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Experiencing Media: The Resonance of (Post)Modern Culture

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ABSTRACT

Experiencing Media: The Resonance of (Post)Modern Culture

We can study television and film by looking at how individuals and groups experience and interact with these media. The phenomenological concepts of reversibility and intersubjectivity provide us with a starting point by showing us how the (post)modern lived world can be understood by looking at its subject-object dynamics. In other words, these ideas begin to show us how and where the existential essence of the subjective and objective simultaneity of experience/existence may be passed through a consideration of media studies. We may then use Trilling's historical overview of the sincere and the authentic, and McLuhan's ideas of figure-ground paradigms and tetradic media laws, to create a multidimensional approach to media studies that is experience-based—the resonance thesis. We then can take other "experiential" approaches to film and television and consider them to be resonant studies, since they all take into account, in one form or another, a basic subject-object dynamism. The use of the resonant approach for particular media can then be used to study a (post)modern media culture in general, namely the current group of individuals referred to as "Generation X" or the "twenty-somethings."

For my grandparents, Nick and Suzanna Byczkowsky

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction: Experiencing Media

This work will explore not only the ways in which collective and individual experience inform and enhance our readings of various media texts and comprehension of ourselves, but, what is more important, how and why lived-world experience and particular media phenomena create a dynamic interplay that constitutes meaning at all. Specifically, I would like to look at the diverse and multiple ways we interact with television and film (con)texts. To begin, two key phenomenological constructs shall be used to help achieve this goal: the *reversibility* of subject-object relations (that is, the *resonance*, the sustained, dynamic movement—in this case, the fluctuation or oscillation—occurring between phenomena), and the related idea of meaningful, vibrant (again, *resonant*) intersubjective social processes. Thus, insofar as this study favours these resonant qualities of experience as a starting point for an encounter with film or television, we may say that this thesis is "phenomenologically-inspired." In the final analysis, though, this work does not generally adhere to any particular philosophical methodology or meaning, but instead uses certain ideas as a springboard for exploring and explaining the experiential lived-world. Thus, the phenomenological studies of, for example, Vivian Sobchack, Linda Singer, and Jenny L. Nelson, will be integrated with, among others, the historical-literary work of Lionel Trilling's *Sincerity and Authenticity* and the media explorations of Marshall McLuhan's *Laws of Media*. Each work, we shall see, contributes to an overall definition of my *resonance thesis*, which then may be used to help explain and explore further TV and film in a (post)modern context. *In the end, then, the overall goal of this project is to see how and*

where the existential essence of the subjective and objective simultaneity of experience/existence may be passed through a consideration of media studies.

The use of the phenomenological concepts that I will briefly touch upon in this first part is therefore part of a larger inquiry; my experience-based (reversible and intersubjective, i.e., resonant) approach to looking at (post)modern culture is not a self-contained philosophical undertaking, but one that is crafted by a *multidisciplinary strategy* that takes into account some diverse yet highly compatible works. However, since this is first and foremost a study that posits the *primacy of experience* in a television and film studies context, we cannot help beginning our study by briefly looking at some of the key phenomenological ideas brought to light by Edmund Husserl, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Alfred Schutz, and to see specifically how *these* ideas contribute to the notion of resonance as a unique approach to studying the media.

To begin, Merleau-Ponty's existential phenomenology differs from a Husserlian transcendental phenomenology in that the former method places the repository of meaning within the lived-world (through the subjective perceptions of the lived-body), while the latter places subjective consciousness—consciousness of meaning, consciousness *as* meaning—outside lived existence and into a *transcendental ego* (Sobchack 37). Husserl's subject, in other words, is made objective, available to any existence, at the expense of its grounding in the lived-world—which, according to Sobchack, is at odds with the fundamental aim of phenomenology (37–38). As she notes, "Husserl's transcendental ego presents us with an unnecessary paradox. It is an abstraction from

the *Lebenswelt* which cannot escape the *Lebenswelt*, suggesting only infinite regress" (38). A Husserlian transcendentalism thus attempts to define an *essential* subject outside existence, beyond an embodied, enworlded realm. This prompts Don Ihde, for instance, to seek alternatives in a "second" phenomenology. As he explains, a second phenomenology, unlike a first, or Husserlian phenomenology, "understands that experience cannot be questioned alone or in isolation but must be understood ultimately in relation to its historical and cultural imbeddedness" (20). In other words Ihde's study underscores the importance of *context*, the recognition that subjecthood can only be comprehended fully by looking, as Lawrence Grossberg suggests, at the "nomadic wanderings" of individuals through the social-matrix of "ever-changing positions and apparatuses" (38) of (post)modern society.

The articulation of an embodied, contextualized subject existing within the *Lebenswelt* is best exemplified in the work of Merleau-Ponty. Merleau-Ponty's work centres around the lived-body, in the subject's relation to herself and to the world around her. Unlike Husserl's transcendental ego, Merleau-Ponty's subject of consciousness exists within the world, i.e., within the scope of a lived-world embodiment. For, as Vivian Sobchack reminds us:

> As a philosophy of consciousness and experience and a research method, phenomenology cannot avoid locating the subject of consciousness and experience as existence in the world. And, as existence in the world, the subject of consciousness and experience is *embodied*, *situated*, and *finite*. (38)

Thus, to use Merleau-Ponty's famous phrase, we are "condemned to meaning" by the very essence of our being-in-the-world. This condition is what Heidegger called *Dasein*, the duality of being in and constituting the world simultaneously (Con Davis and Schleifer 374), and what Merleau-Ponty refers to as *être-au-monde* (literally, being-in-the-world), an idea that suggests both a "being-present-to-the-world" and a "being-alive-in-the-world" (Sobchack 38).

The usefulness of phenomenology for this thesis thus rests more in the existential tradition of Merleau-Ponty than in the transcendentalism of Husserl's thought, for the former brand of phenomenology reminds us that the lived-body is subject *and* object—maker *of* and participant *in*—a world in which the very act of existing (of perceiving) becomes the very act of consciousness (Merleau-Ponty: "the world... is the totality of perceptible things..." [16]; "we can only think the world because we have already experienced it" [17]). The lived-body, Sobchack notes, "is both agent and agency of an engagement with the world that is lived in its *subjective* modality as *perception* and its *objective* modality as *expression*" (40)—we are, for example, creatures who *see* (who perceive) and who are *seen* (seen because we express).

The existential tradition of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology helps bring to light the *reversibility* of subjective and objective being. Here the idea of reversibility is based on Merleau-Ponty's notion, which centres around touch, specifically, the resonant act of touching and being touched in a single moment of lived-body experience (Dillon 153–76). The reversibility thesis recognizes that there is always a moment that we are sensed *by* something or someone even as we are ourselves sensing

something, or someone, other: as I touch a table, for instance, I am at the same time "touched" by it, etc.

This reversibility process is an example of a "corporeal reflexivity" (Dillon 123), a sensing that must also be sensed. In this regard the idea of *intersubjectivity* is very much related to reversibility. "If I am to perceive my body as a body," Dillon explains, "I must perceive it in relation to other bodies and other things..." (123). Or, as Merleau-Ponty states, "In the perception of another, I find myself in relation with another 'myself...'" (17). Intersubjectivity, then, is the process by which we are able to objectively consolidate our subjective perceptions by allowing ourselves to first move beyond our own subjectivity. In looking at the development of children, for instance, Merleau-Ponty notes how an infant's "body image"—her sense of her self as a subjective self—is achieved only through her self-alienation, that is, from a self-objectification that reveals to herself and to the world that she is at the same time an image (a looked at) and an embodied, perceiving (e.g., looking) subject (Dillon 123).

Like reversibility, intersubjectivity assumes that we are simultaneously object and subject in relation to another object/subject (i.e., in relation to a social order, a matrix of interconnected people and objects). As Schutz notes, we interact with others in various relational (intersubjective) ways,[1] but there is always the implicit, primary assertion that our mere presence in the world suggests that we are always first born into the contextual world of directly experienced social

[1] For example, see Schutz, *The Phenomenology of the Social World*, and his discussion of the three fundamental types of social interactions: the realm of directly experienced social reality, the realm of contemporaries, and the realm of predecessors.

reality—this he calls the "we-relationship" (165), an "interlocking of mirrored glances" (170). That is, while retaining our subjectivity, our embodied making-of-the-world, we are also necessarily part of an-other, intersubjective enworldedness. It is in this way that intersubjectivity initiates language and communication, and, hence, meaning. As Merleau-Ponty notes:

> Just as my body, as the system of all my holds on the world, founds the unity of the objects which I perceive, in the same way the body of the other—as the bearer of symbolic behaviors and of the behavior of true reality—tears itself away from being one of my phenomena, offers me the task of a true communication, and confers on my objects the new dimension of intersubjective being... (18)

The other, then, does not remain a sole object of my gaze (it is not merely "one of my phenomena"), but instead is its own subject as well, sharing with me its particular take on the world, so that in the end together we create meaning together through this ever-shifting relationship of multiple and diverse perceptions.

These are the primary elements, then, that I am borrowing from phenomenology: the reversibility thesis, and the related notion of intersubjectivity. These ideas are grounded in the tradition of an existential philosophy, one that maintains the idea of a coterminous being-in-the-world and a being-present-to-the-world, the idea that we simultaneously make, and are made by, the world. I have therefore established here, perhaps somewhat implicitly, the distinction between the use of phenomenology in its more traditional sense (e.g., the epistemological methods of bracketing and reduction [the

phenomenological *epoche*][2]), and phenomenology as a more accessible and pliant application, i.e., as a springboard for exploring the lived-world of resonant (post)modern experience. Since I want to follow the latter course of a phenomenologically-rooted reading of certain media texts, as opposed to a phenomenological philosophy of the media per se, I will necessarily employ in this thesis some of the language and fundamental concepts of the philosophy (again, reversibility, intersubjectivity, being-in-the-world, and so on) as I explore the media of (post)modern culture. This thesis, while it uses some important phenomenological ideas and looks at some phenomenologically-based media studies, is not a strict phenomenological discourse in the traditional sense. This work instead promotes a unique, more open-ended way of looking at the media of the existential world, a vision that emerges from the idea that the lived-world or lived-body experience of subject-object interactivity/interchangeability is our primary and most direct way of interpreting and understanding our universe. And this concept of what I would call the *resonance of experience* is why we must borrow from, yet feel free to move beyond, the dictates of just one mode of thought, e.g., phenomenology.

Chapter Two begins to map out in greater detail the notion of resonance begun with our discussion of reversibility and intersubjectivity

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[2]Indeed, following a series of strict phenomenological reductions would be counterintuitive to this project, since a phenomenological reduction, or *epoche*, attempts to strip away the contextual imbeddedness of all those elements of a phenomenon that interfere with viewing the essential, invariant qualities of that phenomenon. Conversely, I am interested in the contextual matrix created by the relationship between an experience of media and the other existential factors of our everyday lives.

here. I illustrate there that the notion of the reversibility and/or resonance of subject-object relations can be expanded upon by employing Marshall McLuhan's *Laws of Media* and Lionel Trilling's *Sincerity and Authenticity*. Each of these works, it can be argued, illustrates the fundamental idea that we are in-the-world and of-the-world, that we are continually and subjectively interacting with other objects even as other objects are always interacting subjectively with us, and that we are always, above all, immersed in, and influenced by, this randomness and resonance of lived-experience. I will show there that the figure-ground paradigm used by McLuhan in his brand of media studies, coupled with Trilling's discussion of the sincere and authentic modes of (post)modern existence, can help illuminate the dynamic relationship we have with contemporary media. Together these works, intertwined with our phenomenological concepts, will help us see precisely what a "resonant" approach to a media study is concerned with, and will propel us to look at the existential time and space of particular film and television contexts.

The first part of Chapter Three thus uses the idea of resonance as a way of looking at how we interact specifically in meaningful and dynamic ways with film and television (con)texts. The phenomenological explorations of Sobchack and Nelson, for example, assume that film and TV are part of the entire complex of relations that make up our being-in-the-world; their works are grounded in the implicit notion that particular media exist as we do, *in the world*, and therefore should be considered as part of the intersubjective pattern that constitutes our everyday life—Sobchack's argument, for instance, that a film is a perceiving, (inter)subjective "individual"—Merleau-Ponty's "expression of experience

by experience" (Sobchack 3)—a "spectator" of experience (50) that interacts with us in the social sphere of the *Lebenswelt*. The film (con)text, taken in this way, has the capacity to evoke memories and to trigger personal associations in highly significant, and, as Linda Singer notes, in very visceral, ways.

Similarly, it would be appropriate to say that I do not watch TV and receive it as it was a mere object of my gaze, but that I interact with it as if it were another person, another creature that responds to me as I respond to it. Of course this does not mean that if I hit the TV it will hit me back, or that if I shout at it ("idiot box!") it will respond to me with equal insult ("couch potato!"); but what it does signal is that a medium like television can create meaning for me in that it is as real to me—as "in-the-world"—as other individuals are. The type of interaction I have with television is obviously different from the one I have with other human beings, and yet it is a dynamic interaction nonetheless, one that is quite capable, as Jenny L. Nelson shows, and as I will explore further, of generating meaning apart from its obvious utilitarian function (i.e., as an entertainment or information source).

With this in mind, I should also like to use the idea of subject-object interactivity to propel analysts of contemporary culture to adopt a more intimate relation between themselves and their bodies of inquiry. That is, critics should no longer be bound to exploring detached texts, but, instead, open to a dynamic interplay with culturally and historically generated (con)texts. These writers and thinkers must recognize their position in the social matrix by moving beyond mere role-playing (i.e., as writers, as thinkers, as intellectuals) and by actively engaging themselves intersubjectively and reversibly with their foci of study. Using Linda

Singer's discussion of a "cinematic scopophilia," I would like to show in the second part of Chapter Three that some of the current approaches to media studies are limited because they fail to recognize the full significance of the resonant relationship that exists between the cultural student and cultural studied. For instance, I believe that "response" oriented approaches—ethnographic or audience research studies—limit themselves in that they do not account for the fact that the student—the cultural subject—can also become her own object of analysis. This is a drawback that denies the intersubjective notion that we are both sensing and sensed beings (even if that perception is reflexive, i.e., we objectively situate our own subjective position). In other words, we must move away from the rigid notion that we are merely subjects in a world that places objects in our realm to study or perceive. What I am saying is that we can no longer look at texts just from a vantage point of a detached critical distance—we must also keep in mind our existential relation to these cultural phenomena. No longer is it enough to say: What does this text mean? Now we must first ask ourselves: Why am I studying this? How does it interact with me? How does my personal experience with the text develop into something that may be collectively appropriated? In this way we facilitate a weaving of a web of significations through an experiential, resonant discourse. The conclusion of Chapter Three—an illustration of my personal interactions with, as a student of the media and as an ordinary viewer, some film (con)texts—provides a few preliminary sketches of what this type of dialogue might deal with.

I would reiterate, finally, that the idea of resonance is not only suited for an exploration of particular media per se, but can also be used to help examine the media in the context of a certain lived-world

condition, namely (post)modernity (e.g., see the discussion of Trilling's work, below). As I have already mentioned, the study of media texts should be contextual, and not contextless, that is, movie-going and film-viewing are not merely static and intrasubjective but dynamic and intersubjective as well. By contextual and intersubjective I mean that we partake in a meaningful exchange with movies and television in ways as never before. We go to the movies, for instance, and see the residue of those images everywhere—in bus shelters, in video games, on TV, and so on. The media of (post)modernity, because of their sheer presence in the world, continually influence and infiltrate our daily lives. This is hardly a novel statement, but what I would like to suggest is that this (post)modern explosion of media has caused the spread of a whole network of significations out into the social world, a network of intersubjectivity, of dynamic, reversible relationships not just between people, but between people and *things*. The idea of a resonance in the text-audience relationship is thus well suited to a study, say, of how a (post)modern culture can create a symbiotic relationship with TV, so that the latter is not just a static object of our eye, but an-other that coexists with us, in much the same way as other people coexist with us, to reveal certain things about ourselves.

It is with this in mind that we can look at Schutz's assertion that the media of the existential world—what he calls cultural objects (but, which, as we have argued, and shall argue further, are also, like us, cultural subjects)—can be used to "read...the subjective experiences of others" (182). Schutz's cultural entities—which include "everything from artifacts to institutions to conventional ways of doing things" (182)—are in the world, and part of its overall reversible, resonant reality

Television, then, for example, becomes a subject-onto-itself, capable of indirectly informing us about, and directly affecting, aspects of our lives; it coexists dynamically and intersubjectively with not only myself but with all others, and together we (I-you-it[TV]) comprise the experience of the (post)modern world.

My final gesture in this thesis, then, will be to see in Chapter Four how and to what extent a (post)modern generation has used a distinct intersubjective relationship with TV in order to create meaning for the former. I argue that television acts upon, and is thus used by, different generations in different ways. As I have already mentioned, media like television are situated within the world as never before. Specifically, one can argue that the last twenty-five years of so have seen not just the qualitative—e.g., social factors such as the increase in single parent and two-income families, and the decrease of family size, which generally allowed TV a greater role in children's upbringing than in the past—but the quantitative aspects of TV experience change. With the onset of greater and more diverse technological applications during the '70's and '80's—the explosion of available channels via cable, the introduction of Pay TV and VCR's, the frenetic use of remote control ("channel-surfing")—the traditional relationship between TV viewers and TV (con)texts was, and continues to be, revamped. It is important to note that while everybody was watching television during this time and was therefore introduced to these new dynamics, there was a group who were affected in a unique way. I am referring to those individuals labeled the "twenty-somethings" or "Generation X" (those born roughly between 1964 and 1973), whose formative years were the dizzying times of continual implementation of "new and improved" media technologies. I believe that

a look at this generation illustrates a distinct moment in the history of resonant subject-object interactivity.

In sum, the entire amalgam of ideas that make up the resonance thesis in this work provides us with the epistemological tools for looking at the reciprocal nature of existence. This means that ideas like reversibility, intersubjectivity, sincerity, authenticity, figure, ground, can be used to help understand media in new ways. We are able, for instance, to move beyond both the traditional audience-based, sociocultural models that look at either the text (e.g., television) as a manipulating object of a mass culture industry, or those studies that regard the audience member as a thoroughly empowered subject who uses TV to break down the hegemonic effects of institutionalized media. Instead, this work suggests a meeting ground between the two poles of a text-as-object/viewer-as-subject dichotomy, whereby meaning is created in the unique, intersubjective moment of experiencing media.

CHAPTER 2

The Resonance Thesis

I would like to elaborate here on the idea of *resonance*, to show how the literary-historical work of Lionel Trilling and the media explorations of Marshall McLuhan describe or posit an existential realm of subjectivity only in relation to a simultaneous objective scope. That is, I would like to illustrate what each work contributes to an overall meaning of our resonance theory. For, if we link the phenomenological ideas of reversibility and intersubjectivity with these two studies, we can develop a greater sense of what a resonant approach to media studies really is, and how it can be used to study the meaningful interaction between ourselves and television and film (con)texts. I will begin, then, by discussing Trilling's notion of sincerity and authenticity, and what these concepts mean in the context of a study of the (post)modern world. After that, I will explore McLuhan's figure-ground dynamic, which he uses as the basis for his unique media studies strategy. It will be seen that these two works provide us with an integral component for understanding our resonance approach to media studies: Trilling, firstly, delivers a historical overview of modernity and its affects on our being-in-the-world; he shows us that modernity readily accommodates the simultaneity of the subjective and objective modes of existence. I argue that, by association, this existential-reciprocal view of modernity is applicable to understanding our current *post*modern condition as well. McLuhan, secondly, takes the idea of an existential poetics (in the guise of his tetradic media laws) and shows us just how the media of the *Lebenswelt* can be looked at in a resonant or dynamic way. This chapter then, illustrates how the resonance thesis—the study of the interplay of

subject-object relations within the context of a (post)modern television and film culture—has been constructed, in part, from the crucial ideas of these two works.

(a) Resonance and the (Post)Modern: Trilling's *Sincerity and Authenticity*

Trilling's *Sincerity and Authenticity* looks at the historical and moral moments of the collective and individual states of being—the subject-object resonance—of modernity. We will use his work to look at the extent to which the reality of our current *post*modern condition is a continuum of a particular aspect of a *modern* ethos. What we now think of, for instance, as the deconstructive nature of a certain conception of postmodernism—as a destabilization of a prevailing order, as a loss of "deep" meaning and a renewed predilection for textual surfaces, as a reappropriation of the past that defines the present (the melting-pot of pastiche, for example, or else what Scott Lash refers to as a "de-semanticised historicity" [164])—is merely the present-day condition in the continuum of a modern existential mode that has been with us for many centuries.[3]

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[3] I am employing here a vision that regards postmodernity as an extension of modernity, in contrast to more "radical" versions of postmodernism that, for instance, reject the Enlightenment idea of rationality (one of the primary defining characteristics of modernity)—approaches that render the modern and the postmodern mutually exclusive realms, and that reject "both the feasibility and the desirability of the modernist project" (Doherty et al. 13). My position stresses the essential, shared modern and postmodern predilection to promote the adoption of multiple viewpoints and to create the necessary environment for dissembling of deconstructive tendencies. These tendencies, I shall argue, are indicative of a larger mode of being, that is, the resonant, (post)modern essence of reversible subject-object relations (i.e., the relationship between being-in-the-world and being-made-by-the-world, between living for one's self and living for the [social] world).

In Trilling's work, the author traces the existential movement of modern man and woman from Shakespeare's time to our twentieth-century era. Trilling points out a fundamental tendency for individuals, throughout modernity, to root themselves in what he would claim is inauthentic life experience, a mode of being that denies the meaningful interplay of the inter- and intrasubjective. According to Trilling, modernity dictated men and women to adopt a relatively rational, structured, socially conditioned way of life, as opposed to a more privately defined, less rigid existence. Thus these individuals were—and have been—limited to existing only within one dimension of their selfhood; modern people's rationality, in other words, has clouded their ability to see that they can exist outside structured, a priori (teleological) thought. In one sense, the argument goes, rational thinking, logic, and the established framework of a culture are viable and fundamental tools for understanding and living within modernity (and, of course, postmodernity); but so too, as we shall see, are the practices of deviance and improvisation (i.e., irrationality)[4] and, as de Certeau and others point out, the empowering practices of everyday (post)modern life.

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[4]As Michael Hays, discussing the modern, anti-humanist and anti-rational architecture of Mies van der Rohe, writes, "humanist conceptions of formal rationality and self-creating subjectivity cannot cope with the irrationality of actual experience" (192). Hays's reading of van der Rohe's project stresses the importance of a phenomenological, "posthumanist" discourse that challenges logical, grand narrative schemes and which recognizes the individual not in the humanistic conception of autonomous subject, but in terms of the intersubjective, dynamic relationship that exists between people and other objects (buildings, media, other individuals, etc.). In this regard, the individual can only be truly defined in relation to ever-changing external phenomena. Hays's description of Mies's work further illustrates this point and is thus worth quoting at length:

> Against the autonomous, formal object of humanism in which the viewer can grasp in purely mental space an antecedent logic, deciphering the relationships

continued on next page

For Trilling, it was literature that provided modern culture with a more complete conception of who and what the "authentic," or fully realized, individual was (33–47). One way it did this was by introducing the autobiography and the signification of the self, and not the other, as a viable subject for the written text. Another important movement of modernity, vis-à-vis literature, was the publication of Diderot's *Le Neveu de Rameau*. As the exemplar of the individual who existed in both camps of the social and the private, Trilling notes, Rameau's nephew was celebrated by Hegel as a "disintegrated," or an "alienated," consciousness. This form of consciousness is defined by an antagonism towards the external powers of society and the desire to be liberated from the imposed social circumstances of the communal structure, while at the same time being aware that one cannot be defined fully outside the context of the social framework. Only in this way, according to the proponents of this dichotomous psychosocial existence, can one then truly interpret the dynamics of his or her existence.

> between its parts and connecting every part to a coherent formal theme, the alternative posited by Mies is an object intractable to decoding by analysis of what is only immanent and apparent. The glass curtain wall, alternately transparent, reflective, or refractive depending on light conditions and viewing positions, absorbs, mirrors, or distorts the immediate, constantly changing images of city life and foregrounds the context as a physical and conceptual frame for understanding the building. And if this reading of Mies's project is thus far largely phenomenological, it is that very phenomenological reality of the metropolis "reflected" in the project that throws humanist conceptions of the subject into question, even as it is the vestiges of human thought that allow the reality to be gauged as unsatisfactory. (187)

Mies, taken here as an exemplar of the modern (anti-humanist) project, moves away from the teleological, "a priori categories of rational understanding" and towards the recognition of the contextualized, "temporal, historically developed, and irrational structure of society..." (190). "Architecture," as Lash tells us, "is in the world– in history, in ideology, in the sensuous facts of everyday existence" (287); in other words, it is part of that postmodern, phenomenal process that seeks as an alternative to a teleological, rational autonomy the resonance of subject-object relations.

In other words, Rameau's nephew, or, more specifically, his "morality," is the literary alternative to the purely Utopian, socially constricted/constructed, "noble," "sincere,' or "honest soul" belief of early modernity. The protagonist is not moral, immoral, or amoral—instead, he is an amalgamation of these three components. The hero of Diderot's tale is, existentially speaking, *engagé*, preoccupied with, and committed to, society, and with the "desire for place and position within society" (Trilling 28). But, unlike the so-called "sincere" individual, Rameau's nephew—embracing the essential components of the disintegrated consciousness—plays many roles, and wears the masks of his choice. This choice to exist diversely, to adopt a multitude of personae (in other words, to resonate between the sincere and authentic modes of being), according to many thinkers, was an essential tool for subjective self discovery and for developing an objective, thorough, *Weltanschauung*. Trilling points out, for instance, that Oscar Wilde wrote that "man is least himself when he talks in his own person. Give him a mask and he will tell you the truth," while Nietzsche echoed that "every profound spirit needs a mask" (Trilling 119). In refusing to be constricted by the preconceived images of what and who they should be, the role-playing, fragmented consciousnesses began to live the life of the more "existential" human being. Here, essentially, modernity starts to act upon the individual by saying that you can only define your true (or authentic) self by distancing—that is, alienating—your *self* from yourself (i.e., distinguishing between one's social and private existence).[5] (This

[5]In an attempt to clarify the distinction between sincerity and authenticity, Trilling, in a discussion in *Salmagundi*, states:

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idea of self-alienation, as the means for developing a more objective view of the self, coincides with Merleau-Ponty's ideas of the developmental strategy of self-alienation as the necessary component for developing personal identity mentioned earlier.)

Trilling's study is thus important in the context of my argument because his work, as I argue below, reminds us that postmodernity is a variant of modernity,[6] linked to modernity's "maelstrom of perpetual

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> It seems to me that sincerity has to do with one's relation to others, chiefly we know it in acts of communication. So that what one says is what one means, what one does is what one truly wants to do and has all the actuality it appears to have. In that sense sincerity is a public thing and...relates to one's public image, how other people think of you...The notion of authenticity seems to me a more private thing, though obviously it has its public aspects too. It is one's self who judges whether or not one is authentic, that is to say that one is following one's true desires, following the laws of one's true being without any modifications, without responding to any of the sanctions or seductions of society. One is what one is. How one know what one is one doesn't know but one doesn't go against one's impulses. (93–94)

[6]There are many arguments made in favour of the inextricability--the merging and blurred distinctions of classifying boundaries—between the postmodern and the modern. One of these, Lash's "Postmodernism or Modernism?: Social Theory Revisited," argues that modernist traits such as humanism, historicism, and external referentiality—characteristics that postmodernism supposedly rejects—actually comprise the postmodern landscape. In other words, Lash argues that postmodernism attempts, one, to restore humanism (independence of social actors over structural determination [163], two, to reconstitute the historical dimension, and, three, to develop a framework that is contextual—"*other*-referential"—rather than merely self-referential (164). Furthermore, the author maintains, it is twentieth-century modernism that gave rise to the anti-humanist, anti-historical, self-referential and avant-garde traditions we so readily regard as uniquely *post*modern. As Lash writes:

> ...I should like to maintain that what is characteristically understood in terms of a cultural paradigm (postmodernism) becoming pervasive in the past one or two decades is in fact much more characteristic of the set of modernist movements of the turn of the last century. (164)

For example, regarding referentiality, it is argued that the Derridean, reflexive, postmodern ethos of '*il n'y a pas hors du texte*'—the self-contained text, or work of art--is a defining characteristic of modernist architecture (170–72). It is seen, for instance in van der Rohe's constructions, where form became integral, first and foremost, to a building's structure, and not to its utilitarian role:

> For Mies van der Rohe...the form of a building was to follow not function--which would be a *hors du texte*—but the structure of the building itself. That is, van der Rohe's understanding of, say, glass was not in terms of light maximisation for a

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disintegration and renewal" (Berman 15) within which Rameau's literary nephew existed. Since, as I believe, the ideas of sincerity and authenticity are theoretical threads that help link the modern to the postmodern, we can state that our contemporary world dictates this same type of resonant interplay between social role-playing and individual self-assertion (or, generally, between objective and subjective spheres of being). In other words, Trilling's account helps to underscore the idea of the reciprocal nature of (post)modern existence. We may retain and regard, thus, the ideas of authenticity, sincerity, and disintegration as contributing to the overall meaning of the term "resonance" employed as a theoretical construct in this paper (i.e., the resonance of [post]modern culture).

Trilling's notions allow us to look at postmodernity in a unique way. For instance, when, in *Cafeteria America*, June Sochen talks about a contemporary "cafeteria society" that is "eclectic," "diverse," a "patchwork" of capricious individuals, she is describing a *Lebenswelt* of American culture that is constantly being broken down, a (post)modern, tempestuous society in which the private and public modes of existence meet and redefine themselves. As Sochen writes, the individual subject—

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building's users but instead involved with aesthetic, formal and structural properties...Thus the role of glass, as building material, was to reveal structure. This surely is the language of self-referentiality. (171)

Whether one agrees with Lash's idea(s) here or not, however, is to miss the point: it is important to take from this the notion that as a *theoretical construct*, the modern and the postmodern are bridgeable by their shared defining characteristics—qualities that have been attributed to each at different points in time by various thinkers (e.g., modernism and postmodernism each looked at from both a humanist and an anti-humanist perspective). This theoretical ambiguity is no doubt the result of the merging and blurring of distinctions between the actual *lived-world* states of the modern and the postmodern.

Trilling's authentic (modern) consciousness—can only exist within the realm of objective lived-body and lived-world social experience:

> Individual identity and national identity merge at some point. The very basis of a culture is the shared traits of its participants. People gain their sense of self from an exploration of themselves within a specific cultural context. (12)

Although Sochen goes on to assert that this cafeteria culture has produced an "everything goes" mentality in which "culture and individual have both succumbed to a nondiscriminatory, nonjudgemental approach to life" (12), the important thing to take away from her work is the inextricable link between culture and the individuals of that culture being made here—as one object of consciousness (e.g., the social) moves along in the frenzied, multifaceted pace of the (post)modern, so too does (and must) the other (e.g., the individual). The fragmented or disintegrated consciousnesses of the past foreshadow Sochen's "cafeteria" dweller; the eclectic spirit of the early-moderns now exists within a different context, and yet when Sochen describes the contemporary modes of existence there is an echo from Trilling's discussion of Rameau's nephew and his quasi-schizoid consciousness. Again, Sochen:

> The cafeteria, I believe, is the appropriate image. It aptly captures the variety, the speed, and the often indiscriminate way Americans choose their food, their games, and their identities. Americans compartmentalize their personalities, shelving undesirable or unusable parts, while creating new dimensions to present to the public. (12–13)

I suspect that Sochen is less than pleased at the existential condition of these individuals, ones who can be "packaged in much the same way as hamburgers" (13). Yet Sochen's general description of the multi-modal cafeteria-goer (who is constantly recycling and re-presenting new public personae) is, to an extent, reminiscent of the fragmented consciousness that was explored by Diderot and others who described an existentially resonant reality.

Obviously, though, the world is a different place than it was some 200 years ago—then, the need to break free of the stasis of regimented order probably required the individual to aggressively splinter the consciousness. Today the same sort of role-adoption is submerged in the level of choice, i.e., of consumerism, that envelops us.[7] In other words, in the past the alienated consciousness was a rare and splendid thing, for it helped to pursue an active, self-perceived, self-alienated mode of existence—the only true way, perhaps, to gain an unadulterated perspective of both the collective and private aspects of the shifting moral ground of early modernity. Today, though, one could argue, people exist in a lived-world in which there is no awareness of, no reflection upon, the individual's position within society. Thus, while Sochen describes a consciousness that is splintered, it can be thought of as a fragmentation without substance, an alienation from the self that passes beyond the complexity of the authentic-sincere fluctuation and into the static realm of material culture servitude. For Sochen there does not

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[7]As Hays notes, "duplication, heterogeneity, schizophrenia, alterity, and difference are the *leitworte* of the postmodern posthumanist subject...a subject now splintered not merely by modernist reification but by utterly new and heretofore unimaginable desires and acts of consumption" (282).

exist a postmodern equivalent of a lived-world in which the individual, like Rameau's nephew, moves through life as an existential being, consciously and willingly engaged in a world she knows is as much a part of her as she is of it.

Rameau's nephew accepted his fate even as he attempted to surpass the role that had been assigned to him. Acutely aware of the need to fragment his being so that he may exist wholly for himself, he is part of that modern mechanism that attempts to break down the sincere, objective self with the goal to rebuild a greater, authentic, subjective self. Conversely, the disintegration of Sochen's cafeteria-goer does not result in the same sort of reintegration of self, the existential realization of authenticity, of Diderot's protagonist. Taken in this way, Berman's modern "maelstrom of perpetual disintegration and renewal" has been thus truncated here to a mere postmodern maelstrom of perpetual disintegration (i.e., pure schizophrenia). It is clear, then, that what is needed is a way to rethink a notion of a contemporary existential being who lives through the world even as she recognizes the world working through her. By doing so, we can fully situate a cognizant postmodern subject within the continuum of modernity.

An important lesson of the phenomenologists is that, as conscious beings, we are both *of* the world and *in* the world, and that to actively *be* in the world is to reflect upon that being, i.e., that lived-body and that lived-world existence. In many ways, (post)modernity has clouded our ability to articulate, or to comprehend, our being-in-the-world. The constituents of time, memory, and history, become displaced and distorted as media and other phenomena define new modes of existence for us. Sochen, for instance, notes how the traditions of the family have

lost their primary position in the emotional, intellectual, and recreational lives of the capricious cafeteria-dwellers (41). Similarly, in *No Sense of Place* Joshua Meyrowitz shows how the electronic media have altered the workings of traditional modes of existence, through, among other things, the blurring of distinctions between public and private spheres and the merging of various group identities (131–59; 307-29).

Taken in this way, the condition of (post)modernity provides a chance to study the *effects* of mass-media on social behaviour. To an extent, this type of analysis is invaluable, for it is an attempt to recognize and define elements of the lived-world that change and shape us every day. But it is also evident that this form of study often disregards *how* and *why* meaning is created by people within this (post)modern context. That is, it removes from its plane of study the realities of *empowered* existence that experience-based approaches attempt to recover. As we shall see, a resonant approach to a study of (post)modern culture attempts to reconcile—to produce new possibilities for understanding—the intra- (private) and intersubjective (collective) nature of social existence. In his way, Rameau's nephew, knowingly engaged in the world as an agent of his existence while simultaneously a constituent of a world to which he is inextricably bound, becomes the exemplar for a study of (post)modernity through which ideas of reversibility and intersubjectivity—of resonance—may be passed.

It is this state of *knowing* that one is in and of the world that allows individuals to function in multiple-environments, to adopt various roles (the legacy of *Le Neveu de Rameau*), and to disrupt or reconstitute the prevailing order while simultaneously constituting part of that dominant social matrix. In his book *Time Passages*, for example,

George Lipsitz talks about the "dissembling" "carnival" traditions of North American society, sensibilities that seek to invert the regimented order of established society (7–17). These themes—individuals living for themselves and for or in the world simultaneously, individuals using the products of popular culture as a response to societal pressures and conventions—are thus very much tied to the idea of Existential man and woman, and have been dealt with by artists and writers countless times in the past.[8] The idea that individuals have control and choice and do exist as individuals in a collective world to which they are necessarily bound (i.e., that they are, ultimately, not non-reflective, disempowered, but reflective, empowered creatures) is also seen in the work of Michel de Certeau.

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[8]In Henry James's short story "The Private Life," for instance, we are presented with a portrait of a man who exists simultaneously in time and space as a brilliant writer (in-the-world) and as a social celebrity (for-the-world). In this story, James illustrates how the artist must necessarily, as a consequence of modernity, live in each mutually bounded realm of the public and private domain. Michelangelo Antonioni's film *Blow-Up* deals with the similar question of artists and their conception of their external representations. However, unlike James, Antonioni wishes to render the artist and his artistic creations mutually exclusive; in *Blow-Up*, the artist's inability to separate his actual existence from that of his art—his adherence to a purely intrasubjective, solipsistic ideology—leads literally to his total removal from the "objective" reality of the film's mise-en-scène.

In a similar vein, we may think of the carnival dweller as that individual who also lives in the dual mode of for-the-world and in-the-world; individuals exist in society and tacitly accept the rules and regulations that govern it, and yet at the same time they move beyond these restrictions by allowing themselves to engage in the liberating practices of popular culture. As Lipsitz notes:

> Carnival traditions have provided [an] important frame of reception for American popular culture since World War II. Bourdieu speaks of popular forms that "satisfy the taste for and sense of revelry, the free speaking and hearty laughter which liberate by setting the social world head over heels, overturning conventions and proprieties." Literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin identifies these sensibilities as the essence of carnival—ritualized celebrations oriented around the passions of plenitude, inversions of the social order, and mocking laughter designed to "uncrown power." (15–16)

In *The Practice of Everyday Life* de Certeau discusses the "tactics" consumers ("poets of their own acts") use to negotiate their individual needs within the scope of an objectifying market culture. He writes:

> In any case, the consumer cannot be identified or qualified by the newspapers or commercial products he assimilates: between the person (who uses them) and these products (indexes of the "order" which is imposed on him), there is a gap of varying proportions opened up by the use that he makes of them.[9] (32)

De Certeau's consumer, or "ordinary man" (sic), is the "common" hero of the lived-world; she is the fully realized cafeteria-dweller, finally, triumphantly, reintegrated after so much fragmentation. To understand her is not to describe just the effects of a (post)modern society on her lifestyle, but to recognize and comprehend the ways that she self-consciously uses or interacts with the phenomena of a given culture. Considered in this way, the "everyday" person, the "hero" of the streets, employing the practices of day-to-day activity—ranging from the use in language of "rhetorical alterations" such as metaphor, ellipsis, metonymy, and so on, to countless other quotidian practices such as reading, cooking, dwelling, etc. (de Certeau, 40)—is no longer an unreflecting, naive consumer, but a conscious, resonant being who is able to existentially place herself as an individual among a sea of collective identities. The hero of de Certeau's *Lebenswelt* is thus tied in many ways to the consciousness of the modern, passed down through

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[9]He adds, "use must thus be analyzed in itself." That is, we must revert to a study of how people *perform within* their social world, and not just how the sociocultural apparatus *acts upon* individuals

time from Diderot on. This legacy, then, rooted in the consciousnesses of the past, brings to the postmodern a unique sense of a being-in-the-world/making-the-world duality. In other words, it is apparent that the condition we call "postmodernity," or, more precisely, the individuals we call "postmoderns," can and do exist spatiotemporally—and can thus be studied—in the existential modes of constituent and constituted, i.e., as both subjects and objects.

Similarly, in his book *The Five Myths of Television Power*, Douglas Davis debunks the prevalent notion that television controls and shapes the lives of a collective, faceless, objectified mass of American society. He argues that the influence of television on American voting patterns, for example, is considerably less than is commonly assumed by media and election campaign managers alike. As he notes, the uses and needs of *individuals* (as opposed to faceless, demographically defined voting *populations*) subvert political media campaigns that assume that the voting public are unwilling and unable to gather and analyze political messages longer than the 30 second-or-less soundbites of contemporary election-ad programming. Davis notes, for example, that the 1992 presidential election in the United States saw voters and politicians reject the tradition of the vapid negative-ad spots of previous campaigns in favour of a more in-depth and extended engagement with the issues (for instance, the use of 800 numbers to examine campaign platforms and speeches abbreviated by network news and political ads, or the extended debates that saw undecided voters directly addressing the three presidential candidates). "Every sign," Davis writes, "indicates that [the voter] hungers for precisely the sustenance denied by fast-paced network TV news or killer soundbite—or bit—spots" (76). These observations

underscore Davis's main premise, namely that the myth of the omnipotent TV deity is precisely that—a myth, an overestimation of the power of television, a view of the media that denies the empowering practices of individual lives:

> Those who cede the TV God demonic powers cede him precisely the arrogance and authority he needs. When well-meaning critics like Marie Winn, Neil Postman, and Jerry Mander find TV at the core of virtually every problem, from illiteracy to rape, they indirectly enhance the value of every televised minute...They ignore the *Real*, the defining power of history, of personal heritage, of events, of income, of powerful competing media (such as the book, the film, and the computer), of personality—and most of all the obdurate human mind. (34)

Davis, like de Certeau, wishes to consider the way individuals act upon the world (i.e., as knowing, capable subjects), in contrast to those investigations that look at the effects of the world upon our daily, collective lives. Specifically, in regard to television, Davis is acknowledging the existence of an existential creature who is able to cognizantly and confidently determine the quantity and quality of information entering his or her world, according to his or her needs. Thus, when he asks, "why are we served now by multiple channels, as well as multiple products?" his answer is the implicit recognition of our (post)modern essence, our need to explore the myriad possibilities of our lived-world—a fragmented existence that is bound to the ever-changing

cultural context of the disruptive Carnival and the capricious Cafeteria.[10] Why are we served by hundreds of channels and an infinite array of products? "Because we *demand* them, with our dollars, and with our impassioned zapping, and channel switching. Our message to the medium is: *Break into a thousand parts. Serve me, not yourself*" (91).

(It is fair to say, however, that in many respects, individuals *do* exist as objects of a mediated society, passively attuned to an influx of images-in-the-world over which they have little or no control [it is virtually impossible, after all, to be anywhere that has not been touched in some way by technology]. The world, of course, does act upon us—we are, on one hand, made by, or defined through, social and cultural structures. On the other hand, we must be aware that due to our mere presence in the world, we are also self-perceiving, tactical, resonant beings, in touch with the representations and practices of our *Lebenswelt*—therefore, we also constitute the sociocultural world. In other words, [post]modern individuals have *choice*, a choice that enables them to employ or deploy the influx of, say, media images, according to what they require from their day-to-day existence.[11] Many people would

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[10]For instance, as Davis notes:

> ...the critical lesson of the [1992 presidential] campaign is that a profound cultural change had occurred in the electorate, not the media. What we want, what we expect now from the means of communication and of the political leaders who serve us is totally different from what was delivered, or expected, in the past. Needless to say, these needs are highly individuated. They are looser, freer, less iconic, verging on the anarchic. (91)

[11]Obviously there are many people in the world who have only limited choice, these are not, however, the individuals I am discussing here. The moderns, or postmoderns, are those consumer-culture groups who are immersed in the frenzied pace and goods-laden world of North American and Western European societies

argue, of course, that being able to turn the TV on or off, or selecting from countless aisles at a grocery store, hardly constitutes choice. Yet we must remember—and this is the crux of my argument—that these components of [post]modern culture—television, films, fast-food, fashion, pop icons, etc.—are part of our lived-world. This is not to accept blindly all the negative and evil components of our culture [and there are many], but it is a recognition that because television and other media phenomena are in the world [after all, most of these elements did not just appear, suddenly, out of thin air, but have evolved within the *Lebenswelt* over time], and therefore help *make* the world [as much as we, as individuals, help compose the world], they must be thought of and talked about as integral parts of our resonant reality.)

As Trilling, de Certeau, Davis, and other cultural analysts suggest, the meeting-ground of people and the forces of everyday life is a dynamic, contextually designated space. In general terms, these writers imply a reciprocity of experience that sees the individual contributing to and defining social and cultural structures even as those structures encroach upon and shape the individual. Trilling's study, then, allows us to make a historical argument for this reciprocal nature of our existence. His work, an account of the sincere (the social, the structurally defined) and authentic (the individual, the empowered) modes of existence, allows us to trace the path of this existential resonance from early modernity to our present (post)modern condition.

(b) Resonance and Media: McLuhan's *Laws of Media*

It can be argued that the resonant qualities of, one, the reversibility and intersubjectivity theses of Merleau-Ponty and Schutz's

phenomenology, and, two, Trilling's literary-historical examination of the sincere-authentic, find their counterpart in the media work of Marshall McLuhan. To understand this, one must first look at his *Laws of Media* and see how they relate to a comprehension of the lived-world.

McLuhan's work is important to our work here, for his ideas about the media derive from the notion of dynamic *figure-ground* relations. These terms, borrowed from Gestalt psychology, take on a primary position in McLuhan's final work, and they can be regarded in this context as the most crucial component in the consideration of all human communication, and hence, meaning. The concepts figure and ground are used in order to understand or explain media: there must exist, McLuhan would argue, a symbiotic relationship between these two spheres in order to foster a meaningful interplay between the various extensions—"whether language, or laws, or ideas and hypotheses, or tools, or clothing, or computers" (93)—of humankind. For McLuhan, these extensions, these human "artefacts" (or phenomena) of the lived-world, represent the *media-essence of existence*, a lived-world condition that can be understood in the light of our resonance thesis. How are the ideas of figure and ground related to our discussion of the media-world of (post)modernity? Let us sketch out McLuhan's paradigm so that we may see how his work constitutes a continuum in the resonant (i.e., the reversible, experience-based) approach to culture.

At the beginning of his work, the author outlines the crucial concepts of figure and ground:

> 'Figure' and 'ground' [borrowed from Gestalt psychology]...have here been broadened to embrace the whole structure of perception and of consciousness. All situations

> comprise an area of attention (figure) and a very much larger area of inattention (ground). The two continually coerce and play with each other across a common outline or boundary or interval that serves to define both simultaneously. The shape of one conforms exactly to the shape of the other. Figures rise out of, and recede back into, ground, which is con-figurational and comprises all other available figures at once. (5)

Figure and ground trade off with each other in the realm of experience so that at any given time figure may precede ground and vice versa: "For example," McLuhan writes, "at a lecture, attention will shift from the speaker's words to his gestures, to the hum of the lights or to street sounds, to the feel of the chair or to a memory or association or smell" (5). There is thus an oscillation, an existential back-and-forth, between figure and ground, between what is perceived as text and that which is pushed to the existential periphery of the extra-textual. "Once the old ground becomes content of a new situation," he states, "it appears to ordinary attention as aesthetic figure" (5).

There is thus a *reversible* relation between figure and ground, one that can be linked to the phenomenological exchange between subject and object, and, similarly, to the (post)modern scenario of multivalent (i.e., simultaneous, or fluctuating) social and individual experience. What I am suggesting is that McLuhan's work is an important component in the resonant study of (post)modern culture; what he shares with the thinkers we have discussed is the recognition that human beings are both in and of the world, that existence can only be understood fully in the context of being and making, of touching and

being touched, of living both intra- and intersubjectively. When McLuhan cites Heraclitus's assertion that "man himself is part of his surroundings and not merely a contained or detachable figure..." (36), the former is echoing the phenomenological essence of *être-au-monde*, reminding us that a recognition of others—of our collective being-present-to-the-world—is a necessary component for our individual makeup (our distinctive being-alive-in-the-world).

Most importantly, the ideas of figure and ground are essential to McLuhan's attempt to fortify a "new science," to establish a media study that incorporates and understands the impact of a resonant lived-world. McLuhan's goal is to retrieve a notion of an "acoustic" sensibility, one that overcomes the visual, linear (diachronic), and static modes of thought. For McLuhan, a synchronic, multivalent, acoustic space retrieves "the resonant interval between figure and ground" (161). McLuhan makes this distinction between acoustic and visual space more explicit:

> Acoustic space is a complete contrast to visual space in all of its properties...visual space, created by intensifying and separating that sense from interplay with the others, is an infinite container, linear and continuous, homogeneous and uniform. Acoustic space, always penetrated by tactility and other senses, is spherical, discontinuous, non-homogeneous, resonant, and dynamic Visual space is structured as static, abstract figure minus a ground; acoustic space is a flux in which figure and ground rub against and transform each other. (33)

As McLuhan explains, an acoustic, verbal space—a lived-world space of dynamic figure-ground, subject-object potentialities—existed before the intervention of a linear, Euclidean visual space (32–38); he goes on to suggest that our modern era is now moving into a "post-Euclidean" acoustic space (39–66). This reclamation of an acoustic world-view is due to the "new ground of instantaneous electric information" (37–38), i.e., the emergence and affirmation of a media-culture. This media culture described by McLuhan is thus a resonant one, and can be understood by using the phenomenological notions of reversibility and intersubjectivity and Trilling's related notion of a polysemic, (post)modern consciousness.

In other words, a (post)modern media culture dictates that we cannot isolate a being-of-the-world from a being-in-the-world, a ground from a figure, an object from a subject:

> In acoustic space, which involves the dynamic interaction of a figure as a part of its ground, each thing creates its own space; that is, it reshapes the ground even as it is shaped by the ground. (41)

It reshapes the ground even as it is shaped by the ground—that is to say, we, as individuals, as identifiable figures or subjects, influence the world even as the world—the horizon of multidimensional experience—influences us.

For McLuhan, this "audile-tactile Gestalt" (42) of figure-ground interplay represents the movement towards a non-linear, discontinuous, right-hemisphere culture (67–91). This state-of-being is contrasted by a written, naming, logical, mathematical, and linear left-hemisphere

arrangement, one that is incompatible with the activities of a post-literate media society.[12] (As Douglas Davis points our, today's literacy is "grounded in unbounded choice...it is a literacy of sharpened tastes, of particular needs" [111].) The right-hemisphere individual simultaneously exists in the media world as part of a larger, "tribal" whole, a collective order generated from the synthesis of multiple viewpoints. Because the right-hemisphere emphasizes the Gestalt, the emotional, and the perception of abstract patterns (68), it is thus linked to TV viewing (71–73). For the author, TV viewing is part of that lived-process which accommodates the (post)modern essence of the resonant, the polysemic, and the erratic:

> The current spate of dyslexia and other reading difficulties...is a direct result of TV and other electric media

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[12]Thus said, we must note that the interplay of figure and ground *within* a right-hemisphere framework/culture also exists *between* left- *and* right-hemisphere sensibilities. As McLuhan writes:

> A variety of factors can give salience or dominance either to the right (simultaneous and acoustic) hemisphere of the brain, or to the left (lineal and visual). But no matter how extreme the dominance of either hemisphere in particular culture, there is always some degree of interplay, thanks to the *corpus callosum*, that part of the nervous system which bridges the hemispheres. (76)

This exchange between the hemispheres is equally important in the consideration of a resonant postmodern society as is the notion of figure-ground reversibility within right-hemisphere thinking. McLuhan's statement here reminds us that we are never fully one or the other, that is, it is impossible to isolate a single moment of right-hemisphere, acoustic existence that is not influenced by a visual, left hemisphere bias. This fact is perhaps the greatest contribution to the vertiginous reality of the twentieth century. Again, McLuhan:

> The paradox today is that the ground of the latest Western technologies is electronic and simultaneous, and thus is structurally right-hemisphere and 'Oriental' and oral in its nature and its effects...Still the overwhelming pattern of procedures in the Western world remains lineal, sequential, and connected in political and legal institutions, and also in education and commerce, but not in entertainment and art. A formula for complete chaos!

> pressuring us into returning to the right hemisphere. Dyslexia is the inability to adopt a single, fixed point of view with respect to all letters and words: conversely, it consists of approaching letters and words [i.e., texts] from many points of view simultaneously (right-hemisphere fashion), minus the assumption that any one way is solely correct. (76)

The right-hemisphered, "dyslexic" individual, altered by the lived-world of electronic media such as television, does not comprehend the world primarily in a linear, diachronic fashion. As Davis notes, in our contemporary culture, we can no longer regard television in the conventional notion of the "one-eyed, one-way monolith" any more than we can define literacy as traditional reading and writing:

> ...words are no longer words alone but ingredients in the moving landscapes wrought by video, computers, and optical discs [that provoke] alternative skills...When a child learns to type, draw, and store words on his personal computer at the age of seven or eight, he taps powers of invention and recall beyond anything the average student, chalk and tablet in hand one hundred years ago. (106)

The (post)modern individual is part of that frenetic (post)modern makeup that reminds us of Trilling's disintegrated consciousness, Sochen's "cafeteria-dweller," de Certeau's "hero," and Lipsitz's "carnival" creature. In other words, we see in these seemingly unrelated ideas a common conception of a lived-world being who no longer thinks and/or acts in the tradition of continuity, of diachronic movement, of visual space. Since the mediated world of (post)modernity dictates that we perform in

a right-hemisphere mode, that is, as simultaneous beings, we must look at ourselves from this perspective of resonant (reversible) relations. We are creatures, for instance, who are acted upon by television, but at the same time, we must also recognize the "powerful contemporary outside culture brought to the screen by those who watch and respond to TV at the earliest age" (Davis 107). Once again we return to the idea that our existence is composed of a mixture of subjective and objective moments, a perpetual figure-ground crossover of making, and being made by, the world.

Yet McLuhan's relation to the resonance thesis goes beyond the idea of figure-ground reversibility, and extends to his tetrad paradigm. The tetrad—the dynamic relationship between artifacts and ideas—is presented to us by McLuhan as the vital "poetic" structure necessary to understand the lived-world. The tetrad form understands that every human technology and artifact can, at any given time, *enhance*, *retrieve*, *obsolesce*, or *reverse into* another aspect of any number of related modes of being. For example, the author gives the very simple example of the *cigarette* in its tetrad form:

calm and poise	nervousness, addiction
ritual, group security	awkwardness, loneliness

Read in its proper manner, then, the cigarette in tetrad mode is seen to *enhance* calm and poise, *retrieve* ritual and group security, *obsolesce* awkwardness and loneliness, and, finally, if pushed to its useful limit, *reverse into* nervousness and addiction.[13] As McLuhan writes, these

[13]McLuhan explains further how the tetrad works.

continued on next page

tetrads are "resonant, appositional, and metamorphic" (127); in other words, they are part of the dynamic, right-hemisphere interplay between figure and ground.[14]

The tetrad, then, as it maps out the highly charged network of connecting patterns, helps us to understand and explore the resonance of a media culture; its basic form can be used to study not only simple artefacts like the cigarette, but the entire scope of human (inter)activity. Above all, it provides an access to the lived-world and to the lived-body: "The tetrads of our science are not based on a theory or set of concepts, but rather rely on observation, and on experience, and on percepts" (116). When we study a human artefact like television, for instance, we must consider it to be an extension, an artefact, of ourselves, an "outering" and "uttering" of "the human body or psyche, private or corporate" (116). As McLuhan suggests, all lived-world artefacts are

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> There is no 'right way' to 'read' a tetrad, as the parts are simultaneous. But when 'read' either left-right or top-bottom (Enhance is to Retrieve as Reverse is to Obsolesce, etc.), or the reverse, the proportions and metaphor- or word-structure should appear. .(furthermore) a chain (of tetrads) forms when, for example, one tetrad's reversal (or retrieval, etc.) provides the subject of the next tetrad, or provides the enhancement (etc.) or the next tetrad. Clusters form where a group of tetrads has one or another of the four laws in common, as when several different media each obsolesce visual bias, or retrieve oral forms, or reverse into the same mode of culture. (130)

The tetrad is thus part of an entire interrelated web of significations, suggesting that human artefacts can only be comprehended fully within a contextual framework. This can be used to argue against theories that see artefacts (e.g., television) as solely belonging to themselves—as objects—and which therefore deny that artefact's dynamic relation to other human activity and artefacts (for instance, the dialogue between TV and memory, or, as McLuhan suggests, television contributing to the obsolescing of radio, film, and a "point of view" [159]).

[14]"The tetrads of *Laws of Media* present not sequential but simultaneous facets of media effects. That is to say, they are right-hemisphere in character, and each tetrad comprises two figures and two grounds in proportion to each other. This proportion of ratios is not made of imposed theoretical classifications...but are structurally inherent in each of our artefacts and procedures" (127).

"speech...translations of us the users, from one form into another form: metaphors" (116). Our being-in-the-world thus manifests itself in our creative output, ranging from language to film and television to mathematical thought and philosophical endeavours. To know the world of television, then, is to recognize that it is in the world as an extension of ourselves, as part of the metaphorical and grammatical (i.e., all human activity as a "linguistic" entity [128]) relationship between a world as it is, acting upon us, and a world that is shaped by individual and collective identities.

McLuhan's contribution to our resonant approach to media studies, then, becomes quite apparent: the phenomena of the lived-world (TV, film, computers, etc.), considered as an inextricable part of our embodied existence, must necessarily be brought to light in the context of our personal and communal experience. This is the value, then, of the figure-ground essence of the tetrad: for the first time, we are provided with a paradigm of thought that seeks to understand and explore the existential reality of the media world, i.e., media as metaphor, media as language, media as embodied existence and expression. As McLuhan writes:

> All human artefacts are human utterances, or outerings, and as such they are linguistic and rhetorical entities. At the same time, the etymology [or ontology] of all human technologies is to be found in the human body itself: they are, as it were, prosthetic devices, mutations, metaphors of the body or its parts. The tetrad is exegesis on four levels, showing not the mythic, but the logos-structure of each

> artefact, and giving its four 'parts' as metaphor, or word. (128)

McLuhan's ontology thus sees being-in-the-world originating with the human body and extending outward into the world of bodily action and thought. His media laws, imbedded in the resonant framework of the poetic (reversible and synchronic) tetrad, shift our attention from media and its technologies as being solely static objects-in-the-world, towards a recognition of these products as also being subjective extensions of our making-the-world. When he writes, then, that "insofar as the tetrads are a means of focusing awareness of hidden of unobserved qualities in our culture and technology they act phenomenologically" (128), he is stating that there is an existential interplay between things and people, that to understand media is to study the patterns of use within a day-to-day context. Television, can, on one hand, be seen as an object in time and space that remains static in relation to our lives—while being a source of entertainment or information, it is nonetheless outside the realm of intersubjective (dynamic) experience. On the other hand, we can also recognize it as that medium which coexists with us, whose meaning shifts in relation to our ever-changing sociocultural context (I will flesh this idea out in the subsequent chapters). It is this dynamic, experiential aspect of media that McLuhan's tetrads attempt to articulate.

By recognizing media as extensions of ourselves, as part of the everyday, McLuhan, like Trilling, is describing a world where social and cultural artifacts—the objective (structural) realm of ideas, rules, technologies, institutions, etc.—are shaped as much by us as we are by them. Consequently, media technologies, to take one example from the structural sphere, cannot be seen solely as malevolent objects that serve

to enslave or transmogrify us, since our relationship with them is based on reciprocity. As McLuhan's dynamic conception of media builds upon Trilling's rendering of the modern *Lebenswelt*, our own notion of what a resonant approach towards (post)modern culture is concerned with begins to take shape.

CHAPTER 3

I. Resonant Media: Film and Television

What I have attempted to illustrate thus far, by way of an exploration of its derivation, is the usefulness of the idea of resonance for helping us understand the media in a (post)modern context. Resonance, influenced by the phenomenological ideas of reversibility and intersubjectivity, Trilling's ideas of sincerity and authenticity, and McLuhan's poetic media laws, allows us to look at certain media in the light of fluctuating and dynamic subject-object interactivity. According to the resonance thesis, the relationship between people, and the relationship between people and things, is a very meaningful and dynamic one; it can be shown, for example, that film and television are part of the intersubjective matrix that comprises the lived-world. That is, we can look at TV and film as not mere static objects of our senses but dynamic subjects that have the ability to speak to us, to make us feel, to make us remember and to help us understand In sum, the works of Sobchack, Nelson, and Singer that I rely on in this chapter each look at the different ways that film and television contexts can be discussed by looking at subject-object resonance. As such we can begin to look in novel ways at how we relate to these phenomena—for example, television as that which passes beyond the realm of the linear, diachronic subject/viewer-object/text framework and into the scope of a more synchronic, meaningful subject/viewer-subject/(con)text relationship.

Alongside this description of resonant (simultaneous, reversible, intersubjective, acoustic, etc.) approaches to media study is the critique of not only those studies that regard certain phenomena as objects only (those that do not consider the dynamic subject-object, or figure-ground,

interplay within a viewing context, e.g., the relationship we have with other people within the film theatre environment) but a request for more cultural students—like Singer—to become their own objects of analysis, to allow their experience to become part of the interplay between people and media. That is, we should like to see the "text" incorporated into the intersubjective context, the social matrix that is, for example, the film-viewer-critic relationship. This is what I keep in mind, then, as I "go" to the movies at the end of this chapter.

(a) Sobchack: Resonant Film

Vivian Sobchack's *Address of the Eye* is a phenomenological approach to film studies. That is, she uses certain phenomenological ideas to promote the notion that each component of the film-going experience—the film spectator and the film itself—exists, in one form or another, in both the objective and subjective moments of a being-in-the-world. Ultimately, then, we can say that Sobchack's work is a theory of *resonance* that looks at how people and films interact in a reversible and dynamic encounter with each other.

Sobchack's work emphasizes the reversible and intersubjective existence of people and things within the film-going context; it attempts to show how filmmaker, film, and spectator, are both *viewers viewing*, and *viewers viewed*, i.e.,

> engaged as participants in dynamically and directionally reversible acts the reflexively and reflectively constitute the *perception of expression* and the *expression of perception*. (5)

That is, each component of the film experience has not only the capacity to be sensed (e.g., an object of the eye, an expression of perception), but

likewise the capacity to sense (i.e., a subjective eye/I, a perception of expression). Thus, the filmmaker, spectator, and the film itself all are able to experience the world and to express those experiences of that being-in-the-world. In the end, then, cinematic communication is based on an intersubjective (i.e., reversible and resonant) relationship between subjects and objects, that is, between subjective "embodiment" and objective "enworldedness" (4).

For instance, a film's body—the film in its role as perceiving subject—has the capacity not just to have textual (e.g., diagetic) sense, but to make sense through its unique communicative apparatus, in the same way we use our faculties to comprehend the world around us.[15] The film is thus that entity which both perceives and expresses the experiences of the *Lebenswelt*, and that, which, allows us to see what it sees in ways that we cannot ourselves perceive. For instance, a film's facial close-up allows me to see the details of that visage in a way that my vision cannot (185). In this manner the film as perceiver shares with me its unique perspective on the world; together we share a *community of time and space* (Schutz 163), and together we (film and viewer) make meaning out of this intersubjective relationship.

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[15]This capacity for the film to perceive cannot be understood by breaking down the film to its technical and instrumental components. As Sobchack notes:

> ...while they enable the commutation of perception and expression that is the film, neither the camera nor projector (nor lenses, editorial equipment, optical printers, sound recording and transfer equipment, screen, et al.) are themselves the film we experience and see, which itself visually signifies vision as visible and significant experience. The film is a dynamic and synoptic gestalt that cannot be reduced to its mechanisms, much as a human perception and intentional conduct cannot be reduced to or explained in terms of its physiological and anatomical source... (169)

Sobchack's work is thus important since it is part of the continuum of subject-object studies that we can claim to be resonant. Like McLuhan's work, Sobchack's inquiry is a unique way of looking at the media of the lived-world, a world in which people and things coexist in the objective and subjective realms. Sobchack's work is important, for instance, because it views film as not just as an object for perception, but also as a subject of perception and expression (167). In this way the filmic experience—what it has captured in its perceptive field and how it has expressed that perception—and my experience, become linked. We share moments of intersubjectivity, whereby the film is no longer solely an object of my vision, but is linked to a shared subjectivity that allows me to reconceive or reappropriate the film in meaningful ways. (I will touch more upon these interactive moments in the final section of this chapter.)

(b) Nelson: Resonant TV (I Remember Reruns)

In *Logics of Television*, both Mary Ann Doane and Patricia Mellencamp describe television in terms of time: Doane states that "the major category of television is time" (222), while Mellencamp refers to American network television as a "disciplinary time machine" (240). For these writers, the continuum of televisual time—precisely, television's temporally constituted "flow"—is that stable feature, which, according to Doane, constitutes "television's basis, its principle of structuration, as well as its persistent reference" (222). Time, then, is regarded by these writers as the unshakable ground in which the televisual text is cemented firmly. These articles, then, do not frame time around some abstract, transcendent notion about human existence and memory.

Instead, the temporal sphere is regarded as a powerful political agent, a "gendered, hierarchized commodity capitalizing on leisure" (240). What all this amounts to is a concept of televisual temporality that is completely textual—a notion of TV time that is about and for itself exclusively. To understand this better, one must look at Mellencamp's idea of memory, an integral constituent of the TV time machine.

For Mellencamp, as for Doane and Stephen Heath, the nature of television removes the agency of memory (Doane 227; Heath 279); memories generated through TV via reruns, remakes, and parodies, do not reflect upon the experiences of individuals so much as they do upon the medium itself. "TV schedules memories of television," Mellencamp writes, presumably leading to Benjamin's notion of an "atrophied" experience (241). Thus, the subjective experience of individuals—memories of the televisual text itself and the memory residue that is detonated by that televisual text (that is, memories of lived experience or what I would call "extra-televisual" memory)—is negated by the objective sphere of a common TV viewing process.[16] Hence, "TV's history...belongs to everyone" (Mellencamp 241).

While one might agree with Mellencamp's assertion that, on one level, "TV triggers memories of TV in an endless chain of TV referentiality"

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[16]Television's apparent built-in bias against "pastness" (i.e., memories or lived-experiences) is also expressed in Neil Postman's *Amusing Ourselves to Death*. The author specifically targets TV news and its "Now...this" catchphrase as an example of how television dictates short attention spans for its viewers, so that

> there is no murder so brutal, no earthquake so devastating, no political blunder so costly—for that matter, no ball score so tantalizing or weather report so threatening—that it cannot be erased from our minds by a newscaster saying, "Now...this." (99)

(242), it is difficult to imagine that TV-generated memory refers exclusively to (past) televisual text(s). That is, an argument can be made which conceives of TV as an object that can, and does, set off what Mellencamp calls involuntary or personal memory (242). Taken as such, we can see the concept of not only memory but televisual time per se (as conceived by Mellencamp, Doane, Heath et al.) being renegotiated as a network of complex associations that moves beyond the strict notion of the televisual text and incorporates (inter)subjective experience as a locus of study as well. Here the paradigm of TV time is uprooted from its hierarchized, stable ground, and infused with another variant of our resonant approach to media studies—in this case, a method of studying TV memory (a memory that is affected by reruns) which, like Sobchack's work, challenges traditional text-centred (text-as-static-object) approaches.

In Jenny L. Nelson's "The Dislocation of Time: A Phenomenology of Television Viewing," the author attempts, by way of an overview of the television rerun, to illustrate how the latter permits one to move beyond the "confines" of television, thus allowing a conception of the televisual experience that rejects the viewer as a mere "'decoder' of already-speaking significations embodied in a particular televisual text" (91). Like Mellencamp, Doane, and Heath, Nelson posits a televisual functioning that is situated in and inextricably bound to a temporal mode. While Nelson regards the flow of televisual experience—for her, essentially, a stream of television reruns[17]—as being defined by time, it is considered,

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[17]Nelson notes that TV primetime—in essence, what I would call "fresh" programming—is subsumed by an ocean of pre- and post-primetime rerun scheduling; I would add to

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ultimately, to be an unbridled, "open-ended" field of possibility, where "signifiers lose their defining power, images are dislodged from their original context, and our perceptual reality is subtly redefined" (91). In this way television (specifically, the TV rerun) is in that position to interact meaningfully with us, whereby its perception, its vision, is able to trigger in us memories that have been forgotten.

The result of this is that the whole televisual context becomes based on a much more complex text-viewer dynamic than some others would suggest. "I do not merely receive the televisual," Nelson writes, "but I can switch it on and take it up *in addition to my own vision* [emphasis added]" (91). Thus the televisual experience becomes more than an experience of television itself. When we watch TV, particularly (or, perhaps, exclusively) programs that we have viewed or experienced before—what Nelson refers to as "rerun-as-rerun"[18]—we are not merely recalling the formal aspects of a televisual text, but instead are immediately and irrevocably attuned to a web of past-lived experience(s). Nelson writes:

Nelson's argument that commercials, in a limited sense (temporally speaking, as their broadcast life, however ubiquitous, is nonetheless short-lived) are reruns as well, and are hence discrete, meaningful televisual experiences. (Camille Paglia refers to ads as "soothing litanies that make us feel safe and familiar and at home in the strange modern world" [54].)

[18]We must be aware of the fact that not everybody experiences TV reruns-as-reruns; indeed, in many instances we encounter televisual texts that, having been broadcast previously, are viewed by us for the first time. Nelson refers to these viewings as "rerun-as-first-run," and in many ways this dynamic shares in the complexity of associations produced from watching rerun-as-rerun. Nelson writes:

> I experience a rerun-as-first-run in terms of my present interpretive scheme, which is different than the expressive schemes of [the past]. Yet, I learn to see the ways in which these old TV programs open up a horizon for television as it is now. I can see the present in the contours of the past, and vice versa (88).

> [in the experience of rerun-as-rerun] I can repeat my lived experience in "free production" in that I can turn my attention to any phase of the experience that I choose: to the program itself, to the era it represents, or to aspects of my own life experiences during that time (86)

In this respect, one can see how the experience of rerun-as-rerun allows for Mellencamp's notion of a televisual remembrance (a voluntary, rehearsed accumulation of names, dates, and places—the "protection of impressions" [242]), as well as the emergence of a thoroughly personal, involuntary evocation of the past.

Watching a rerun-as-rerun of, say, *M*A*S*H*, might have several effects on a viewer; on the one hand, one may (consciously) (re)turn to the text itself. Viewing might amount to—as a friend of mine, an avid fan of the television series, liked to do—turning off the sound of the program and providing verbatim lip-synch for the various *M*A*S*H* characters. In this sense, recognition of the program is textually confined and reduced to the conscious *remembrance* of often-repeated series' episodes. However, this is also a creative reworking of the past which shifts, as Nelson notes, the viewer's initial (i.e., first time viewing) concern with the dramatic aspects of plot, suspense, and character development, to an awareness of televisual codes (Nelson 86). This type of conscious reappraisal, then, is what allows for the possible deconstruction and subsequent (re)interpretation of the televisual text.

Nelson's entire phenomenological undertaking is an attempt to situate the past in relation to the present, to foster a vibrant interplay between the two lived experiences in order to comprehend more fully our being-in-the-world. It is important to note that while she is attempting

to connect memory, experience, and the televisual, Mellencamp's essay proposes a rift between these elements:

> Instead of experience and memory, television's past, whether funny or not, evokes laughter and distance; it is a dissociated, dated history, out of synch with the present, with nothing, now, to do with us... (242).

This aggressive denial of a connectedness between a past and a present televisual universe is an instance of Nelson's "cruel or forgetful memory," a detached critical outlook "which imposes a current (static) perspective on past events" (89). This perspective, one that is adopted by Mellencamp, denies the existential and historical continuum of televisual experience that helps to define us. "In this sense," Nelson writes, "reruns survive only as objects for current derision" (89). "The cruel form," she continues,

> involves a forgetfulness of our own inherence in the world and our inheritance from the past, as if we never lived it and were never touched by it, as if we did not believe then that *Mod Squad* revealed some degree of truth for our culture at the time. (90)

Nelson thus rejects the notion of a cruel or forgetful memory and instead promotes the notion of a "noble" memory, which she describes as the ability to move beyond the outmoded codes of fashion and behaviour embodied in televisual drama of the past (90). Admittedly, therefore, when a contemporary viewer watches an episode of *The Honeymooners*, they do not revel in the antics of Ralph Kramden and Ed Norton as audiences in the Golden Age of television once did. Indeed, much, if not all, of the show's comedic content has slowly eroded, as viewers have

become overly familiar with the genre's formal and thematic codes (e.g., the double-takes and bodily mishaps of the slapstick tradition). This does not mean however, that one should deny the impact that *The Honeymooners* has had, televisually and extra-televisually, on successive generations of TV viewers. To dismiss this or any other televisual text simply because we feel that it is "dated" is to deny our inextricable attachment to a continuum of human experience.

To use another, slightly different example: a few years ago, director Rob Reiner created a TV series called *Morton and Hayes*. These episodes, shot in black and white, were Reiner's tribute to television's Golden Age. Employing all the televisual conventions of a past era--sight gags, one liners, a bumbling detective duo (one skinny and dimwitted, the other overweight and assertive)—*Morton and Hayes* was Reiner's attempt to vivify the televisual text of the 1950's and all of the associations created by it; in essence, Reiner's task was to activate a *noble* memory in his viewers. In the final analysis, the program did not attempt to reach the audience in the way that contemporary comedy shows do; in fact, the series seemed to be not about generating laughter as such—instead, it appeared that its main purpose was to function as a springboard for a recollection of a particular time and place, an attempt, as Nelson would say, to recognize "our rootedness in the past" (90). Here the work of Reiner, like that of Nelson, constructs a phenomenological discourse that aims to situate all lived experience into a meaningful network of associations.

For Nelson, the rerun (particularly, the rerun-as-rerun phenomenon) hearkens back to a particular televisual era or personal place-in-time (past "life experiences"). Although we have seen that the

exchange between past and present can be the result of a continual, rehearsed protection of impressions (the conscious, textual, remembrance of our aforementioned *M*A*S*H* viewer/lip-syncher), the evocation of a past era of televisual or personal life experience is usually the result of an involuntary evocation of the past, i.e., we do not, or, more precisely, cannot, actively, "turn our attention" (it is unfortunate that Nelson chooses this phrase to describe the experience of reruns, for it connotes some type of active, conscious agency) to those personal, involuntary memories that sneak up on us from time to time.

For instance, watching a certain rerun of *M*A*S*H* might allow for the deconstruction of the text—e.g., we may have memorized, through repeated viewings, the entire script, and thus may disconnect the audio in order to ad-lib our own speech; and yet the episode in question might also have an altogether different effect on us, one that triggers a nexus of associations to suddenly emerge, without forewarning. I watch, to use another example, a rerun-as-rerun of *Saturday Night Live*; not only am I immediately taken, in this instance, to the time and place where I watched that original episode (1977—my parents' house, the old beat-up colour TV, the original fascination with this (for me) quirky, innovative program, etc.), but I am also brought back to a greater, more polyphonous field of lived existence (the sensuous experiences associated with playing baseball with my friends that summer, or going to the movies, or being asked the eternal question: "Do you like rock or disco?" and so on). Similarly, when watching *The Honeymooners*, I cannot, as Nelson states "transcend my own historicity" (Nelson 88)—i.e., I cannot be taken back to a particular era in which I did not exist physically—therefore, I can only, voluntarily, try to reconstruct, via a noble memory,

a past. However, for my grandparents, a contemporary viewing of *The Honeymooners* might indeed blossom into an unexpected return to a certain era. The important idea here, then, is that the televisual viewing experience can foster remembrance *and* memory (or, more precisely, a dialogue between remembering and memory), producing a conscious recollection of, and an involuntary movement into, a former (that is not necessarily one's own) lived occasion.

It is in this way that TV acts as a true time machine, unexpectedly propelling us into a past world of lived experience. While it is true that television promotes and produces a referentiality to itself (e.g., my lip-synching friend), this self-reflexivity cannot, through the sheer testimony of personal experience, perpetuate itself in ceaseless flux. Television, like any good song or certain smell, is a powerful evocator of past, *extra-televisual*, experience. "With the constant flow of potentiality, every site/sight is haunted by countless silent histories, to be evoked or not" (Nelson 90). That is to say, the viewing of the televisual flow of rerun-as-rerun, or even of rerun-as-first-run, is that process which is alive with the capability to shake our static memories of the past—whether it is a lived through or artificially constructed past—loose, to propel our lived experience outward onto a wider plane of consciousness and understanding.[19] Since it interacts with us dynamically—since it has the

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[19]Television, considered in this way, negates Postman's caustic remark that the medium is valuable only as a "source of comfort and pleasure to the elderly, the infirm, and, indeed, all people who find themselves in hotel rooms" (*Amusing Ourselves* 28). Paglia's response to Postman's thesis echoes my argument that TV/reruns are a locus and disseminator of a more meaningful array of significations than critics like Postman suggest:

> In your book you speak of television as being a medium of flashing images with only an eternal present and no past. I disagree. It's just the opposite. TV is a

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power to show us things we have not yet seen or experienced, or have long forgotten—television is ultimately part of the intersubjective—resonant—social process of the mediated lived-world (again, media are, phenomenologically speaking, as "in" the world as we are), and not simply a static, decontextualized, and self-referential object. In the concluding chapter I will explore further this resonant relationship between television and memory, and see where and how this interactivity contributes to an understanding of a particular (post)modern generation.

II. Resonant Studies

The idea of resonance makes us aware that a study of any cultural component must not deny that component's combined textual (i.e., objective) and contextual (i.e., [inter]subjective) makeup. Patterns of meaning do not simply occur within specific forms, but they also emerge out of them, and attach themselves, in grand and random fashion, to other cultural entities. The understanding of, say, a film text, becomes fuller when one considers that its whole existence (in this sense films "live" as much as we do) is connected to a receptive individual who is absorbing, and being absorbed by, that text.

It is essential here, therefore, to recognize that the sociocultural world is not merely an assemblage of identifiable artefacts (e.g., theoretically constructed notions of audiences or groups; cultural objects such as television and film; social structures like marriage, schooling,

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genre of reruns, a formulaic return to what we already know. Everything is familiar. Ads and old programs are constantly recycled. It's like mythology, like the Homeric epics, the oral tradition, in which the listener hears passages, formulae, and epithets repeated over and over again. There is a joy in repetition, as children know when they say, "Mommy, tell me that story again." TV is a medium that makes us feel "at home." (51)

and so on) placed in the frame of a particular critical inquiry (e.g., anthropology, feminism, Marxism, and so on). That is to say that these artefacts cannot be severed from the world by a particular mode of analysis because they help to make our world—they are *of* our world—they define our lived-world existence. As McLuhan notes, they are not detached from us, but inextricably linked to our human activity (as extensions, as metaphors). The task here, then, is to explore how a resonant approach towards specific cultural texts strives to renegotiate the seemingly disparate elements of experience and theory, audience and text, reader and critic, subject and object. With certain qualifications, one can see how our undertaking refigures the complex network of relations between individuals and artefacts that constitute the recognizable pattern of everyday life.

In her essay "Eye/Mind/Screen: Toward a Phenomenology of Cinematic Scopophilia," Linda Singer puts forth a notion of cinema viewing that if based first and foremost on personal modes of reception. Implicitly challenging (but not referring directly to) the psychoanalytic/feminist work of Mulvey et al., Singer situates the film text within the scope of phenomenological, subject-oriented, rather than psychoanalytic/feminist, object-directed approaches to pleasure:

> While psychoanalytic theory has made significant contributions to our understanding [of the concepts of pleasure and desire], such theory risks losing touch with the obvious dimensions of cinematic pleasure, the pleasure in seeing that arises not through a subliminatory movement of the unconscious but rather from the situation of visibility and incarnation as such. (51)

In other words, Singer's notion of cinematic pleasure opens up the field of inquiry by initially establishing a "general" notion of pleasure, that is, one that moves out of the psychoanalytic paradigm of the unconscious and into the framework of a lived-world viewing experience. Singer therefore discards the notion of a guilty pleasure that is fostered by a fetishistic scopophilia, and instead adopts the idea of a cinematic pleasure, i.e.,

> the pleasure we take in going to the movies irrespective of our judgment of the quality of the particular film we have seen, a sense which is distinguishable from the variations of pleasure that arise in our viewing of particular films. What I have in mind is the nature of the desire expressed when we feel like seeing a movie and then check the newspaper to see what is playing. (52)

This use of the idea "cinematic scopophilia" thus constitutes a foray into film studies that is experience-based—i.e., (con)textually influenced, rather than textually bound. And yet, Singer's inquiry is much more than this, since it begins to blur the usual distinctions between critic and viewer. It is important to remember that many audience or reception theories tend to posit their object of analysis, e.g., the viewer, reader, listener, etc., outside the existential realm of the critic—in sum, setting up the to-be-studied form as a static, faceless entity. In these instances, studying the patterns of reception of individuals from a heightened perspective of critical detachment atrophies the actual experiences of these individuals, developing into theories about abstract communities, and generating, from above, universal statements about sensuous experiences. Let us return to

Singer after briefly looking at some examples of these approaches, so that we may then compare the two types of response-oriented studies of media, the former a phenomenologically-inspired, *resonant* one, the latter, one which lacks the core idea of reversible, or, again, *resonant* experience.

(a) The Limits of "Response" Research

In her "Banality in Cultural Studies," Meaghan Morris notes how in the instances of some audience-based or reception theories (what I will categorize as "response" approaches to media studies) individuals—that is, the cultural student's objects of study—have no necessary defining characteristics, i.e., they are conceived only within the context of a larger collective order. One of the problems with these forms of reader or spectator analyses, then, is that while they claim to represent how audiences receive and interpret lived-world phenomena, they many times submit to being nothing more than empirical assertions mediated through the cultural-academic baggage of the critic. That is, while various forms of reader/viewer response or ethnographic theories suggest a critical inquiry that is informed by inter- and intrasubjective experience—implying that the critic acts by carefully studying his/her subjects, and then relating to us those subjects' unique readings of cultural texts—these practices do not truly reflect authentic audience experiences as much as they echo the cultural student's own vision or agenda. Morris writes:

> In the end [the audience] are not simply the cultural student's object of study and [his/her] native informants. The people are also the textually delegated, allegorical

> emblem of the critic's own activity. Their *ethnos* may be constructed as other, but it is used as the ethnographer's mask. (23)

An inquiry that allows for an interplay between subject and object, conversely, does not have to conceal itself behind the mask of an ethnographic claim. There is no "bad faith" here; an "other" does not have to be constructed in a resonant approach, since, in many instances, it is the critic herself who is the object of her own analysis. It is in this way that a cultural studies that allows for the objective glance of a critical subject to look back on its own subjectivity (i.e., so that the studying subject is simultaneously a studied object) avoids the pitfalls of other audience-influenced critical theories.

An instance of this ethnographic culpability is seen in Janice Radway's study of women's readings of romance novels. In her "Identifying Cultural Seams," the author attempts to illustrate how ethnography can be employed as a political tool for the deconstruction of traditional practices and institutions. Radway's analysis strives to uncover and evaluate the "conflicts, slippages and imperfect joinings"—the ideological "seams"—created by patriarchy's imperfect patchwork quilt (108–09). To further her argument she discusses Stanley Fish's concept of "interpretive communities" (102)—groups of readers who are united by their common ways of reading cultural texts (Con Davis and Schleifer 71–72). While she therefore attempts to make the link between texts and audiences (a necessary connection in any resonant inquiry of the mediated lived-world), it is difficult to see, despite her qualifications, the she successfully moves beyond her own subjective sphere (the ruse of the ethnographer's mask). In other words, we see in Radway's work a

failure—common to cultural or media studies—to create a meaningful discourse between texts (the romance novel *and* her own text) and audiences (women readers *and* Radway as reader).

While we can agree with Radway's assertion that there is a difference between purely formal analyses of texts on the one hand and the "ethnographic investigation of the activity of reading as a social process" (104) on the other, it is difficult to approve of, as a means to achieving new human understanding, the contradictive methodology that her ethnographic analysis entails: when she writes in her essay, for instance, that "we very much need to know what the world produced by patriarchy and capitalism looks like from the *inside* [emphasis added]"[20] it is very telling, for she is at once implicating herself in the role of academic interpreter and disseminator of truth, one who exists *outside* the phenomenal universe of text and mass audience.

This positioning is not, however, necessarily a problem; in "Thick Description," for instance, Clifford Geertz removes the possibility of an objective ethnographic claim made from inside a particular culture—in other words, he would state, the ethnographer has no teleological insight into a culture apart from his/her own subjectively influenced interpretation. In Geertz's case, then, the ethnographer can only participate or enter a culture from the outside. We may say that Geertz's epistemology remains sound because his work emphasizes from the

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[20]"If we wish to change patriarchal social relations—if we wish to challenge the capitalist organization of production—then I think we cannot ignore what the study of a people's engagement with mass culture can tell us. We very much need to know what the world produced by patriarchy and capitalism looks like from inside if we are ever to discover where those forms of domination are most vulnerable, where they might be challenged most successfully" (118).

beginning that ethnography, arising out of an anthropological (social-scientific) vantage point, is situated outside the object of study; thus he writes that the "...object of study is one thing and the study of it another," and that "anthropological writings...are...fictions, in the sense that they are 'something made'" (15). Geertz here makes no false claims about his position as a detached cultural analyst; he is stating, essentially, that one who can never "know" or understand fully the foreign culture or situation he or she is looking at, and that the subjective interpretation of the student will always bookend the studied phenomena.

The problem with Radway's positioning, though, is that her analysis is embedded in a reader-response base. Thus, by (initially) relying on the experiences and interpretations of her readers—namely, the interpretive community of female readers of romance novels—in order to foster her own meaning of their discourse ("I offered a second-order interpretation of the women's own interpretations" [99]), she is associating herself (the cultural student) with the text (the romance novel) and her true object of study (the audience). What I am saying is that Radway's version of reader-response methodology necessarily includes herself in her analysis—she, as a consequence of her plan of study, functions within this dynamic interplay of cultural student and cultural studied (i.e., her own text does not exist without the women's input). Thus, when Radway, at the end of her text, severs herself from the female readers and their novels (that is, by removing herself from the lived-world of patriarchal social relations—she is implying that she exists "outside," and the readers "inside," the world of capitalist modes of

production) she undermines her claims to establishing a proper methodological reader-response, or reception-based, ethnography.

Radway here cannot have her cake and eat it too: she cannot remove herself from the lived-world of her audience after she has initially established herself as part of that experiential process. Radway is thus guilty of the kind of "bad faith" media study that proposes an access to the "other" but does so without considering the phenomenological, resonant bond between a participating in and a making of the world. In essence, Radway's attempts to solidify her academic role as being an intrinsic part of the meaning created by her study of a lived-world phenomenon (audience-text-analyst)[21] is short-lived, for she falls back into the critical paradigm of interpretation from the anti-phenomenological (that is, anti-reversible, since she does not let herself become part of her object of study) position of detached critical observer.

The questions we must therefore ask ourselves are: Why does Radway not firmly and irrevocably place herself within the group of

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[21]She writes:

> The reader-response critique of literary formalism was attractive to me precisely because it appeared to offer a hypothesis that would not only explain why I was disturbed by the "mass man" theory and its accompanying critique, but because it might also suggest fruitful ways to test the validity of both. Although reader theorists are a fractious group and therefore accord different levels of power and control to readers, all at least seem to agree that textual meaning is produced by some sort of interaction between a text and a reader.. I think that this is an important advance because is suggests that the critics who formally analyze mass culture texts may read and interpret them very differently from the ways they are read by their typical audiences. (96)

In other words, although a cultural student and her audience may read texts differently, in the reader-response mode there is at least an interaction occurring between critic and audience, whereby the two are connected by their lived-world relation to the same text (i.e., both critic and audience exist as readers in this case).

female readers? Why can she not engage in a first-order study of the romance novel herself (and not just the "second-order" interpretation she pursued) and come to her *own* conclusions about her *own* reading (what do I, as a woman, have to contribute to my study of how women read romance texts)? Why does she have to leave that world and reposition herself within an academic framework in order to make conclusive statements about romance novels and the women who read them? After all, is there not a viability in developing an audience-based, resonant theory that is inextricably liked to its own cultural context, one that cites a firsthand experience that is not undermined by the ethnographer's epistemological shortcomings, i.e., that takes into consideration not just the textual analysis of media phenomena but its contextual interaction with all individuals?

What we are looking for here is the kind of exploration of media and media audiences that is cognizant of its lived-world relation to its object(s) of study. It seems, however, that these excursions are rare. For example, in Bill McKibben's *The Age of Missing Information*, we see a study of a particular medium, namely television, that illustrates the failure, in Ien Ang's words, to recognize that "'viewing behaviour' can only be adequately accounted for when it is grounded in the concrete situation in which it takes place" (161). McKibben's attempt to experience 24 hours of nature and 24 hours of television, and then to compare the two lived-world experiences, is praiseworthy, not only for the sheer effort put into the study (he watched 2000 hours of TV on videotape!), but also because the author undertook a study in which he was, in part, the object of his own analysis—that is, it was not just an abstract study of television and the type of information disseminated by

it to a faceless audience, but a study of the televisual information that *Bill McKibben* himself received.

However, we see in McKibben's work a failure to recognize the distinction between his two lived-days: camping out in the mountains, sleeping under the stars, we see that the author is truly embedded within the domain of nature—he is, phenomenologically and existentially speaking, *in* nature. However, he is not truly *in* television (again, phenomenologically speaking) when he reflects upon its various images and messages, for it is clear that from the beginning of his book TV is not part of his lived-world, and that he does not wish it to be. Therefore the author removes it from the sphere of the existential; in his piece, I would argue, McKibben is not *experiencing* television, but merely *viewing it* as an image on a screen, that is, as an abstract text, as a figure minus a ground.

In other words, the author bases his television viewing in relation to nothing; he is working here within a vacuum that empties the significance of contextual experience. Why does the author restrict his concept of "information" to that which solely emanates from the TV screen and which does not include the "information" that is synthesized from a meeting of text and context (e.g., memory, personal association, collective identity, etc.)? McKibben's look at TV is precisely the type of media study that elevates the status of an abstract figure to the exclusion of a meaningful ground. We must remember that television—or, more precisely, the information imparted by television—is dependent on our worldly experience, and to regard the televisual as just a series of

unattached, empty images is leave out much of the meaning of that overall experience;[22] as Ang points out, TV viewing (like any other media phenomenon) is a "behaviour-in-context" (161), and must be regarded as such.[23] And although Ang in her work is referring more to audience analysis and McKibben in his to an actual televisual text (a 2000 hour text),[24] it can be argued that since the latter is establishing himself as viewer—as audience member—when he asks the ubiquitous TV question, "What's on?" he is thereby bound to describing a richer, more meaningful televisual context than his study allows. And yet, he does not do this. Specifically, his work represents not only the negation of the existence of a dynamic relationship between cultural students and their objects of study, but between TV texts and individual viewers in general.[25]

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[22]This is precisely the way McKibben describes the images and sounds he sees on TV—in terse, decontextualized pulses of stream-of-consciousness description which totally disregard the lived-world ties one may have with the text. For example:

> "If you have a cold, you do not need to worry about reinfecting yourself with lip balm." That's Beverly, who leads Christian calisthenics on Channel 116, Family Net. "If you used someone else's lip balm, I could see that. But not your own".. On Good Morning America, Joel, the movie critic, says, "I learned something about England. For sore throats, the actors of Shakespeare's time used to take a live frog and lower the frog by its foot into their mouths. They figured that would keep the juices going. That's where the expression 'a frog in your throat' comes from." Since seaweed grows "in the nutrient-rich ocean," it comes as no surprise to anyone that it attacks and destroys cellulite. An Amtrak train has gone off the rails in Iowa... (3-4)

This is not to say that television does not impart information in rapid-fire bursts of supersaturated content, the problem we are identifying here, though, is the author's refusal to even examine whether or not, or how, these segments interact with people's lives relationally, i.e., in their process of experiencing these images.

[23]Moreover, as McLuhan reminds us media (e.g., television and film) are "human artefacts" and "extensions of the physical human body or mind" (93), and thus must be studied accordingly—that is, as part of the lived world relationship between human beings, technology, and the natural environment. In this sense, with (post)modernity, the mediated lived-world becomes as "natural" as nature itself.

[24]Also see McKibben, "What's On?"

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Ang's comments are thus quite useful here, and yet we must note that she does not fully meet the criteria of our resonant critical process either (whereby the critical subject becomes a critical object, that is, where we see the student exchanging roles with the studied). Indeed, while she stresses the need to "resist the temptation to speak about the television audience as if it were an ontologically stable universe that can be known as such" (155)—in other words, as an objectified other—she cannot bring herself fully into the realm of critic-as-experiencing-viewer. In the end she too places herself on the outside looking in, hovering above the viewer/reader as if she had no role herself to play in the sociocultural moment of TV viewing and audience receiving. Again, while we can nod our heads in approval at her phenomenologically-flavoured notion that an understanding of viewership must begin with the recognition that the idea of "audience" is a social occurrence consisting "of an infinite and ever expanding myriad of dispersed practices that can never be, and should not be, contained in one total system of knowledge" (155), we cannot, in the context of our discussion here, help but feel disappointed at her refusal to recognize her own self as being part of that social process.

I have outlined briefly some of the problems with cultural/media studies as they relate to questions of placement of the cultural student in the text-audience-critic paradigm. The point here was to show what I

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[25]At this point, one might argue that McKibben's experience-in-context is simply his role as a detached critical observer. That is, his description is as valid as that of any other person because it is *his* unique experience of television. However, I think that it is incomplete and misleading of McKibben to suggest that the "information" disseminated by television moves in one-direction—that is, from text to viewer. As Davis suggests, in the televisual context, meaning is that which develops bi-directionally, from viewer to screen and vice versa. McKibben's study is a one-way--i.e., a dead-end--street

feel are the *limits* of a media study that refuses to include the very important consideration of resonance, e.g., the experience of the cultural critic (as object, in other words) in the evaluation of a given text. Theories of audience reception *are* important tools for understanding the complex interactions between texts and their multiple contexts. By conceptualizing the audience member(s)—the television viewer, the novel reader, the film-goer, etc.—as a *position* from where meaning emanates (as opposed to a conception of the text as sole repository of meaning), epistemological considerations can be shifted away from certain types of text-based, cause/effect, linear perspectives of sociocultural dynamics. Audience-based theories of textual and cultural meaning become extremely useful when considered as a starting point for understanding the complex array of significations that are produced by human (inter)activity. While the work of Radway, McKibben, Ang et al. does certainly contribute to a study of media phenomena and how individuals respond to those phenomena, they are not truly resonant, and instead of exploring the meaningful implications of subject-object reversibility (text-audience-critic), they choose to work from a more limited perspective of subject-object linearity (text-audience). Let us now return to Singer's text to see how and where it challenges psychoanalytic applications of film viewing, and, what is more important, to evaluate its overall success as a theory of (media) experience—one that attempts to construct a better method for understanding not only film and film-viewing, but for comprehending all moments of being-in-the-world.

(b) An Alternative: Critic as Audience

As I have mentioned, Singer's work undertakes to reconstitute the notion of pleasure in the context of film studies. Moving away from "object-directed" theories of psychoanalysis, the author posits a subject-based, phenomenological strategy to film-viewing. For her, the pleasure that is produced by the film text is not rooted in the machinations of a fetishistic, scopophilic unconscious. Instead, Singer sees the definable presence of a pleasure—what she calls a "cinematic scopophilia"—that is consciously generated by one's affinity for movie-going and viewing. It is a pleasure that ultimately emerges "as a surplus of process over product, seeing over what is seen" (52).

For Singer, the environment of the movie theatre is conducive to generating pure cinematic pleasure; predetermined forms such as darkened rooms and comfortable seats create an "atmosphere of perpetual quietism, serenity and comfort" that guides our attention toward a signifying screen (53–54). Furthermore, the very situation of exhibition itself, she notes, promotes a variant of cinematic pleasure that the author calls "the contagion effect," a "pleasure of sociality" wherein one's viewing pleasure is promoted by "its reproduction and affective reverberations in others" (55).

Here cinematic viewing becomes less of a voyeuristic endeavour and more a pleasure of intersubjectivity. Indeed, as Singer remarks, how can the spectatorial position be solely voyeuristic and intrasubjective when the entire movie-going process is set within a group dynamic? My readers here can think of their own experiences of film watching: viewing, say, an erotic film alone at home is not filled with the same kind of self-consciousness one might have while viewing the same film at a theatre.

In a crowded, darkened room, one is acutely aware of the other, and thus, in certain situations, there is always the feeling (or fear) of being watched while watching.

Inside the theatre, Singer notes, "we are a community of perceivers" (56). This idea of group dynamics, I would point out, should not be confused with the generalized, abstract notion of "interpretive communities" that feed other audience-based theories. In those instances, audience members are negotiated as mass readers of cultural texts whose common meeting places are usually grand scale constructs such as "society" or "sub-culture"—in other words, in these situations (e.g., Fish et al.) interpretive communities are merely posited somewhere "out there in the world," and not situated in a specific time and space, e.g., individuals assembled under the same roof viewing the same film at the same moment (and yet, of course, each reacting differently to what is on and around the screen). In the movie-going context, therefore, people assemble for the common purpose of film viewing. While each person might have a different reason for attending a movie (a date, nothing else to do, a desire to escape the heat in summer, or perhaps the cold of winter), they are all nonetheless directed towards the focal point of the movie screen:

> ...in a situation where we are cut off from our habitual urgencies and commitments, we cannot help but look at the screen because there is very little else to do. In this sense, the screen is conducive to a spectatorial abandon. (Singer 55)

However, movie viewing is not complete surrender:

> But the screen while eliciting our abandon and complicity also demands from the spectator a certain distance, conducive to the emergence of fascination. The dimensions of the screen mandate a spectatorial position at some real distance from it. If we try to abandon ourselves totally to the screen by obliterating all else from our actual field of vision, we are too close and will sacrifice both breadth and clarity. (55)

The set-up of the movie theatre's universe is that which "encourages both a maintenance of distance and the constitution of that distance as a zone of desire and pleasure" (54). In essence, we cannot help becoming engrossed in a film's diagesis, and yet, at the same time, we are keenly attuned to the entire filmic context—the theatre surroundings, the screen, and the film's formal constructs (editing, sound, camera movement, etc.[26]) that frames or creates the on-screen text.

There is thus a dynamic oscillation between a distance from and a proximity to the filmic text. In the final analysis both positions constitute the realm of experience, an internalization of a text-produced sensorium: when the lights go out, the audience and the film inhabit the same universe, and the two are thus inextricably connected. Therefore, to return to our earlier discussion, it is difficult to conceive of oneself, in the context of the movie theatre, as being simply a voyeur, since one is

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[26]For example, critics have noted how the presence of Dolby sound has become too perfect, in other words, hyper-real, so that the on-screen sound, initially meant to represent reality, i.e., to conceal the intervention of the film-making process, has become an intrusive element in the film text—a perfect example of a McLuhan reversal.

always conscious of the situation within the textual or social environment—in other words, one is always cognizant of one's own viewing situation, even (or, perhaps, especially) when one is engrossed in the film's narrative. It is this notion of a dual nature of cinema-going—film as text, film as intrasubjective experience; film as context, film as intersubjective experience—that is the great strength of Singer's phenomenological enterprise. More than just helping to negotiate a notion of cinematic pleasure, it posits, or allows for, the possibility of critic-as-reader/reader-as-critic, and, better still, constructs textual reading as an incorporation of personal and shared experience.

Once again we return to the position that various resonance ideas expand the possibility for critical studies by bringing into focus the special relationship between viewer and viewed, a relationship that can be better understood through, one, the phenomenological notions of the reversibility of subject-object relations, two, a comprehension of McLuhan's figure-ground dynamics and his tetradic media laws, and, three, an emphasis on those cultural and literary studies that articulate a polyphonous field of (post)modern signification, i.e., an existential duality of making, and being made by, the lived-world. Some critics, as we have already noted, unsuccessfully attempt to disregard this inevitability of textual reading qua reflection of the lived-world. Many analysts of culture, as I have argued, by placing themselves beyond their object of study, invalidate the possibility of a meaningful exchange between student and studied (whether that studied form is an audience, a text, or any lived-world artefact).

What I have hoped to establish thus far is the usefulness of a particular resonant method of media study. I have done so by pitting it

against a general tendency of critical studies to ignore the possibilities for an exchange or reversibility of subject-object relations as they pertain to readers and particular (con)texts. Now I would like to briefly illustrate, before I "go" to the movies, more precisely how a specific resonant approach to film studies works to create meaning by placing both viewer and text within the lived-world of reversible subject-object relations.

In an existential phenomenology, being-in-the-world precedes actual phenomena and the reflection of the experiences of those phenomena. Sobchack uses this as the basis of her study of the film experience: the study of film (as with any phenomena) must first dispense with the preconceptions of theoretical baggage. The "natural language" of film (i.e., those narrative and technical elements that are unique to the cinema), according to Sobchack, is "always first immersed in the more primordial language of embodied existence" (11–12). Thus, before anything else—before the various applications of cinematic theories converge on the film as object—"a film makes sense by virtue of its very ontology" (12). Sobchack here wishes to forge a study that sees film as not only a static object of the eye (her "viewed-view") but as a dynamic subject that helps to define the individual in the world as an "I" (a "viewing-view").[27] As she and others have pointed out, our very

[27]This distinction between an essential, implicit, existence (being-in-the-world) and the explicit embodiment of that existence (i.e., reflection of that experience) is exemplified by the existential phenomenological approach to language. The notion of a pre-linguistic language, or rather, a language in the process of becoming (Merleau-Ponty's *parole parlance* [speech speaking], a "fertile" nascent language rife with new possibilities for meaning), is in interplay with that aspect of language which manifests itself in the everyday use of our established linguistic codes (*parole parlee* [speech spoken], a "stereotypic," static language of already-established meaning) (Sobchack 43; Yeo 44). That is to say, whether it is language, or a film text, or any other phenomenon, things exist in the world before we can comprehend (reflect upon) them fully. The search for these existential essences (the reflecting, the speaking, the viewing—experience in the

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existence (and, for that matter, a film's life) initiates language and communication; in this way the film and viewer can, and do, each inhabit an objective and a subjective place in the lived-world—the film thus becoming more than just a visual object and the viewer emerging as more than just a viewing subject. The cinema, for Sobchack, is that unique medium that makes clear "the reversible, dialectical, and social nature of our own...vision" (309). Again, we must remember that the "address of the eye" is a *place* for the perception and reflection of subjective experience ("I," a "viewing-view," a constituting) and a *medium* through which the objective lived-world in constituted ("eye," a "viewed-view"). The film's body, like our own subjective corpus, is a resonant one.

In her essay, Singer recalls her experience of viewing Lina Wertmuller's *Swept Away*:

> I remember first seeing this film and leaving the theatre feeling as though I could face the December winds outside because I had somehow had a respite in a warmer place...Sometimes the atmospheric dimension of cinematic pleasure is not so easily named. (59)

Although this passage is used by the author to convey a sense of how Wertmuller's "chromatic intensification"—the director's use of intense blues and warm lights—produces surplus pleasurable effects in the viewing subject (that is, a feeling of warmth), it is more important to

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midst of becoming) is the root of all phenomenological analysis (Husserl's "to the thing's themselves"), and is the basis for a bracketing (a temporary removal, a disruption of the familiarity we have with things [Sobchack 43]) of the natural attitude (the reflected, the spoken, the viewed, etc.—that which has become).

note that the film discourse is being relayed to us initially from the unique position of the author's personal experience. What we are getting here is Singer's own reaction to a filmic event, a life experience that she draws upon to signify a textual functioning (in this case, film lighting). Wertmuller's film constitutes different intensities and forms of signification for many people, but for Singer there is a very special association of warmth attached to it. This is not, however, merely a solipsistic endeavour, for the author is not just reminiscing here: she is relating to us her personal, experience (walking out of a theatre one December in her life) in order to gain access to a film language that is waiting to be read. In one sense, then, she acts as the film critic, evaluating the text from a vantage point of academic cinema reading, and asking: What are the formal aspects of Wertmuller's text that create warmth? In another sense, though, she is nothing more than a cinephile, who, picking up the paper one December day, decided to go to the movies, watched a film, and was emotionally and physically warmed by its bright and colorful mise-en-scène.

For the phenomenologist, then, film analysis is more than just the detached academic gaze of the critic. Similarly, it goes beyond the hierarchized, ethnographic consideration of specific audiences, wherein, as Meaghan Morris points out, the very term "ethnography" implies "a possible 'ethnic' gap between the cultural student and the cultural studied" (22). Instead, here we have a vision of a film analysis, rooted in phenomenology, that employs the unique experience of individual film viewers as the touchstone for further consideration.

For Singer, movies "confirm" the phenomenological enterprise, the whole process of filmaking and viewing "demands a perceptual life that is

intentional and motivated...both filmmaker and audience must grant that our eyes [and I would add to Singer's remark the whole array of senses[28]] can reveal the meaning of things" (64-66). As well,

> the filmaking enterprise must also presuppose the intersubjective significations of visibility, where vision is not only a mode of self-object awareness but a way of being open to and in communication with others. Our experience of the cinema, as a locus of meaning, is both that subjective moment of personal vision and also that instant where the audience member becomes linked to other experiences, creating a network of intersubjectivity, a supplementary discourse which amplifies and enhances the breadth, range, and depth of our perception and, with that, all the lives that depend on it (65).

Here, clearly, Singer recognizes the fundamental interaction between individuals as they participate in reversible life-world relations: in the film-going scenario, I am not only in interplay with the text, but I am also engaged with other viewers as they are engaged with me—I am "touched" by their presence as they are touched by mine.

Resonance approaches, such as Singer's phenomenological study, as they are applied to film and other cultural-textual studies, do not offer us a methodology per se because their underlying construct—experience—cannot initially be subjected to methodology. That is, we are

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[28]See Don Ihde's *Listening and Voice* for a phenomenological consideration of sound. Also see David Howes, *The Varieties f Sensory Experience*, for examples of anthropological approaches that turn awa .rom traditional visual- and verbal-oriented paradigms and instead move towards gustatory, tactile and olfactory sensory phenomena in the study of particular cultures.

not using, for instance, phenomenology in the scientific, reductive-philosophical way of Husserl, Merleau-Ponty et al., but merely seeing how and where the phenomenological essence of the intersubjective and reversible nature of experience may be passed through a consideration of media studies; in other, words, we are exploring the resonant qualities of experience. One could dismiss, to continue with our example, phenomenological applications by stating that they are ultimately solipsistic or self-indulgent; this would be to disregard, however, that they are theories that posit, in one form or another, the reversal of subject-object relations between a film (con)text and its viewing process (namely, the on-going relation between audience members within the theatre, on the one hand, and the relation between audience members and film screen on the other).

In the end we must realize two things: one, that we all bring a certain amount of cultural baggage to the cinema, and, two, that we are all positioned within the same time and space of the movie theatre universe—in other words, we go to the movies for movies' sake, and yet we all attempt to interpret, to deconstruct, the film text as a source of some kind of meaning. What resonant approaches to the media (e.g., the works of Singer, Sobchack, Nelson, McLuhan, et al.) attempt to do is link the seemingly disparate elements of text, universe, and critic/reader, so that it becomes impossible to study a discrete notion without collapsing the existential framework: one cannot experience a text without engaging, in one form or another, with that text; one cannot be a critic without, in some way, also being a reader; likewise, one is not just a reader, but in many ways, a critic also; and, finally, one cannot perceive the text solely as an autonomous entity waiting to have itself

deconstructed, but must also regard it as lived-world phenomena alive with the significations of a vast and varied context. As McLuhan, discussing Baudelaire, notes, "the senses, intellect, and emotions are in abrasive interplay as a mosaic of author, reader and poem" (48). Meaning emanates from a text only insofar as we are there to perceive it; this is not a circular, self-referential monologue, but a multi-dimensional discourse that is generated by the interaction between text(s) and context(s).

III. Resonant Experience: Going to the Movies[29]

I've decided to see David Cronenberg's *Dead Ringers*. This is not my first time seeing it; I know that my reactions to this film will be different from my initial viewing. Since I have last seen it, I have viewed other Cronenberg films, watched Cronenberg interviewed on TV, and have read several articles on the director and his work. I will be looking for different things this time around; perhaps I will see or hear something I did not perceive during my other encounters (seeing a film on video and on the screen are, for instance, two different visual experiences [see below]); or maybe I'll miss a critical scene because my mind will be elsewhere, thinking about the events of the past day. If I am lucky, there won't be

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[29]In this section I would like to sketch out some of the considerations I might take into account with a resonant approach to film. I am thus primarily using the film *Dead Ringers* in order to give a "face" to a particular movie-going context. Since a resonant approach looks at relationships between people, and between people and things, there is a multiplicity of ways of looking at any given media experience. Therefore this section does not so much provide a complete textual account of Cronenberg's movie, or a detailed diary of my experience of it, as much as it locates some of the possible entry points for further resonant studies. In this way it is to be taken as a supplement to Sobchack and Singer's ideas and procedures.

someone in the theatre talking to their friend, and the dialogue will be loud and clear.

The acting in the film will not be a consideration of the film's overall success; in fact, I dislike film criticism that goes on about the acting or scripting of a film, and that talks little about the film language, i.e., how the director uses his or her technical arsenal to deliver a certain image or express a certain idea. Yet, as I watch the movie, I cannot help being amazed at Jeremy Irons's ability to play two people; he is playing his own twin brother, and I carefully study how the director and crew have chosen to make this illusion work (e.g., the use of doubles, split-screen photography, etc.). As I hunt for the elements that break down the film's diagetic flow—slight, almost imperceptible cues that expose the film's technicality (Is the right half of the screen the same depth of focus as the left side? Does Irons really look as if he's addressing someone, or is he awkwardly talking to someone—himself, really—who isn't there?)—I wonder if I am the only one who is privy to the cunning of the film's vision. At this moment I am no longer experiencing the film as a narrative text, but as a perceptual creature who is "sharing" with me the tricks of its trade.

In the film, which was shot in Toronto, there are certain sites and buildings that I recognize as a native of that city. It is at these moments that the traditional screen-viewer relationship collapses, and I am brought into the film as an accessory to its vision—Jeremy Irons's character is standing in a small civic park in back of the Eaton Centre, and I recall myself standing at or walking by that very place at various times in the past. In a strange way I feel a kinship with the actor, his character, and the filmic apparatus (camera, director, crew, etc.), since

each has existed in the same lived-space as I have. I know that my experience of this moment will be different from that of the person sitting next to me; maybe she has never been to Toronto, and cannot actualize the mise-en-scène as her own (although it might remind her of something similar that she has experienced). (Maybe she is from New York: imagine all those New Yorkers who are constantly seeing their city on the big screen; whether we have been there or not, when we view a movie that is set in New York [or even Chicago or Los Angeles or Paris] it is always somewhat removed from our at-hand existence, that is, it takes on the quality of a larger-than-life-domain. It carries with it a mythical charm—for many of us, it is the quintessential metropolis, an abstraction [insofar as it represents a generalized time and space, i.e., New York-as-concept] that is perfectly suited for representation on the movie screen.)

Continuing, I know that I will think about sound during this film; my friend works in the industry as a sound editor and from time to time he fills me in on certain technical details; plus, I have a background in film theory and communications; thus, despite my proclivity to become lost in the film's narrative, I know that there will be moments in the film when a particular effect—a certain camera angle, or tracking shot, or lens use, for instance—will attract my attention. I am thus sharing my gaze with that of the filmic apparatus; it is a type of intersubjective relationship whereby the film calls to me and asks, "Do you see what I see?"

Afterwards, a group of us discuss the film; there is talk of how the movie is too "male-centred." I think that this is a reasonable interpretation, but I ask someone: "Well, before you thought that, how

did you feel?" What did the film do to you that made you reflect upon this experience in this way?" The individual shrugs and replies "I can't say, I simply feel this way." I review the film in my mind: What is technically happening in the film that draws out the film's essence as being a "male" film? It is too easy to say that people "feel the film" a certain way because it is about two male gynecologists; there is a way of perceiving the mise-en-scène that influences a particular reading of the film. But is it just the text itself that promotes this reaction? Maybe one had gone into this film with certain preconceived ideas about Cronenberg; or perhaps the person that saw this film felt uncomfortable seeing (and perhaps feeling) the pain inflicted on women here by the male doctors (women, of course, will have a unique insight into the film that a man cannot have).

There is, no question, a visceral nature to all Cronenberg films—*things happen to bodies in his work*—and this may profoundly influence one's experience of *Dead Ringers*. Of course, depending on the theatrical environment, the intensity of this bodily "deconstruction" will vary, if I see this film in 70mm Dolby (that is, in widescreen, with sometimes painfully loud surround-sound), I will literally feel what the film has captured much more than if I was in a smaller theatre (or similarly, if I viewed it at home). The horror of Cronenberg's images—the final death scene of the two brothers, for instance, becomes blown up to such an extent in this former context the images of death and decay are virtually "in our face."

However, it is not always the case that a bigger picture, a more intense sound, will be needed to create a special interplay between the audience and the on-screen image. I remember, for instance, seeing *Taxi*

Driver in a small repertory cinema in Vienna; although I had seen this film several times before, I had an entirely different reaction to it during this encounter in Austria. Alone in a strange European city, not knowing the language, inside a theatre that was small and uncomfortable, I felt alienated and anxious; consequently, my whole interaction with the film was affected by these feelings. Martin Scorsese's rendering of New York (which, for instance, through the use of wild-sound in the film, as well as naturally lit interiors, made the film a visceral experience to begin with) thus became more intense—more bodily—for me than it had ever been; my own feelings of uneasiness exacerbated the tension and horror one normally feels as the filmic body moves through the inner-city streets. The interplay between my state of mind (influenced by my viewing context) and the film's compelling celluloid portrait created a virtual environment—as far as I was concerned, during those two hours in the Vienna repertory cinema, I felt that I was in New York.

What I am trying to suggest is that the viewing of Cronenberg's *Dead Ringers*, or Scorsese's *Taxi Driver*, as with all experiences of media phenomena, cannot help being influenced by the interplay of textual and extra-textual factors such as these; despite my best attempts to formally view the film, an abundance of significant associations are detonated during the encounter. That is, even I go into the film as a student of cinema, e.g., approach it with pen and paper and work solely within the text, following the diagesis, camera angles, number of shots per scene, use of lighting, etc., I must remember that I am, prior to any active discourse, *experiencing* this film in a greater context. To talk about this film critically, then, is to first live within its scope, for the questions that are raised by it are formed not only by its on-screen life but by its

being-in-the-world. I therefore treat the film simultaneously as an object-to-be-studied and a subject that itself senses and that responds to me intersubjectively. As Sobchack notes, "cinema uniquely allows this philosophical turning, this objective and subjective insight into oneself and, remarkably, others" (309).

So, in one way, I experience the film as it interacts with me, as it works upon me, as its language initiates communication with its audience. It does this through the *aesthetic* of the filmic mise-en-scène—the choice of colour (*Dead Ringers*, for example, includes many scenes that are shot in neutral-coloured offices, creating a subdued, superficial, and antiseptic tone, one that is eventually contrasted with the more intense colours of metallic silver and deep red associated with the protagonists' breakdown), camera angle, placement of characters and objects, etc. And it also creates meaning through the *diagetic* elements—we interact with a text differently according to its genre. For example, we may experience a horror movie or psychological thriller differently than we would, say, a documentary; in the former the relationship to the screen is more corporeal, more visceral (once again, this interaction depends, on part, on the dimensions of the screen and other environmental factors)—we are being frightened, the horror is happening to us—it is the overall goal of the film to frighten us, to draw us into its perceptual realm; in a documentary-viewing situation, we are more likely to be passively attuned to the screen, where the action seems to be happening to someone or something else. The documentary may thus share with us a perception that seeks only to inform or entertain. As with any unpredictable phenomena, however, the complete opposite may be true—one might be hardened by years of horror movie-going and be

completely unresponsive to a severed head appearing suddenly on the screen, while a documentary on the illegal ivory trade, for example, may instill such anger in an individual that they will decide to take some form of action against those who are perpetrating these ecological crimes. As well, we may react not to the movie as a whole but to the particular *characters* within the text, either by identifying with their fictional presence (through the suspension of disbelief—we know that the actor Jeremy Irons does not have a twin brother) or by examining or idolizing their artistry (e.g., movie-going as fan worship). Of course, in the end, the movie-going experience is likely to be a combination of these diagetic forms (e.g., genre and character) working together to promote the interplay between viewer and text.

It is with this in mind—that I live the film experience in relation to others (audience-as-other, film-text-as-other), as much as others live their experience in relation to me, that I go to, and interact with, a film. A resonant approach to movie-going would work to incorporate one or more of the elements described in this section (i.e., the consideration of the formal, thematic, and extra-textual factors that I have just mentioned, as well as the other phenomenological strategies discussed by Sobchack, Singer, et al.). That is, one would approach a film with the following dynamic relationship in mind:

Viewer (*intrasubjective* [seeing, hearing, feeling, etc.])<—>Viewer (*intersubjective* [seen, heard, felt, etc.])<—>Film (*object* [seen, heard, felt, etc.])<—>Film (*subject* [seeing, hearing, feeling,[30] etc.])

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[30]It is not entirely accurate to say that a film "feels" in the sense we "feel" pain or joy; more correctly, as we have already noted, film, through its technological embodiment,

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This simple paradigm shows how a film's "meaning" can be understood in various ways. For instance, the film may be talked about from the sole standpoint of an individual movie-goer; here she may refer to how she reacted to the formal or thematic elements of the "text" (or both), or else how the film's overall effect became linked to the environment of the theatre (e.g., a particular smell in the theatre that seemed to permeate the filmic mise-en-scène), or, maybe, what the film caused her to experience outside the theatre (e.g., Singer's reaction to the warmth of Wertmuller's film). Alternately, we may look at the film and see how its viewing is affected by the (intersubjective) relationship between audience members (a distracting cough that puts one in a bad mood, the watching of an erotic scene in the company of strangers that is not as pleasurable as watching it alone or with a lover, and so on).

Continuing, one might regard the film as that which is not merely viewed by an individual or individuals, but that which itself has the capacity to see, to become part of the intersubjective space that is occupied by other viewing spectators. This is the idea put forth by Sobchack, who writes:

> When the film [for example] inhumanely moves through carnage and seems impervious to the human blood and gore it sees, I will either share its inhumane interest...or I will break my engagement with its gaze and stare at my lap, unable to share in a look that behaves with no subjective awareness [i.e., no "feeling"] of what it is to bleed or be in

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engages in a physical and reflective movement (the various "looks" created by different lenses, for example) that allows it be both perceptive and expressive (Sobchack 3-4)

> physical pain...in [these] instances in which difference between the spectator's materiality and situation and the film's materiality and situation becomes explicit, the spectator can refuse, partially share, or become rapt in the film's vision. (288–89)

Thus, in *Dead Ringers*, we may sense the profilmic event (the event as captured by the cinematic recording equipment) as clearly (or as unclearly) as the film does; the film here thus becomes an act of consciousness, a perceiving, subjectively embodied figure, with the "capacity and competence to signify, to not only *have* sense but also to *make* sense through a unique and systemic form of communication" (6). We may, on the one hand, share the camera's voyeuristic explorations of the deterioration and horrific demise of the main characters to varying degrees, whereby we are physically sickened (yet strangely compelled) by the images of death on the screen; on the other hand, we might be unwilling to look at, or uninterested in looking at, those captured moments that the film yearns to share with us. Of course, there might be an interplay among all of these levels of interaction: as I watch the film, particularly during its final moments as the camera moves through the cluttered death-scene of the twins' barricaded medical office—a macabre pastiche of strewn syringes, pills, rotting food, and bloodied bandages—I am at once repulsed and curious, as though I have become privy to an image of an actual crime scene (Where have I seen this image before? In other films? On TV? In the newspaper? In books?) Yet, at the same time, my eyes wander from the perceptual frame of the camera's eye, and I find myself straining in the dark to see how other people in the theatre are reacting to the on-screen image. To my surprise, I discover that someone

is looking at *me*, and I turn my attention once again to the screen, slightly unnerved by the reciprocal gaze of another "voyeur." I go back "into" the film's perceptual world, thinking to myself that at least the film does not mind if I look at/with it while *it* looks.

The resonant relationships between film and audience outlined above are diverse and can each be taken as a starting point for an analysis of the experience of film-going and viewing. Here, then, we are not limiting ourselves to a rigid analysis of an objectified text but opening up the field of investigation to include the contextualized, moments of inter- and intrasubjective being-in-the-world. That is, an analysis of this kind recognizes that our experience of, say, a film, is not just the direct perception of an on-screen image but tied to an endless string of other related experiences. This consideration is resonant because it recognizes the existential variations of lived-world phenomena, the diversity created by the fluctuation of subject-object relations and the social dynamics created by these relations. If, by contrast, we retain the film as solely object, as that which can only be seen, we are ignoring a whole other existential dimension of its being, namely its lived-world embodiment (that *seen* which also *sees*). Similarly, it would be impossible to retain a film-going experience as a purely solipsistic, intrasubjective, singular vision, for we are not merely sensing creatures but also *sensed* creatures.

A resonant approach, as I have already mentioned, is crucial to an evaluation of (post)modern culture. The freedom gained by this type of exploration—it allows us to talk about a network of related experiences, memories, texts, and so on—permits to explore and understand better the fluctuating, polyphonous, and sometimes schizoid reality of

(post)modernity. Because of its technological, cultural, and commercial resonance, which has been intensified and expanded within the (post)modern context, film-going, like television viewing, is a much more complex and diverse experience than it ever was. That is, it is tied to such a vast array of extra-visual and extra-textual factors that it would be incomplete to say that a film these days is merely a projected image on the screen. Surely it is more than that; it is something that exists beyond the theatre—it is a (post)modern entity that stretches outward into all aspects of our life. When a movie is released, its images do not remain on the screen, but instead are released out into the world, to occupy space on billboards, to exist in video games, in books, and so on. Similarly, the music and dialogue of a film do not simply reverberate within the domain of the theatre but escape outside into soundtracks, and onto the radio, as sampled bits of information that linger inside our collective and individual heads.

Since television and film exist alongside us, in the world, we must promote a study that permits us to trace the varied, meaningful paths leading out from these media into other moments and spaces of our lived experience. This is to say that media like TV and film cannot be considered in isolation, in a contextless limbo that sets them apart from others. In Davis's terminology, we must look at not only the "one-way" relationship between a particular medium and its user (e.g., the effects of television on viewers), but the two- and three- and four-way connections between people and cultural phenomena. A resonant approach towards film and television recognizes that in a dynamic, reversible relationship, things act upon us as much as we act upon them. Thus we do not simply gaze at a movie screen for two hours and then leave the theater

unaffected; we would all agree that films act upon us—they make us laugh, they make us cry, they frighten us, etc. But they also act upon us in the way that the whole movie-going process can detonate an entire other realm of experience: for instance, they can trigger or promote memories, as well as imprinting on us the sensorium of a particular time and place, so that years after viewing a film, we may go back not so much to the text per se but to the context in which it was viewed (How old was I? What was I doing? Where was I living?). To this day, the profound images of *Taxi Driver* are linked to my experiences of traveling in Europe and feelings of isolation during those times. During the moments that we are bound to the film screen, to its perceptive vision, the film reveals to all of us its subjective vision (the images it presents through the merging of technical and creative forces). In this sense, the film has no subjective inclination to reveal more or less of its image to any one person—we are each presented with identical images and sounds. It is how and why we uniquely make these images and sounds our own that varies from one experience to the next, and it is to these *contextual and existential moments* where film studies, and all media studies, must turn its attention.

CHAPTER FOUR

Resonant Generation? TV and Postmodernism: Searching for the '70's

It is sometimes difficult to think of postmodernism as simply just an epistemological notion, i.e., as a way of thinking or comprehending the world. In fact, one can see that postmodernism becomes more than that which lends itself to the abstract, to the transcendent; in other words, it is more than just a theory—it is not only a way we think the world, but a condition of our everyday lived experience as well. To talk about postmodernism, then, is to first exist within the postmodern universe And it does not matter what names we, as historical beings, have attributed to our past and present lived conditions (e.g., the "conditions" of the Dark Ages, of Enlightenment, of modernity, etc.), so long as we realize them to be states of existence because we exist or have existed in the specific time and place of their life-worlds. Therefore call postmodernism condition "x" or "now" or "right here," for it does not matter, since we understand it to be the condition-of-the-present-day-lived-world for which we can only be in and of.

It is this resonant idea, one that we have repeatedly emphasized in this work (namely, that we are simultaneously in and of the world, or, to put it another way, that we are both subjective and objective creatures, or else, that we partake in intersubjective relationships with all phenomena-of-the-world, human beings and artefacts alike), that propels us to look at postmodernity not from the privileged vantage point of the detached, critical observer (i.e., the postmodern "theorist), but as individuals living within the lived-world of postmodernity. In this section, then, I speak not merely as an analyst of culture, but as a

postmodern, phenomenological creature, capable of thinking about the postmodern world because I exist in, and thus experience, the postmodern world.

The "subjects" of this section, therefore—postmodernism, television, Generation X—become an extension/reconstruction of myself, that is, insofar as I live the postmodern experience, the postmodern world lives in and is defined through me. To separate myself from the discourse of postmodernism would thus be to remove me from a world to which I am inextricably bound. Therefore, as a member of the generation I am about to look at, one who has experienced the world in the ways that I will now describe, I am attempting to join—to become—the object of my own analysis.

In a recent article in the *Village Voice*, Pagan Kennedy elegizes the loss of the '70's era in the collective psyche. As an individual who came of age in that period—and thus part of that group referred to these days as the "twenty-somethings" or, more commonly, "Generation X"—Kennedy is both saddened and frustrated by the way historians, cultural students, political thinkers, and so on, have neglected and negated a whole moment in the continuum of our recorded and recollected past. As part of this twenty-something generation myself, I feel it is part of my duty to re-construct, to recognize, and to re-appropriate, for me and for my peers, some notion of what it means—culturally, politically, and historically—to belong to that generation which grew up in the midst of popular culture's tremendous flux of information, a time in which the ultimate reference was (and which remains) the ubiquitous, omniscient televisual text.

In his novel *Generation X*, Doug Coupland glosses his margins with concepts and phrases that are indigenous to the '70's-reared, tele-centred, twentyish crowd. One of these terms, "tele-parablizing," the author describes, is the way in which morals in everyday life are likened to TV sitcom plots, as in: "That's just like the episode where Jan lost her glasses!" (120). It is here where one can see the vital, inextricable link being made between a generation and their TV. It is this blurring of distinctions between TV and not-TV, exemplified by the act of tele-parablization, that leads to Arthur Kroker's observation that society is a mirror of television, that TV is the embodiment of postmodern culture (37–38). In Kroker's world, as in Coupland's, the twenty-something crowd, the *postmoderns*, are bound to a world where the constant, reliable companion, the ultimate reference point, becomes television and the televisual text.

Cable, VCR's, and remote-controls—these are the great inventions of my childhood and adolescence. Everyone has experienced, in some way, the effects of these liberating and empowering extensions of television. But, for those of us who grew up during the '70's, these new technologies were part of the exponential infiltration of media into our daily lives. In other words, we were raised upon, and thus interacted with—*experienced*— television, both qualitatively and quantitatively, like no other generation before.

In this sense, for the postmodern, mediated lived world—a world imbued with television and televisual residue—encompassing all aspects of daily life, becomes, as I have already stated, as natural as nature itself. This is a hard pill for someone like McKibben to swallow, who

strives to distinguish a world of nature apart from a world of rapid-fire televisual bursts. But for those whose formative years were the information-soaked '70's and '80's, it is easy to see how the ever-increasing implementation of new technologies began to define our lived-word. We were reared on cable, and VCR's and remote-control, as well as personal computers, answering machines, and instant tellers, all of which contributed to the fragmentation and caprice of Sochen's cafeteria culture. It is thus difficult to deny such an experience—picking randomly and at will from a dizzying plethora of goods and services—because we were, and are, situated within that existential context. TV and other media are the constituents of the twenty-somethings' *Lebenswelt*.

We are therefore the first generation to really expect obsolescence at the point of technological inception. Today our grandparents, and even our parents, marvel at the arrival of new and improved technologies. Fifty years from now, these technologies will have far surpassed today's wonders; yet we will not react with the same awe to these novel inventions, because we were born into the expectation of such change. The telephone remained essentially unchanged for about a hundred years; its ability to transmit and receive improved and increased, no question, but its elementary function—to carry the human voice over distance, remained the same. In the last ten years we have seen the telephone line reworked to transmit other types of information via faxes and electronic BBS's.[31] With new encryption techniques, money—not

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[31] As cultural historian James Gleick observes:

> After a century of fading into bedside tables and kitchen walls, the telephone—both the instrument and its network—is on the march again. As a device

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abstract cash like that handled by banks—but real money, could be sent by e-mail from one person to another, or downloaded from an electronic bank to one's computer desktop. And the changes keep coming... In the postmodern cafeteria, the technologies *du jour* are the unsavoury leftovers of tomorrow.

I do not, however, want to portray postmodern culture (to reiterate: "postmodern" is used here as a convenient term that signifies this explosion of expanding technology during the '70's), and those who grew up during its ascension, as being as empty, as centre-less, and as dehumanized as some theorists might imply. Instead, my concern here is to see how and where a generation—my generation—use that great postmodern beat of burden, the television, to help live out and define particular moments in our lived-world as being uniquely our own. This type of analysis immediately lends itself to a view of TV time and memory that is dynamic, experience-based, and hence, resonant. I want to show that the reflection of lived experience is the one of the most fundamental ways to become aware of ourselves in the present, an echo of Franco Ferrarotti's assertion that "we are what we are and know we are that only in the moment of reflection" (28).

For one to use television as a parameter for explaining lived (i.e., past) existence,[32] to define oneself within a pop-context of first-run

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shrinking to pocket size, the telephone is subsuming the rest of our technological baggage—the fax machine, the pager, the clock, the compass, the stock ticker, and the television. A sign of the telephone's power: It is pressing the computer into service as its accessory, not the other way around. (*Wired* 103)

[32]Is not all experience "past", i.e., always already experienced?

episodes of *Good Times*, *Welcome Back, Kotter*, *James at 15/16*, or else endless re-runs of *The Flintstones*, *Gilligan's Island*, and *Get Smart!*—to relate our life-worlds to these texts, is to see where television acts as a very special time-space conduit, a part of the intersubjective matrix of the *Lebenswelt* that reconciles the past with the present, and that at once helps to both promote and define a techno-fed, postmodern, post-sixties, pop-culture viewer.

Like Kennedy, I found that the most incredible thing about doing any sort of research on the '70's and on those who grew up during that time, is that there are few sources on these topics. This is partly due to the fact, as Kennedy and others point out, that people are either unwilling to or unable to define a generation that exists in the shadow of the much scrutinized baby-boomer crowd. Coupland's *Generation X*, Kennedy notes, had trouble getting serious attention, since those in the publishing industry found it difficult to accept a separate, existent, targetable audience of '70's kids.[33] But we are out here, surely, and our heroes growing up were (for boys) Evil Knievel, The Six Million Dollar Man, and Starsky and Hutch, (for girls) The Bionic Woman, Charlie's Angels, and Police Woman. (Perhaps the only heroes we could have had in an age of disco, bell-bottoms, and pet rocks?)

The influence of TV—its relation to the increase of a thoroughly technological environment—must be looked at in a social context as

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[33]The fact the *Generation X* remains one of the sole texts that deals with this generation explains Coupland's success. The recent films *Slacker*, for example, and *Singles*, a *Big Chill* for the twenty-somethings, reflect a renewed interest in the Generation X crowd (or at least the marketability of the stories of a "lost" generation).

well. In the '50's and '60's (and now, I think, finally in the '90's) kids growing up watching television were living in a time of important political and social upheaval. The '50's and '60's were firmly entrenched in a cold-war ethos; your enemies lay outside the sphere of the established nuclear family, its rationality, its normality, etc. Then, of course, was the time of the mid- to late-sixties, and your enemy, the person you should be very wary of, was no longer the impending Russian soldier but the national guardsman or the corporate executive—perhaps even (or especially) your parents too became *personae non gratae*... Now, however, in the '90's there is a constant reconfiguring of borders, a conflation and deflation of historical and geographical entities What I am suggesting here is that the eras of the '50's, the '60's, and now the '90's, can be seen in terms of specific shifts, grand sociopolitical movements that directly affected the society. However, in the '70's, and for much of the '80's, I think that sort of general, recognizable trend toward a collective mindset—the existence of some graspable, teleological essence—disappeared.

Although one can think of the '70's, as Kennedy notes, as a time of important social and political change—the detonation of the women's movement, the end of the Vietnam war, the emergence of a united gay and lesbian front, etc.—these events, I believe, were discrete moments that did not produce, promote, or reflect larger considerations. After all, the '50's was, for many North Americans, about patriotism, about rebuilding, about family, and, above all, about establishing a harmonious, powerful, and ideal state (with two cars in every garage...); conversely, the '60's was about re-evaluating, revolutionizing, re-constituting that very state; and, the '70's, well, it was simply about

everything and nothing at the same time. And although the events and ideas of the '50's and '60's that had enough momentum to carry through to the "disco-decade" did have an impact here, they were still rooted in, and hence belonged to, a different time and place. The '70's was a collecting ground, a landfill site for all the detritus from the '50's on: Nixon, Vietnam, cold-war rhetoric, and the requisite sex, drugs, and rock and roll. With this growing instability of firm ground, it is hardly surprising that people began to wear clogs and listen to Abba—after all, something had to define the new era.

And what about the kids, what did it mean for them to grow up in such a dissonant decade? For me, and I think that this is true for many others my age, it allowed us to exist more freely than those who had grown up before us. We were more liberated in the sense that we were, for that particular time, living without the grand ethos; no longer influenced on the one hand by a prevailing undercurrent of fear, aggression, and nationalism, and, on the other hand, by rebellion, revolution, and going-to-San-Franciscoism; free in the sense that we could be exposed to more TV, for longer hours, and without being influenced in our viewing habits by a specific morality lesson or political message. More single parents and two-income families, coupled with smaller family sizes (I, like many of the pop culture savants whom I know—those who can name every celebrity-guest who appeared on the *Love Boat*—am an only child), meant that TV began to play a greater role as baby-sitter and sibling than before. The '70's was a kind of sociocultural nether-world, a gap in time and space that, looking back upon it, helps us to define and comprehend an under-thirty generation. Coupled with the quantitative increase of postmodern technological implementation, these qualitative social and

cultural influences brought TV into our lives in a way that forever changed our perception of reality. It helps to understand why my generation is so *technocultured*.

In Kroker's "Television and the Triumph of Culture: Three Theses," the author sees TV as the real world of postmodern culture,

> which has *entertainment* as its ideology, *spectacle* as the emblematic sign of the commodity-form, *lifestyle advertising* as its popular psychology, pure, empty *seriality* as the bond which unites the simulacrum of the audience, *electronic images* as its most dynamic, and only, form of social cohesion, *elite media politics* as its ideological formula, the buying and selling of *abstract attention* as the locus of its marketplace rationale, cynicism as its dominant cultural sign, and the diffusion of a *network of relational power* as its real product. (39)

This is a view of a contemporary TV society that is very much like the one inhabited by the characters of Coupland's *Generation X*. It is a generation guided and shaped by a lived-world of consumerism that began for them in the 1970's. If some of the glosses of Coupland's text remind us of (Kroker's) postmodern world—a society of "decade blending," historical slumming," "spectacularism," "now denial," and "ultra short-term nostalgia"—it is because, as mentioned before, these qualities *are* part of the postmodern's *Lebenswelt*. What is important to recognize is that these postmoderns are all united by the common trait of having grown up during the 1970's. Do we have, then, a causal explanation here? That is, are the children of the '70's postmodern due to the times in which

they grew up (in terms of the '70's technological, televisual, cultural, and (a)political framework), or else, is a "postmodern" ethos just something that they acquired somewhere, sometime, during the '80's, along with their *Miami Vice* soundtracks and their pastel-coloured accouterments?

In other words, just how special is the '70's era? Is Generation X a true generation, do they have their own special place among the discourse on generations, or should they be lumped together with those who grew up in the late '50's/early '60's; after all—and this is an important point in our consideration of the relationship between society and television—we are all related by this simple fact: all of us, that is, those of us in our twenties, thirties, and forties, grew up watching TV, and by way of reruns, much of the same TV. My older friends and relatives (those in their mid-thirties) grew up watching *Gilligan's Island*—so did I. The difference is, while they watched it as first-run, now (or when I was growing up) I watched it as rerun: or similarly, when I was growing up, I watched live, primetime versions of *Happy Days*, *M*A*S*H*, *Welcome Back, Kotter*, etc.; now, people under twenty watch reruns of these same shows (at various times throughout the day); and, if we want to widen this perspective even more, we can note how our parents (say, those aged 45–50) watched *The Honeymooners* as first run, my older friends/relatives (born in the mid- to late-fifties) watched it as rerun, Generation X watched it as rerun, and, now, how the '70's/'80's born generations are enjoying these televisual texts in rerun.

Here, then, the televisual experience of reruns links the generations in a certain way. We must remember that reruns make up a good deal of non-primetime television; we are constantly viewing programs that hearken back to past individual, televisual experience. I

can watch a rerun of the '70's sitcom *Good Times* with a 15 year-old; for me, the viewing is more dynamic, in the sense that I am watching the episode again, and can recall the context in which I watched the original episode years ago. The 15 year-old does not have that context, the clothes, the phrases, even the intertextuality of the episode (e.g., *Good Times* as a spin-off of *Maude*), do not constitute the same meaning for my viewing partner, for she/he did not grow up during (or else was too young to remember) that time. We are watching the same text, but in a different *context*. You see, for me, as for others, I retain a certain cultural baggage—the modes of experience of the technologically inspired naissance of postmodern consumer frenzy during the '70's—a quality of experience that I did not only exist through, but was molded by, therefore I can claim a unique affinity with, and understanding of, that lived-world. It is my generation—Generation X—who can remember, and state, for example: "I felt the same kind of horror watching today's *Oprah* topic on child abuse as I did when Penny's mom (on *Good Times*) broke her daughter's arm." This tele-parablizing (I am using this term somewhat less ironically than Coupland defines it) can only be brought about through a special (i.e., resonant) relation one has with the referential event, namely, the understanding and appreciation an individual has with the first-hand experiencing of a techno-dynamic televisual text. Perhaps here, though, I am talking more about the relation between TV, time, and memory, and less about the postmodern generation that I set out to locate and define. At this point, maybe we should reconsider the relationship between the televisual text, personal experience, and different television eras/generations.

We have noted how Coupland's notion of tele-parablization is considered unique to a generation who grew up under the full barrage of pop culture. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine my parents (who are in their mid-forties), or even anyone in their mid-thirties, engaging in this form of television-reality blending. The type of allusion to, say, *The Honeymooners* (e.g., someone who grew up in the '50's saying: "This current situation in my lived experience reminds me of the time that Ralph and Ed...") is not as commonly heard, I think, than a postmodern referring to, for instance, an episode of *James at 15*, and relating it to her present lived-world experience. This is not to say that TV viewing was neither as important, nor as prevalent, for the thirty/forty-somethings as it was for me and the other twenty-somethings. But, let me reiterate how, one, unregulated TV viewing was in the '70's vis-à-vis an underlying ethos that would fit everything seen on TV into some coherent order, and, two, how technology's influence on the life-world greatly increased: the fragmented, fickle nature of a postmodern cafeteria dweller, is surely in part the result of growing up in a time where "obsolescence" becomes a leitmotif, where the availability of a hundred channels and the ability to move through those channels quickly and effortlessly via the remote-control become an integral part of TV viewing. What I am suggesting is that TV-as-full-blown-postmodern-experience (i.e., the televisual as society) did not emerge until the '70's. In other words, during the '50's and 60's, TV and society (the family, school, church, the political corpus, for instance) remained separate spheres. Although these were influenced by each other—TV in the home as appliance, as a locus for family interaction, and so on—television had not gained full dominion over the society at large, partly because of the prevailing order that still promoted

traditional values—churchgoing, family outings, etc.—and partly because of the technology—TV had yet to establish and perfect its great space-binding processes, such as satellite, cable, and so forth. So, the postmodern development—television and society blending together, imploding meaning, deconstructing time and space—was one that gradually began to take shape and gain steam in the '70's, until this blurring of boundaries eventually came of age in the '80's, and settled comfortably in the exalted position it now holds within the discourse of culture.

Television, therefore, has different effects, and inhabits different meaning systems for each generation. The '50's and '60's saw television occupy a privileged place in the society, but it was a space that remained largely external to the activities and ideas of everyday life. The '70's through to the present, however, has seen society become an extension of the televisual, in the sense that everything defined as part of consumer society is mediated through a televisual moment. Is it not easy to see, then, why Generation X (and those younger) find it difficult to distinguish between television and "reality," between consumer culture and society? Is it not apparent that in the last twenty years or so the new forms of TV and related media technologies, coupled with specific social factors, have affected the traditional relationship impressionable youth have had with their world, in effect creating a new quality of reciprocity between subjects and objects, between individuals and artefacts? The question that must be asked, in other words, is whether or not we *can*, or *should*, distinguish between these notions, that is, between TV and not-TV, since growing up today does not only mean living with mom and dad and your sister, but is also linked to the world

of the Simpsons and the Huxtables, and, a little further back, to the Waltons and the Bradys. Not that people didn't grow up with the Nelsons, or the Ricardos, but now TV viewing is bound up with such cultural signification, of such an intense and pervasive thrust, that it is impossible to say, in the context of Kroker's thesis, that 'he TV family and one's really family are not part of the same postmodern lived-world.

If we, for the sake of exploration, agree with Kroker's postmodern thesis, and nod our heads approvingly at the assertion that society is a reflection of the televisual, then are we not defining or locating the specific traits of a generation? If, according to Coupland's text, the protagonists exist in the vacuum of culture—a hyperactualized, "empty, signifying culture" (Kroker)—would they not be happy, or at least relieved, to cling to, however superficial or impotent, a notion of themselves being televisually created (i.e., we, Generation X, are not (m)any things, but at least we are a TV culture). If, in other words, Generation X's constituents are bound to an empty world of meaningless signifiers, might that relationship, for the time being, be considered as a lynch-pin for understanding and interpreting this generation? Taking this argument to its most absurd and extreme conclusion, one might thus say:

> Generation X are postmodern (or, at least, they exist in a postmodern culture)
>
> television is postmodern culture (Kroker)
>
> therefore, Generation X is television (and vice versa)[34]

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[34]One might question the logic here, as in:

A dog is a mammal

continued on next page

The important notion here is that to understand and to place Generation X in a particular context is to understand and place television in a particular context. The logic here is, of course, circular. For once we link Generation X with television in order to understand them, we have to first have an understanding of "postmodernism." Thus, a new question/problem arises (one that has been alluded to before): What came first, postmodernism or Generation X? In other words, is Generation X a symptom of a postmodern condition, or have the members of that generation, through the context of their growing up during the information-soaked '70's/'80's, created a situation called postmodernism (forget about postmodernism here as being merely a *term* that has been around since the sixties; we are talking here, as I mentioned before, about postmodernism as an embodiment of a *way of life*, as a signifier of the lived-world of cafeteria-like experiences). To put it in another context: is TV a one-way process, whereby its textual[35] and contextual (technological) enworldedness shape the impressionable youth living in its shadow, or does a generation—a specific TV audience—uniquely using the inventions of a particular era, construct "meaning" of the world for and by themselves?

A whale is a mammal
Therefore, a cat is a whale?

I would state, yes, a cat is a whale (and vice versa) insofar as they are both defined with a specific meaning-order, i.e., the classification "mammal". Similarly, I would assert that Generation X is television (and, conversely, that television is Generation X) insofar as both are inextricably linked to the episteme and lived-world existence of postmodernism.

[35]I have not talked about the specific textual factors of '70's television that may have influenced viewership. For instance, one could argue that TV, particularly in the early- to mid-'70's, employed the close-up shot more frequently than today (I'm thinking especially of Norman Lear vehicles such as *All in the Family*). Thus, one might conclude that this technical propensity made television more dramatic, more visceral—and, therefore, more likely to be incorporated into young people's *Lebenswelt*.

In what one might claim is a typically postmodern compromise (but which I would say is a resonant explanation), I am going to suggest that our chicken-or-the-egg inquiry does not at this stage have a simple yes/no answer. Postmodernism, I would argue, can only exist (or be defined) within an environment of mass consumer culture (Generation X), and yet it is this very collective who must seek out and internalize the products and ideas of postmodernity. It is neither a question of "the public gets what the public wants" (I want my MTV, Generation X as creating/defining postmodernity, de Certeau and Davis's notions of a cognizant, choosing consumer), nor should it be based solely within a structuralist framework of alienated labour, capitalist machinery, manipulation of the masses, etc. (postmodern consumer culture—the omnipotent, mythical TV deity, for instance—transmogrifying a particular generation). The relation between the postmodern world and its inhabitants is neither exclusively a bottom-up (making-the-world) nor a top-down (made-by-the-world) process, for the two are linked in such a way that it is impossible to render one term mutually exclusive from the other.

We are discussing here, therefore, not a causal association but a *resonant* relation between Generation X and postmodernity (i.e., the technological and social realities of the lived-world of the '70's and beyond), which assumes that one, or something, is both subject and object in relation to another individual or thing that is also both subject and object in regard to the former. Thus, I am both an intrasubjective individual and an intersubjective part of a greater whole—to understand myself I must comprehend that I am part of the world (a world of objects or artefacts), and, conversely, to understand the world I must have an

awareness that it is in part composed of me (my subjective world). Similarly, to discuss Generation X, our collective past and present, is to place us in a sphere of understanding that necessarily includes all the facets of postmodernism (pastiche, decentring, explosion of meaning—the legacies of technological ascendancy), while at the same time acknowledging that to discuss postmodernism one must bring forth an understanding of who and what the individuals of Generation X are and do. To be born into this mediated world, or to have grown up during its momentous gain, is to exist intersubjectively with technologies like television.

What all of this implies, as Kennedy goes at length in her article to point out, is that '70's culture, and the experiences of its children (i.e., the twenty-somethings), are unique, and must not be dismissed, to be exorcised from our collective psyche by other generations. It is here where those members of Generation X—Kennedy, Coupland, myself, and others—must strive to renegotiate, through recollections and reevaluations of the past, the 1970's as an area of meaning for a vast group of individuals who are shadowed by the baby-boomers and their '60's nostalgia (a nostalgia, which, unfortunately, captures the hearts and mind of many who grew up in the '70's, teens and twenty-somethings who bemoan the fact that there "is nothing to my generation," that "theirs [the boomers'] was so much better!"). This is not a call for everyone under thirty to throw on a pair of bellbottoms and some platforms, but to be aware of Generation X (or whatever one prefers to call them) as a collective that grew up in a time and space that helped to both create and embody a current prevalent mode of existence and thought, namely, postmodernism. As Kennedy notes, the individual

recollections of the '70's may be "our only defense against the revisionism with which our current pop culture treats the pop culture of the past" (20).

A study of the '70's—that is, more studies on the '70's—can reveal a number of interesting things about our current mode of being as postmodern, pop culture savants. Kennedy cites, for instance, Peter Carroll's *The Tragedy and Promise of America in the 1970's*, which notes how that era saw a growing number of adults choosing to live alone—by 1976, as much as 60 percent. Thus, Kennedy speculates, perhaps

> maybe the '70's fascination with pop culture was due to more than just a glut of young consumers. Those single Americans cut off from the private culture of family looked to TV to provide a sense of community; the local mall for a sense of place; and fashion for a sense of belonging. Kids who grew up in the early seventies were alone a lot...However TV couples produced huge broods: Look at the Bradys, the Waltons, the Partridges...and later the *Eight is Enough* crowd. The close-knit clans of TV fulfilled kids' desire for siblings, lots of them, and for parents whose first priority was their children. (20)

Analyses of this kind, whether we agree with them or not, are nonetheless surely needed, for they not only help define a culture growing up in a particular era, but they also may help to explain our current resonant relationships with TV and all other facets of contemporary media culture.

For those of us who have grown up in the past twenty years, the constant implementation of new technologies and new modes of viewing

TV (we were the first generation to see and to use TV in a multidimensional way, e.g., the interactive home video-games that could be turned on with a flick of the switch, which allowed one to either watch TV or play "on" TV) has been an integral component of our everyday lives; these new dynamics have become, in phenomenological *parlance*, part of our lived-world. We have seen that to understand Generation X is to understand pop culture—why we act, or think, in a certain way, is partly a result of being brought up as '70's (and '80's) kids in the midst of an onslaught of postmodern possibilities. Looking back, for instance, at the fashions, the hairstyles, the music, one might attempt to dismiss the era of my youth as nothing more than an aberration, a moment of consumer culture gone wild; but for those of us who grew up then (who did not merely pass through it is as other generations did), this period has had a profound impact on our lives and our lived-relations. The '70's era, remains a far too glossed-over period, and this is an egregious oversight. It is therefore crucial to relate a '70's experience, a '70's "theory," based on our discussions of (resonant) television and consumer culture experience, since my generation will be looked at, years from now when the dust of this millennium has settled, as *the* age group that grew up in the crossover from the "modern" (analog) to the "postmodern" (digital).

By linking all the concepts mentioned in this section—TV, postmodernism, Generation X, the reflection and recollection of past experience, and, of course, the resonance of subject-object interactivity (i.e., to utilize the various assumptions of this entire thesis)—we cannot only reveal truths about the meaningful relationship between society and television (or between TV and other forms of mediated experience), but

can use this study (e.g., television and its effects on society—television *as* society, and, simultaneously, society—in both a collective and an individual consideration—and its impact on television, e.g., Davis's assertion of contemporary culture being brought to the TV screen by empowered viewers) as a way to retrieve, for the generation of twenty somethings and others, a continuum and quality of lived-experience often dismissed as non-definitive or non-existent. This exploration can begin to show how the "meaning" of the world starts to emerge only in the resonant moment of experiencing media.

CONCLUSION

With the fundamental concept of resonance—the amalgam of ideas, borrowed from a number of diverse works, of reversibility, intersubjectivity, figure-ground, sincerity-authenticity, etc.—we have a starting point for a unique approach to studying media phenomena—here, film and television—within a (post)modern context The resonance thesis implies a lived-word of experienced social relations that is dynamic; thus, the conventional paradigm of text-audience-critic becomes a much more open-ended field of signification than current studies generally allow, for the resonance of, say, an idea such as reversibility, implies that there exists a multiplicity of ways to study media phenomena and its relationship to viewers and critics. For instance, watching an episode of my favourite television show is the intrasubjective, passive reception of mediated images at the level of viewer/viewed. Yet it is also the active interplay between myself, the televisual, and the complex and varied network of significations that are produced by it (for instance, through individual and collective remembrance). Thus a seemingly nonsensical text like *Gilligan's Island*, for example, becomes imbued with meaning, as it is not only a static object-in-the-world (as the object of my intrasubjectivity) but a starting point for a consciousness-of-the-world (in other words, a detonator of intersubjectivity). This approach to certain media, then, is an alternative to those studies that regard the text as only an object, and which thereby deny that text's subjective, or intersubjective, existence. In this latter way we are left with the same old monocular exploration of "texts," leaving the contextual "imbeddedness" of things unspoken. As Vivian Sobchack notes, contemporary film theories—for instance, certain

Marxist, feminist, and psychoanalytic approaches—are concerned with the constituted image of the cinematic—the "viewed-view"—and ignore the experienced/experiencing moments of the film-in-the-world (the "viewing-view").[36] These approaches tend to downplay agency, and see social, political, and unconscious mental structures as the dominant instigator and regulator of lived-world dynamics. This is not to deny the credibility or usefulness of these cinematic and cultural theories, but it does point to the dearth of studies that are concerned with the crucial resonant (i.e., intersubjective and reversible) qualities of cinematic, televisual and other cultural experience (that is, those studies that portray a dynamic interplay between social/cultural structures and the empowered actors of everyday life).

We must be aware, then, that the subject-object resonance within and between individuals/things is existentially situated in the lived-world, and thus a useful way to explore and understand these dynamics is to study—to reflect on—our lived experience, past and present. This special relation between a particular experience (TV viewing, for example)

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[36]Furthermore, as Sobchack points out, while the (film) theorist denies the fundamental nature of the existential (intrasubjective) moment when discussing the objective status of a film, they nonetheless must first arrive at their own intrasubjective thesis about the film. Sobchack explains:

> Those aspects of vision that are not visible in vision but that are perceptible to each individual viewer as s/he views are discounted in theoretical descriptions of the film experience, even as the theorist must subjectively live through those "invisible" aspects of his or her perceptual experience in order to see the images, imagining, and spectators s/he so objectively and partially describes. (296–297)

Film theory is thus somewhat paradoxical. One is informed that an existential, subjective interpretation is meaningless, even as the "meaningful" objective status of the film in intuited by the intrasubjective (experiential qua theoretically illegitimate) reflection of the theorist!

and the aspects of that experience which give it full meaning—once again, Ihde's idea of a historical or cultural (that is, contextual) grounding—amount to the inter- and intrasubjective "modalities of a single experience of being-in-the-world" (Sobchack 23). It is this cohesion that prompts Merleau-Ponty to state that "'I belong to myself' while belonging to the world" (qtd. in Sobchack 22). It becomes clear, then, that a resonant approach requires the reflection of past experience in order to help make sense of the present and the future. In *The Past Is a Foreign Country*, David Lowenthal writes:

> The past surrounds and saturates us; every scene, every statement, every action retains residual content from earlier times. All present awareness is grounded on past perceptions and acts; we recognize a person, a tree, a breakfast, an errand because we have seen or done it before. And pastness is also integral to my own being: 'We are at any moment the sum of all our moments, the product of all our experiences', as A.A. Mendilow put it. (185)

The past then, taken as the already-experienced, helps to make up the existential pattern of our being-in-the-world; we cannot know ourselves as beings without the experience of the already-experienced. We are thus "historical" creatures, and yet, as David Carr points out,

> to say that we are "historical beings" and "intertwined with history" is not merely to say that we are all *in* history as part of the historical process. It means that we are *in* history as we are in the world: it serves as the horizon and background for our everyday experience. (2)

Carr's analysis infuses approaches to time and history with the basic tenets of the phenomenological, enabling him to make use of what, as he notes, "Hegel called 'the I that is We, the We that is I'—in other words, the idea of a social and collective subject of action, experience, and history" (Carr 6). For Carr, this study engages the resonant dialectic between inter- and intrasubjectivity.[37] In this way Carr, as others have done, acknowledges the duality of existence of a resonant, phenomenologically-situated creature, one, as Dilthey stated, whose "psychic Gestalt is the product of [their] personal history and development" and the "ideas, beliefs, modes of feeling and thinking which prevail at his [sic] time and place" (qtd. in Müller-Vollmer 113).

A study of (post)modern culture that looks to experience as its instigator attempts to unify the separate yet related states-of-being constituted by the individual within culture, on the one hand, and culture within the individual on the other. It is keenly aware of the inter- and intrasubjectivities that are a necessary component of being-in-the-world, and attempts to create meaning through its reflection of a coexistent collective and individual history. I think of here again, as an example, television-viewing and how it relates to my history specifically, and to the collective history/consciousness of the (post)modern generally. Television (and other media) becomes, for me, more than that which is viewed by myself as an individual; it is at once, as Sobchack

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[37]He writes,

> This will permit us to move beyond individual subjectivity without leaving behind altogether the idea of subjectivity itself. The [use of] phenomenology will permit us to arrive at an indispensable condition for our understanding of history: the idea of a social subject that is flexible, movable, and above all developmental. (6)

would note, the object of my viewed-view, and a subject that has, like me, a participatory role in the world. In other words, television exists, as I exist, (post)modernly and existentially, as an object-in-the-world and as a subject-of-the-world: it is that phenomenon, like any other constituent of the everyday, that is open to the individual and to the social at the same moment.

The understanding of a (post)modern, media culture is strengthened by this resonant approach, for it enables us to comprehend the matrix of the lived-world, "the sense which is revealed where the paths of my various experiences intersect, and also where my own and other people's intersect and engage each other like gears" (Fisher 41). To realize our individual history is to engage knowingly in the world as individuals within a simultaneously existing collective realm. We cannot deny (post)modern experience because we are firmly and irrevocably situated in that very experience. As Marshall Berman points out, the process of modernity, "even as it exploits and torments us, brings our energies and imaginations to life, drives us to grasp and confront the world that modernization makes, and to strive to make it our own" (348). Since the meaning of the world becomes embedded in the very act of being, we, as (post)modern, existential individuals—in both our subjective and objective guises—share the remarkable ability to both perceive, and to exist as—*to be*—that very lived-world itself.

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