced when Ruth leaves Section D; she is pitted against Harry in 10.05, "Episode 5," and even exposes one of his investigations to the Home Secretary, yet her new assertiveness is ultimately tied to the reversal of her determination to prioritize her work. She tells Harry that she left MI5 "because I thought there'd always be too many secrets between us. Stupid, really, because you and, I, we're made of secrets. So leave the Service. With me. While we still know who we are."⁵⁴² While she had previously chosen work over romance, in the final two episodes of the show she appears to believe the inverse: that rather than defining herself by her job, she is in danger of changing as a result of her profession's demands.

Though Harry has been the consummate professional spook, he accepts Ruth's decision that they can only engage in a relationship outside of the auspices of the Service. Forming "a semblance of a normal life" after intelligence work would be their "crowning achievement," he tells Ruth.⁵⁴³ Yet the decision is taken from him, again by the demands of the job. His agreement with Ruth follows a tense confrontation in which Section D avert a war between Britain and Russia; as Harry and Ruth tentatively embrace, Sasha Gavrik (Tom Weston-Jones), the son of a Russian spy who had previously seduced Harry interrupts them. Gavrik blames Harry for his mother's death and wants revenge; he

⁵³⁸ "Episode 3," *Spooks*, directed by Julian Holmes (2011; London, England: Entertainment One, 2011), DVD.

⁵³⁹ "Episode 1," *Spooks*, directed by Paul Whittington (2010; London, England: Entertainment One, 2011), DVD.

⁵⁴⁰ "Episode 8," *Spooks*.

⁵⁴¹ "Episode 4," *Spooks*, directed by Paul Whittington (2011; London, England: Entertainment One, 2011), DVD.

⁵⁴² "Episode 6," *Spooks*, directed by Bharat Nalluri (2011; London, England: Entertainment One, 2011), DVD.

⁵⁴³ "Episode 5," *Spooks*, directed by Bharat Nalluri (2011; London, England: Entertainment One, 2011), DVD.

attacks Harry with a makeshift knife, but Ruth leaps to protect him and is fatally stabbed. Harry attempts to keep her responsive in order to receive medical care by asking her to describe the house she wants them to share, declaring that they're "going to live there... have a home, and a life."⁵⁴⁴ Ruth's last words contradict him, however: "Harry. We were never meant to have those things."⁵⁴⁵ Her death demonstrates the futility of her desire to have a normal life, whether within or outside of the Service. The secretive pasts she and Harry both have inevitably destroy any possibility of a shared future.

Ruth's death is subsequently represented as a tragedy not in its own right, but in what it does to Harry. She sacrifices herself for him again, this time literally, recouping the threat of the foreign female by ensuring the male agent remains available in service to his country. She undertakes the ultimate in traditionally feminist roles, becoming the self-sacrificing nurturer⁵⁴⁶ and freeing Harry from his past mistakes. We do not see Ruth's funeral: instead we see Harry's process of mourning, starting by viewing and rejecting the house Ruth wanted to buy. Ruth's second attempt at being a housewife is no more successful than the first one, because she is not merely undertaking the role herself but also 'stealing' a male spy in order to ensure her happiness. This threat to the true core of MI5 dooms her, and her death allows the Service to return to normal. Rather than attempt a life outside of the Service, Harry returns to it. The camera follows him back into the space of Section D, lingering with his gaze on a plaque memorialising fallen agents. The last entry on the list is *R. Evershed*; the camera tracks through the glass plate on which the list is printed and trails Harry as he returns to his office. Ruth's death forms part of the structure that forces Harry to remain in MI5, but it also means that he is free to devote his whole attention to his job once more, rather than split between loyalties to her and to the country.

The series ends on a shot of Harry, solitary, in his office, visibly making the decision to pick up his ringing phone and rededicate himself to his work. He is positioned as the most important person within the series and the only one who is irreplaceable; the sacrifices Ruth in particular and the rest of his team make to keep him in his position emphasize his centrality to the Service. He is not a Jack Bauer, to run maverick outside of the law; rather, he is a James Bond, exceptional within the bounds of Her Majesty's Secret service. The continued importance attached to the Bond figure is clear in that only a man

⁵⁴⁴ "Episode 6," *Spooks* (2011).

⁵⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁶ Dow, *Prime Time Feminism*, 25.

who encapsulates it is allowed to survive *Spooks*' ruthless killing off of its characters. Harry must renounce the idea of a long-term romantic relationship in order to retain his position; more, at no point are any women allowed to aspire to the same heights that he inhabits. As in the Scouting for Girls song, girls – be they female spies or civilians – are there for kissing in the process of defeating the bad guys; they are never themselves fully successful members of the team. The central figure in the British intelligence myth remains the male spook, who, like Bond, is required to have a string of past lovers but whose primary relationship can only be with his country.

A Woman's Place

Following 9/11, the powerful female spy is reduced from her position as nation's defender. She is allowed to continue under patriarchal control in the pre-plotted *Alias*, yet in *24* and *Spooks*, shows that react more closely to the culture of fear present post-9/11, she regresses to previous caricatured appearances. She again represents the foreign threat; her sexuality, even when supposedly controlled within the heterosexual family, regains its danger; her skills are no longer comparable to those of her male counterparts. Even her fashionability is erased: other than Kim's 'provocative' outfit in Season One of *24*, the female spy's wardrobe is as blandly professional, and thus as useless, as the male's. When it is not it serves to girlify or threaten her professional skills, emphasizing the distance between the budding feminisms of the 1960s-era spy shows and the postfeminist backlash of the post-9/11 era. The male spy once more sits atop the espionage hierarchy: both Jack Bauer and Harry Pearce reflect iconographic male archetypes whose powers are invoked in an attempt to reassure audiences through familiarity. The rapid return to the masculine protector forces the female spy into a position of inferiority.

In *24*, even the heterosexual reproductive family that had been the site of safety in earlier shows is destabilized. The domestic is presented as a more desirable dream for young career women, much as with Sydney in *Alias*. Zoe, however, cannot even balance the housewife role with some spy work, as Sydney does; she must repudiate spying entirely. That the only spies to escape to the domestic are those who are young – young enough to have internalized feminist advances as common sense⁵⁴⁷ as well as to continue having children of their own – positions the post-9/11 text as a negotiator both of national identity and of procreation. Bauer, for example, cannot control a family that does not

⁵⁴⁷ Mosely and Read, "Having it *Ally*," 238

contribute to the goal of protecting the nation; his unruly female relations distract him from his duty and must therefore be punished. He is simultaneously forced to contend with the threat of the foreign spy-seductress. His ability to overcome these challenges is almost more impressive than his protection of the nation. He is ultimately forced to sacrifice himself in order to protect those of his family who are not involved in espionage, Kim and her husband and daughter. This action mirrors the end of *La Femme Nikita* and Nikita's sacrifice on behalf of Michael and his son; the female family is clearly the most dangerous, however, as its protection requires Bauer to desert his position defending the nation.

Family has its dangers for the female spy as well, yet she is no longer able to overcome even long enough to protect them via sacrifice. Kim must leave espionage completely; Driscoll fails both as a mother and as a spy; and Chloe's alignment with Jack leads to her arrest and subsequent potential removal from her family. In *Spooks*, the women must choose similarly: they are allowed to leave the world of intelligence to form a family, like Zoe, or are more often entrapped by their family into a world they cannot survive, like Ros. If they attempt to form a family within the espionage world, however, their presumption is punished: both Fiona and Ruth pay with their lives for distracting the male spy. Harry Pearce must survive the series in order to ensure the continuance of the nation; the male spy must retain his position as leader for the nation to survive.

Despite the length of time that has passed since 9/11, at the end of both *24* and *Spooks* popular culture continues to present the man as protector and family as the luxury he cannot afford if he is to perform his assigned role. Women are given regressive gender traits and portrayed as either temptresses or traitors, choosing to walk away from the nation they ought to serve. Unlike in *La Femme Nikita* or *Alias*, these shows present women as outsiders; their heritages are tied to their duplicitous natures and merely reinforce the dangers of family life. The return to these Cold War-era traditions suggests television's attempt to reinforce conservative values at home, thus reducing audience uncertainties about the necessities and negatives of war. Ultimately, however, both shows present a worldview wherein one's loyalty and love for their country is measured by what they are willing to lose in its defence, and only men are allowed to present themselves as heroes or markers of national identity.

Conclusion: The Female Spy Since 1965

*Darling you've won
It's no fun
Martinis, girls, and guns
It's murder on our love affair
But you bet your life
Every night
While you're chasing the morning light
You're not the only spy out there*⁵⁴⁸

The figure of the female spy has undergone multiple changes over the almost-fifty year period I explore in this thesis. Her image remains a glamorous one; producers trade on her dangerous sexuality and exotic profession as promotion for their programmes, as always. Yet importantly, she is not unique: there are multiple examples of her presence on television, and her skills and qualifications no longer require lengthy justification. None of her incarnations are as ubiquitous or as universally recognized as is Bond, but each of them hold a unique position within the cultural history of television. Unlike Bond, who has been shaped to fit different ideals in multiple eras, each female spy I study is the incarnation of the ethos of a particular time and place. The progression of these roles allows me to explore what the female spy has meant in each appearance and how her identity has or has not changed.

In Chapter One, I chronicle the female spy's move from sidekick or secretary to partner and equal. 1965 marks this turning point for the espionage genre: series on both sides of the ocean deliberately began to cast women into positions of strength. By adapting traditional feminine roles, Emma Peel and 99 become icons of the new liberated woman. Yet their entrance into the spy world is not seamless: their loyalty to their nations is endangered or undermined by their attachments to past roles as housewives and mothers. Chapter Two expands on these restrictions and demonstrates the increasing necessity for the female spy to defer her interests to those of her country. Diana is a foreigner, yet her supernatural abilities and her choice to embody American values allow her to stand as an example of patriotic fervour; her willingness to see America as a beacon of such goodness that she will sacrifice her own family for it is commendable.

⁵⁴⁸ Sheryl Crow, vocal performance of "Tomorrow Never Dies," by Sheryl Crow and Mitchell Froom, recorded 1997 on *Tomorrow Never Dies*, A&M, CD.

Subsequently, Amanda's insistence on inhabiting the dual role of spy and mother portrays a shift concomitant with the late Cold War era in which the import of maternity became apparent: she is allowed to maintain both identities only given that her work for her family can provide value to her work for the nation. As the Cold War drew to a close, the female spy was indubitably useful, but restrained, with that utility managed by the state.

Chapter Three introduced the first post-Cold War and the first post-9/11 female spies. The difference between the two series is stark: Nikita lives in a world where morality is chosen rather than dictated by the circumstances of one's birth, while Sydney inhabits an America in which patriotism is inherited and stands as a marker of virtue. Nikita seeks a family identity that will replace her lack of a national touchstone, finding instead a faceless entity in whose service she must reproduce further soldiers. Sydney, though she has the strength of her family behind her, nevertheless follows a similar trajectory, with an emphasis on her transition into a (re)productive member of society. Though the female spy is sidelined in the shows of Chapter Four, the tension between nation and family remains: women who refuse to bear children may productively serve their country until, like Tessa or Ros, their weaknesses are revealed; women like Kim, Zoe, or Ruth, who threaten to detract from the intelligence services rather than bolster them, must be removed from positions of danger. Only under the control of a properly dedicated man can the female spy operate in the immediately post-9/11 world.

The most recent examples of female spies on television appear to rebuff the ultra-masculine trend of the early 2000s; they mark a re-ascendancy of femininity, at least at first view. Yet the female spy herself has historically been a figure of intense contradictions. When I began this project, I expected to enjoy a series of shows presenting narratives of female empowerment and providing feminist idols. While there are certainly moments in most shows that demonstrate positive images of female capabilities, overall the bent of the espionage genre has revealed itself to be extremely conservative, presenting female strength as an asset only when it is controlled by the state. Whether this conservatism negates the potential feminist strengths of these shows I cannot say, but as viewer-critic I certainly find it off-putting. Similarly, the 2010 relaunch of the spy genre, which I will touch on within the confines of this conclusion, looks on the surface to be part of a reclamation of the girl power message that earlier shows appeared to embrace. The relaunch does serve to reset the image of the spy that *24* and *Spooks* propagated, emphasizing that the atmosphere of fear driven by post-9/11 terror was a temporary state of affairs. The instinct to regress to a safer, male-led form of protection

remains evident in the Western psyche, but it is viewed as an aberration in the continued progression of female representation. What does not change, however, is the management of gender roles and manipulation of audience alignment with them.

Militarized gender roles are extremely specific, designed, like most combat positions, to ensure that all participants understand their assigned duties and perform as required. Male strength and female passivity are, despite their stereotypical natures, among those unquestioned roles: their presence in popular culture as a reinforcement of their ubiquity is a requirement in times of war. The female spy as an archetype challenges the rigidity of these roles. By allowing her to develop a persona that mixes strength and sexuality and ensuring that persona is still trivialized through the emphasis on unimportant concepts such as fashion while also maintaining a patriarchal control over the expression of that sexuality, the spy genre treads an uneasy line between regressive portrayals of women and challenges to the militarized gender hierarchy. It is no coincidence that *La Femme Nikita* is the show that comes closest to challenging the conflation of national and familial duties. An international production helmed by a Canadian creator, *La Femme Nikita* criticizes the militaristic attitudes of the US. Set as it is in the long decade of the 1990s, between the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the rise of terrorism on 9/11, *La Femme Nikita* occurs at a time when the US is once again becoming comfortable with its own position within a militarized universe. It recuperates wounds left by the Vietnam war, which "wound up frustratingly messy and confusing, while the first Gulf War easily fit[s] into the desired historical patter, reinvigorating the national psyche (deflated by the Vietnam syndrome) in a triumphal war over a demonized opponent (Iraq)."⁵⁴⁹ Its creation is indebted to the Cold War ethos, certainly, but its portrayal of the female spy and her lack of attachment to a particular nation mark it as a new approach for the espionage genre. Yet with 9/11 and the War on Terror, the shows that follow it are without the space to reorient themselves in a more peaceful media world. They revert to previous traditions in order to maintain control over the home front. The figure of the female spy serves the same purpose within the Western television landscape as she does within the narratives of the shows: she maintains order as a tool of gender normalization at the behest of the governing body.

⁵⁴⁹ Carl Boggs and Tom Pollard, *The Hollywood War Machine: U.S. Militarism and Popular Culture* (London: Paradigm Publishers, 2007), 37.

A Decade Later

Though the programmes I consider in Chapter Four have only recently concluded – *24* in 2010 and *Spooks* in 2011 – neither of them began any later than 2002, mere months after 9/11. Both shows demonstrate a nearly decade-long reflection of the way the espionage genre changed over that time, but both were similarly constrained in what events they could present by the dynamic they initially established. Having removed the female spy from the central position she enjoyed in previous iterations of the spy drama and replaced her with the comforting image of the male protector, the shows are frozen as a reflection of concerns in the immediate post-9/11 era. In order to bring this research to a close and suggest further avenues for exploration, the analysis must include more recent shows in order to reveal the current trends in the representation of female spies. The two shows I will close with both debuted on American television in the 2010 season, just in time to fill the void left by *24*; moreover, they are both related to shows from the heyday of the female spy which I have studied earlier in this work (see Chapter Three), making them ideal for demonstrating the ideological shifts that have occurred in the interim. This analysis concludes ten years after 9/11, providing a clear picture of the television landscape as it recovers from the blow to national identities inflicted by the terrorist strikes.

Nikita

Nikita (The CW, 2010-2013), though handled by a different production team, is both a reimagining of and a sequel of sorts to *La Femme Nikita*. *La Femme Nikita* ends with a reluctant Nikita overseeing Section's anti-terrorism operations, consigned by virtue of her familial affiliation to continue the work of the national intelligence agency. By contrast, the new *Nikita* starts with a new Nikita (Maggie Q), on the run from a CIA-mandated black-ops unit known as Division, which has gone rogue and which she intends to destroy. Nikita is no longer alone: she has a female partner, Alexandra "Alex" Udinov (Lyndsy Fonesca), on the inside as an informant. Nikita is also allowed to redevelop a romance with her former lover within Division, Michael (Shane West). These and other changes reflect the differences in the portrayal of the female spy on American television in the intervening decade and a half.

The changes in Nikita herself are particularly telling. In 1997, Peta Wilson's Nikita was blonde and blue-eyed; her Australian accent marked her as other, but still placed her

within a colonial narrative shared by the other characters with their Western accents. In 2010, Maggie Q's *Nikita* is American, but other nonetheless: she is African-American. Q has a Vietnamese mother and a Polish-Irish father, making her the first visible person of colour to play a lead in an American espionage show; although *Wonder Woman*'s Lynda Carter was half Mexican, the pro-American rhetoric surrounding the show and her character effectively made her heritage invisible. Casting an ethnic minority as the female hero is a decidedly post-9/11 strategy, a response to the criticisms of terrorists on both 24 and *Spooks* being shown as racist caricatures.⁵⁵⁰ Making the 2010 *Nikita* Asian is a positive reflection of America's ethnic diversity, but it also problematizes any potential accusations of racism in the show's portrayal of America's enemies.

La Femme Nikita dealt with this dilemma by refusing to align Section with any one nation; the new *Nikita*'s Division, however, is explicitly part of the CIA. It is a black-ops unit, off the official books, but is nevertheless decidedly American, which makes its ruthless methods a startling commentary on the techniques employed by American intelligence during the War on Terror – at least, until we remember *Nikita*'s description of it as a black ops unit 'gone rogue.' This distinction allows the show to be critical of the government's past errors in judgment, epitomized by its creation of Division, while still allowing individual Americans to choose their own alignment when they learn the truth about Division. Not everyone in the American government outside of Division are on the right side; the members of Oversight, the group nominally in control of Division, are addressed only as 'Senator,' 'Admiral,' and 'Joint Chief,' suggesting they are positioned deep within all branches of the American government system. The Senator is played by Alberta Watson; though later episodes reveal the character's name to be Madeline, whether she is meant to be the Madeline of *La Femme Nikita* remains unclear. Nevertheless, her presence ties the moral decay in the government to the anationality of *La Femme Nikita*, giving the new show a force against which to rebel. *Nikita* is a new type of American hero, building on the archetype Sydney inaugurated: she represents an America that is emerging from past mistakes and trying to right wrongs previously enacted by people who were more interested in gaining power for themselves than in keeping the world safe.

Importantly, *Nikita* is not on her quest alone. She begins the show with her protégé Alex as her inside woman at Division. *Nikita*'s relationship with Alex parallels her own

⁵⁵⁰ Takacs, *Terrorism TV*, 57.

introduction to Section/Division as told in *La Femme Nikita*; she rescues Alex from life on the streets, helping her detox from her drug addiction and building a relationship with her in lieu of the one she no longer has with her blood family. Nikita appears to be throwing off the mantle of the housewife here: her attitude towards Alex is not maternal, but highly practical. Alex represents the return of the foreign spy: born in Russia and abandoned after her father's death, she recoups herself by joining Nikita's constructed family and aligning herself with American national interests. Her partnership with Nikita forms a non-traditional family unit, however, which leaves it vulnerable to outside influences. In episode 1x22, "Pandora," Amanda (Melinda Clarke), Division's second-in-command, plays on Alex's fascination with her former Soviet life and family, using them as leverage to turn Alex from Nikita's pro-American crusade back to Division's self-interested hunger for power. The former Soviet threat is again aligned with un-American activities; family structure remains the mechanism by which American heroism is threatened.

Even without Alex, Nikita is not left to fight alone as in *La Femme Nikita*. In episode 1x17, "Covenants," she convinces Michael to renounce Division and join her in her crusade against it, thereby restoring order to the intelligence services and allowing them to continue protecting America. Michael becomes a second double agent within Division as well as a romantic partner for Nikita. Perhaps this move is possible because Nikita is no longer really a spy, as she works for herself and thus has no organization to endanger; perhaps it reflects a rejection of the constructed family of Division in favour of a real romance. With the series still ongoing, however, there is no reason to expect that Nikita and Michael's reconciliation is permanent. As the second of 2010's new crop of espionage dramas demonstrates, committed relationships rarely lend themselves to successful television.

Undercovers

Undercovers is created and produced by JJ Abrams, who was the man behind *Alias*. Unlike the two *Nikitas*, *Alias* and *Undercovers* do not seem to be connected except thematically, as spy dramas. They do seem to share a narrative, however; *Alias* ended with Sydney leaving the CIA to begin a family with her co-worker Vaughn, while *Undercovers* introduces Steven and Samantha Bloom (Boris Kodjoe and Gugu Mbatha-Raw), two former CIA agents who retired in order to build a 'normal life' together but are recalled to serve the agency once more. In that sense, *Undercovers* can be read as the

next chapter in Abrams' visualization of the female spy. Yet where Sydney was the undisputed star of *Alias*, here Steven and Samantha are portrayed as equals.

As with Maggie Q's *Nikita*, Steven and Samantha are biracial, demonstrating a definite trend towards not 'whitewashing' the heroes of America's new intelligence service. Still, all the other CIA agents – the Blooms' fellow agent Leo (Carter MacIntyre), their junior assistant Hoyt (Ben Schwartz), their contact Shaw (Gerald McRaney), and his superior Kelvin (Alan Dale) – are all white. This ethnic division holds true in *Nikita*: aside from a junior agent or two, everyone at Division, especially the higher-ups, are also white. The difference, however, is that *Nikita* is aligned against Division and is even able to recruit their agents in order to achieve her own goals; she is clearly at least as capable as the majority-white network she challenges. Steven and Samantha work within and at the behest of the 'white old boys' network that the CIA seems to have become. Moreover, they are doing so under false pretences: Shaw periodically reports to Kelvin that the Blooms "remain unaware" of the "real reasons"⁵⁵¹ behind their re-activation as agents. The CIA bug the Blooms' workplace in order to keep tabs on the potential discovery of their real purpose; there is a strong sense that the CIA believe they are acting for the Blooms' own good, which has uncomfortable colonial overtones.

There are also odd suggestions of exoticism in the employment and representation of Samantha's sexuality, which read as related to her race. The show constantly throws around the term 'sexpionage' in relation to Samantha's skills at distracting enemy agents. "I feel bad for the men she decides to seduce,"⁵⁵² Hoyt says, and Steven agrees – which is rather awkward, considering they never delve too deeply into just how Steven and Samantha met and became involved. Samantha is actually undressed by her target in episode 1.03, "Devices," marking her sexuality as predatory and yet passive. Her secret spy past seems to involve a number of previously unrevealed facts about her sexuality, such as her relationship with Leo or the many aliases who were undercover as part of a married couple. This over-exposure of a female spy's sexuality is reminiscent of the narratives of exoticism that surrounded first Mata Hari and then Josephine Baker (see Introduction). Both women were punished for the belief that their ethnicity, as expressed in their dance routines, enhanced their danger as a spy because it made them more likely to employ 'sexpionage' and less likely to remain loyal. Samantha works on the 'right' side

⁵⁵¹ "Funny Money," *Undercovers*, directed by Jonas Pate (22 December, 2010: NBC).

⁵⁵² "Jailbreak," *Undercovers*, directed by Anthony Hemingway (13 October 2010: NBC).

and yet is willing and eager to employ her sexuality as a weapon in this fashion. The parallels are difficult to avoid.

Like most female spies, Samantha appears to have faced the choice between her espionage career and a relationship; she and Steven left the CIA because they saw no way to have a love life and a life as a spy at the same time. Though she and Steven have what looks like a perfectly happy marriage, her time away from 'the office' affects the perception of her abilities in a way it does not for Steven. Hoyt, the junior agent assigned to assist the Blooms, hero-worships Steven and studied his casefile during training, suggesting that Steven was literally a model agent. In contrast, Hoyt is initially impressed with Samantha only because of her association with Steven; her value is conferred on her by her husband. Hoyt addresses them, not as Steven and Samantha, but as Agent Bloom and Mrs Agent Bloom,⁵⁵³ meaning that even her work identity is subsumed by that of her husband. Samantha is shown to have spy skills equal to Steven's – even outside the realm of sexpionage – but the narrative contradicts itself, placing her in the secondary position as a wife subservient to her husband. As a caterer, she is literally 'in the kitchen' in her civilian life; though she and Steven have no children, her relationship with her sister Lizzie (Mekia Cox) is more maternal than sibling, as she employs Lizzie and attempts to help her stay sober. Much like Amanda King (see Chapter Two), Samantha is useful largely as an afterthought; unlike Amanda, she is not granted the chance to outgrow that position.

The question of why the Blooms return to the CIA is also awkwardly handled, even aside from the unfinished plotline about the CIA's secret designs on them. It takes Shaw some time to convince them to even consider returning. He attempts to guilt-trip them over having 'deserted' the agency that "trained them, invested in them, and allowed them to serve their country." "Oh, don't try that patriotism line on me," Steven retorts.⁵⁵⁴ Both Steven and Samantha are shown to be dedicated to the sorts of altruistic causes typically espoused by America in fiction: the promotion of democracy, the protection of innocents, the eradication of terrorism. Yet Steven's dismissal of patriotic fervour, and the fact that the CIA is apparently conspiring against its own agents, both colour the series.

Aside from Samantha, the other female agents in the show only appear as single-episode guest stars, all of whom end up evil, dead, or both. Given this, the emphasis on sexiness, and the near-erasure of Samantha's identity, it would seem that the female spy

⁵⁵³ "Pilot," *Undercovers*, directed by J.J. Abrams (22 September 2010: NBC).

⁵⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

is not in fact much improved from her sidelined position immediately after 9/11. However, audience perception of her identity does seem to have changed significantly. *Undercovers* was cancelled: though thirteen episodes of a projected 22-episode season were filmed, only 11 of them were even broadcast. *Nikita*, in contrast, lasted four seasons.

Relaunched

The changes evident in these two programmes emphasize the extent to which *24* and *Spooks* are statistical anomalies within the espionage genre, their success driven by their ability to capitalize on audience reaction to 9/11 and subsequent events. Their ties to *La Femme Nikita* and *Alias* – the two most recent high-profile female-led spy shows – demonstrate the show-runners' desire to recapture the previous, more permissive, environment. More, the 2010 shows demonstrate a further openness in terms of what categories of citizenship define who is able to protect their country. Both *Nikita* and *Undercovers* present femininity as equal or superior to masculinity as a trait required of national heroes. This acceptance is a clear change from the perpetually subordinate femininity of *24* and *Spooks* and instead recalls the ambiguity of *La Femme Nikita*, *Alias*, and earlier shows. That *Nikita* – which promotes feminine superiority – is successful while *Undercovers* – which portrays bare gender equality – failed reflects the audience desire to challenge the primacy of the white male. The ethnic diversity evident in both shows is also a clear sign of a reexamination of the privilege inherently seen in the espionage role. National identity is opening up as a category; nations are becoming much less prescriptive about who they will accept as their protectors.

Despite their reappearance within, even atop, the espionage hierarchy, women have not entirely regained their status in the spy-world with these new shows. While *La Femme Nikita* and *Alias* showed women finally being accepted into the boys' club of espionage on their own merits, in *Nikita* and *Undercovers* they are still outsiders. *Nikita* is a literal outsider, having left the officially-sanctioned Division and become a target of its ire. Her narrative is complicated by the fact that Division is a rogue cell of the CIA; though she is pitted against it from without, she is still ultimately working towards America's best interests. Like Jack Bauer, she places the needs of the nation ahead of her own personal safety; unlike Bauer, by doing so she admits the possibility that America might not, in fact, be perfect. Though *Nikita*'s Division is populated by several other women, they too are outsiders, like Alex, or traitors, like Amanda. In contrast, Samantha is the only recurring

female spy in *Undercovers*; the other major recurring female role is that of her sister, Lizzy (Mekia Cox), who is decidedly outside of the world of espionage and who, as Samantha's family, serves only as a further distraction from Samantha's spying. The vision of the CIA as a (white) old boys' network is prominent in *Undercovers*. Steven infiltrates it by virtue of his gender and his exceptional skills, but Samantha, "Mrs Agent Bloom," is little more than an appendage, much like Amanda King: useful to have around, but rarely one's first choice. Within the CIA, women are kept subordinate, like Samantha or Amanda from *Nikita*; placing them in positions of power still marks them as outside the norm.

Nation remains paramount in the spy genre; the shift in concept between *La Femme Nikita* and *Nikita* demonstrates the significance of national identity to the post-9/11 audience. By aligning itself narratively with *La Femme Nikita*, the most anti-nationalist espionage drama, and yet altering itself thematically to emphasize the import nationalism has developed in the decade-plus between the two, *Nikita* is able to recapture an audience trained to believe in a male spy and replace him with a similarly patriotic female. Rather than the diminished importance of the female spy in *Undercovers* versus *Nikita*, the significant difference between them and the reason one show succeeded where another failed is the positioning of the nation's fallibility in each narrative. In *Undercovers*, the Blooms' loyalty to their marriage replaced that to their country. Distressingly, Steven's anti-patriotic bent was shown to be sensible: the CIA were in the process of abusing the skills and trust their citizens placed in them. In *Nikita*, there is a problem within the CIA that becomes a threat to the nation, but it is self-contained; Nikita is elevated in the audience's opinion by her ability to combat that threat and her desire to re-stabilize the intelligence service. In *Undercovers*, by contrast, the threat pervades the administration of the CIA and influences its decisions at all levels; worse, the Blooms appear unable to discern it, much less combat it effectively. Samantha and Steven are manipulated by an American organization that is a less than shining example of American exceptionalism; they thus earn audience censure, while Nikita demonstrates positive American traits of ingenuity and perseverance and thus finds a continued place in the nation's viewing schedule. While more people may qualify to defend the nation in the newer crop of shows, the nation they are to defend cannot be maligned. It must retain its perfect image, bolstered by the unquestioned support of its intelligence services.

Housewives and Honeytraps

This thesis sets out and attempts to answer three questions. How does the female spy develop on television when compared to the progression of the feminist movement? How is the female spy's relationship to national identity portrayed and why is it important? And why does the figure of the housewife haunt the female spy's apparent liberation? None of these questions have simple answers, nor do any of them have an answer that is consistently true for all of the shows I analyze. Nevertheless, I believe I have provided insight into all of them.

Having written this thesis, I feel about the figure of the female spy in general much as D'Acci feels about the "jiggle era" of 1970s television.⁵⁵⁵ on the surface, these characters provide important points of identification and power fantasies for women, yet a closer analysis reveals multiple ways in which they are problematized by being used in the service of the patriarchy. This tension explains the sense that the female spy has simultaneously reflected the victories of the feminist movement and yet remained in a position of oppression. Perhaps the most 'liberated' figure comes, ironically, from the aforementioned jiggle era: *Wonder Woman's* Diana is at least able to escape being defined as either mother or lover. Otherwise, however, I have shown that even the apparently independent female spy is trapped within a framework that emphasizes the importance of heteronormative reproduction.

This trap is tied to the spy's mission in service to her country. National identity is an inescapable part of the espionage genre, bound as it is to the politics of its production context. My thesis analyzes the relationship between family and nation within that genre, effectively revealing the conservative bent of the female spy's attachment to the family structure. The majority of the shows I focus on conflate family and nation: women who do not value family are considered unfit to serve their nation. The progression from Emma Peel – whose focus on family must inevitably eclipse her work – to Sydney Bristow, who is allowed to pursue a family and remain a spy – does reflect the societal push towards women being able to raise a family while in the workforce; nevertheless, the types of punishment still enacted on women in the more recent spy series, such as Chloe O'Brian or Ruth Evershed, shows that only a narrow definition of family, one that is procreative within the bounds of service to the nation, is suitable.

⁵⁵⁵ D'Acci, "Defining Women," 173.

The conflation of family and nation thus provides a window into understanding why housewifery slides underneath the vast majority of these spies – at least, the ones who survive their series. The figure of the housewife often provides cover for the spies' activities: the apparent disconnect between the powerful spy and the weak housewife allows for the element of surprise, as is particularly seen in *Scarecrow and Mrs. King*. *SMK* merely literalized the insinuations that appear in spy shows before and since. Even in feminisms that attempt to reclaim her, the housewife is a polarizing figure because she is viewed as emblematic of the re-second wave un-liberated woman; association with the spy could refute that assumption, but instead, outside of *SMK*, the housewife serves to contain the spy. Where the male spy can transcend the need for domesticity, the female spy is inevitably mired in it, largely negating her independence: Jack Bauer is galvanized by the death of his wife, Bond overcomes spy-matriarch M's death in *Skyfall* (Sam Mendes, 2012), but the ultimate goal imposed on female spies is not widow-making but homemaking.

It is perhaps inevitable that a genre that has as its inherent concern the defense of the state would be inherently conservative; it was perhaps naïve of me to predict that the female spy would be, if not an uncomplicated figure, an uncomplicatedly empowered one. Nevertheless, I continue to be distressed by the extent of the constraints placed on the female spy by what are, effectively, 'traditional family values.' If I was spurred into this area of research by curiosity about the reception and influence of the female spy, it is almost reassuring that I had to shift scope and cannot state with certainty that these shows do have significant impact. Nevertheless, it is this surprise that suggests I have in fact performed an important piece of analysis: the conservatism of the female spy is unexpected enough that I believe it warrants further exploration.

Significance

This thesis considers the figure of the female spy as a marker of cultural identity in the period of time from the mid-Cold War to the decade following 9/11. Although several aspects of this work have previously been analyzed, nevertheless I provide a fresh and original contribution to the body of academic work surrounding gender on television. At the most basic level, I introduce detailed analysis of numerous programmes that have not previously been deemed of note. While *The Avengers*, *Alias*, and *24* have all been the objects of multiple pieces of scholarly work, little to no exploration has been done into the

other shows I study. *La Femme Nikita* has received some attention, most notably in Rosie White's book, but no other work has analyzed it in relation to its 'brother show' by the same creators, 24. I look at it not just as 24's predecessor, but within the wider spy genre. Though the Wonder Woman character has been the target of popular and academic critiques, such works typically focus on the comic book persona, relegating the television version to a footnote in her long history; in contrast, I explore specific elements of her television portrayal and what they mean both to the character as a whole and to the television landscape of the Seventies. *Get Smart* has largely been ignored by critics, likely due to its genre and an academic tendency towards dismissing the sitcom, but it is that very genre that contributes to its importance as an espionage programme and allows 99 to transcend the limitations of the action heroine. Finally, despite the fact that *Scarecrow and Mrs. King* is a more 'traditional' spy show, it has been unavailable to scholars since its original air date until its recent release on DVD. My work provides the first comprehensive analysis of this important entry in the American espionage genre.

Moreover, the concurrent breadth and focus of my work are innovative. I have chosen to concentrate specifically on television as it is a medium that provides a certain sense of immediacy. It reflects its historical context closely as a result of its ability to react nigh-instantaneously to current events; unlike a movie, the production and financing of which can take years, a television series can reflect reality within months if not weeks. The unofficial season three premiere of *The West Wing* (NBC, 1999-2006), "Isaac and Ishmael," emphasizes this reduced period; filmed within two weeks of 9/11, it aired on 3 October 2001 and directly addressed the topic of terrorism.⁵⁵⁶ Choosing to focus on this medium allows me to explore a politicized cultural historiography of the spy genre that is closely tied to the experiences of the audience it seeks to attract. I have applied this narrow focus on a specific medium over a lengthy time period lasting nearly fifty years, from the height of the Cold War in 1965 to a decade following 9/11. In doing so I have closely considered eight television programmes as representative of the ethos associated with their particular era, finally concluding by touching on a further two more recent examples. Excluding film and literature from my remit has allowed me to engage more closely with television as a unique cultural artifact during a period characterized by Western armed conflicts and explore its specific role in maintaining gender norms. While similar studies have been done, by Lynn Spigel for example, mine is the first that

⁵⁵⁶ "Isaac and Ishmael," *The West Wing Episode Guide*, accessed 05 July 2012, http://westwingepguide.com/S3/Episodes/45_IaI.html.

considers the cultural and historical import of the inherently political spy genre throughout the latter half of the twentieth and early years of the twenty-first centuries.

The gendered aspect of my project is also important, particularly in concert with its focus on television. Female spies have often been read against the Bond films of their time, and while Bond is an overarching influence on the spy genre in general and the representation of gender in espionage media in particular, his is not the only influence worth noting. Comparing the female spy to Bond himself is imprecise; comparing the female spy to the Bond girl is incomplete; comparing the female spy on television to the female spy on film is imperfect. Comparing the female spy on television to other iterations of herself, however, is more apt. The length of the television narratives I have studied allow the female spy to develop as a character; Bond himself is granted this lengthy period of audience identification by virtue of his presence in a series of films, but female spies in single films are rarely allowed a similar level of character development.

Exploring the female spy specifically has also allowed me to come to different conclusions about the relation of the espionage genre to national identity. The male spy is almost inevitably a reflection of his nation: Bond is a post-war England in recovery, Steed is England's ability to retain its traditions in the face of modernization, Bauer is the indomitable, plucky American spirit. Yet women are excluded from this sort of unquestioned identification, not just in the spy genre, but in general. Exploring the relation of the female spy to her national identity has allowed me to explore questions of nationality, family, gender, and gender roles in a way that was not available to previous scholars, whose understanding of the spy was coloured by the national identification of the male spy. I am confident that this thesis will provide a basis for further work exploring the interaction between television, gender, and politics.

Further Research

This thesis is of course not a complete accounting for even the relatively small topic of the female spy on television. There are several avenues for further research that I hope future scholars will pursue or that I myself hope to spin out of this work. The first major criticism I would level at my own work is its exclusive focus on English-language television. For a project that makes claims about reflecting the political dynamics of particular eras world-wide, this is an unfortunate lack, and one I do hope to remedy, but that was simply not feasible to approach within the limits of a doctoral thesis. Though I am

uncertain of availability, programmes such as *Das unsichtbare Visier* (Fernsehen der DDR, 1973-1979) and *Espionne et tais-toi* (Antenne 2, 1986-1988) would be useful to reveal whether my conclusions can be reflected in non-English-language television. I also hope to examine the Dutch show *Deadline* (VARA, 2008-2010), which is specifically positioned as an anti-terrorism drama. While I suspect that there will inevitably be a reciprocal relationship between the concept of patriotism and the figure of the spy, female or not, the shape of that relationship in countries other than those I have examined deserves analysis.

There are also several other English-language spy programmes worthy of further study. These include a number of recent female-helmed series, *Covert Affairs* (USA, 2010-present), *Homeland* (Showtime, 2011-present), and *Hunted* (BBC One, 2012) among them. While I chose not to include these series in favour of prioritizing *Nikita* and *Undercovers*, recent shows with deliberate ties to previous incarnations of the female spy, their existence further suggests the female spy's recovery from the masculinized post-9/11 era. Whether they adhere to the conventions I have exposed or allow the spy to begin to develop away from those traditions, however, requires deeper exploration. The FX series *The Americans* (2013-present) is particularly ripe for analysis given my identification of the housewife as a figure that parallels the spy; this show literalizes my allegations by placing a pair of KGB agents in deep cover as a suburban family in 1980s Washington, D.C.. There are also contemporary male-dominated spy shows whose presence may or may not refute my conclusions, such as *Chuck* (NBC, 2007-2012) and *Archer* (FX, 2009-present); these shows in particular, the former a comedy and the latter an animated series, suggest that the importance of genre in the spy show is also in need of study. Finally, though I have specifically concentrated on television, I believe that turning my gendered lens back on film would also be of use. Films such as *RED* (Robert Schwentke, 2010) and *This Means War* (McG, 2012) reflect problematic views of the female spy, yet are distanced enough from the Bond phenomenon to require separate analysis. The question of representation between film and television is a particularly interesting one.

I continue to believe that this area is also ripe for the type of qualitative audience research performed by Brunsdon, Ang, and D'Acci, to name a few. Though I gesture towards the importance of context, a full analysis of the production, reception, and influence of these shows would take more space than I have available here. The choice to draw broader strokes across multiple shows and multiple decades was a deliberate one, made with the knowledge that I could not fully situate each of these shows within a cultural

materialist framework at the same time as I situated it within a framework of the wider genre progression. I have thus focused on textual analysis in order to understand the changes that occur within the genre while including some historical context as I can. Nevertheless, I am aware that questions of reception particularly would inform our understanding of such politicized texts. As spy agencies continue to declassify material germane to the periods in which these texts appeared, true historical analysis will become more possible.

Despite the many areas that I have been unable to fully engage with, however, I believe I have made a significant contribution to knowledge in media and cultural studies. I am confident that this thesis will provide a basis for further work exploring the interaction between television, gender, and politics.

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