Television's adaptable women: postfeminist nostalgia and Hollywood film

Lisa Caroline Hill
Southern Cross University

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I acknowledge that I have read and understood the University’s rules, requirements, procedures and policy relating to my higher degree research award and to my thesis. I certify that I have complied with the rules, requirements, procedures and policy of the University (as they may be from time to time).

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ABSTRACT

This thesis determines that nostalgia and postfeminism are linked by notions of the past and performativity, and recognises contemporary film adaptations of television shows as potential sites for these principles to converge. It identifies the new millennium films Bewitched and Charlie’s Angels, both adapted from 1960s and 1970s TV series, as pertinent examples of this coalescence and posits the concept of ‘postfeminist nostalgia’ to account for the desire to engage with past womanhoods and competing gender ideals.

From the late 1990s onwards, a string of popular US TV shows from the sixties and seventies have been re-imagined as Hollywood films. While this trend signals a collective nostalgia, the recurrence of characters, settings and themes also provides an opportunity to observe socio-cultural changes across the period; particularly variations in screen representations of women and femininity. Through primarily textual analysis, this thesis examines the chosen texts in tandem, by first situating the TV show in a socio-historical context and then considering the corresponding film in relation to the TV series, revealing what has changed and, just as significantly, what has stayed the same. In Bewitched, the gender performativity highlighted in the TV show reappears through a narrative construct in the film whereby the modern-day character calls on the idealised sixties housewife to gain insight into postfeminist womanhood. In contrast, the ‘girl power’ discourse that permeates the Charlie’s Angels film(s) reflects the negotiation of new (post)femininities, moving beyond the multiple and public characterisations introduced in the seventies’ TV series.

The significance of adaptations became apparent throughout this analysis as the most potent state in which postfeminism and nostalgia converge. Despite the presentation of diverse femininities (from housewife to ‘action chick’), the Bewitched and Charlie’s Angels texts uncovered similar and complementary issues, each engaging with sisterhood and empowerment as well as performativity and the negotiation of multiple roles. An examination of the postfeminist series Sex and the City (1998-2004) and its recent film adaptation (and sequel) confirms these findings, demonstrating a broader application of postfeminist nostalgia and exposing postfeminism’s mediating potential. When examined through a contemporary lens, the more widely progressive representations of women were found in the original TV
shows. Each of the film adaptations tap into these transgressive representations and, in doing so, foreground the active nature of postfeminism and nostalgia. This suggests that, further to connecting with a feminist genealogy and past ideals, the adapted texts work towards incorporating them into representations of contemporary women on screen.

While focussing on specific texts, this thesis directly responds to broader trends. The proliferation of retro imagery across the contemporary popular culture landscape, and in screen media particularly, confirms a widespread postfeminist desire to engage with the past. Nostalgia highlights the importance of this desire in a contemporary context. Moreover, popular culture is a rapidly changing environment, with the regular introduction of new technologies, integration and convergence of old technologies, preservation of some, adaptation of others, and simultaneous use of multiple platforms and dispersed narratives. These changes have seen popular culture increasingly fold back on itself, with representations of representations and ever-deepening intertextuality woven into the fabric of the books, games, television shows, movies, advertisements, fashion, music and websites that are produced and consumed on a daily basis. In such an environment, tracing representations of gender and closely examining how gendered ideals are presented garners even greater significance. The in-depth studies undertaken in this thesis thereby provide models that can be applied to popular culture more generally, making the findings particularly relevant in the new transmedia era.
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Introduction

**WOMEN, CHANGE, AND ENGAGING WITH THE PAST**

With the wiggle of a bewitching nose or a ‘Good morning Charlie’ chorus, iconic female characters from television’s past have made their way to the twenty-first century, adapting to postfeminist life on the silver screen. The pasts these women bring with them not only remain relevant, but are critical tools for exploring contemporary tensions in postfeminism and how women and femininity are portrayed on modern screens. This thesis addresses the relationship between postfeminism and nostalgia through an examination of the representations of women and femininity in contemporary film adaptations of television shows from the 1960s and 1970s. It contends that such texts function as spaces that facilitate a dialogue between the past and the present within which competing feminine ideals are negotiated. Utilising *Bewitched* and *Charlie’s Angels* as in-depth studies, the thesis explores the significance of drawing on existing TV characters, themes and narratives from this era, and considers the role of the adaptation process in this gendered discourse.

**Everything Old is New Again**

Importantly, this analysis of film adaptations of TV series is located within a broader socio-cultural interest in ‘retro’ imagery of women and womanhood. While looking back is nothing new, what is distinct about contemporary popular culture texts’ engagement with the past is the attention given to women’s roles during the 1960s. This interest is demonstrated by the current popularity of AMC’s TV series *Mad Men* (2007- ). While in its fourth season in 2011, *Mad Men* won a fourth consecutive Emmy Award for Outstanding Drama Series to equal the record set by *Hill Street Blues* (1981-1987), *L.A. Law* (1986-1994) and *The West Wing* (1999-2006). In September the same year – spurred on by *Mad Men*’s success – ABC premiered *Pan Am* and NBC offered up *The Playboy Club*. All three shows are set in 1960s America and are notable for high production values, close attention to historical detail and foregrounding gender roles during a period of changing social mores. In a *New York Times* review of *Pan Am*, Alessandra Stanley (2011) contrasts the high flying series’ romanticism of the past with *Mad Men*’s more grounded, ‘slyly mocking’ rendition of that era. She states that ‘*Mad Men* is
veined with injustices: the way women are overlooked, blacks are ignored and Jews despised. *Pan Am* takes a more forgiving look at the 1960s’ (Stanley 2011). Notably, Stanley (2011) observes that ‘period shows pick through the past to mediate on the present’, identifying *That 70s Show* (1998-2006) and *M*A*S*H* (1972-1983) as examples that examine generational differences and critique the Vietnam War ‘at a safe remove’, given that they are set during the Carter administration and the Korean War respectively. She subsequently suggests the golden hue through which *Pan Am* is shot should be read as ‘a mood indicator for these times, not those’ (Stanley 2011). While *Pan Am* has not achieved the critical acclaim and longevity of *Mad Men*, and *The Playboy Club* was cancelled after only three episodes,¹ the simultaneous production of these analogous series suggests a strong pull towards a central theme: women negotiating change. It is therefore timely for this thesis to engage with these issues.

**Why Retro?**

Historians agree that delving into the past is an exercise in gaining insight into contemporary times. In 1885, John Franklin Jameson – the first person to hold a doctorate in history at John Hopkins University and founder of the American Historical Association – affirmed not only that ‘the study of the past can enable us to understand the present’, but that particular attention should be paid to the ‘immediate past’ (cited in Fitzpatrick 2004). Or as Nobel laureate Pearl S. Buck (1892-1973) observed, ‘If you want to understand today, you have to search yesterday’. When popular culture pays attention to the recent past, it is called ‘retro’; a term that generally refers to the post-war style period. However, as Elizabeth E. Guffey argues,

> ‘Retro’ has been dismissed as a fashionable novelty and fodder for popular culture's relentless appetite, but its most potent connotation is often overlooked: ‘retro’ suggests a fundamental shift in the popular relationship with the past. Beyond presenting older forms with an Indian summer novelty, ‘retro’ ignores remote lore and focuses on the recent past. It ignores, for instance, the Middle Ages or classical antiquity. Half-ironic, half-longing, ‘retro’ considers the recent past with an unsentimental nostalgia. (2006:10-11)

To this end, retro trends deserve close consideration. Retro embodies a communal memory and as Guffey asserts, ‘allows us to come to terms with the modern past’ (2006:9); moreover, like any ‘history’, retro speaks to contemporary issues.

¹ Despite its short run, *The Playboy Club* is significant due to the millions of dollars spent on its production and millions of people in the US having seen it. The series attracted approximately five million viewers on debut; however, it faced strong competition scheduled opposite proven rating winners *Castle* (2009-) and the rebooted *Hawaii Five-0* (2010-) (Seidman 2011).
Most importantly for this thesis, retro representations of women and femininity feature prominently on modern screens, a trend which therefore speaks to a contemporary interest in women and women’s roles. This retro imagery is accommodated by postfeminism, which offers an outlet for varied and variable representations of women. The simplified and popularised version of postfeminism combines an assumption of the independence and equalities that came with hard-fought battles of feminism, with romanticised ideals of pre-feminist womanhood; specifically ideals of marriage, home and hearth (think Bridget Jones – modern working girl crossed with Austen-style romance). However, what is of particular note about the retro images being foregrounded in the twenty-first century is that, although they have a distinctly pre-feminist flavour, they are not wholly entrenched in the ‘happy housewife’ myth. In a postfeminist era, idealised versions of June Cleaver or Donna Stone are not being presented. Instead, while clearly retro, more rounded depictions are being constructed and screened – images of women on the cusp of change; women with a desire and drive for more. Mad Men and Pan Am again demonstrate this shift.

Set in the fictional Madison Avenue advertising agency Sterling Cooper in 1960s New York City, Mad Men adopts a ‘warts and all’ approach in its exposition of antiquated double standards for men and women, and in doing so identifies the motivations for and pre-conditions to social changes in gender politics. Both at home, with the stark portrayal of troubled housewife Betty Draper, and at work, such as with office manager and Stirling’s long-time mistress Joan Holloway, the women in Mad Men are shown to be frustrated by the restrictions they face. At the same time, the show identifies women forging new paths such as through the character of Peggy Olsen, who starts out as a secretary and becomes a copywriter, despite an unplanned pregnancy. As J. M. Tyree attests, ‘Peggy’s gradual steps toward empowerment in the wake of her childbirth, costly and hard-won, feel like genuine progress’ (2010:35). Pan Am carries a gentler tone than Mad Men but is still candid in its portrayal of gendered expectations and women’s desire for change. The series follows the pilots and stewardesses of Pan Am airlines in the early 1960s, and foregrounds new roles and opportunities for women in the workforce at this time. For Stanley (2011), ‘the Pan Am heroines represent the dawning of the women’s movement’. Mirroring the promise of the commercial jet age, the women are portrayed as confident, adventurous and ready to take on

2 June Cleaver is the mother in Leave it To Beaver (1957-1963) and Donna Stone is the wife of pediatrician Dr Alex Stone in The Donna Reed Show (1958-1966).
3 At the end of Season 3 in Mad Men, a new firm, Sterling Cooper Draper Pryce, is established.
the world. As a pilot remarks in the trailer for the first episode, ‘they’re a new breed of woman’.

Outside historical or period drama series, screen media also supports retro imagery and foregrounds changing roles for women by utilising the fictional form to facilitate the past meeting the present within a single text. Two recent examples include the film Julie & Julia (2009) and TV series Ashes to Ashes (2008-2010). In Julie & Julia, Amy Adams plays Julie Powell, a young modern-day New Yorker who embarks on a project to cook each of the 524 recipes in Julia Child’s 1961 cookbook, Mastering the Art of French Cooking, within a year and chronicle her progress on a blog. Powell’s journey is contrasted with that of Child’s (played by Meryl Streep), during the early years of her culinary career. The film parallels women from the post-war and post 9/11 periods (these historical markers both organise the film and bring into focus the congruity of the central characters’ paths), comparing their opportunities and challenges, and highlighting the similarities and differences in their personal and professional lives. In Ashes to Ashes, London policewoman Alex Drake (Keeley Hawes) is shot in 2008 and, in a time twist, regains consciousness to live and work in 1981. Past and present ideals clash when her professional performance, in the form of modern policing techniques, is juxtaposed against an earlier generation’s expectations (within a male-dominated workplace), primarily based on gender. What is particularly relevant about the films and shows identified here – from Mad Men to Ashes to Ashes – is that they essentially engage with changing roles for women and with negotiating old and new femininities, which elucidates a current socio-cultural interest in women and change. This is not the exclusive terrain of the contemporary age, as films reflecting back on historical events, social convention and periods of change for women have been produced since the silent era (see Cartmell and Whelehan 1999, Cook 2005, Smyth 2013 and Sprengler 2009). However, the era examined here – the 1960s and 1970s – represents the current example of such reflection. Moreover, this thesis takes the identification of this interest and locates it in an even more specific space: that of contemporary Hollywood films adapted from 1960s and 1970s television shows. In such adaptations, the past and present coexist within the same (fictional) text, as an established story and/or set of characters from a distinct era is re-imagined in a

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4 Ashes to Ashes is a sequel to the British series, Life on Mars (2006-2007) in which policeman Sam Tyler wakes up in 1973 after being hit by a car in 2006. One series of a US version was also produced in 2008-2009.
modern context. In this way, the old is necessarily incorporated with the new – particularly when drawing on retro imagery, popular memory and nostalgia.

**Thesis Outline**

From the late 1990s, there was an inundation of film adaptations of television shows that were popular during Generation X’s childhood. While this retrospection was initially attributed to the impending new millennium (Zelizer 1995:216), these adaptations continue to be produced and readily consumed as the second decade of the twenty-first century dawns, which indicates that they serve a further purpose. More than a backward-looking glance or simple nostalgia, this particular format facilitates a dialogue between the past and the present. To closely examine changing representations of women and femininity, this thesis focuses on modern filmic adaptations of popular, female-centric television shows from an era marked by social, cultural and political changes for women: the 1960s and 1970s. This period broadly incorporates the advent and consolidation of what has been called ‘second wave’ feminism. Examining how popular female television characters from this period are utilised in contemporary Hollywood film adaptations correlates postfeminism with second wave feminism and foregrounds issues of competing gender ideals. As adaptations provide an opportunity for effective comparison, this thesis looks at the original TV shows, both in their historical context and in light of contemporary theoretical paradigms, while comparing the characters, themes and narrative constructs directly with those in the film adaptations. This approach not only ascertains what has changed but, just as (if not more) significantly, what has not changed. In these ways, the thesis investigates the extent to which contemporary, postfeminist film adaptations of earlier TV series provide a space in which multiple femininities are negotiated.

The study is limited to Hollywood-produced television series and films. While this partly functions as a means of containing the project, it also highlights how Hollywood-produced texts have come to represent popular mass media and, to this end, represent mainstream ideals and broad socio-cultural trends. The Hollywood industry, which Douglas Gomery identifies as ‘a closed oligopoly’ of six major studios, controls between 80 and 90 percent of product in

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5 For a full list of films adapted from 1960s, 1970s and early 1980s TV series, see the Nostalgic Adaptations Table (Figure 2.1) in Chapter 2.

6 Gomery identifies the Big Six at the beginning of the twenty-first century as comprising (in alphabetical order), Disney (owned by The Walt Disney Corporation), Paramount Pictures (owned by Viacom), Sony
the US and ‘a bit less’ throughout the rest of the world (2009:32,34). With a strong domestic market and tightly controlled distribution networks, the Hollywood studios are cost-effective exporters, ensuring Hollywood movies and TV shows are seen around the globe. For example, *Bewitched* (1964-1972) and *Charlie’s Angels* (1976-1981), the two series examined in depth in this thesis, are well known world-wide and continue to be shown in re-runs today. *Bewitched* has been on air around the world since its first run and syndication in the US and, together with *Charlie’s Angels* and other Hollywood series of the era, is more accessible than ever decades later due to its recent release on DVD.

This thesis is written in Australia and therefore influenced by the Australian media climate and the accessibility of Hollywood product on Australian screens. Recent changes in Australian television broadcasting provided an impetus for this study. Pay TV was introduced in Australia in 1995 and, while steadily increasing, penetration rates remain relatively low – moving from 11% in 1998 and 21% in 2002 to approximately 32% in 2011 (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2005; Research and Markets 2011). However, the introduction of new free-to-air digital television channels between 2009 and 2011 – which had reached approximately 75% of households by early 2011 (Research and Markets 2011) – has meant there are many more hours of airtime to be filled, and (inexpensive) syndicated reruns of American TV series feature prominently. Moreover, with digital television providing more targeted programming to the broader Australian population, channels such as Eleven, Go! and 7mate schedule shows consistent with their station image. For example, *Bewitched*, *The Flintstones* (1960-1966) and *I Dream of Jeannie* (1965-1970) are found on family-friendly Go!, while *The A-Team* (1983-1987), *Knight Rider* (1982-1986) and *Magnum P.I.* (1980-1988) are seen on the male-orientated 7mate. Most of these series were aired on Australian screens when originally produced and popular in the US (between the 1960s and 1980s); however, many have not been seen in Australian homes since that time. This evokes nostalgia for some, while also introducing the shows to a whole new demographic. The presentation of the syndicated rerun episodes in this way serves as a reminder to consider them from not only a nostalgic perspective, but also from the perspective of a new audience in a modern context, bringing into sharp relief the appeal and relevance of contemporary film adaptations of the various series.

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Pictures (owned by Sony), Twentieth Century Fox (owned by News Corporation), Universal Pictures (owned by Seagram/Vivendi), and Warner Bros. (owned by Time Warner) (2009:32).
Nostalgia plays a central role in the adaptation of existing TV series and together with postfeminism, functions as an organising principle in this thesis. The diagram below (Figure 0.1) demonstrates how the three concepts overlap. Postfeminism and adaptation, and nostalgia and adaptation each intersect; however, while these overlapping elements are discussed in the thesis, they are not shaded in the diagram because they are not examined with the same concentration as the central relationship, which is between nostalgia and postfeminism. Nostalgia and postfeminism occupy common ground in their connections with the past and with notions of performativity. This intersection provides a new approach to reading the contemporary trend for retro representations of women and postfeminism’s changing and multiple ideals of womanhood and femininity. Although not reliant upon the adaptation process, it is in the adapted screen texts that this relationship between postfeminism and nostalgia is most evident. Thus, as the more heavily shaded area in the diagram illustrates (Figure 0.1), postfeminism, nostalgia and adaptation operate as a triumvirate of converging issues in this thesis’s examination of women and femininity in screen media texts.

**Figure 0.1: A diagrammatic model of how the central principles considered in the thesis intersect.**

**Thesis Structure**

The first section of the thesis establishes the theoretical framework and context for the analysis that follows. Chapter 1 contains a literature review of nostalgia and one of postfeminism, followed by a discussion of the relationship between postfeminism and nostalgia. The methodology and scope of the project is then addressed. Chapter 2 briefly reviews adaptations and remakes, and then explains the significance of television shows as
source material for contemporary film adaptations. The different styles of adaptation are addressed in order to identify the most effective facilitation of a dialogue between past and present notions of womanhood and femininity. The concept of ‘postfeminist nostalgia’ is outlined and the in-depth studies are identified as *Bewitched* and *Charlie’s Angels*.

The next section of the thesis comprises the two in-depth studies. For both sets of texts an analysis of the television show is undertaken, followed by an examination of the film adaptation of that series (each of which is identified by the thesis as postfeminist). Having commenced in 1964, the *Bewitched* TV show provides the earliest screen representations of women from the texts chosen for analysis and is the first text examined, in Chapter 3. The series demonstrates aspects of traditionally-defined gender roles through its focus on domesticity; however, the show is notable for its more progressive features. This chapter identifies how the central character Samantha’s role as wife and housewife effectively exposes gender performativity and how the series promotes the principles of sisterhood. In Chapter 4 the *Bewitched* (2005) film adaptation is considered as a postfeminist text and comparisons with the TV show are drawn. The film narrative incorporates a fictional remake of the TV show, which facilitates a direct, textual relationship between the old and new versions and reinforces the correlation between past and present representations of ideal femininities. How this manifests and reflects on contemporary postfeminism is discussed.

Chapter 5 moves on to the *Charlie’s Angels* TV series, which premiered in the US in 1976 over a decade after the earliest *Bewitched* broadcasts. The three female lead characters signalled a new age for women through their negotiation of feminism and femininity. The ways in which the show utilised existing ideals while incorporating new ones is examined in the context of changes in network television as well as the broader social changes that were taking place at that time. The progressive elements of the series, including the women’s redefinition of roles and reinforcement of sisterhood, are further explored. In Chapter 6 the in-depth studies are rounded out with a film text analysis of *Charlie’s Angels* (2000) and *Charlie’s Angel: Full Throttle* (2003). ‘Girl power’ is discussed, as the balance between feminism and femininity that was identified in the TV show is reflected in the films through the prominence of a girl power discourse. Again the film is considered as a postfeminist text and its engagement with aspects of the original series noted, including redefining traditionally masculine roles and foregrounding sisterhood.
In the final section of the thesis, the analyses from the in-depth studies are mobilised to make a broader argument about postfeminism and social change. Chapter 7 explores one of postfeminism’s defining TV texts, *Sex and the City* (1998-2004), and its recent film adaptation and sequel, *Sex and the City: The Movie* (2008) and *Sex and the City 2* (2010). The films’ reflection on the TV series, early postfeminism and wider intertextuality is examined to demonstrate a contemporary context for postfeminist nostalgia, and identify postfeminism’s mediating potential. The concluding chapter then provides a comparison between the *Bewitched* and *Charlie’s Angels* films, and an overall review of the adapted texts examined in the thesis to reinforce the political significance of engaging with the past through screen media.

The prominence of retro imagery in contemporary popular culture signals an ongoing interest in the past, the present and social change. Examination of recent film adaptations of earlier televisual texts simultaneously incorporates all of these features and, with a focus on changing representations of women and femininity, identifies postfeminist nostalgia. Postfeminist nostalgia in these screen texts highlights social change and exposes postfeminism’s feminist potential as a space in which competing gendered ideals are negotiated. The foundational concepts for this argument are explored in the next chapter, where nostalgia, postfeminism and the relationship between them is outlined. Beyond reminiscence or a simple desire to return to the past and past ideals, nostalgia and postfeminism are shown to actively engage with the past, and it is with this understanding that the political significance of retro imagery in contemporary popular culture is recognised.
Chapter 1
‘MORE THAN “MERE PAST”’: NOSTALGIA AND POSTFEMINISM

This chapter examines the two concepts that sit at the heart of this thesis – nostalgia and postfeminism – and establishes the relationship between them. The genealogy and theoretical implications of nostalgia are explored, postfeminism is reviewed, and how the terms are employed is outlined. Nostalgia and postfeminism are connected by notions of the past, or pastness, and it is this correlation that forms the basis of the research questions that frame the thesis. How these questions are approached and applied to the chosen screen texts – Bewitched and Charlie’s Angels for in-depth study and Sex and the City for broader contextualisation – is detailed in a section on methodology, followed by a delineation of the scope of the thesis. Providing definitions and parameters in this way facilitates the thesis’s contribution to ongoing discussions of screen representations of women and femininity in the contemporary postfeminist media environment.

Nostalgia

[N]ostalgia is one of the means – or, better, one of the more readily accessible psychological lenses – we employ in the never ending work of constructing, maintaining, and reconstructing our identities. (Davis 1979:31)

Nostalgia...is artificial, but it is not contrived. It is secondhand, but is nonetheless persuasive. It is far too common to all kinds of people in all kinds of stations and situations to dismiss as unimportant. (R. Harper 1966, cited in Wilson 1999:303)

Nostalgia is a weapon. (Coupland 1992:175)

Nostalgia has a long history. Evolving from a medical to an emotional and aesthetic concept, it has been the subject of varying theoretical models across a number of academic disciplines (Grainge 2000; Starobinski 1966; Turner, B. 1987). The term ‘nostalgia’ was coined by Swiss physician Johannes Hofer in the late seventeenth century to categorise a range of symptoms he observed in young Swiss mercenaries living away from their homeland (Boym 2001:3; Davis 1979:1). These symptoms included insomnia, wasting away (anorexia), physical weakness, melancholia and persistent thoughts of home (Davis 1979:1-2; Wilson 1999:296). While the medical tradition already recognised melancholic
love, Hofer’s 1688 dissertation sought to convert these sentiments and peculiarities into a medical phenomenon, and thereby expose it to rational inquiry (Starobinski 1966:84). Amalgamating the Greek words *nostos* (return to native land/home) and *algia* (longing or suffering/painful condition), he posited that nostalgia was ‘born from a disorder of the imagination, from which it follows that the nervous sap always takes the very same direction in the brain and, as a result, excites the very same idea, the desire to return to one’s native land’ (Hofer cited in Starobinski 1966:87). While initially considered a potentially fatal disease, perceptions changed with scientific advances in the fields of bacteriology and pathological anatomy (Hutcheon 1998). The term became more generalised and, medically, nostalgia moved from the realm of physiology to psychiatry\(^1\) and a closer examination of the behaviour of ‘nostalgic people’. This shifted the focus of nostalgia from a pathologised homesickness to a behavioural reaction that signalled a person’s failure to adapt (Starobinski 1966:101).

Connotations of nostalgia as an emotive expression of discontinuity and alienation carry through to contemporary use of the term. Bryan Turner suggests nostalgia and melancholy were necessary occupational conditions of intellectuals as far back as classical times (1987:148). He argues that ‘the nostalgic and melancholic person did not feel comfortable in their world because they experienced social reality as mere illusion… For the nostalgic, the world is alien’ and their state of melancholy ensured a ‘heightened sensitivity to reality’ (Turner, B. 1987:148-149). More recently, in *The Future of Nostalgia* (2001), Svetlana Boym taps into her own social reality and alienation as an emigrant from the Soviet Union by combining personal memoirs with philosophical arguments and historical analysis. Defining nostalgia as ‘a sentiment of loss and displacement’ (2001:xiii), Boym’s discussion of global popular culture, twentieth century Russian literature and the reconstruction of post-communist cities in Eastern Europe is framed by a strong sense of geographical belonging and the subsequent repercussions of dislocation. However, her realisation of contemporary nostalgia essentially hinges on the notion of time and ‘temporal irreversibility’, as it not only mourns a time past, but also ‘the unrealized dreams of the past and vision of the future that became obsolete’ (Boym 2001:xvi). Thus, as well

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\(^1\) As Robert Hemmings notes, ‘the notion of a thwarted desire to return continued in psychoanalytic discourse in Freud’s theory of regression’ (2007:55).
as evolving from a medical to an emotional term, nostalgia is seen to undergo a further shift – from essentially longing to return to a place to longing to return to a time.²

Janelle L. Wilson raises the issue of contemporary meanings in Nostalgia: Sanctuary of Meaning, and cites the shift from longing for a particular place to longing for a particular time as a fundamental consideration (2005:22-23). Etymologically, the transfer of nostalgia from meaning homesickness to its modern, popular meaning – the Oxford Dictionary defines it as ‘a sentimental longing or wistful affection for a period in the past’ – is recorded around 1920 (Harper 2012). However, Linda Hutcheon (1998) identifies traces of this semantic shift as early as 1798, citing Immanuel Kant’s reasoning that the disappointment felt upon returning home was due to the desire to return to a time – ‘a time of youth’ – rather than a place. Regardless of when it took effect, the significance of this shift in meaning is that it distinguishes the irretrievable nature of time. As one can never actually return to a time already passed, nostalgia takes on an essentially contradictory quality. A bittersweet emotion, it is necessarily unsatisfiable. Hutcheon suggests that ‘[n]ostalgia, in fact, may depend precisely on the irrecoverable nature of the past for its emotional impact and appeal. It is the very pastness of the past, its inaccessibility, that likely accounts for a large part of nostalgia’s power’ (1998, emphasis in original). As Fred Davis attests in his seminal sociological study of nostalgia, Yearning for Yesterday, ‘[c]learly, more than “mere past” is involved’ (1979:13).

History, memory, sentimentality, recollection, remembrance and reminiscence are all terms associated with relating to the past. What distinguishes nostalgia – as it functions today – is the way it is employed by the modern subject. Nostalgia is an active process. ‘Feeling nostalgia, expressing and experiencing nostalgia – this requires active reconstruction of the past – active selection of what to remember and how to remember it’ (Wilson 1999:299). Moreover, nostalgia ‘acquires its significance from the particular way we juxtapose it to certain features of our present lives’ (Davis 1979:13). In this way, it is a function of identity construction, as the nostalgic subject actively uses the past to situate the self in the present. Rather than a sentimental, regressive state, nostalgia can be seen to mediate with the past to allow the individual (or society) to reconcile disruption and progress through

² Despite the shift away from its medical origins, pathological language and medical metaphors continue to be used when discussing nostalgia (Volcic 2007:25). For example, ‘the passing ailment turned into the incurable modern condition’ and ‘symptom of our age’ (Boym 2001: xiv, xvi).
periods of change (Cook 2005:4; Davis 1979:32). However, critics such as Frederic Jameson disparage nostalgia as a stylisation of the historical past that substitutes representations of the past with cultural stereotypes of that past (Grainge 2000:29; Jameson 1997:25). Jameson points to ‘nostalgia films’, which he defines as ‘films about the past and about specific generational moments of that past’, as symptomatic of postmodern society’s inability to engage with current experience, ‘as though we have become incapable of achieving aesthetic representations of our own’ (1997:25). In this way, Jameson sees nostalgia as an obstacle to historical ‘truth’ (Volcic 2007:25).

Traditional historical inquiry tends to focus on the differences between memory, nostalgia and evidential ‘truth’ as a means of validating conventional approaches to the past. Yet Pam Cook suggests they need not be at odds, and should rather be seen to function on a continuum,

with history at one end, nostalgia at the other and memory as a bridge or transition between them. The advantage of this formulation is that it avoids the common hierarchy in which nostalgia and some ‘inauthentic’ forms of memory are relegated and devalued in order to shore up notions of history ‘proper’. Instead, it recognises that the three terms are connected. (Cook 2005:3-4)

This approach facilitates contemporary recognition of a wide variety of sources as cultural texts, including films, books, diaries, music, photographic images, advertisements and fashion. So while Jameson’s assertion of cultural amnesia dismisses ‘nostalgia film’ as an irrelevancy – which as Paul Grainge notes, fails to recognise ‘the particular negotiations of memory and meaning’ (2000:29) – the significance of his contribution is that he addresses nostalgia on a collective and aesthetic level.

Davis notes that two aspects essential to understanding nostalgia's relationship to society at large are ‘its sources in the perceived threats of identity discontinuity and its role in engendering collective identities among people generally, but most especially among members of “the same generation”’ (1979:101, emphasis in original). Embracing the idea of nostalgia as a mediating phenomenon linked to times of change, or particular stages of

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4 The notion of ‘truth’ is complicated by history’s reliance on memory/personal accounts, and interpretation both in mediated re-tellings of history and in academia. See Rameriz (1999) for a discussion on historical films and documentaries, and Trezise (2008) for a critique of historians’ use of memory and personal testimony.
life for individuals, it follows that it can function similarly for periods of social upheaval on a collective level. Significant social events can be considered galvanising features for generations – defined in relation to wars, political unrest and social change. As Wilson suggests, waves of collective nostalgia ‘also might reflect selective remembering and selective forgetting that occur at the collective level’ (1999:300).

Certainly contemporary marketing – itself a signifier of collective, social thought – taps into generational trends. Keith Naughton and Bill Vlasic identify nostalgic marketing as prevalent throughout the 1990s, citing campaigns such as those for the VW Beetle, Pepsi, Maxwell House and Coca-Cola in the US (1998:587). They discuss stylistic adjustments to accommodate Baby Boomer and Generation X consumers, and give examples of companies such as Gap clothing ‘faking’ nostalgia to achieve brand credibility (Naughton and Vlasic 1998:587). Whether it is cars, cola, coffee, tee-shirts or children’s books, as Julia Cassidy simply states, ‘nostalgia sells’ (2008:145). Davis even noted the commercialisation of nostalgia as significant in the late 1970s. He remarks that ‘[p]erhaps the first and most obvious thing to note about contemporary nostalgia is that it is very big business’ (Davis 1979:118). So while the pastoral images and poetry of the nineteenth century are reminders of nostalgia’s long history (see Santesso 2006), in the new millennium, Grainge observes that ‘[i]n the last three decades of the twentieth century, nostalgia was commodified and aestheticized in American culture as perhaps never before’ (2000:27). Grainge also distinguishes nostalgic moods from nostalgic modes, cautioning the assumption of a simple causal relationship between them. A nostalgic mood suggests an experience grounded in longing or loss, while a nostalgic mode relates to a style or form of nostalgia in cultural terms. Although one may affect and even generate the other, this is not always the case. He contends that nostalgia as a cultural style ‘has become divorced from a necessary concept of loss’, and attributes its development as a marketable mode to a range of cultural, demographic, technological, and commercial factors (Grainge 2000:28,33). As Grainge’s commentary is located in the US, such factors include the conservatism of the 1980s political climate and validation of ‘pastness’ during Reagan’s

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5 For further discussion of the ‘generations’ narrative, defining features and influences of popularly-termed generations, and the impact of their classification, see Andrews (2002), Huntley (2006) and Mackay (1997). Generation X’s relationship with nostalgia will be examined further in Chapter 2.
presidency,\textsuperscript{6} the consolidation of cable, video and digital markets and ‘cultural recycling’, as well as interest in ‘retro’\textsuperscript{7} fashions and the commercial production of ‘heritage’ (Grainge 2002:41-64). Moreover, Grainge situates the consolidation of aesthetic nostalgia in a culture ‘able to access, circulate, and reconfigure the textual traces of the past in new and dynamic ways’ (2000:33). Rather than being representative of cultural loss and longing, the prevalence of nostalgic modes in contemporary society can be seen to reflect ‘a new kind of engagement with the past, a relationship based fundamentally on its cultural mediation and textual reconfiguration in the present’ (Grainge 2000:33).

Amelia DeFalco discusses nostalgia as a cultural style and textual mode utilising the 2002 film, \textit{Far From Heaven}, as a case study. She explores hypertextuality,\textsuperscript{8} the film’s (textual) relationship with Douglas Sirk’s 1950s melodramas, and the significance of privileging representation over that which is represented (DeFalco 2004:27). For DeFalco, ‘[i]t is this gap between the nostalgic sufferer and the past that gives rise to questions and problems of representation, re-production being the only means the nostalgic has for fulfilment’ (DeFalco 2004:29). This textual acknowledgment or desire to experience the past is similarly employed by Kaja Silverman (1986). Discussing ‘retro’ or ‘vintage’ fashion, she argues that it ‘inserts its wearer into a complex network of cultural and historical references’ (Silverman 1986:150), and indicates an increasing interest in, and semiotic awareness of, the textuality of the past (Grainge 2000:29). Commentary on such nostalgic trends in fashion, music, advertising and film serve to highlight issues of representation and re-presentation in postmodern society. In this way, the aesthetic style of nostalgia can be seen to operate as a critical framework in contemporary popular culture. As Sean Scanlan notes in his introduction to the 2004 issue of the \textit{Iowa Journal of Cultural Studies} devoted to nostalgia, ‘[r]ather than an end reaction to yearning, it is understood as a technique for provoking a secondary reaction’ (2004:4).

The transgressive potential of nostalgia can then be realised, which cultural studies theorist Stuart Tannock gestures to in ‘Nostalgia Critique’ (1995):

\textsuperscript{6} Michael D. Dwyer draws on the notion of nostalgia as a ‘productive practice’ to examine the construction of ‘the fifties’ in popular culture during the Reagan era through a sample of 1970s and 1980s Hollywood films set in the 1950s, and argues that it was a site of ‘intense negotiation and struggle’ (2010:6,4).

\textsuperscript{7} Grainge defines ‘retro’ as ‘a stylistic currency that borrows and quotes from the past’ (2000:6,4).

\textsuperscript{8} Gerard Genette defines hypertextuality as involving ‘any relationship uniting a text B (which I shall call the hypertext) to an earlier text A (I shall, of course, call it the hypotext), upon which it is grafted in a manner that is not of commentary’ (1997:5, emphasis in original).
The nostalgic subject turns to the past to find / construct sources of identity, agency, or community, that are felt to be lacking, blocked, subverted, or threatened in the present. … Invoking the past, the nostalgic subject may be involved in escaping or evading, in critiquing, or in mobilizing to overcome the present experience of loss of identity, lack of agency, or absence of community. (Tannock 1995:454)

The relationship between the individual and society is, of course, at the heart of cultural studies and acts as a compass when analysing the ideological implications of popular culture. It is also a central feature of nostalgia. While nostalgic trends, style and modes can be recognised on a generational or collective level, it must essentially resonate on an individual level, because nostalgia is so closely linked with emotion and identity. Moreover, it can effectively mediate between the two. Boym discusses nostalgia as a mediating function and posits that ‘nostalgia is about the relationship between individual biography and the biography of groups or nations, between the personal and collective memory’ (2001:xvii). While Wilson recognises that ‘[t]he public culture contains powerful symbols of the past. These symbols become more personal, as we, in some ways, construct our identities from that which is available to us culturally’ (1999:296-297).

Nostalgia is a complex and contradictory concept. It maintains elements of its evolution in pathologised language, connections with place and time, loss and longing, and experience and memory. Yet in a contemporary context, it also presents progressive opportunities for further reflection and engagement with a range of social theories. Recalling the sentiment of the introductory quote from Davis (1979), nostalgia provides a useful lens through which the textual processes of identity formation – for both the individual and the collective – can be explored, and potentially transgressive functions realised. In this thesis, nostalgia will be mobilised as an aesthetic mode that facilitates a reconciliation of the past and negotiates the way forward. While unable to actually situate the subject in a time passed, nostalgia instead seeks to recreate that past, or at least elements of it, and in this way, can be understood as performative. Thus, more than ‘mere past’, nostalgia is an active, performative means of connecting with the past. Nostalgic representations of women and femininity therefore serve to not only highlight the differences between ‘then’ and ‘now’, but further expose the performance of gender.

In *Gender Trouble* (1990) Judith Butler argues that gender, along with sex and sexuality, is performative. She contends that ‘[g]ender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of
repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being’ (Butler [1990]1999:43-44) – a concept that resonates in contemporary feminist thought. The following section will explore feminism and postfeminism, relating to nostalgia through both performativity and the notion of ‘post’ signalling ‘past’. In postfeminism, whether ‘post’ reflects a longing for the past in terms of a time before feminism or a return to the political awareness and activism of an earlier feminism is ambiguous. It is a contested term that in contemporary popular culture and its representations of women and femininity, like nostalgia, engages in a dialogue between the past and the present.

**Postfeminism**

Feminism has never been unified. Feminism has always been feminisms – a variety of approaches that aim to improve women's lives and thus enhance the lives of the family, the workplace, the nation. An important deeper meaning of feminism is its effort to reconceptualize what counts as knowledge and power in general. This diversity has resulted in feminism defined and pursued not as a single political effort or as a series of political acts. Feminism aims to change culture through constructing and championing new ways of thinking about subjects from law to philosophy to literature to politics to economics to popular media. (Haralovich and Rabinovitz 1999:1)

In her doctoral thesis, Kathryn Hausbeck argues that postfeminism fills the space between academic and popular feminisms. She posits that

postfeminism neither signals the death of feminism nor does it allow for the unaltered continuity of second wave feminism. Instead…postfeminism marks a conceptual shift into a new paradigm for the new millennium: feminism as a spectrum of identities, politics, and perspectives from which alliances and coalitions may be formed. (Hausbeck 1997:xvi)

In terms of examining postfeminism for this thesis, Hausbeck’s model is a useful place to start. She situates postfeminism in a ‘space’, acknowledges postfeminism’s link with both the popular and the scholarly, and, like Haralovich and Rabinovitz, signals the plurality of contemporary feminism. Written in 1997, Hausbeck’s model also provides something of a midpoint from which to investigate more than a decade of postfeminism that came before it and just as many years that have transpired since. After offering a broad definition of postfeminism here, an exploration of the emergence and consolidation of postfeminism will provide a foundation upon which to understand its socio-cultural significance, and recognise its validity and transgressive potential in contemporary feminist media studies.
Perhaps the most consistent feature among the wide variety of definitions of postfeminism on offer to date is an acknowledgement of the problematic nature of the term (Braithwaite 2004:25; Gamble 2001:49; Lotz 2001:106). Like ‘nostalgia’, ‘postfeminism’ is an inherently contradictory term that is more complex than the sum of its parts. While the prefix ‘post’ broadly indicates that which comes after (feminism), to adequately apply postfeminism as a tool for cultural critique requires qualification as to who is using it, when, and in what context. As Amanda Lotz laments, these ‘disparate understandings of postfeminism’ largely hinder its potential as a ‘theoretical tool for exploring the complexity of recent female representations and their resonance with contemporary audiences’ (2001:114-5). With this in mind, the inclusive definition that opens Yvonne Tasker and Diane Negra’s anthology, *Interrogating Postfeminism* (2007), is particularly functional. For Tasker and Negra,

> postfeminism broadly encompasses a set of assumptions, widely disseminated within popular media forms, having to do with the ‘pastness’ of feminism, whether that supposed pastness is merely noted, mourned, or celebrated. (2007:1)

Significantly, this definition of postfeminism accommodates the diversity and contention that has always been a part of feminism and acknowledges the integral role of the media in its conception.

The term ‘postfeminism’ is considered to have emerged in the 1980s from the popular media in which it suggested a distancing from feminism, particularly by women (Gamble 2001:44). As Sarah Gamble notes, it ‘tended to be used in this context as indicative of joyous liberation from the ideological shackles of a hopelessly outdated feminist movement’ (2001:44). Susan Bolotim’s 1982 article in the *New York Times Magazine*, ‘Voices from the Post-feminist Generation’, is credited as the first to use the term (Coppock, Haydon and Richter 1995:4; Garrison 2004:31). In the article, Bolotin (1982) notes that, despite their own experiences of discrimination and inequality, the 18-25 year old women she interviewed saw feminism as outdated and ineffectual, and suggests that the rejection of feminist theory by this age group indicates the advent of postfeminism. While the article is based on interviews from a convenience sample and therefore cannot legitimately claim to be broadly representative, it served to both label and promote the perception that what constituted ‘feminism’ was no longer relevant to this sample, at least.
Significantly, this study was conducted in the US amid the conservative socio-political climate of the Reagan era, during which the New Right were gaining strength and popularity with their fervent promotion of ‘family values’. As Deborah Siegel notes,

[m]embers of the New Right openly declared their opposition to abortion and homosexuality and affirmed the ‘natural’ fit between women’s nature, homemaking, and motherhood... As the mainstream political climate became increasingly hostile, many prominent feminist thinkers retreated from overt activism... [and] feminism as a popular movement went off radar. (Siegel 2007:106)

Despite feminism’s ongoing political achievements, in this context, postfeminism was being used to suggest a regression, and in crude terms, imply anti-feminism (Brooks 1997:1; Braithwaite 2004:19). For Susan Faludi, this was the ‘backlash’ against feminism.

In *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women* (1991), Faludi argues that conservative forces in the US orchestrated a counter-attack against advances made by 1970s feminism, and posits that this campaign is both constructed by the media and is an historically recurring trend. Faludi contends that while the media’s use of terms such as ‘man shortage’, ‘biological clock’ and ‘postfeminism’ introduced the backlash to a national audience in the 1980s, ‘post-feminist sentiments’ were evident as early as the 1920s (Faludi 2006:65,91; Brooks 1997:3). She cites the establishment of the Miss America contest in the same year as women were allowed to vote, notes Margaret Culkin Banning’s comment in a 1935 edition of *Harper’s* that ‘[i]t looks sometimes as if pre-suffrage conditions even might be curiously reversed’, and Ethel Klein’s observation that in the 1920s ‘[t]he dissipation of interest in the women’s movement was taken as a sign not of failure but of completion’ (cited in Faludi 2006:65). Faludi identifies a renewed interest, in some US 1980s media texts, in images of women that focus on and celebrate the traditional definitions of femininity that second wave feminism had fought against. She argues that, throughout advertising, the fashion industry and popular presses, women are presented as either concerned with their appearance and attractiveness to men, or immersed in motherhood, children and the desire to be at home⁹ (Faludi 2006; Braithwaite 2004:20). Faludi suggests that such anti-feminist representations were endemic, and implied ‘not that women have arrived at equal justice and moved beyond it, but simply that they themselves are beyond even pretending to care’ (2006:86). While allusions to anti-feminism continue

⁹ See Charlotte Brunsdon (2006) for a discussion of the resurgence of domesticity on television and feminism. The domestic aesthetic in postfeminism will be examined in relation to the *Bewitched* film in Chapter 4.
to influence contemporary understandings of postfeminism, it is the term’s emergence both through the media and about the media that remains one of its defining features. This conflation of postfeminism and popular culture was consolidated throughout the 1990s (Tasker and Negra 2007:8).

On 29 June 1998, with the faces of Susan B. Anthony, Betty Friedan, Gloria Steinem and Ally McBeal on the cover, Time magazine asks, ‘Is Feminism Dead?’ (see Figure 1.1) The inclusion of a fictional character alongside three leading figures in women’s history (disembodiment aside) exemplifies 1990s’ postfeminism and the significance of popular culture to its genealogy. In the accompanying article, Ginia Bellafante uses Ally McBeal (1997-2002) – the show and character – to demonstrate how ‘much of feminism has devolved into the silly’, with ‘a popular culture insistent on offering images of grown single women as frazzled, self-absorbed girls’ (1998:56). Contrasting the fight for equality in the sixties and seventies with the self-interest of young nineties’ postfeminists, she questions if such a representation can be considered progress (Bellafante 1998:58). While Erica Jong points out that neither a Hollywood sitcom demeaning women nor the contention that feminism is dead is anything new (1998:19), the tone and context of Bellafante’s article and the centrality of a television character to the discussion are significant. Kristyn Gorton maintains that ‘[t]he cover demonstrates how the media continually reduces a complex movement like feminism into a simplistic lineup of names and faces’, and that ultimately, feminism is packaged into ‘a marketable success or disaster story’ (2007:86,85). The stories that circulate in the popular press around women and feminism during this time (the 1990s) are essentially an oppositional construct,

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10 Angela McRobbie’s recent offering, The Aftermath of Feminism (2009) marks a self-proclaimed shift in her approach to postfeminism. In it she moves away from an earlier optimism to re-define postfeminism as ‘a new kind of anti-feminist sentiment’ (McRobbie 2009:1).

11 As Kristyn Gorton exclaims, ‘Cutting off the bodies of these women and leaving only their heads is almost too obvious an undercut to need comment’ (2007:86).

12 The distinctions between these groups are acknowledged as generational and related through mother/daughter analogies in emergent third wave feminism (see Siegel 2007), and will be examined later in the chapter.
expressed in terms of the old versus the new, or success versus failure, conveniently reducing complex issues into soundbites for use across multiple media platforms. Yet on the *Time* cover, beyond this simplification is the anomalous inclusion of a fictional character. Aesthetically, Anthony, Friedan and Steinem are presented as staid, black and white images, while McBeal’s image is styled (hair and makeup) and in colour (see Figure 1.1). The first three women are identified by their real names, while the headshot of actress Calista Flockhart is labelled with the name of her screen character, Ally McBeal – a substitution that not only dissolves Flockhart’s agency, but champions a fictional agent. Gorton suggests this be read to indicate that “‘today’s’ feminist is someone playing a role, using an alias, identified by the role she plays rather than identifiable as herself” (2007:86). While the cover may also be read as ironic, playful or even deliberately provocative, it remains a clear demonstration of postfeminism’s innate relationship with the media.

Monica Dux and Zora Simic note the media’s record of presenting feminism in ‘soundbites and visual shorthand’ when observing that ‘post-feminism’s poster-girls have all been drawn from pop culture’ (2008:19). From Ally McBeal and Bridget Jones13 to the foursome from *Sex and the City*,14 fictional characters are synonymous with postfeminism. With a nod to *Sex and the City*’s Carrie Bradshaw, Alison Piepmeier (2006) captures this sensibility when she suggests that, should postfeminism have a voice, it would say, ‘Go buy some Manolo Blahniks and stop your whining.’ However, among the prominent television characters, simplified discourse and mediated debate, postfeminism is consolidated. It saturates popular culture, and perhaps this is the ‘space’ postfeminism most comfortably occupies. To fully examine such a space, as Hausbeck proposes, it becomes necessary to reconcile popularised feminism with academia’s attempt to make sense of postfeminism and its popularity.

Confronted with the term itself and sentiments of postfeminism as they were employed by the media, many feminist scholars and commentators responded by equating postfeminism with anti-feminism and affirming the backlash model; however, some more positive applications of postfeminism were adopted in the cultural studies discipline (Alice 2000:38). In an article written in 1987, Deborah Rosenfelt and Judith Stacey identified

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13 British development of postfeminism does vary from that in the US. See Angela McRobbie’s ‘Postfeminism and Popular Culture: Bridget Jones and the New Gender Regime’ (2006).
14 The *Sex and the City* television series and films are examined in Chapter 7.
postfeminism as ‘an emerging culture and ideology that simultaneously incorporates, revises and depoliticizes many of the fundamental issues advanced by second-wave feminism’ (1987:341). In ‘Second Thoughts on the Second Wave’, they draw a distinction between postfeminism and anti-feminism and suggest that the value of postfeminism lies in its exposure of the extent to which key elements of feminist ideology have been irrevocably absorbed into popular consciousness (Rosenfelt and Stacey 1987:358). For Ann Brooks, the ‘post’ in postfeminism need not delineate a break from or replacement of feminism, but rather is best utilised to imply ‘a process of ongoing transformation and change’ (1997:1). In *Postfeminisms*, Brooks traces the conceptual shift in feminist debates from issues of equality to debates around difference, and examines postfeminism as a product of feminism’s intersection with postmodernism and post-structuralism (1997:4,6). She considers postfeminism to mark feminism’s ‘coming of age’, its maturity into a confident body of theory and politics, representing pluralism and difference and reflecting on its position in relation to other philosophical and political movements similarly demanding change. (Brooks 1997:1)

Part of the difference to which she refers is the progressive acknowledgement that women are divided by race, class, culture and sexuality – issues identified in second wave feminism but foregrounded in postfeminist thought.\(^\text{15}\)

Drawing on Brooks’ work and on that of feminist media critics, Amanda Lotz (2001) argues that postfeminism proves to be its most useful as a critical tool for interrogating the complex and diverse representations of women and femininity in popular media such as television. Utilising a base of US television series from the late 1990s as texts, Lotz identifies some key attributes that demonstrate an essentially postfeminist perspective, including ‘the diverse relations to power women exhibit’ (2001:115). She posits that, when complex female characters are shown to be distinct from one another, ‘[t]he multiple ways ethnicity, class, education, sexuality, age or generation, marital status, motherhood, and ability positions women in society all offer possible axes for illustrating disparate perspectives on female experience and social opportunities’ (Lotz 2001:115). In this way, by emphasising the differences among women, postfeminism seeks to critique discrimination based on other aspects of identity, and address the intersection of prejudices. The other attributes Lotz identifies as postfeminist include: ‘depictions of

\(^{15}\) Notably, these foundational themes are also prioritised in so-called ‘third wave’ feminism. The rise and characteristics of third-wave feminism are briefly outlined later in this chapter.
varied feminist solutions and loose organizations of activism’; ‘deconstruct[ed] binary categories of gender and sexuality’; and the illustration of ‘contemporary struggles faced by women and feminists’ (2001:115-116). She suggests that while these are not the only attributes, they are the most widespread, and to categorise them in this way provides a constructive framework for the application of existing postfeminist theory to contemporary media texts.

In “‘Having it Ally’: Popular Television (Post-)Feminism’ (2002), Rachel Moseley and Jacinda Read draw attention to the body of work by British cultural studies and media theorists\(^{16}\) on television, and identify it as postfeminist. Examining the series Ally McBeal, they contend that, rather than apply an ‘outside’ or ‘authentic’ (post)feminist theory to the texts as Lotz suggests, adopting the British cultural studies approach exposes popular culture itself (such as the television series and accompanying newspaper reviews) as the site ‘on, through, and against which the meanings of feminism are produced and understood’ (Moseley and Read 2002:235). While this assertion appears to affirm the notion of popular culture as a primary site of postfeminism, it also highlights a distinction that Tasker and Negra articulate, between a postfeminist culture and feminist politics:

It should go without saying that feminism as a political force has certainly been expressed culturally and that there is clearly a politics at stake in postfeminism. Indeed… postfeminist discourses rarely express the explicit view that feminist politics should be rejected; rather it is by virtue of feminism’s success that it is seen to have been superseded. In this context, we argue that the transition to a postfeminist culture involves an evident erasure of feminist politics from the popular, even as aspects of feminism seem to be incorporated within that culture. (Tasker and Negra 2007:5)

Thus, when popular culture texts are produced and consumed in a postfeminist climate, they necessarily contain elements of the feminism to which postfeminism responds. For feminist media scholars, therefore, the traditional question of whether representations of women and femininity in the text are progressive or regressive becomes significantly more complicated.

While problematic, postfeminism is also compelling because of the extent to which it resonates in contemporary society. Dawn Heinecken suggests that postfeminism is seductive because ‘[i]t appeals to deeply imbedded American ideologies of individuality’ (2003:153). Lynn Spigel identifies a postfeminist logic that ‘embraces femininity and

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\(^{16}\) These British theorists include Charlotte Brunsdon, Angela McRobbie and Bonnie Dow.
“girliness” in the name of enlightenment and female empowerment’ (2004:1212). Tasker and Negra note the celebration of ‘woman as empowered consumer’ and a postfeminist emphasis on ‘physical and particularly sexual empowerment’ (2007:2). Significantly, these are also the features that young women particularly embrace and identify as relevant in their lives (Siegel 2007). Consequently, a number of scholars sought to identify whether or not the (sense of) ‘empowerment’ claimed is ‘authentic’, specifically through analyses of the commodification of feminism (see Faludi 2006\(^{17}\); Maguire 2008), raunch culture (see Levy 2005), and the grassroots riot grrrls movement\(^{18}\) (see Feigenbaum 2007; Riordan 2001). Moreover, with many of the academics interested in these areas being young women themselves, postfeminist trends were linked to a generational divide and defined by their distinction from second wave feminism. The catchcry for the ‘sisterhood’ was replaced with analogies of ‘mother/daughter’ dichotomies, and the scene set for a new generation of feminism – the ‘third wave’.

In a 1992 article published in *Ms*, Rebecca Walker (daughter of feminist and author Alice Walker) declared, ‘I am not a postfeminist feminist. I am the third wave’ (1992:87). As Siegel observes, ‘Walker embodied the hope of a previous generation and was lighting the way for the next, giving younger women a banner under which they could join their mothers in the march through history – and an alternative to postfeminism’ (2007:128). Rhetorically, self-proclaimed third wavers were intrinsically linked to second wave feminism, while at the same time, defined by their differences from it. For Gamble, ‘the primary difference between third wave and second wave feminism is that third wave feminists feel at ease with contradiction. Because they have been brought up within competing feminist structures, they accept pluralism as a given’ (2001:52). With women of colour playing a central role in the direction taken by third wave feminism (Siegel 2007:142), issues of inclusion and diversity are foregrounded. Megan Seely explains that ‘[i]n conjunction with the politics of inclusiveness, another critical contribution of the third wave is the appreciation of and the emphasis on the intersection of race, class, sex, gender,

\(^{17}\) In the 2006 preface to *Backlash*, Faludi remarks that ‘it turns out there are some things worse than backlash’. Drawing on an analogy from “The Story of Atalanta” in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, she contends that women today are distracted by consumer goods and marketing, as Atalanta was by the golden apples: ‘We have stopped to gather glittery trinkets from an apparent admirer. The admirer is the marketplace, and the trinkets are the bounty of a commercial culture, which has deployed the language of liberation as a new and powerful tool of subjugation’ (Faludi 2006:xiv).

\(^{18}\) The riot grrrls movement is discussed in relation to the ‘girl power’ discourse evident in the *Charlie’s Angels* films in Chapter 6.
sexual orientation, disability and age’ (2007:47). For R. Claire Snyder, third wave feminism is defined by not just its recognition of these tensions, but the ‘tactical responses’ it offers to the issues that caused contention towards the end of the second wave (2008:183). She suggests that ‘third-wave feminism has no illusions about reconstituting “women” as the subject of feminism or creating some kind of unified platform. Instead it asks women to work together in coalitions to address issues of shared concern’ (Snyder-Hall 2010:260). And in this way, third wave feminism makes sense as a new ‘stage of feminist politics’ (Snyder 2008:183).

Like all developments in feminist theory, the emergence and progress of third wave feminism is not without contention. While third wave feminism’s emphasis on political action distinguishes it from the more broadly socio-cultural emphasis of postfeminism, the boundaries between them is blurred, with the two terms sometimes used interchangeably. Most commentators, including those identified as third wave, question the utility of continuing with the wave model (Gillis et al. 2004:1; Seely 2007:47). Cultural theorist Lynn Spigel proposes a move away from ‘thinking in waves of feminism and media images’ and instead suggests that analyses ‘concentrate on feminist media studies itself as a “discursive formation” (Foucault 1972) that is composed of a variety of discursive practices and that is informed by “popular” feminisms in the broader sphere of culture’ (2004:1212). Meanwhile, Helene A. Shugart (2001) argues that third wave feminism is best understood as a subculture of Generation X rather than as a progressive phase in the evolution of feminism. But for Amber E. Kisner, it is more personal than generational. She states that,

like other third wavers, I seek a way of being in the world, of being feminist in the world that allows more room for stretching and spreading my feminism. Like other third wavers, I seek to negotiate my own space in this modern, global, technology-driven, dauntingly pluralistic world. (Kisner 2004:127)

However, in the context of the pluralistic world Kisner identifies, ‘postfeminism’, in its fluidity, multiplicity and socio-cultural connectivity, is the more relevant and useful concept to employ when engaging with contemporary gender politics and a continuing feminist discourse.

For the purposes of this thesis, it is important to affirm the distinction between postfeminist culture and feminist politics. Ann Braithwaite argues that feminist media studies are
inhibited by the broadly-accepted assumption that there was ever a single, identifiable ‘feminism’, and proposes a reclamation of the terms ‘backlash’ and ‘postfeminism’ precisely because of the difficulties and contradictions they imply (2004:25,27). Returning to Hausbeck and her vision of a plural feminism in the new millennium, the difficulties and contradictions that are postfeminism, backlash and third wave feminism are all accommodated by, and functional within, this spectrum. But it is the postfeminist culture – the ‘space’ / media / popular culture – that facilitates these negotiations of feminist politics. It is also important to acknowledge that both men and women have grown up, and therefore formed their identity, in an environment saturated with postfeminist images and informed by second wave feminism. Historically, when the term ‘postfeminism’ came to prominence in the 1980s, it demarcated the time at which feminist politics moved on from the second wave. However, in its contention, reflexivity and relationship with the popular, postfeminism moves beyond a specific time period and instead incorporates a broader scope based on socio-cultural (rather than historical) engagement. In this way, postfeminism is an important critical tool in the exploration of identity and subjectivity in contemporary society. For feminist media studies, this presents the opportunity for a deeper engagement with the text and greater insight into diverse and pluralistic readings of texts and the audiences with whom they resonate.

Postfeminism and Nostalgia

In Postfemininities in Popular Culture, Stéphanie Genz emphasises that postfeminism is ‘both “retro-“ and “neo-“ in its outlook’, and while she notes this ‘double movement is at the root of the difficulty of attributing a meaning to postfeminism’ (2009:24, emphasis in original), she significantly attributes *movement* to postfeminism (own emphasis); that is, acknowledges postfeminism as an active process. And this is where postfeminism’s potential lies – in its mediating rather than reflective abilities. Like Davis’s assessment of nostalgia as ‘more than “mere past”’, postfeminism is more than a relegation of feminism into the past: it provides a space for the contemporary gendered subject to engage with the past. This mediation is also where the juncture with nostalgia lies and where this thesis identifies a gap in postfeminist scholarship. Postfeminism and nostalgia have parallel traits in their link with the past, with performativity and as active processes. To examine postfeminism’s engagement with retro representations of women and femininity through a nostalgic lens brings something new to the postfeminist table. Key features of nostalgic
reasoning – the inherent knowledge that the subject cannot go back in time and that nostalgia is about now, not then – direct attention away from notions of a backlash or from reading postfeminism’s backward-looking tendencies as wholly regressive, and instead suggest a functional negotiation of the past with the present. This is not to say all postfeminist imagery is progressive (as this is clearly not the case), but that, through the coalescence of nostalgic and postfeminist theoretical paradigms, the potential exists for working through issues of the past in the hope of finding a way forward. It is important to reaffirm at this point that this is occurring in a popular culture forum. Nostalgia is playing in postfeminism’s sandbox; that is, in the postfeminist culture or ‘space’ identified earlier, that incorporates the media and popular culture in general. As identified in the Introduction for this thesis, there is a broad trend towards retro representations of women and femininity in contemporary popular culture and particularly on screen. These representations focus on periods of change, often around the emergence and consolidation of second wave feminism in the 1960s and 1970s. However, where this gets really interesting for postfeminism is that there is now a strong pull of nostalgia in popular culture for retro popular culture images and versions of womanhood on screen.

From the late 1990s onwards, a string of popular US TV shows from the 1960s and 1970s have been re-imagined as Hollywood films. Consequently, some of TV’s most iconic female characters from this period have been resurrected for the (postfeminist) silver screen. Through primarily textual analysis, this thesis seeks to address the relationship between postfeminism and nostalgia within the popular culture forum by examining representations of women and femininity in contemporary Hollywood film adaptations of television shows from the 1960s and 1970s. It contends that such texts employ nostalgia and postfeminism in a dialogue between the past and the present to provide a space in which competing gendered ideals are negotiated. Central to this inquiry is to question why contemporary texts return to old characters rather than create new ones, and why characters from popular television shows seem to be such effective points of convergence for nostalgia and postfeminism.

**Methodology**

This thesis approaches these questions from an essentially cultural studies perspective. However, this is not necessarily clear cut. As Chris Barker affirms:
It remains difficult to pin down the boundaries of cultural studies as a coherent, unified, academic discipline with clear-cut substantive topics, concepts and methods that differentiate it from other disciplines. Cultural studies is, and always has been, a multi- or post-disciplinary field of inquiry which blurs the boundaries between itself and other 'subjects'. (Barker 2003:5)

Moreover, the discipline of cultural studies is largely defined by what it is not (for example, sociology and linguistics) even though it draws from these areas (Barker 2003:5). Consistent with such a definition, this thesis is informed by (but not wholly situated within) feminism, film studies, adaptation studies and media studies. It is closely aligned with a model put forward by Liesbet van Zoonen in Feminist Media Studies (1994), whereby feminist research is integrated with media studies through the rubric of a cultural studies framework. Taking John Corner’s definition of culture – ‘the conditions and the forms in which meaning and value are structured and articulated within a society’ (1991:131) – van Zoonen contends that

[...] these processes take place in institutionalized forms where the production and reception of mass mediated meanings are concerned and in everyday life when it concerns the daily symbolic interactions between human beings, within and between subcultures and other collectivities. Inevitably, gender is a, if not the, crucial component of culture. (van Zoonen 1994:6)

She ultimately concludes that ‘the relation between gender and communication is primarily – although not only – a cultural one’ and that

media are part of feminism’s cultural and – albeit to a lesser extent – its material struggle. Mass media are central sites in which these negotiations take place, evidently at the level of media texts, but also at the level of the other 'moments' of the mass mediated production of meaning, encoding and decoding; both media producers and media audiences construct meaning. (van Zoonen 1994:148)

This thesis fervently concurs with van Zoonen’s rationale and actively engages with conversations that locate it in such a ‘feminist media studies’ discipline. However, it wishes to foreground its cultural studies focus, for as Amanda D. Lotz notes in Redesigning Women, ‘[t]he complexity of cultural studies’ theorization of representation offers an important intervention into how feminist cultural critics approach the texts they study’ (2006:19).

Alan McKee observes that,

one of the key insights of Cultural Studies has been that rigorous methodologies can limit research to a great extent: if you only ever ask the same questions in the same
way, you will continue to get very similar answers. By contrast, by asking new questions, and coming up with new ways of thinking about things, you can get different kinds of knowledge. (McKee 2001:2-3)

He identifies textual analysis as one of the methodologies embraced by cultural studies, and it is the primary methodology employed by this thesis. McKee defines textual analysis as the interpretation of ‘texts (films, television programs, magazines, advertisements, clothes, graffiti, and so on) in order to try and obtain a sense of the ways in which, in particular cultures at particular times, people make sense of the world around them’ (2003:1). Moreover, he explains that ‘by seeing the variety of ways in which it is possible to interpret reality, we also understand our own cultures better because we can start to see the limitations and advantages of our own sense-making practices’ (McKee 2003:1). Thus textual analysis sits well with the interpretive paradigm which this thesis draws upon. It situates the text at the heart of a semiosphere (Hartley 1999); that is, a ‘world of meanings’, taking into account the myriad of diverse social, cultural and historical factors that surround and ultimately feed into it (the text). Like cultural studies, textual analysis also has fluid boundaries and is largely defined by what it is not. This thesis does not utilise audience studies, quantitative content analysis or detailed semiotic analysis. However, it does employ broadly qualitative methods of data gathering and analysis to critically engage with postfeminism and nostalgia in contemporary Hollywood film adaptations of television shows. It draws on a contextual cultural investigation to situate the texts and signal the central mobilising themes of postfeminism and nostalgia.

**Method**

The central body of the thesis comprises in-depth studies of the *Bewitched* and *Charlie’s Angels* films and television shows, and is organised around the pairing of the two sets of texts (the *Bewitched* TV series with the *Bewitched* film, and the *Charlie’s Angels* TV series with the *Charlie’s Angels* films). In each set, the TV show is examined first, drawing upon analyses of audio-visual material, scripts, stills and reviews from eight seasons of *Bewitched* (254 episodes) and five seasons of *Charlie’s Angels* (110 episodes). Historical, social and production documentation is analysed in order to situate the shows in

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19 Higgs and Trede assert that ‘A researcher working in the interpretive paradigm seeks to understand the human world by exploring the multiple realities people construct to make sense of their lived experiences’ (2010:34).

20 All episodes were accessed on DVD. Audio-visual material includes some ‘special features’ incorporated in DVD releases.
their socio-historical context. The corresponding film is then explored, again utilising audio-visual material, scripts, stills and reviews, as well as trailers, production notes, box office receipts and publicity releases. The films involved are adaptations so, in accordance with the conventions of cultural studies methodology outlined above, the thesis will draw on elements of adaptation theory in their analysis, particularly the work of Linda Hutcheon, although it does not engage with what is broadly identified as traditional or fidelity adaptation studies (as discussed in Chapter 2). In each film chapter, the significance of the accompanying television chapter is highlighted in investigating the film’s reliance on intertextuality as well as identifying what has and has not changed in terms of representations of women and femininity across the different mediums and different time periods. The findings from the in-depth studies are then mobilised in an examination of the *Sex and the City* TV series and films (together in Chapter 7) to broaden the context of the analysis and provide a more recent example of contemporary nostalgia in postfeminist film adaptation.

With such a large body of texts, it is not possible to provide a detailed analysis of each and every scene in the TV shows and films. However, key scenes have been identified that typify or encapsulate aspects of the series or film, and feature throughout the thesis in ‘focus boxes’. Formatted as shaded breakout boxes, these self-contained supplements provide detailed textual analyses of the pertinent scenes. They present further textual evidence for the arguments made and, like the images that are also included throughout to support and enhance the analysis, are referred to in the body of the thesis at the most relevant point.

**Scope**

The scope of this thesis extends to, but is contained by, a central concern with popular US / Hollywood texts and focus on women and femininity. As identified in the Introduction, Hollywood films and TV shows dominate the international mediascape, including Australia’s. Through a dialogue that Bell and Bell describe as ‘cultural reception and transformation’ (1998:7), Hollywood product has influenced and continues to influence Australian culture, with texts and paratextual material widely available and readily accessible. Moreover, as media and popular culture are so central to postfeminism, popular texts in an identifiably popular market provide the most fertile and relevant material for
this investigation. In *Prime-Time Feminism* (1996), Bonnie J. Dow examines images of women in popular US TV shows between the 1970s and 1990s. Although only directly referring to commercial television in the following quote, her rationale is still applicable. She asserts that commercial television’s relentless profit motive is one of the elements that makes it such a useful cultural barometer. In its attempt to capture the zeitgeist and to attract a large audience, it ‘feeds off itself and other media, and in this way its images both ego and participate in the shaping of cultural trends’ (Taylor, 1989, p.4). Thus, a study of television’s treatment of feminism is, to some degree, a study of mass-mediated cultural attitudes toward feminism. Analysis of some of television’s most powerful and popular visions of liberated women is a journey through phases of popular consciousness over the past quarter century. Television entertainment, as much as a sociological study, can tell us what we like about feminism, what we fear about feminism, and, perhaps most interesting, what aspects of feminism we simply refuse to represent in popular narrative. (Dow 1996:xxii)

As gender is central to feminist and postfeminist analysis, the thesis’s focus on women and femininity does not exclude masculinity, although discussions of male characters and masculinity are mainly restricted to the context of their relationship to the women in the texts. While detailed masculinity studies sit outside the scope of this thesis, its analysis of contemporary Hollywood film adaptations of 1960s and 1970s TV shows does open up the possibility for complementary research within masculinity studies to examine similar adaptations of retro shows, such as *The A-Team* (2010), *The Dukes of Hazzard* (2005), *Miami Vice* (2006) and *Mission Impossible* (1996). Another potential area for future research opened up by the thesis is to examine how the postfeminist representations of women and femininity from retro TV shows such as *Bewitched* and *Charlie’s Angels*, are employed in contexts beyond film adaptation, such as in new media and through the process of ‘remediation’.

Thus through a survey of the concepts of nostalgia and postfeminism, these critical frameworks are identified as active intersecting principles, linked by notions of the past and performativity. Operating within a cultural studies framework and employing primarily textual analysis, this thesis examines contemporary Hollywood film adaptations of two 1960s and 1970s TV shows to determine how the relationship between postfeminism and nostalgia mediates past and present gender ideals. In doing so it contributes to ongoing conversations in feminist media studies and furthers postfeminist scholarship, through an understanding of postfeminism’s nostalgic element and
identification of its potential. The next chapter, ‘Mining the Box’, provides a context for
the in-depth studies by examining adaptations and remakes, and the significance of
television and Generation X. It then identifies the wider group of film versions of TV
series and details why *Bewitched* and *Charlie’s Angels* were targeted for the in-depth
studies that form the core of this thesis.
While popular culture is pervasive, television has a particular place in the lives of its audience. As a screen medium, a domestic fixture and a unifying feature for Generation X, television is the perfect source for contemporary films to not only appropriate tried and true narratives, but to capitalise on the nostalgia associated with TV shows from Generation X’s childhood. Moreover, how the source material is adapted gives insight into its original context, contemporary ideals, and the changes that have – or just as importantly, have not – taken place over the period of time between the two texts’ production. This chapter acknowledges the role of adaptations in screen culture and the specificity of television texts and nostalgia, as well as the significance of generational factors. It then discusses how adaptations alter, parody or celebrate female characters in their transition from TV to film and provide examples of each category. Finally, *Bewitched* and *Charlie’s Angels* are identified as the films and television shows which are closely examined by this thesis to demonstrate how the film adaptations are examples of the manifestation and evocation of postfeminist nostalgia and contemporary women’s desire to engage with past ideals of womanhood.

**Remakes and Adaptations**

The motion picture industry has a long history of re-telling tales, with remakes and adaptations featuring prominently in film history. Remakes date back to the silent era with Sigmund ‘Pop’ Lubin’s release of *The Bold Bank Robbery* (1904), a hasty and unauthorised version of *The Great Train Robbery* (1903) directed by Edwin S. Porter (Atkins 1974:216). Ongoing technological advances in the filmmaking industry – the most notable being the introduction of sound – facilitated a culture of remakes. As D.A. Doran, Paramount’s executive assistant for stories in 1947 observed, ‘We began to run dry [of stories] in 1928 but the invention of sound, to our great joy, allowed us to do them all over again’ (cited in Pierce 2007:130). Technicolor provided a similar impetus (and this is seen again with digital re-mastering, surround sound and 3D remakes). Budget-conscious studios capitalised on retained story rights, saved on scriptwriting and banked on proven audience appeal. In this
environment, remakes – a term conventionally reserved for films that are remade again as films (see Leitch 1990) – tended to retain strong similarities with their predecessors. While the advent of video and possibility of re-releasing films put remakes in more direct competition with earlier incarnations and subsequently curbed the practice, the remake maintains connotations of replication and simulation. Contemporary film examples include *Alfie* (2004), *The Karate Kid* (2010), *King Kong* (2005) and *Psycho* (1998). The new millennium has also seen television producers undertake remakes, with short runs of *Bionic Woman* (2007), *Charlie’s Angels* (2011), *Dragnet* (2003-2004), *The Fugitive* (2000-2001) and *The Twilight Zone* (2002-2003) returning to the small screen, as well as the more successful *Hawaii Five-0* (2010- ). Consistent with its historical focus on replication, this thesis defines remakes by their consistency of medium; that is, a text that is remade in the same medium – a film remade as a film or a television show remade as a television show.

The term ‘adaptation’, however, is a broader one and implies that not only is the source material from a different medium (a key distinction between remake and adaptation), but also that a degree of licence has been invoked in its translation. As Susan Hayward identifies, an adaptation

> creates a new story; it is not the same as the original but takes on a new life, as indeed do the characters. Narrative and characters become independent of the original even though both are based – in terms of genesis – on the original. (Hayward 2006:11)

Hayward is referring to literary adaptations to film in the above quote, which she acknowledges as a long-established tradition in cinema. From early adaptations of the Bible (*La Vie et passion de Jesus Christ* [1897] by the Lumière brothers and *La Vie du Christ*, [1899] by Alice Guy), to Charles Dickens (*Scrooge*, or, *Marley’s Ghost* [1901] by R.W. Paul) and Lewis Carroll (*Alice in Wonderland* [1903] directed by Cecil Hepworth), Ewan Davidson (2010) determines that ‘filmmakers chose to adapt an already well-known story, assuming the audience’s familiarity with the tale meant less need for excessive inter-titles’. However, Hayward suggests that the trend during the 1910s of adapting from the established literary canon was a ‘marketing ploy’ by producers and exhibitors to legitimize the cinema and attract the respectable middle classes to their theatres (2006:10-11). Some of the films produced during this time include: *Frankenstein* (1910), directed by J. Searle Dawley and produced by the Edison Film Company; *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* (1913), also directed by J. Searle Dawley and produced by the Famous Players Film Co; *Sherlock Holmes* (1916), starring
William Gillette and made by Essanay Studios; and Tom Sawyer (1917) and The Further Adventures of Tom Sawyer (1918), directed by William Desmond Taylor and starring Jack Pickford. A similar alignment with the literary canon as a means of legitimising cinema can also be seen in academic realms later in the twentieth century with the evolution of adaptation theory.

George Bluestone established adaptations as an area of study with Novels Into Film in 1957, which focused on close case studies of film adaptations and became the discipline’s standard reference for some decades. Historically more closely related to literary studies than film theory (Leitch 2007:3), the galvanising approach to adaptation studies has been ‘fidelity criticism’ which works on the assumption that the source text has ‘a single, correct “meaning”’ and the success of a film adaptation was reliant on its adherence to that meaning (McFarlane 1996:8). However, while continuing to examine films based on literary works, Brian McFarlane identifies a range of influences on film adaptation beyond literary sources in Novel to Film (1996), including the condition of the film industry and the social and cultural climate at the time of production, and acknowledges the risk of marginalising these contexts when focusing only on the literary source (as had been the practice in fidelity criticism). More theorists within the field began to break ranks, including James Naremore (2000), Robert Stam (2000), Thomas Leitch (2003) and Kamilla Elliott (2003), all of whom Simone Murray identifies as dissatisfied with the limitations of fidelity criticism and its narrow field of view, and active in calling for new approaches to accommodate the rapidly changing media environment of the twenty-first century (2008:4).

In Film Adaptation and Its Discontents, Leitch devotes his second last chapter to ‘postliterary adaptations – that is, movies based on originals that have neither the cachet of literature nor the armature of a single narrative plot that might seem to make them natural Hollywood material’ (2007:258). He uses films adapted from video games (Mortal Kombat [1995], Double Dragon [1994] and Lara Croft: Tomb Raider [2001]), a board game (Clue [1985]) and theme park rides (Pirates of the Caribbean [2003] and The Haunted Mansion [2003]) to make the point that it need not be the plot or characters that are borrowed in an adaptation. Instead, Leitch argues that ‘[w]hatever particular features they borrow, the feature that is most

1 These film adaptations were based on: Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein (1823), Thomas Hardy’s Tess of the d’Urbervilles (1891), Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s character Sherlock Holmes, who first appeared in A Study in Scarlet (1887), and Mark Twain’s The Adventures of Tom Sawyer (1876).
important is the marketing aura of the original’ (2007:260). This point is certainly relevant when considering the TV-bred, merchandise-ready Generation X audience (the significance of Generation X is discussed later in this chapter), and acknowledges the commercial considerations of producing adaptations. However, it also opens up the theoretical framework around which adaptation studies have traditionally operated.

Linda Hutcheon takes this encompassing spirit on board and includes everything from music videos, computer games, opera and plays to poems, graphic novels and websites in her examination of adaptations, *A Theory of Adaptation* (2006). Moreover, she looks beyond ‘what’ should be categorised as an adaptation to challenge the core assumption that adaptations are inferior to the material upon which they are based and endeavours to understand the experience of adaptation; that is, the ways texts adapt and how they are consumed. Hutcheon replaces the notion of fidelity with ‘culture’ and adopts a Darwinian analogy, whereby narrative adaptation is understood in terms of a story’s ‘process of mutation or adjustment, through adaptation, to a particular cultural environment’ (2006:31). She contends that ‘[s]ometimes, like biological adaptation, cultural adaptation involves migration to favourable conditions: stories travel to different cultures and different media. In short, stories adapt just as they are adapted’ (Hutcheon 2006:31). The implication of Hutcheon’s ‘survival of the fittest’ approach is that the stories that adapt to survive do so because they serve a purpose, and consequently these are the stories that deserve particular attention. It is both this imperative and the broader, more fluid, version of ‘adaptation’ (as identified by Hutcheon) that is hereto employed by this thesis when referring to texts based on earlier texts.

**Adapting Television**

It has been established that adaptations have played a significant role in screen culture since early cinema, and in an increasingly mediated and competitive environment, film producers are turning to more varied sources for their story ideas. Over the last two decades, a strong trend of adapting television shows that originally aired from the late 1960s to early 1980s has emerged – see the Nostalgic Adaptations Table (Figure 2.1) below. This began with a few films in the early 1990s, including *The Addams Family* (1991), *The Beverly Hillbillies* (1993), *The Brady Bunch Movie* (1995) and *The Flintstones* (1994). The preference for using children’s and family shows continued, with a concentration of films released in the late 1990s and early 2000s, including *Charlie’s Angels, Hulk* (2003), *Inspector Gadget* (1999),
Josie and the Pussycats (2001), Lost in Space (1998), Mission Impossible, and The Saint (1997). While Barbie Zelizer suggests the impending new millennium makes looking back more appealing (1995:216), this trend for TV adaptations continues well past the first and into the second decade of the twenty-first century. 21 Jump Street (2012), The A-Team, The Green Hornet (2011), The Smurfs (2011) and Yogi Bear (2010) and are some of the latest offerings (at the time of writing), along with the third and fourth instalments of ongoing franchises. Sequels and franchises appear to be a feature of TV adaptations with the production of a significant number of sequels, such as those for The Addams Family, Charlie’s Angels, George of the Jungle, The Flintstones and Inspector Gadget, and franchises for Mission Impossible, Transformers and Alvin and the Chipmunks. Two further features of this group of adaptations are that the overwhelming majority are rated PG or PG-13,\(^2\) so they maintain a family audience, and the films generally keep the same name as the television show on which they are based. In these ways the adapted texts capitalise on nostalgia for the original shows.

The following table catalogues the extent of nostalgic film adaptations produced over the last two decades by listing television series from Generation X’s childhood alongside the contemporary movies adapted from those shows. Sequels, franchises and multiple adaptations (such as the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles movies) have been included, as well as television shows and films that originated from Marvel and DC Comics material. However, with a history dating back to the late 1930s, the Marvel and DC Comics texts are somewhat aberrant as they are the product of numerous revisionings and are part of a complex fan culture. Their adaptations are also strongly linked to a history of advances in animation technology. Therefore, while listed in the Nostalgic Adaptations Table and relevant to identifying a broader trend, analysis of screen adaptations based on Marvel and DC Comics material lies beyond the scope of this thesis, and instead offers the potential to be the subject of its own research project.

\(^2\) Exceptions are 21 Jump Street (2012), Miami Vice and The Mod Squad (1999), which are all rated R in the US.
Figure 2.1: Nostalgic Adaptations Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TELEVISION</th>
<th>FILM</th>
<th>RATING</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Addams Family Values (1993)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Alvin and the Chipmunks: The Squeakquel (2009)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The Avengers (1998)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Batman Returns (1992) **</td>
<td>PG-13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Batman and Robin (1997) **</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Batman Begins (2005) **</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A Very Brady Sequel (1996)</td>
<td>PG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Captain America (1979) *</td>
<td>Captain America: The First Avenger (2011) *</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Garfield 2 (2006)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>George of the Jungle 2 (2003)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inspector Gadget (1999)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leave it to Beaver (1957-1963)</td>
<td>Leave it to Beaver (1997)</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### The Television Format

As a screen medium, television presents itself as naturally compatible with film for adaptation; however, in addition to viewing conditions there are significant narrative differences between the two formats. Traditionally, standard Hollywood or mainstream film is narrative-driven, with motivated, goal-orientated central protagonists who move through the narrative following a cause and effect chain to achieve a resolution. Closure is both
significant and usually socially conscious in feature films, whereby good triumphs over bad, and the hero gets the girl (Stadler and McWilliam 2009:172). By contrast, television is more character-driven and storylines are less goal-orientated due to the disrupted, segmented nature of television programming. Information about characters, their relationships with one another and ongoing plotlines are constantly revisited so that viewers can watch regardless of whether or not they have seen previous episodes. As Nicholas Abercrombie contends, ‘Television replaces the linear form of film narrative with serial form, whether it is a series or a continuing serial, and a major effect is the diversion of interest from events to character’ (1996:24). Therefore characters provide continuity despite the fragmentation of the format. This concentration on character lends itself to focusing on the familiar or on ‘ordinary life’, which is also consistent with TV’s historical link with ‘liveness’, immediacy and reality based on the industry’s origins in live broadcasting. Moreover, with lower budgets, smaller crews and shorter deadlines, TV shows are restricted to fewer locations than feature films, further reinforcing the exploration of characters (they discuss where they have been and what they have done rather than show the location and activity itself) and emphasising the (relatable) ‘every day’ through sense of place.

Thus TV is defined by a focus on character, lack of narrative closure and fragmentation (broken into ongoing episodes which, for commercial TV, are then broken into segments punctuated by ad breaks). To counter the fragmentation, TV employs strategies to maintain a ‘flow’ to keep audiences tuned to the show (and station) (see Thompson 2003). Subsequently, as Abercrombie observes, TV is marked by both fragmentation and flow, thereby producing a ‘decentered experience of viewing, which is characteristic of the postmodern experience’ (1996:16-17). He suggests this fits in with the social and domestic context in which TV is consumed, whereby the audience’s attention is dispersed (between domestic duties, familial interactions, mealtimes etc). This is another of the main differences between film and television – the mode of reception. Stadler and Williams suggest that ‘[d]iffering contexts of reception of film and television texts mean that audience members tend to glance at the TV and gaze with sustained attention at film’ (2009:176, emphasis in original). These differences are significant because they can also explain why TV shows are so appealing for film adaptation. Television’s social immediacy, focus on characters, and relationship with domesticity all directly contribute to the degree of nostalgia and cultural consequence TV

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3 It is noted that contexts of reception are changing, with film increasingly consumed on the ‘small’ screen via DVD or online download, although this broader argument is not directly relevant to this thesis.
shows accrue. This in turn translates to commercial viability in terms of feature film production.4

Television’s focus on character fosters para-social relationships; that is, the audience develop relationships with fictional characters. As Chris Rojek explains, ‘[t]he term “para-social interaction” is used to refer to relations of intimacy constructed through the mass-media rather than direct experience and face-to-face meetings’ (2007:171). The term was coined by Donald Horton and R. Richard Wohl in 1956, then used in relation to TV news presenters (see Levy 1979), and more recently linked with celebrity studies (for example, Rojek relates mythologies around religion and shamanism to those around celebrity in a secular society). Television’s mode of address is identified as a contributing factor: its use of direct address, presenters’ conversational tone and prolonged exposure tend to increase perceived intimacy (Levy 1979). Later studies of soap operas similarly supported the link between media consumption and audiences’ involvement with media characters (Chia and Poo 2009:26). In ‘Some Sense of Time’ (2003), a sociological study of how people remember television, Jérôme Bourdon refers to para-sociality when identifying how television hosts and celebrities are distinct from Hollywood stars. He contends that ‘[t]hey present themselves (and are perceived) as living ordinary lives in comfortable but not luxurious houses, surrounded by their families’ and that ‘they evoke feelings … [of] a mild attachment to an old family friend’ (2003:20). As his study focuses on remembering, feelings of warmth and familiarity associated with recollections of TV personalities are relevant in terms of nostalgic impact. What is most significant for this thesis is Bourdon’s acknowledgment of the way TV is ‘deeply embedded in everyday life and the family’ (2003:32).

John Ellis identified this critical feature of television in 1982, stating in Visible Fictions that ‘TV has achieved a centrality in everyday life which outstrips anything that cinema could achieve’ (1982:227). In ‘Feeling Sentimental about Television and Audiences’ Helen Wood and Lisa Taylor similarly argue that television is ‘durably and consistently located in the fabric of everyday life’ (2008:144). This relationship with domesticity is another characteristic that distinguishes TV from film while reinforcing its cultural significance and nostalgic impact. Together with an intimate mode of address (which facilitates para-social interactions), the television format favours close-ups, is largely concerned with domestic

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4 The commercial factors involved in producing Hollywood blockbuster films are explored in Chapter 6.
issues and of course is a constant physical presence in the home. In *Make Room for TV* (1992), Lynn Spigel examines the installation of television in the postwar American home. Investigating representation of television in women’s home magazines, she notes that, while initially viewed as intrusive and a potential threat to family life, the television set was quickly integrated into interior design, the daily household routine and even came to symbolise family life. The advent of TV was a distinctly domestic phenomenon. However an important consequence of its infiltration into the domestic realm was that TV effectively eroded the ideological division between public and private spheres by bringing the world into the home and ‘promoting the new family theatres as a substitute for traditional forms of community life and social relations’ (Spigel 1992:10). Thus, as Spigel indicates in her expanded examination of television in postwar suburbia, *Welcome to the Dreamhouse* (2001), the very domestically-situated television becomes a gateway through which broader social and cultural ideas are accessed. She notes that

> Television and suburbs are both engineered spaces, designed and planned by people who are engaged in giving material reality to wider cultural belief systems. In addition, media and suburbs are sites where meanings are produced and created; they are spaces (whether material or electronic) in which people make sense of their social relationships to each other, their communities, their nation, and the world at large. (Spigel 2001:15)

It follows that, along with making sense of each other, television functions as an important mechanism by which viewers also make sense of themselves; that is, through the formation of identity and process of identification.

Diana Fuss contends that identity is an on-going process. In *Identification Papers*, she defines identity as ‘the self that identifies itself’ and identification as ‘the psychical mechanism that produces self-recognition’ (Fuss 1995:2). Fuss argues that identification ‘operates as a mark of self-difference, opening up a space for the self to relate to itself as self, a self that is perpetually other’ in a ‘process that keeps identity at a distance’ (1995:2). While the theoretical model for this process is founded on the Lacanian dynamic of recognition and misrecognition that is associated with the formation of identity and subjectivity, it is Fuss’s clarification of the subject as complex, plural and ‘profoundly unstable’ that ensures this model’s relevance (1995:2-3). The process of identification sees the subject recognise as significant – and take on board – aspects of the ‘other’ or that which is outside the self. What is seen on TV is one such aspect and, with multiple, relatable images available, it is a medium particularly susceptible to identification. Moreover, recognising the consistent presence of TV
in the context of an evolving subject, is to acknowledge the ongoing and thereby profound influence of television in terms of the formation of identity. For the purposes of this thesis, which is primarily concerned with screen representations of femininity and womanhood, the social attitudes and developing sense of femaleness being demonstrated through evolving TV series thereby take on marked significance. The argument then follows that, when these series are re-visited in contemporary filmic adaptations, the subject taps into those deeply embedded images and ideals and works to update and re-negotiate the parameters of womanhood and femininity along with the characters on screen.\(^5\) In this way, adapted films draw heavily on the nostalgia created by the domesticity of television, and rely on temporarily accessing the established cultural attitudes partly formed through its mode of consumption.

Finally, television’s immediacy is important in both setting it apart from film and guaranteeing its appeal in terms of later adaptations. It is instrumental in ensuring TV is an effective \textit{zeitgeist}. In part this relates to TV’s ready coverage of news, current affairs and broadcasting of special events such as royal weddings, election results and international sporting events like the Olympic Games. It is also because television production is a collaborative process that typically employs teams of writers and multiple directors on any given series (and thereby evolves from a more broadly representative social group), which ultimately functions on its ability to appeal to a mass audience. Therefore when a show is successful (largely measured by ratings) it can be identified as having resonated with a significant section of society and having tuned in to what is current. TV’s connection with ordinary life, along with its tight production schedules, also allow it to engage with the social climate of the day. As entertainment (drama, comedy etc) shows are intermingled on the weekly programme with news and other real world events, specific shows are tied in with broader TV memories from any given era. This ensures these shows or series are anchored in nostalgia.

Thus television’s social immediacy, together with its domesticity and focus on character, imprint TV as a format that is distinct from film yet rich with cultural references, thick with nostalgia and ripe for adaptation. Since the late 1990s, the trend of films based on TV series has tapped into this nostalgia. As identified earlier, most of these are adaptations of children’s

\(^5\) Perhaps this is why film adaptations are more successful than TV remakes. Tapping into nostalgia and offering updated versions of established characters is more appealing than trying to replace characters, which may interfere too much with nostalgia and key points of identification.
and family shows from the late 1960s to early 1980s (see Figure 2.1, the Nostalgic Adoptions Table). What is significant about this period is that it represents the formative years for Generation X – a generation for whom television holds particular importance.

**Generation X and Newstalgia**

*Time* magazine identifies Generation X as roughly those born between 1965 and 1980 (Stephey 2008). And while Strauss and Howe (1991) extend the grouping to anyone born between 1961 and 1981, Courtney Rubin suggests a person belongs to Generation X if they are ‘too young to remember the Kennedy assassination and too old to have had a cell phone in college’ (2002:43). The new millennium has brought a trend for all things retro on a broad cultural level (certainly in first world, Western societies), encompassing fashion, music, toys, films, television and advertising. Marketers call it ‘newstalgia’. (Thomas 2007:148). Defined as ‘the love of old things from the past revived in what designers call “the contemporary classics” from cars to TV shows’, it is a term that has long been used by the music industry and car hobbyists in relation to new products that reflect a 1950s or 1960s styling (Thomas 2007:148). However, today it is most often employed in marketing to Generation X. In *Buy, Buy Baby* (2007), Susan Gregory Thomas credits newstalgia with the return of the Care Bears and Strawberry Shortcake and renewed interest in mini-skirts, ballet shoes and preppy fashion from Lacoste and Lily Pulitzer. She includes Nickelodeon’s shift in programming on their popular Nick at Nite network from nostalgic reruns aimed at Baby Boomers (such as *The Dick Van Dyke Show* [1961-1966]) to sitcoms from Generation X’s childhood (including *The Facts of Life* [1979-1988] and *Three’s Company* [1976-1984]) as part of this trend, as well as ‘film revivals of such 1970s and 1980s lightweight classics as *Scooby Doo, Charlie’s Angels, Starsky and Hutch, The Incredible Hulk, and The Dukes of Hazard*’ (Thomas 2007:149). Moreover, Thomas maintains that marketers’ success lies in their recognition of the significance of television for Generation X (and for her purposes its nostalgic connection with childhood).\(^6\) She notes that:

Previous generations’ nostalgia is rooted in achievement, triumph over hardship, social activism – some authentic, galvanizing experience. ‘Greatest Generation’ nostalgia, for example, is centered on World War II, sacrifice at home, and the heyday of Big Band music; Baby Boomers gloat over memories of the civil rights, antiwar, and feminist

\(^6\) Thomas’s book closely examines contemporary marketing practices aimed at babies and toddlers. Her discussion of Generation X is as parents and consumers motivated by branding and licensing connected with their own (TV-influenced) childhood.
movements. Not Generation X... the latchkey kids of Generation X had just one
galvanizing collective experience: TV. (Thomas 2007:150)\(^7\)

Recognised as a collective, unifying experience, the television Generation X watched
therefore takes on a greater significance than for earlier generations. In ‘Reading the Past
Against the Grain’ (1995), Zelizer discusses collective memory and the involvement of self
with environmental and external factors, including the influence of popular culture. She
asserts that

> Remembering becomes implicated in a range of other activities having as much to do with
> identity formation, power and authority, cultural norms, and social interaction as with the
> simple act of recall. Its full understanding thus requires an appropriation of memory as
> social, cultural, and political action at its broadest level. (Zelizer 1995:214)

As television is Generation X’s collective experience, then the broader implications of a
desire to remember – in the form of a proliferation of film adaptations based on TV shows
from Generation X’s childhood – should be acknowledged. Together with Hutcheon’s
‘survival of the fittest’ approach to adaptation, this rationale supports a closer examination of
this group of filmic adaptations. Zelizer also identifies the media as a form of storage for
collective memory (1995:233), which is consistent with the notion of TV as an effective
zeitgeist. With shows rerun on cable and many readily available either on DVD and/or the
internet, these are easily accessible memories. And while Generation X are the clear market
for reworked TV ‘classics’ on film, it is important to note that as the writers, directors and
producers, Generation X are also responsible for getting these adaptations made.\(^8\)

**Women on Screen**

Revisiting TV shows as films, then, serves a purpose for Generation X. It is an experience
that taps into some core, formative ideals and, in a contemporary (postfeminist) world fraught
with conflicting imagery, it provides an opportunity to re-evaluate those ideals. One key
formative area is gender, particularly notions of womanhood and femininity, and this is the
area upon which this thesis focuses. The main reasons for targeting this area are: there is an
established relationship between women and TV;\(^9\) the original TV shows coincide with
second wave feminism while the adapted films can be interpreted as products of

\(^7\) Thomas’s observations are based on the US experience but are applicable (and specific) to developed,
Western countries.

\(^8\) See discussion of Drew Barrymore as producer in Chapter 6.

\(^9\) Refer to methodology section and acknowledgment of feminist media studies in Chapter 1.
postfeminism; and there is a strong correlation between postfeminism and nostalgia (as identified in Chapter 1). This set of circumstances suggests that contemporary adaptations can function as spaces in which competing gender ideals from the past and present are negotiated. Some adaptations are more effective in facilitating such a dialogue than others and this is largely dependant on the original text – specifically, women’s roles in the TV series upon which that film is based. While characters necessarily take on changing roles as part of the adaptation process, the treatment of women in the contemporary interpretations falls roughly into three categories; they are generally either parodied, significantly altered or celebrated.

**Parodied Women**

Parody refers to imitations of a work of art in order to ridicule the original and expose its inauthentic construction. It is essentially reflexive in its capacity to reflect critically back on both its target and itself (see Hannoosh 1989). Some examples of contemporary film adaptations employing parody include *The Brady Bunch Movie* (1995) (and its sequel, *A Very Brady Sequel* [1996]) and *Leave it to Beaver* (1997). In both cases, the films juxtapose social and cultural ideals from the era in which the original TV shows were produced (early seventies and late fifties/early sixties respectively) with those from the modern day. In *Leave it to Beaver*, traditional family expectations are set against the dynamics of modern society. In *The Brady Bunch Movie*, the Brady family retain their 1970s sensibilities (including language patterns, fashion sense and moral values) while living in the 1990s (see Figures 2.2 and 2.3). The resulting discord highlights the changes that have occurred in gender politics (and other cultural codes) over the decades, and in this way, the constructed nature of gender and narrowly-defined gender roles are foregrounded. However, as its comedy is drawn from maintaining the distinction between the two eras, the parodied adaptation does not offer the opportunity to negotiate past ideals with present ones. Such film adaptations can therefore be seen to employ parody as a strategy not only to identify representations of women and femininity in the earlier show as outdated, but *because* the original female roles have little (or a problematic) contemporary relevance.
Significantly Altered Women

The second category of adaptations significantly alters the way women in original TV shows are represented in contemporary film versions. One way this occurs is when female characters are added, such as in the movie versions of *The A-Team*, *Mission Impossible*, *Transformers*, and *Yogi Bear*. In *The A-Team* for example, army Captain Charissa Sosa, played by Jessica Biel, is included in the film (and its promotion) despite the TV show having an all-male cast. As a DCIS agent, Sosa is notably not in the actual ‘A team’, but she is identified early in the movie as professionally successful as well as being Face’s (Bradley Cooper) ex-girlfriend:

Face: Captain Sosa look at you. Wow. So I guess you said no to the kids, no to the family, no ladder you can’t climb huh?

Sosa: No. No, honey, I just said no to you.

Yet this initial resistance to stereotyping is undermined by the later suggestion that her professional judgement is compromised by her feelings for Face. Ultimately Sosa occupies a peripheral role. In *Transformers* and *Yogi Bear*, the inserted female characters also play love interests, while in the *Mission Impossible* franchise women are employed in stereotypical, contrived roles. For example, in the first movie, Sarah Davies (Kristin Scott Thomas) is killed by the end of the opening sequence and the only other female character, Claire Phelps
(Emmanuelle Béart) is a *femme fatale*. In the second film, Hunt’s love interest is Nyah Nordoff-Hall (Thandie Newton), a professional thief recruited to assist with the mission, yet after being tricked by the villains she needs to be rescued by Hunt. And in the third instalment, IMF agent Lindsey Farris (Keri Russell) is blown up at the beginning of the film and Hunt’s fiancée, Julia Meade (Michelle Monaghan), is kidnapped. While the addition of female characters in these film adaptations identifies contemporary expectations for the inclusion of women across a range of narratives and genres, it also highlights the limited nature of those roles.

Similarly, a character is significantly altered when they are negated or reduced back to a stereotypical representation in an adaptation, such as in the film version of *Get Smart* (2008). This film is strongly nostalgic and, while it generally celebrates the TV show, it does not adhere to the original dynamic between the two main characters, known by their special agent numbers, 86 and 99. The TV series afforded the central female character, 99, considerable agency (see Focus Box 2.1 below), whereas the movie functions more as a vehicle for Steve Carell and further develops the character of 86 (Maxwell Smart). In terms of an adaptation, it readily utilises intertextual references, including: catchphrases; a cameo by the original actor who played Siegfried, Bernie Kopell; the car and shoe phone from the TV series are displayed as museum items; the cone of silence is deployed; Agent 13 (Bill Murray) appears in a tree trunk; and the original theme music and opening sequence are recreated (walking down the corridor with doors closing and a phone booth elevator). However, the character of 99 is significantly altered as she is relegated to the position of girlfriend to the newly-accomplished Smart by the end of the film: a shift demonstrated by a comparison of publicity photos for the two texts. In the publicity shot for

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10 Ultimately, Claire Phelps is revealed as having co-conspired with her husband, Jim Phelps (Jon Voight) – the agent previously believed to have been murdered. Implausibly (although inevitably), Claire Phelps is killed by her husband who turns his gun away from Ethan Hunt (Tom Cruise) to shoot her instead.

11 The focus on developing Smart’s character in the film adaptation suggests an in-depth analysis of this movie is most pertinent to a discussion on men and changing representations of masculinity which, as identified in Chapter 1, sits outside the scope of this thesis.
the *Get Smart* TV series (1965-1970) (see Figure 2.5 below), a more equal demonstration of power and communication between Smart and 99 is displayed than in the movie poster (see Figure 2.4), where 99 is positioned behind Smart and effectively silenced by his tie covering her mouth (and her gun is held close to her hair like a hair dryer). Like the earlier examples of film adaptations in which TV characters are significantly altered (or added), this treatment suggests that the original characters are not compatible with contemporary conceptions.

Focus Box 2.1: 99 in *Get Smart*

TV’s *Get Smart* (1965-1970) was created by Mel Brooks and Buck Henry, with 138 episodes produces over five seasons. Following the spy trend of the era (*The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* [1964-1968] and the original James Bond franchise [1962-1967]), the series centres on Maxwell Smart as Agent 86 (Don Adams), who is an operative for the government spy agency CONTROL. As Brooks describes it, the comedy revolves around Smart’s ‘earnest stupidity’ (cited in Day 2008), as he is both a top agent and absurdly incompetent. Barbara Feldon plays Agent 99 – known throughout the series as ‘99’. (For April Brandon [2010], ‘This spy was so cool she didn’t even need a name.’) Tall, elegant and beautiful, 99’s appearance is utilised in undercover operations, for example when Smart and 99 pose as a married couple. However, within their partnership, 99 is shown to be the more competent and capable agent as she is more alert and informed than Smart, and regularly saves him from disaster. Importantly, she does so without undermining his authority; that is, without challenging his ego or claiming credit for successful outcomes. The show’s humour is derived from Smart thinking he is the superior agent, while 99 (and the audience) knows that is not the case. Moreover, 99’s ability to operate as an effective agent without overtly disrupting or threatening patriarchal expectations (and the structure of a [fictional] government agency) can be seen to facilitate her presence as an empowered female figure on screen at a time when such representations are relevantly aberrant for cultural convention. The Chief’s acclamation of Smart as CONTROL’s top agent, despite Smart’s incompetency, further highlights the inequity of gender bias of the era. At the same time, while 99 ultimately conforms to the conventions of the day – she dotes on Max throughout the series and eventually marries him - her competency as an agent serves to advocate broader roles for women outside those traditionally defined by gender.

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12 Brooks was not involved in the series after the pilot.
In the 2008 movie, however, 99’s role is significantly altered. The adapted movie introduces 99 as a competitive, top agent who sees being partnered with the inexperienced 86 (Smart) as an encumbrance. Smart has been a long-time analyst with CONTROL and only becomes a field agent when CONTROL headquarters is attacked and all other agents are compromised. 99 is the only other operative available because she has just undergone plastic surgery (later revealed to be necessary because a personal relationship with another agent compromised her professional capacity). As with Sosa in The A-Team, the suggestion of poor judgement (the relationship was with Agent 23 who turns out to be a double agent) and a spill over between public and private lives weakens her role. This is reinforced by her judgement of Smart, whom she initially dislikes and devalues. However, despite being instrumental in Smart’s success, by the end of the film 99 is Smart’s stereotypically submissive girlfriend. As the Chief congratulates Smart on a job well done at the end of the movie, a small dog nips at his heels. The camera pans up 99’s legs as she bends down to pick up the dog. Wearing a short, tight, red dress, high heels and with the dog tucked under her arm (reminiscent of Reece Witherspoon’s character, Elle Woods in Legally Blonde [2001]), 99 leans over to coyly kiss the triumphant Smart. The issue of physical appearance is raised earlier in the movie — and a pointed commentary on women, plastic surgery and age is made — in a scene on the plane when 99 confesses to having ‘a few years taken off’ while undergoing plastic surgery to change her identity. However, like the stereotypical representation of her at the end of the film, this reinforces a regressive portrayal (contrasted with a progressive Smart). Smart is shown to have lost weight to become a field agent, a positive and healthy transformation, while 99 has had plastic surgery and goes from being a stereotypically ‘gorgeous blonde’ to ‘stunning brunette’, in a transformation only made necessary in the first place because of her poor judgement.

Celebrated Women

The final category is one in which the contemporary film adaptations celebrate the versions of femininity portrayed in the TV series used as their source. The significance of these films is that they provide the greatest potential in terms of presenting varying gender ideals and encouraging a positive dialogue between the past and the present. Moreover, the celebration of earlier female characters inherently suggests that the TV show they inhabited either had a worthwhile (féminine) message, or at least had women as their focus. In this way, the movies that celebrate female characters are not just tapping into a general nostalgia, but a gendered nostalgia. And because nostalgia is so deeply connected to positive emotions and selective remembering — that is, just remembering the ‘good parts’ (see Chapter 1) — to examine adaptations that focus on representations of femininity and womanhood is to necessarily focus on films based on TV shows that positively portray women and celebrate those aspects. Some
of these films include *The Avengers* (1998), *Bewitched*, *Charlie’s Angels*, *Josie and the Pussycats*, and *Nancy Drew* (2007).

Figure 2.6: Josie, Melody and Valerie from the animated TV series of *Josie and the Pussycats*.

Figure 2.7: Melody, Josie and Valerie in the live action film.

The *Josie and the Pussycats* (2001) movie is based on an animated TV series from the early 1970s (see Figures 2.6 and 2.7), which, as Maria Mogilevich notes, ‘was based on a comic, which was a spin-off of another series of comics’ (the Archie Comics) (2002:41). In the film the struggling all-girl band is discovered by MegaRecords executive Wyatt Frame (Alan Cumming) when he lands outside their small town of Riverdale. The girls sign with the record label but find that they are being tricked into delivering subliminal messages through their music. The film is highly self-reflexive, providing commentary on the music industry, advertising and pop culture trends. Frame breaks the fourth wall by talking directly to camera and in a scene when they all board the private jet he asks Alexandra, the band manager’s sister, why she is there. She replies, ‘I was in the cartoon’, which draws attention to the construction of the text (a recurring feature in adaptations, which is explained further in Chapter 4). The film’s interrogation of marketing and commodification is consistent with the ‘girl power’ message portrayed by the three female leads (see Chapter 6). This is perhaps the most significant feature of *Josie and the Pussycats*: in offering multiple female protagonists working as a team or a group, the text provides multiple points of identification for a gendered audience and therefore more varied representations of femininity. The film is a useful example in the way it identifies some of the tools used in other celebratory, postfeminist adaptations of nostalgic texts. However its application for comparative analysis between past and present femininities is limited because it is based on an animated series, and

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13 Frame had parachuted out of a private jet which is set to crash with the band Du Jour on board, after a member of the band uncovers one of the subliminal messages put under their music by the record company.
like *Nancy Drew* (which is also celebratory and based on books prior to a TV series) was originally introduced as children’s programming.

*The Avengers* (1998) film is more direct in its celebration of the style, aesthetics and gender relations for which the 1960s TV series was known. British secret agent John Steed (Ralph Fiennes) and Dr Emma Peel (Uma Thurman) are charged with finding and stopping Sir August de Wynter (Sean Connery) from destroying the world with his weather control system. The presence of Connery (who played James Bond in the 1960s) is a reminder of the TV show’s relationship with the spy genre. (*The Avengers* TV series will be examined in more detail in Chapter 5 as it relates to the *Charlie’s Angels* TV series and women in the detective/spy genre). The opening sequence for *The Avengers* movie is reminiscent of the iconic styling in the title scenes of Bond films mixed with monochromatic patterns and swirls characteristic of the 1960s. The first few shots of the movie, which are close-ups and sharply cantered angles, establish a shooting style consistent with the TV show – originally developed to accommodate a low budget and limited locations (Miller 1997:11). Although the movie is set in the modern day, Steed’s and Peel’s costuming (closely modelled on the original show – see Figures 2.8 and 2.9) and formal manner of speech ensure the film maintains an clear connection with the TV series. For example, when Steed is first introduced to Peel he says, ‘This is all terribly formal, must I call you Dr Peel?’, to which she responds, ‘You may call me Mrs Peel’.  

Importantly, *The Avengers* movie also celebrates the progressive representation of femininity offered by Mrs Peel’s characterisation in the original TV series. This is evident in the publicity photo from the film, shown above (Figure 2.8). Unlike the silencing of 99 in the *Get Smart* poster, *The Avengers* film shot positions Peel in front of Steed with crossed arms, looking directly forward, indicating that she is in control. This reflects Peel’s portrayal in the movie where she is shown to be a strong, capable, independent, self-assured woman. In an early scene she walks into Boodle’s (an infamous men’s only club in London), past staff and shocked club members. A porter says, ‘You are female… you can’t come in.’ She replies while continuing up the stairs, ‘I have an appointment.’ An exasperated porter calls after her,

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14 The choice of Mrs Peel for the adaptation is worth noting as Steed had three female partners over the course of the series: Catherine Gale played by Honor Blackman (1962-1964); Emma Peel played by Diana Rigg (1965-1968); and Tara King played by Linda Thorson (1968-1969). Emma Peel is the character with whom *The Avengers* was introduced in the US in 1965.
‘No women, not in Boodle’s since 1762.’ She then walks into the steam room where Steed casually says, ‘Dr Peel I presume.’ This scene demonstrates that Peel is unafraid of confronting established inequality and provides a direct reference to social and political changes that occurred as a result of activism, particularly civil protests during the 1960s, and that Steed is complicit in her actions. The film does break from the conventions of the TV series, with Peel and Steed kissing towards the end of the movie. In the final shots they are both dressed in white, standing under a rotunda on a roof-top garden toasting each other (which could be read as a pseudo wedding). While this is at odds with the series, it is consistent with Hollywood film convention, as well as with the dual nature of postfeminist expectations whereby women are shown as empowered and independent while being swept up in romance.

The postfeminist component of the film adaptation is significant. While *The Avengers* provides an appropriate example of a celebratory text in its treatment of the central female character, the film does not concentrate enough on women and femininity to facilitate an effective in-depth study. Emma Peel is a postfeminist character, but *The Avengers* is not a postfeminist film. In its successful combination of nostalgia and modernity, *The Avengers* highlights that, in order to negotiate past and present representations of women, womanhood and femininity, the contemporary adaptation also needs to be a postfeminist text, because the nostalgia being generated is specific: it is ‘postfeminist nostalgia’.
Postfeminist Nostalgia

The role of postfeminism in the contemporary adaptation is an important one as it directs both the film’s focus and assumptions. When an adaptation can be determined as a postfeminist text, that is, produced in a postfeminist era and concerned with female characters, story and point-of-view, it can also be identified as evoking postfeminist nostalgia. Because postfeminism is plural, incorporating multiple femininities and experiences of womanhood, it also incorporates a varied range of feminine ideals. One of the strongest features of postfeminism is the notion of being ‘beyond’ or past feminism that is accompanied by a sense of loss or longing consistent with nostalgia. Whether it is for a traditional past, incorporating traditionally-defined gender roles of home and hearth (ideals associated with the role of housewife) or a political past incorporating sisterhood and empowerment, this dual nostalgia or postfeminist nostalgia is being accessed by postfeminist adaptations. Importantly, as with any nostalgia, knowing one cannot return to the past – that is, that the feminist advances that have been secured cannot be revoked – ensures it is safe to explore the desire to return to past ideals. Thus it is within postfeminist film adaptations of TV series from an earlier era that desires for past ideals most clearly emerge and potentially integrate with contemporary ideals. The texts targeted for in-depth study are, therefore, celebratory, postfeminist adaptations that demonstrate the dual aspects of postfeminist nostalgia.

In-depth Studies

The two sets of texts chosen for in-depth study are the Bewitched TV series and film adaptation and the Charlie’s Angels TV series and film adaptation. While some adaptations parody or significantly alter characters because they do not resonate with contemporary representations of women, others that celebrate the feminine ideals demonstrated in the TV show upon which they are based signal an ongoing relevance. Both the Bewitched and Charlie’s Angels films are celebratory adaptations, as well as being postfeminist texts. For both sets of texts, the TV shows were extremely popular and long-running, and the films were big Hollywood productions. Most importantly however, both of the TV series and both of the films are female-centric (the TV shows are two of a limited number of progressive representations of women on TV screens during the 1960s and 1970s). Finally, the texts readily demonstrate the duality of postfeminist nostalgia as each of the contemporary film
adaptations is focused on a different aspect: *Bewitched* taps into nostalgia for a traditional past, while *Charlie’s Angels* evokes nostalgia for a political past.

The *Bewitched* TV series (1964-1972) is a sitcom centring on Samantha Stephens (Elizabeth Montgomery), a witch who marries a ‘mortal’ (non-magical person) and tries to live a normal life as a housewife in the suburbs (see Figure 2.10). While the social and cultural changes that occurred during the show’s eight seasons are reflected in changes in costumes and storylines as the series progressed (the show’s production spanned the turbulent sixties and sexual revolution – see Chapter 3), the show remained essentially domestic and representative of traditional gender roles. In the 2005 film adaptation, nostalgia for these traditional roles is expressed through the central character, Isabel Bigelow (Nicole Kidman) and her quest (see Figure 2.11). Isabel is a witch who turns her back on magic and moves to Hollywood to set up a home and find love. She meets Jack (Will Ferrell) who recruits her to play Samantha in a TV remake of *Bewitched*. This narrative device facilitates Isabel’s engagement with Samantha and thereby facilitates a dialogue between past and present feminine ideals. Isabel turns to the past and images of Samantha throughout the movie to understand contemporary postfeminist womanhood, which reinforces the ongoing relevance of the original series. Consistently seen on air (in reruns) since 1964, the *Bewitched* TV show has influenced generations of women. It maintains its relevance because Samantha is transgressive in her representation of femininity and womanhood as she foregrounds the constructed nature of her role as housewife and thereby exposes the performativity of gender (see Chapter 3).
The *Charlie’s Angels* TV series (1976-1981) is also shown to contain transgressive representations of women that are relevant to postfeminist ideals. The show broke new ground by casting three female leads in an action series with former policewomen Kelly, Sabrina and Jill (Jaclyn Smith, Kate Jackson and Farrah Fawcett respectively – see Figure 2.12) working as private detectives for the unseen Charles Townsend (John Forsythe). A key component of the show is the way the women utilise their femininity (predominantly while undercover), to carry out what were traditionally considered to be masculine roles (in the workforce as detectives). This political past and the TV series’ emphasis on sisterhood is the focus of postfeminist nostalgia evoked by the 2000 film adaptation (and 2003 sequel). In the *Charlie’s Angels* movie Dylan, Natalie and Alex (Drew Barrymore, Cameron Diaz and Lucy Liu – see Figure 2.13) are the current operatives in the Charles Townsend Detective Agency. Like the TV show, casting three women together in the film’s leading roles breaks new ground, as it transgresses convention to have a team of female action movie heroes. The balance between feminism and femininity that the TV show exposed is carried through the films with a girl power discourse, and the ideals of sisterhood contemporised. In these ways, past ideals are interplayed with contemporary ones.

This chapter has identified why TV shows offer a rich source of material for film adaptations and why the *Bewitched* and *Charlie’s Angels* series and films have been isolated for in-depth study. The cast changes that occurred across the series’ five seasons are noted in Chapter 5.
analysis. Both as celebratory adaptations and postfeminist texts engaged in postfeminist nostalgia, the contemporary films rely heavily on their antecedent TV texts. It is therefore important to closely examine the TV shows upon which they are based before analysing the film adaptations of Bewitched and Charlie’s Angels. This process serves to demonstrate how a contemporary film text can function as a space in which postfeminist nostalgia is evoked and competing gendered ideals from the past and present are negotiated. As identified in the Introduction, the earliest screen representations of womanhood and femininity of the texts chosen are found in the Bewitched TV series. This thesis will therefore start its in-depth studies with the Bewitched TV show, followed by an analysis of its contemporary film adaptation, before moving on to Charlie’s Angels.
Chapter 3

PERFORMING SAMANTHA: BEWITCHED ON TV

_Bewitched_ was such a success in part because of its novelty and its skilful use of special effects, which played to some fairly basic fantasies about magic and control. But it was also successful because it was one of the few shows with an appealing female lead character who offered female viewers a respite from, as well as a critique of, male domination. (Douglas 1995:127)

The American sitcom _Bewitched_ debuted on 17 September 1964 on the ABC network and ran for eight seasons until 1972. Inspired by the 1942 movie _I Married a Witch_ and 1958 film _Bell, Book and Candle_, the series was created by comedy writer Sol Saks. William Asher, who had previously directed over 100 episodes of the domestic sitcom _I Love Lucy_ (1951-1957), was the driving force behind the show, directing and producing many of the 254 episodes filmed. Elizabeth Montgomery (Asher’s wife at the time), starred as the central character Samantha Stephens, with Dick York playing her husband – advertising executive Darrin Stephens – for the first five seasons and Dick Sargent for the last three seasons after York left the show due to ill health¹ (Branson-Trent 2009:12). The long-running sitcom explores the complications that arise in the mixed marriage between a beautiful witch and her human (referred to in the show as ‘mortal’) husband. It traces Samantha’s attempt to become a ‘typical’ suburban housewife while negotiating her husband’s insistence that she refrain from using magic and her family’s disapproval of and frequent (often magical) interference in the marriage. The resulting combination of magical spells and special effects with depictions of modern suburban life engaged television audiences – as the ratings and critical acclaim the show achieved attested.

In terms of popularity and commercial success, ratings, awards and longevity are key indicators in the television industry. _Bewitched_ was the second-highest rating show on television in its first year (beaten only by _Bonanza_ [1959-1973]) and averaged a 35 per cent audience share across its eight-season first run on ABC (Pilato 2001:2). Enchanting

¹ York suffered from a degenerative spine condition due to an injury sustained while filming _They Came to Cordura_ with Gary Cooper in 1959 (Pilato 2001:47).
audiences, Elizabeth Montgomery became a household name and received four Golden Globe nominations for her role as Samantha (HFPA 2010). A strong supporting cast, the development of the Stephens ensemble from a young married couple to a family of four and the move to colour in the third season also contributed to the series maintenance of its audience base. The television industry recognised these achievements with twenty-two Emmy nominations and three awards² (Spangler 2003:79). However, and perhaps even more significantly, Bewitched’s success continued long after its first, prime-time run. The show was syndicated in September 1973 and has been rerun³ on affiliated networks and cable channels since its first broadcast (Pilato 2001:106). Such consistent and frequent screening⁴ ensured that the sitcom became an integral part of the television-viewing experience for many people worldwide.⁵ Walter Metz (2007:1) opens his book on Bewitched by relating his experiences as an eight year old child in 1975 watching the show each day before and after school. In his chapter on sitcom for a seventies anthology, David Allen Case argues for the inclusion of the show, despite the majority of episodes being produced in the sixties, because of its prevalence as reruns on daytime television during that decade (2000:196). Yet beyond the presence the series maintained with children and adults across this period, Bewitched would have another life. The show enjoyed a further wave of popularity when Nickelodeon brought Bewitched to additional generations by including it on their Nick at Nite schedule from 4 September 1989 (Branson-Trent 2009:7). It was the first time in a decade that the first two seasons, which were filmed in black and white, were seen on US television (Pilato 2001:106). Still airing on cable and free-to-air stations around the world, and due to its release on DVD (between 2005 and 2009), today Bewitched is more readily available than ever. With books published (Branson-Trent 2009; Pilato 2001), a film adaptation produced (to be discussed in detail in the next chapter) and fan websites maintained, there is little doubt that, not only has Bewitched earned its place in televisual history, it has an ongoing role in Western popular culture.

For Gregory Branson-Trent, ‘Much of the appeal of this highly rated program is due to its mixture of childlike fantasy and sophisticated social satire’ (2009:7). Under the guise of being

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² Bewitched was awarded one Emmy for directing (William Asher in 1966) and two for Outstanding Supporting Actress (Alice Pearce in 1966 and Marion Lorne in 1968).
³ Reruns are discussed in more detail later in this chapter.
⁴ Bewitched is screened as much as four times a day in cities such as New York, Chicago and Los Angeles (Pilato 2001:106).
⁵ Bewitched is dubbed for broadcasts in France, Italy, India, Spain, Mexico and Brazil. In Japan it is broadcast ‘bilingually’ (can switch between Japanese dubbing and the original soundtrack) and in Israel it has Hebrew subtitles (Mascaro 2009).
fantastical, *Bewitched* was quite radical for what is ostensibly a conservative genre. Some episodes dealt openly with racial prejudice (see ‘Sisters at Heart’ [#213]), and others with consumerism and materialism (see ‘Charlie Harper, Winner’ [#99]). But what is most significant about the show is its foregrounding – particularly for women – of the constructed nature of patriarchal gender roles. The restrictions these narrowly-defined roles place on women are identified by the series’ central premise, which sees the powerful Samantha confined within a normative, suburban, domestic space and denied the use of magic. Moreover, each episode reinforces the show’s underlying critique, as the inability to contain women’s power is exposed by Samantha’s use of magic (a metaphor for enacting agency) in every episode. This chapter examines these ideas and focuses on the features of *Bewitched* that ensure its ongoing relevance. After outlining the social and cultural context in which the show was produced, Samantha is identified as progressive through her exposition of the performativity of gender. The role of magic, the distinction between a matriarchal magical world and patriarchal ‘mortal’ world, and the sitcom format are discussed, followed by an exploration of characters and the gender roles they perform. Finally, the show’s longevity is considered, including its textual relationship with history, the significance of reruns and mediating appeal.

**The Times They Are a-Changin’**

The 1960s and 1970s were decades of significant change in American culture. As Metz observes, ‘The show bridged an important cultural era, from the assassination of President Kennedy to the Nixon years, from civil rights struggles and the rise of second-wave feminism to free love and landing on the moon’ (2007:77). Also taking place during the series’ production: the National Organization of Women (NOW) was formed with Betty Friedan as its first president (1966); Martin Luther King Jr was assassinated (1968); the 3 day Woodstock festival took place in Bethel, New York (1969); and violent anti-Vietnam war protests erupted across the country (1970/71). When *Bewitched* first aired in 1964, Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique* was the number one nonfiction book on the Bowker Annual list of best-sellers, having already spent most of 1963 (when it was first published) on *The New York Times Book Review* best-seller list (Greene 1991:242). This signalled the early stirrings of second wave feminism which emerged as a more prominent movement in the later part of the decade.

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6 See Appendix A for a full list of *Bewitched* episodes.
Where first wave feminism of the late 1800s and early 1900s was primarily concerned with the recognition of women’s civic and legal equality (including the right to vote and full citizenship), the second wave focused on women’s oppression under patriarchy in personal relationships and the private domain. The movement’s catchphrase was ‘the personal is political’ and targeted issues such as sexual harassment and the exploitation of women through sex and how their bodies looked, were controlled and valued (see Gamble 2001). Friedan was critical of idealised notions of femininity and narrowly-defined roles for women as wives and mothers. She argued that women should refuse the media-generated image of the ‘happy housewife’ and an identity defined by their husbands, and strive to develop ‘life plans’ which incorporated their whole lives as women, not just one part of it (Friedan 1997 [1963]). And while Friedan has been credited as having ‘ignited the contemporary women’s movement’ (Fox 2006:1.1), she did not just encourage women to seek professional careers outside the home. Kathryn A. Cady argues that

Friedan critically assessed working within corporate capitalism, and she concluded by advocating not that women merely pursue professional work, but instead that they seek self-actualization through ‘the kind of lifelong personal purpose that was once called a “career”’. (2009:354)

Importantly, Friedan redefined ‘career’ as work which served ‘a real purpose in the community’. This element of civic purpose is a distinction Cady suggests was lost in the popular uptake of feminism, and provides an example of why she believes that early feminist texts should be revisited for opportunities to ‘reclaim’, ‘reactivate’ and ‘publicly remember feminism differently’ (Cady 2009:372).

Endeavouring to shed light on the contradictions and ambivalences inherent in feminism, Susan J. Douglas also suggests revisiting texts. For Douglas, the mass media texts from the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s hold the key. In Where the Girls Are (1995), she acknowledges that stereotypical imagery, gender archetypes and exaggerated codes of masculinity and femininity pervade the media, while also seeking to expose the media’s role as an agent of feminism. In order to do this, Douglas explains, ‘[w]e must rewatch and relisten, but with a new mission: to go where the girls are’ (1995:10). Amid Glamour magazine, The Shirelles, Charlie’s Angels and Dynasty (1981-1989), she identifies moments and aspects during which women disrupt the social conventions of patriarchy, and argues that, while these are sometimes subtle, they are nonetheless liberating. Douglas notes such transgression in Bewitched:
Samantha embodied important contradictions, for she was a happy, respectable suburban housewife who exerted power beyond the kitchen or the living room. She was at once traditional and modern. The show often suggested that women, especially younger women, were smarter, more creative, and more versatile than men. (Douglas 1995:128)

Aside from her magical powers, Samantha was shown to be quick-thinking and adept at diplomacy, finding creative solutions and explanations to the strange events that surrounded the Stephens and their home. Douglas also relates the way Bewitched ‘offered, yet sought to diminish, a criticism of female confinement in the home’ (1995:130). While the show played openly to the fantasy of getting the housework done with a twitch of the nose, it also identified women’s other desires, including that which Friedan advocated – having a real civic influence. Throughout the series Samantha involves herself with local politics, community issues and charity work: in ‘Red Light, Green Light’ (#23) she helps convince the Mayor to install traffic lights at busy Morning Glory Circle; in ‘Remember the Main’ (#34) she campaigns for a local councilman; in ‘Samantha Fights City Hall’ (#149) she protests to keep a local park; and in Episodes 16 and 166 she fundraises for the Hospital Fund Auxiliary and UNICEF respectively. In these ways, Samantha is seen to affect change outside the home in the public realm with what Cady may describe as ‘thoughtful liberal subjectivity’ (2009:348). However, changes to women’s roles in the public and private domains did not just impact women, and the burgeoning women’s movement was not just a debate among women, it was also one that engaged men.

In 1969 Isaac Asimov penned a review of Bewitched for America’s TV Guide in which he shrewdly identifies the political tensions at play in the show by structuring a pseudo-argument between himself (as a conservative patriarch) and his daughter (representing liberated young women) (Asimov 1969; Metz 2007:97). The tongue-in-cheek tone of Asimov’s review suggests that the nuances of gender politics and negotiations between the sexes were not lost on the audience of the day. While much of the scholarly work on Bewitched concerned with gender tends to be divided – and as Metz points out, in a series spanning eight years, there are episodes to support both pro-feminist and anti-feminist stances (2007:97) – Asimov’s conversational approach appears more in sync with the competing allegiances and roles women faced with the emergence of second wave feminism.7 However what is consistent across academic analyses of the Bewitched series is a recognition that the show deals with

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7 While it is significant that Asimov’s piece is ‘of the time’, it captures a sentiment that may well explain why Bewitched continues to be so popular in a postfeminist era in which women continue to face competing discourses.
difference – presented in the central premise of a mixed marriage (between witch and mortal) – and this notion of difference can be transposed to racial, religious or class, as well as gender difference.  

With a firm grounding in notions of gender and difference, it is not surprising that *Bewitched* has also drawn the attention of queer studies. For Melinda Kanner, *Bewitched* is ‘a queer and queerable text beloved in gay iconography’ (2003:35). Interest in homosexual identity / gay figures from the show have focussed on Paul Lynde (Uncle Arthur), Agnes Moorehead (Endora), and Dick Sargent (who outed himself in the late 1980s) (Metz 2007:6). Patricia White (1999) notes *Bewitched’s* affinity with the field of study due to the themes explored, including Samantha having to hide aspects of her identity and thereby live a ‘closeted life’, and the number of gay and lesbian actors involved. Examining popular representations of lesbian identity in American culture, she discusses the film and television appearances of Mercedes McCambridge (who guest starred in ‘Darrin Gone and Forgotten’ [#144]) as well as Agnes Moorehead. Sharon Willis cites Paul Lynde as ‘arguably TV’s favourite unacknowledged queer of the 1970s’ (2003:146), while Joe Wlodarz describes Lynde’s characterisation of Uncle Arthur as ‘connotatively queer’ (2009:88). Fairfield-Artman et al. (2005) employ queer theory as a lens through which to read *Bewitched* by offering three different perspectives – feminist, performative and the show as a gay metaphor (‘Sam’ and Darrin as a gay couple). While the strengths of each reading vary, the value in the overall argument lies in opening up the text and legitimising different modes of engagement. Put simply, 

> Though Bewitched was billed as situation comedy dealing with metaphysics and magic in the confines of domestic bliss, it created a space to examine other social issues. It put into question the representation of self and power. On a more broad scale, it put into question the concept of social convention. (Fairfield-Artman et al. 2005:29)

However, what must also be recognised in any textual analysis is the distribution of power and social conventions at work within that text. Looking at the power structures within the constructed world of *Bewitched*, it is essentially a matriarchal hierarchy. The female witches (including Samantha) are all-powerful. Yet Samantha conforms (for the most part) to the patriarchal order by taking on the gender-specific role of doting wife, conscientious

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8 The contemporaneous *Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner* (1967) similarly reflects issues of difference in its confrontation of race relations through a prospective mixed marriage when Joey Drayton brings her fiancé John Prentice (Sidney Poitier) home to meet her parents.
housewife and dutiful hostess. However, this is foregrounded as a performance – something Samantha makes a deliberate choice and effort to undertake. Traditionally magic is performative (Fairfield-Artman et al. 2005:29), but within the Bewitched world, being a heterosexual, female, Christian ‘mortal’ is shown to be an act or performance – that is, ‘normality’ is performative. The show is subversive because on the surface it is a family sitcom with traditional values (and patriotic overtones) while on another level it is working to expose the constructed nature of these values. Central to this argument is Butler’s conceptualisation of gender and gender performativity. As outlined in Chapter 1, Butler defines gender as ‘the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being’ (1999 [1990]:43-44). And while not natural, she goes on to explain that it is also not optional. Butler looks to drag to ‘reveal the distinctness of those aspects of gendered experience which are falsely naturalized’ (1999 [1990]:175) and identify the political potential of exposing gender performativity. Subsequently, her theory has been applied more broadly and Bewitched provides an example of a text that capitalises on this potential to expose the performativity of gender and constructs of patriarchy.

**Gender Performativity**

There are three key features of Bewitched that facilitate its exposure of gender performativity: the acceptance of an overriding matriarchal structure; the use of magic as tangible ‘power’; and the cyclical, contained nature of the situation comedy (sitcom). While part of the premise of the show is that Darrin forbids Samantha to use magic (in a bid to maintain normality), Samantha performing magic is also a central component of each episode. It is the understanding that, despite her marriage to Darrin and adoption of the role of housewife, Samantha remains part of a greater force (the magical world) that supports the show’s transgressive potential. In Bewitched, Samantha is portrayed as a kind witch who uses magic responsibly and generally selflessly. She is young, blonde and attractive, an image which suggests she is not threatening to convention. While her mother, Endora, provides a counterpoint to Samantha by being more flamboyant and self-serving (she intervenes in

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9 Samantha’s physical characteristics – particularly her blondeness – are consistent with widely accepted notions of traditional femininity. From the earliest fairy tales, blonde hair has symbolised innocence and beauty (see Ilyin 2000; Pitman 2003; and Warner 1995). Moreover, as Jennifer Devere Brody notes, ‘Hair has long been considered a signifier of race, class, and gender as well as a marker of feminine sexuality. In European culture blonde hair, in particular, has been associated with forms of idealized femininity’ (1999:101).
Samantha and Darrin’s marriage because she disapproves), she also reinforces matriarchal authority.

A matriarchy is defined as a society whose social structures are dominated by women. Witchcraft has traditionally been associated with matriarchy (Purkiss 1996:8) and this association is maintained by the *Bewitched* series. As White identifies, Samantha belongs to ‘a matriarchal order of superior beings’ (1999:192). Importantly, and in the spirit of the show, the audience readily accepts the witches’ role as all-powerful – a sentiment reinforced by Samantha’s reminders to Darrin not to ‘upset Mother’, her cousin Serena or the other witches he encounters. Moreover, the governing systems of the magic world are explained. In ‘Witches and Warlocks are My Favorite Things’ (#77), Samantha’s aunts are called upon to test Tabitha’s powers, in ‘Long Live the Queen’ (#108), Samantha is appointed Queen Witch having been one of a few candidates chosen at birth, and in ‘To Go or Not to Go, That is the Question’ (#201), Hepzibah, the High Priestess of witchdom, visits the Stephens’ home in order to decide if they are allowed to stay married (see Focus box 3.1 below).

Focus Box 3.1: Matriarchal Power

In the episode that opens Season 7, ‘To Go or Not to Go, That is the Question’ (#201), the ruler of the witchcraft world, the High Priestess Hepzibah, comes to stay in the Stephens home to pass judgment on whether or not Samantha’s marriage to Darrin should be dissolved. Her involvement is triggered by the news that Darrin intends to accompany Sam to the forthcoming witches’ convention in Salem, and as a mortal, his presence would contravene the witches’ code. This strikes at the heart of the show’s premise yet turns it around, as it is not Samantha’s role in the patriarchal world that is in question, rather Darrin’s validity in the matriarchal one that is being evaluated. (Such a premise supports the argument of gender performativity whereby normative convention is highlighted against a background of excess.) The dominance of matriarchy is particularly clear in this episode, with Hepzibah portrayed as the ultimate power.

| Darrin: Who is Hepzibah? |
| Darrin: Darrin, that’s like asking who is Julius Caesar? |
| Darrin: Well I’m Emperor in this castle so just cool it. |
| Sam: Darrin, listen to me. She’s a very powerful woman and she can be, well you know, kind of weird. |
| Darrin: Well that doesn’t bother me. I took basic training in weird from your mother. |
| Sam: Well my mother is an Angel compared to her. |

Hepzibah’s authority is reinforced in a number of ways: her title, High Priestess, is the traditional term

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10 Hepzibah (or Hephzibah) is named after a Biblical (Hebrew) woman who was Queen and mother of King Manasseh in the Old Testament.
for the leader of a coven in witchcraft; in the above quote Samantha compares her to Julius Caesar, one of history’s most powerful and notoriously cunning rulers; and her appearance in the Stephens’ home, which is preceded by a fierce storm and accompanied by musical fanfare and fireworks, is visually regal (see Figure 3.1). Hepzibah materialises sitting poised on a throne, wearing a full-length velvet gown, jewelled crown, fur-lined robe and holding a sceptre. Sitting at her feet are two black Great Dane dogs with studded collars, aptly named Caesar and Cleopatra. Their presence demonstrates her mastery of the animal kingdom and her command of the natural world. Hepzibah consistently uses what is colloquially referred to as the ‘royal we’ instead of singular personal pronouns (even borrowing Queen Victoria’s ‘We are not amused’) and the conventions of etiquette traditionally reserved for royalty, such as bowing and speaking only after being directly addressed, are observed throughout the episode. Notably, Samantha refers to Hepzibah first and foremost as ‘a very powerful woman’ rather than a very powerful witch; an emphasis that is supported by the references to royalty and powerful women in history, as well as the use of the name Hepzibah.

Throughout the series, Samantha refers to magic as ‘power’ or ‘her powers’. In Bewitched, it is a genuine form of power, as it represents her assertion of agency. Magic is textually significant in the show because it is both power and agency in a perceptible form. As television is an audio-visual medium, the audience can literally see and hear when magic is enacted: when objects move or are transformed the changes are visible and instant (similarly with corporeal changes where people are turned into animal or objects). Importantly, it is accompanied by a physical gesture and identifying sound. For Endora it is a grand wave of the arms and harp sound effect, while Samantha twitches her nose to a signature ‘tinkle’ of the xylophone. Moreover, this serves to heighten the performative effect as it ensures the

Figure 3.1: The powerful and regal High Priestess Hepzibah visits the Stephens in their home in ‘To Go or Not to Go, That is the Question’ (#201)

11 Among the many sound effects used throughout the series, Bill Lane (2002) identifies variations of the sound of harp strings being strummed as the one most widely used to mark arm gestures in the show, while Jon Burlingame (1996) attributes the tinkling xylophone sound that has become Samantha’s trademark to series composer Warren Barker.
action is clearly distinguished from reality while linking in with stereotypical notions of magic (somewhat like audio visual conventions associated with dream sequences and memories).

The third feature of *Bewitched* that facilitates the series’ potential to demonstrate gender as performance is that it is a sitcom. The genre is characterised by a few regular indoor settings and a regular group of characters, whereby the comedy is being generated from the relationships between the characters and their familiar interactions, rather than the setting. Most significantly, sitcoms have circular narratives. Generally there is little or no plot development, characters rarely grow or develop, and the narrative ends up where it started (see Mills 2009). This provides a sense of security for the audience insofar as a reliable problem/solution formula is ritualistically enacted and the status quo is maintained. While this format predominantly facilitates conservatism, it can also provide a safe and confined space for questioning social standards and codes. Historically, comedy does this – challenging issues can be made more palatable by their presentation in a comic format. It disarms the audience with an overt sense of play, and in psychological terms, laughter functions as a mechanism for the release of anxiety (Gray 2006:87). In a sitcom, the laughter on a laugh track can be seen to perform a further function. Brett Mills maintains that

> [t]he mass of people to be heard laughing on a sitcom laugh track doesn’t just suggest that something is funny; it suggests something is obviously, clearly, unarguably, unproblematically funny, and that such responses are collectively defined and experienced. (2009:81)

In this way, audiences are directed and in certain ways influenced by the conventions of sitcoms. *Bewitched’s* inclusion of a laugh track suggests that its humour functions on two levels, with canned laughter acknowledging the slapstick component and irony operating more subversively. Consequently, the series attracted (and continues to attract) a broad audience.

In *Welcome to the Dreamhouse*, Lynn Spigel notes deviations from traditional suburban family sitcoms gaining popularity by the mid 1960s, including what she terms the ‘broken-family sitcom’ and the ‘fantastic sitcom’ (2001:119). The broken-family sitcoms can be seen to relate to increasing divorce rates in 1960s America, and in some ways provided new family models on screen. Narratively, the missing parent was explained as having died (divorce was prohibited by the network censors) and another character would substitute in the role. She
also identifies the formation of non-traditional families in the fantastic sitcoms, such as the unmarried couple Jeannie and Tony in *I Dream of Jeannie*, the childless couple Wilbur and Carol in *Mister Ed* (1961-1966) and the extended family in *The Addams Family* (1964-1966) which included Grandmama, Uncle Fester and Cousin It (Spigel 2001:119). Yet Spigel contends that these changes were more than simply demographic, as they provided narrative situations and themes that suggested a clear departure from the conventions of the family sitcoms that preceded them. These genre hybrids were parodic in nature because they retained the conventions of the previous form, but they made these conventions strange by mismatching form and content. (Spigel 2001:119)

*Bewitched* is set in a traditional suburban house, dealing with family, gender division, neighbours and problems with the mother-in-law, but it is turned upside down by witches, warlocks and visits by historical figures. Similarly, *I Dream of Jeannie*, *Mr Ed*, and *The Addams Family* added genies, ghouls and talking horses to the suburban sitcom (Spigel 2001:120).

Spigel utilises Tzvetan Todorov’s (1975) explanation of the fantastic as a moment characterised by hesitation in a text and observation that the fantastic is often invoked in the story at the point when the hero or heroine is questioning their reality, asking if what is happening is real and if they are dreaming (2001:122-123). In the fantastic sitcom, a particular character becomes this voice, such as Mrs Kravitz in *Bewitched* and Dr Bellows in *I Dream of Jeannie*, both of whom constantly doubt what they see. Not only does this disrupt the conventions of representation in the mind of this character, but functions to alert the audience to question the entire narrative situation. Spigel argues that, in the fantastic sitcoms, it is not the fantastical elements that are interrogated (as noted earlier, there is no question that Samantha is a witch with magical powers and that witches and warlocks exist),

[r]ather, the moment of hesitation takes place in the realm of the natural. We are, in other words, made to question the ‘naturalness’ of middle-class existence. We are asked to hesitate in our beliefs about the normative roles of gender, class, and race that so pervade the era’s suburban lifestyles. In this sense, the fantastic unmasks the conventionality of the everyday. (Spigel 2001:123)

While not using the term explicitly, Spigel’s observations of the fantastic sitcom sit at the heart of identifying gender performativity and confirm the key features already identified as significant in *Bewitched*’s ability to expose the constructed nature of narrowly-defined gender roles. The audience’s belief in the magical world flows on to its acceptance of a prevailing
matriarchal hierarchy, the visual employment of magic provides a material and measurable unit of enacted agency, and the domestic sitcom framework provides the conventions through which the audience can access the text.

Not every distinction can be catalogued in the analysis of a long-running series such as Bewitched, which is comprised of 254 episodes, although clear trends can be identified. Considering the sitcom format and audience viewing practices,\(^\text{12}\) it is the repeated scenarios and images that are the most telling. In terms of examining how Bewitched functions to expose the performativity of gender, it is useful to take roles traditionally defined by patriarchy according to gender as an organising structure. Therefore, the following analysis will look at the way Bewitched characterises and critiques the roles of the wife/housewife, mother/mother-in-law and sexual temptress for women, as well as how it positions the men in the show.

**Wife / Housewife**

As Lesley Johnson and Justine Lloyd identify in *Sentenced to Everyday Life*,

\[\text{[t]he housewife, as a highly visible figure of the modernisation of gender during the twentieth century, came in the 1940s and 1950s to stand for the completion and assumption of a proper feminine identity, of the natural completion of womanhood. (2004:96)}\]

The construct of the housewife essentially embodied femininity (notably white, middle-class, heterosexual femininity) and clearly defined a patriarchally-sanctioned role for women. Linked with middle-class, suburban life, the housewife represented post-war rebuilding of family and home,\(^\text{13}\) and the values associated with the nuclear family. Magazines such as *Good Housekeeping* and *Ladies’ Home Journal* were filled with advice on managing the household budget, maintaining a happy marriage and cooking the perfect casserole (Walker, N. 1998:3, 9). Early episodes of *Bewitched*, such as ‘Samantha Meets the Folks’ (#14) in which Darrin’s mother, Mrs Stephens, passes judgement on Samantha’s housekeeping skills and happily finds them lacking, not only highlight the ideals associated with the role of the housewife, but expose those expectations as unrealistic.

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\(^{12}\) Gray discusses how contemporary audience’s distracted viewing practices contribute to the segmentation of the televisual text in *Watching with ‘The Simpsons’* (2006:71-75). In syndicated series particularly, episodes are seen out of order, multiple times and not necessarily in full.

\(^{13}\) The housewife was also strategic in terms of rebuilding the economy through a consumerist role in the home.
The way in which the woman’s role as housewife is exposed by the show is established very early in the series. In the pre-credit sequence for ‘Be it Ever So Mortgaged’ (#2), Samantha is shown in the kitchen wearing a floral dress, heels and white apron, busily checking on the frying pan on the stove. She then turns to the centre bench to cut oranges in half for juicing as the calm, authoritative male narrator describes the scene and explains her role:

Narrator: Here you see the average, normal, suburban housewife in one of her daily routine tasks – preparing breakfast for her husband. With a modern kitchen and all conveniences at her disposal, the capable housewife moves efficiently through the tasks.

Meanwhile, the scene continues with Samantha using the automatic juicer, although having forgotten to place a jug to catch the orange juice, it dribbles onto the floor. She tries to stop it by putting her finger in the spout when she notices the frying pan on fire. Grabbing the pan off the stove, she douses it under running water in the sink, and then dashes back to get the second pan which also goes under the tap and exudes a generous puff of steam. Sam rushes to the other side of the kitchen to take the smoking, burnt toast out of the toaster, put it into a rack and place it onto the table (more puffs of steam/smoke) where she knocks over a jug of milk, spilling it all over the table and onto the floor.

Narrator: Of course, sometimes there are problems. Especially if your husband expects breakfast ready before he goes to work. But that’s no problem for the average, normal suburban housewife… If, she happens to be a witch!

The scene then cuts from Samantha surveying the mess in the kitchen (see Figure 3.2) to Darrin coming down the stairs. Dressed for work, his relaxed, carefree demeanour (in contrast to Samantha’s hectic attempt at cooking breakfast) is connoted by whistling, with his coat
slung over his shoulder as he comes down the stairs. It then cuts back to Samantha as she elegantly raises her arms. After a flash of light and short sound effect, a composed Samantha is seen standing next to a neatly set table with breakfast served and kitchen benches cleared (see Figure 3.3). As Darrin enters, he is greeted with a kiss and satisfied smile.

This scene operates on a number of levels. First, it should be noted that the laugh track (as identified earlier) tells the audience what to laugh at. Essentially the comedy comes from a disparity between what is seen and what is heard. However, it is not the kind of slapstick humour used in earlier sitcoms such as *I Love Lucy*. It does not end in disaster (as it would with Lucy) rather, because she is empowered with magic, Samantha presents Darrin with both an ideal breakfast and the image of an ideal wife. While he remains unaware that magic has been used, the audience is in on the joke. Importantly, the audience are not laughing at Samantha, but the contrast between her being dishevelled and rushed while trying to cook, and so elegant and composed when using magic. The humour here functions to highlight that not only is the role of a housewife a constructed and performed one, but without magic (agency), its ideals are unattainable.

Samantha’s role as a hostess for dinner parties to entertain Darrin’s boss and/or clients is one that features prominently in storylines throughout the series. Her ability to accommodate dinner guests at short notice and entertain clients is identified early in the series as part of her role as a dutiful wife and as impacting Darrin’s career. ‘It Shouldn’t Happen to a Dog’ (#3) depicts Samantha hosting a cocktail party. Prior to the party Larry (Darrin’s boss) makes a point of checking with Darrin to ensure Samantha is up to the task and that the party will be successful, as an important account is at stake. During the evening, Samantha is shown working hard, rushing around serving food and drinks while Darrin and the guests calmly enjoy the evening. The guests are shown to compliment Darrin on his wife (rather than the party), suggesting he is responsible for her abilities; however, the true exposition of her role occurs when Mr Barker, the client Darrin and Larry are trying to impress, over-steps the boundaries by making uninvited advances on Samantha. She turns Mr Barker into a dog and when Darrin gets angry at her for using magic she relegates Darrin to the couch. Matriarchal order is maintained by Endora sending a cat (representing the feminine) out to chase the dog (masculine). Having been badly scratched, the dog (Barker) ends up at the vet with his fur neatly clipped and adorned with a bow – a physical demonstration of the imposition of
matriarchal order on him. When Barker again makes advances towards Samantha in Darrin’s office, Darrin defends her honour with a punch and apologises for not doing so earlier.

Samantha’s need for diplomacy when dealing with Darrin’s clients is another recurring theme. This is often showcased towards the end of an episode, such as in ‘Laugh, Clown, Laugh’ (#227) when Samantha helps Darrin retain a client (the very serious owner of Mount Rocky Mutual, Mr Jameson), by convincing him and his wife to find the humour in an awkward situation. Similarly in ‘Samantha’s Pet Warlock’ (#209) Samantha helps win over dog food producer Mr Gibbons, and in ‘Make Love Not Hate’ (#200) she saves the account and the client’s marriage when Mr Meiklejohn is reminded how he feels about his wife. Significantly, this skill is not related to magic, although Samantha regularly calls upon this talent to cover up acts of magic (usually instigated by one of her relatives) and maintain the veneer of order in the Stephens home. Demonstrating the work involved in upholding patriarchal convention in this way (the expectations of both masculinity and femininity), Samantha and Darrin further expose the performativity of gender.

Another way in which the constructed nature of the gendered role of ‘housewife’ is exposed in Bewitched is through the foregrounding of fashion as a performative tool. Throughout the series, Samantha maintains a distinction between what she wears at home, out in public and in her capacity as a witch. In the early seasons Samantha would change into an outfit that included a coat, purse and gloves to go out. This is in line with the convention of the time and a means of reflecting her status as a respectable, middle-class ‘lady’. In ‘Which Witch is Which’ (#24) Samantha takes Endora with her to go shopping in a department store. The role of clothing and how a woman is perceived is foregrounded when Endora expresses her disgust at the vulgarity and uncivilised behaviour of the group of shoppers. (By changing a sign to 90% off in order to make Samantha’s shopping more comfortable, Endora observes the indecorous scrambling over bargains by the other shoppers while escalating the mayhem). In the same episode, when Samantha is running late for her errands, Endora offers to double for her dress fitting and meets a writer doing in-store book signings. Endora (with Samantha’s body) embarks on a fling with the writer and is shown in a variety of public situations – at dinner, lunches, and at the races. She wears evening gowns, suits, hats, gloves and heels in accordance with traditional expectations of femininity. Such adherence to fashion reveals what Susan Hiner identifies as ‘the performance of the social functions of femininity – whether virtue, seduction, beauty, or consumption’ (2010:180). At home, however, Samantha
is much more casual and comfortable, mostly seen in slacks with sweaters and flat shoes or simple dresses (see Figure 3.10), although evening dresses may be worn for dinner parties both at home and other peoples’ houses. Generally the clothes worn reflect the role being undertaken and provide the audience with a clear visual cue: an apron for the kitchen while being the cook or housekeeper (see Figures 3.2 and 3.3); an evening gown to be the beautiful wife accompanying her husband; and even flowing dark robes when attending official witches’ conventions (see Figure 3.4). The costumes change as the show moves into the 1970s with more pant suits and A-line dresses which sit above the knee (see Figure 3.5). Colours are brighter and patterns bolder, reflecting socio-cultural trends that saw women signifying their presence, but essentially the distinction between what is worn in the public and private realms is maintained.

Another representation of the housewife to consider in Bewitched is the Stephens’ neighbour, Mrs Kravitz. For Douglas, Mrs Kravitz functions as a warning to women of what happens when they spend too much time and energy looking outward (literally looking outside the window in this case) and not enough time looking inward (Douglas 1995:133). She is presented as petty and nosy, and her relationship with Mr Kravitz is in line with that typically seen in earlier sitcoms such as The Honeymooners in which the husband and wife either bicker or barely tolerate each other. She is also not a mother and through her animated mannerisms, Mrs Kravitz is quite two-dimensional. However, Mrs Kravitz performs a particular function in the narrative as she acts as a kind of Greek chorus or social voice. The dramatic function of a Greek chorus is to show the audience how to react, to give additional information or represent the general population in the story (providing contrast to the heroes/gods/goddesses that are usually at the centre of Greek plays). In this way, Mrs Kravitz distinguishes the ideals foregrounded by Samantha’s performance, and as identified earlier in Spigel’s discussion of the fantastic (2001:122-123), calls into question the version of reality

\[14\] In Season 4 when Samantha becomes Queen Witch and holds court at home at night she wears a cream and gold dress and cape which is much lighter than her usual witch’s robes and consistent with the stereotypical image of a ‘good witch’ or fairy godmother. It is also consistent with her stereotypical image of blonde beauty and can therefore be seen as a concession to the conventional expectations of femininity that are upheld within the Stephens’ home.
presented in the show each time she ‘can’t believe her eyes’ and screeches ‘Abner!’ to notify her husband of perceived outlandish behaviour.

**Mother / Mother-in-Law**

The next role to be examined is that of the mother. Angela Davis purports that ‘[a]lthough the “housewife” was rooted in the social conditions of the bourgeoisie and the middle classes, nineteenth-century ideology established the housewife and mother as universal models of womanhood’ (cited in Johnson and Lloyd 2004:96). Samantha provides the clearest model of traditional motherhood in the *Bewitched* series. Again this is established from the outset, even prior to Samantha and Darrin having children of their own, with storylines from the first season involving Samantha in a pseudo-parenting role. For example, in ‘Little Pitchers Have Big Fears’ (#6), she helps a 10 year old boy with his self-confidence so his mother (a widow) will allow him to play baseball, and in ‘A Vision of Sugar Plums’ (#15), 7 year old Tommy from a local orphanage spends Christmas with the Stephens.

Once they have their own children (Tabitha is born half-way through the second season and Adam joins the family at the beginning of the sixth season), Samantha is shown to be a caring and competent parent, with many episodes devoted to instructing Tabitha and guiding her moral compass. However, due to the show’s predominantly family audience and subsequent before and after school timeslots, it was not just Tabitha being instructed. One of the recurrent themes in *Bewitched* was Samantha teaching Tabitha when and where not to use her powers. Reinforcing the matriarchal affinity with magic, Tabitha shows a natural aptitude for magic from a very early age (in contrast, Adam does not).\(^\text{15}\) This causes problems for the Stephens and subsequently Tabitha has to learn where and when using magic is appropriate. For example, Tabitha turns the class bully into a frog and brings him home to try and change him back in ‘Tabitha’s First Day at School’ (#248). Outside on the patio, she realises she is not able to change him back (she has brought home the wrong frog) when Samantha comes to see what she is doing:

- Samantha: Is that frog who I think he is?
- Tabitha: You’re smart Mummy, you only needed one guess. It’s Charlton.
- Samantha: I thought you said you were going to try and control yourself.

\(^\text{15}\) In ‘Adam, Warlock or Washout’ (#242) Samantha’s father, Maurice, puts a spell on Adam to fake his magical abilities so the Witches Council do not take him away from the family. This distinction between the two children also suggests that, as a male in a patriarchal system, Adam does not need magical powers (agency) to prosper.
Tabitha: I tried and tried, honest. But Charlton grabbed me after class and he kept twisting my arm hurting me, so what could I do?
Samantha: You could have punched him in the nose or kicked him in the shins. Anything would have been more ladylike!

By suggesting Tabitha kick or punch Charlton – that is, respond with similarly masculine actions rather than use magic on him – Samantha is teaching Tabitha to meet men on their own terms in the patriarchal world. Identifying Tabitha’s use of magic in the situation as unladylike, when convention of the day would suggest kicking and punching was unladylike, reinforces matriarchal power and the importance of knowing when to use it (as Tabitha’s magic is not only more powerful than the class bully, her power is inherent). While Charlton is still a frog, Samantha tells him that he brought it on himself, and in doing so acknowledges the inequalities of patriarchy, in a moment similar to when she turned Mr Barker into a dog in Episode 3. Thus through Tabitha’s instruction, *Bewitched* highlights how women learn to perform in a way that is appropriately ‘female’, and where the boundaries of feminine empowerment lie in the wider patriarchal world.

The other significant and recurring mother figures in *Bewitched* are Mrs Stephens and Endora, although they are better described as mothers-in-law. Mrs Stephens and Endora fulfil their roles in the narratives as stereotypical mothers-in-law who both interfere in Darrin and Samantha’s marriage, but they each do so differently. Mrs Stephens is not only subservient to her husband, but also to her son. She is shown to be physically and mentally weak; frequently needing to lie down with a ‘sick headache’ when confronted by the strange occurrences at 1164 Morning Glory Circle, and even checks herself into a rest home in ‘Samantha’s Secret is Discovered’ (#188). As an older woman, she is also shown to have become less relevant, if not, redundant. For example Mrs Stephens tells Samantha that Darrin’s favourite dish is
chicken cacciatore in ‘Samantha Meets the Folks’ (#14) and later in the episode it is revealed that Darrin is allergic to chicken cacciatore.

While Mrs Stephens conforms to the more traditional patriarchal role of the doting mother, Endora provides another perspective. Her disapproval and endeavours to undermine Samantha and Darrin’s marriage, while not ultimately successful, are overt and her power (in sharp contrast to Mrs Stephen’s weakness) is explicit. Endora, named after the witch who foretold the doom of King Saul, is identifiable as a particularly powerful witch. In ‘To Go or Not To Go, That is the Question’ (#201), Endora has been appointed Lord High Chairman of the Witches Convention. The notably masculine title of ‘Lord’, which is both shown on screen at the bottom of the invitation scroll and read aloud by Samantha, denotes aristocracy. This is consistent with the cultured, upper class English accents with which Endora and Samantha’s father, Maurice, speak and reflected in the choice of actors. Agnes Moorehead was an accomplished actress with multiple Academy Award nominations and Maurice Evans was an award-winning British theatre actor. On-screen, Endora articulates the hierarchical order and her disapproval of Samantha’s disregard for it when she asks, ‘How can you let this mortal mistake alienate you from your grand and glorious heritage?’ (#201) Thus, her references throughout the series to what Samantha has given up by marrying Darrin reinforce the significance of an overriding matriarchal structure.

David Allen Case (2000:198) asserts that Endora assaults the 'name of the father' by not using Darrin's name, and instead refers to him as Derwood, Darwin, or Dum-dum among many others.¹⁶ For Douglas, it is this kind of defiance that gives Endora power (1995:132). She purports that audiences enjoy Endora and her disregard for masculine authority and approval, as ‘Endora got to say what many women wished they could say, and her complete indifference to the approval of men was a joy and relief to watch’ (Douglas 1995:132). Not only does she function to provide a necessary narrative complication for the show (her constant interference sets up the storyline for many episodes), but Endora foregrounds the tension between that which is acceptable within patriarchal bounds and that which is not.

¹⁶ On his fan site 1164 Morning Glory Circle, Adam R. Jones (2007) catalogues some 48 names used by Samantha’s relatives to address Darrin. The first of only a few times Endora uses his correct name is in Episode #17 ‘A is for Aardvark’, in which Darrin notably allows the use of magic.
In *The Unruly Woman* (1995), Kathleen Rowe examines women in popular culture pushing boundaries. Incorporating Bakhtin’s notions of grotesque and carnival, Rowe investigates the transgressive potential of female unruliness and identifies some unifying tropes (1995:31). These include: the creation of disorder by dominating or trying to dominate men; physical excess; excessive speech (quantity, content or tone); laughter; androgyny; identification as a crone; negatively defined sexuality; and association with liminality or thresholds. Rowe argues that

the figure of the unruly woman contains much potential for feminist appropriation, for rethinking how women are constructed as gendered subjects in the language of spectacle and the visual. The parodic excess of the unruly woman and the comedic conventions surrounding her provide a space to ‘act out’ the ‘dilemmas of femininity’… [and] points to new ways of thinking about visibility as power. (Rowe 1995:11)

In her analysis, Rowe uses Roseanne Barr and Miss Piggy among her key examples in contemporary pop culture. Endora also meets these outlined criteria. She constantly stirs up trouble for Darrin (creating disorder) and dominates both mortal men and warlocks with her superior magical powers. Her physical presence is punctuated by colour and flamboyance. For example, Endora’s clothing and makeup (signifiers of femininity) are exaggerated, she wears brightly coloured, floor-length gowns and her signature blue eye-shadow extends out past the brow (see Figure 3.6). She gestures grandly, thereby occupying a larger physical space than her bodily size, and her speech, as well as having an accent as mentioned above, has a theatrical tone (projecting voice, rolling ‘r’s, raised pitch at end of sentences). Endora ensures she is heard and does not hesitate to voice her opinions – often without the tact that Samantha demonstrates and that is generally expected of women within patriarchal convention. Her laughter is distinct, often ironic, and in alignment with the figure of a crone and the stereotype of an older witch. While not strictly androgynous, Endora’s refusal of traditional gender roles and ambiguous relationship with Maurice (it is implied they are separated) steps around the issue of her sexual identity. Certainly her love life is not frequently discussed (in

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17 Bakhtin introduces carnival and grotesque in *Rabelais and His World* (1986 [1941]). He identifies carnival as part of popular folk culture and rigidly opposed to official culture, and carnivalesque as a literary mode that is subversive through humour and chaos. The body is an important feature in this mode of resistance. For Bakhtin, the grotesque body is profoundly ambivalent: it celebrates the cycle of life through birth and renewal, and yet is linked to death and decay.

18 Even when Endora tones down her clothing to fit in at mortal functions, her makeup stays the same. For example, when Samantha and Endora go shopping in ‘Which Witch is Which’ (#24), Endora changes into a more appropriate ‘mortal’ outfit; however, it is still distinctive (she wears a luxuriously fur-trimmed suit with matching gloves) and her makeup and hair stay the same. Also, when wearing pearls (a symbol of middle-class affluence), Endora wears multiple layers of strands around her neck and wrists in a display of excess.

19 This ambiguity is supported by rumours around the actress’s sexuality - see White (1999).
comparison to Dr Bombay’s\textsuperscript{20} for example). Finally, she plays with liminality and thresholds. By ‘popping’ in and out at will, even Endora’s visibility is on her own terms. She chooses when and where she can be seen, and by whom – even choosing to ignore Samantha’s calls to her on occasions, as well as associating with mortals when it suits her (particularly Darrin’s parents and Larry). In these ways, she is a ‘disruptive spectacle’, and a clear embodiment of Rowe’s transgressive figure (1995:31).

As the least domesticated character in \emph{Bewitched} (Case 2000), Endora functions as a reminder of the ‘other’, representing the matriarchal world for Samantha and the audience. Operating outside the margins, she explodes the conventions Samantha seeks to perform, and offers an alternative to the patriarchal gender divide. While maintaining some ties with traditional tropes (most significantly that of the meddling mother-in-law), when first seen on American screens, Endora was an exciting new representation of womanhood unlike that which had preceded her. Her presence in the show – both then and in the decades that followed – speaks to the possibilities of identity outside those prescribed by patriarchy. As is the case with the carnivalesque aspect of the unruly woman, the exaggerated nature of the performance creates the space in which existing beliefs can be challenged. Thus, while audiences are not necessarily expected to imitate Endora, they are able to admire and live vicariously through her.

\textbf{The Temptress}

One of the tactics Endora uses in her efforts to disrupt Samantha and Darrin’s marriage is to send temptation Darrin’s way. At various times in the series, characters such as Janine Fleur (Lisa Seagram) – an irresistible witch posing as the ‘Miss Jasmine’ model for one of Darrin’s campaigns in ‘It Takes One to Know One’ (#11) – and Ophelia, a cat-witch played by Julie

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{image3.6.png}
\caption{Agnes Moorehead as Endora in \emph{Bewitched}.}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{20} Dr Bombay, who can be considered as Endora’s contemporary (he is a warlock, a regular character and not a relative), is constantly shown flirting outrageously.
Newmar in ‘The Eight Year Itch Witch (#240), are sent to tempt (and thereby test) Darrin. Usually voluptuous, flirtatious brunettes, they are set up in opposition to the figure of the housewife (represented by Samantha), both in appearance and behaviour. This dichotomy is established from the first episode in which the newlywed couple attend a dinner party hosted by Darrin’s former girlfriend Sheila21 (played by beauty queen, Nancy Kovack). Sheila tries to humiliate Samantha in front of Darrin and the other guests, and is quickly exposed to the audience as a threat. Sheila reappears briefly in Season 4 (Episodes #125 and #126) and Kovack returns in Season 5 as sultry client Clio Vanita (Episodes #155 and #156); however, the show has another recurring character who plays with this role of temptress – Samantha’s cousin Serena (see Figure 3.7).

The word ‘serene’ means to be without worry or stress. And while Serena’s name reflects her own carefree attitude, it belies the disruption she causes. Serena first appears in ‘And Then There Were Three’ (#54), where Darrin mistakes her as the adult version of their newborn baby Tabitha, although she is most frequently seen in Seasons 5 and 7. The character is played throughout the series by Montgomery; however, from the sixth season in ‘Serena Stops the Show’ (#192), Serena is credited to Pandora Spocks.22 The pseudonym is a play on words, referring to the ancient Greek myth of Pandora's box in which the world’s first woman – the irresistibly charming and beautiful Pandora – is given a box by the gods (in some versions a jar or vase) and told not to open it. Eventually her curiosity gets the better of her and she opens it, unleashing untold evil and misery on the world. Realising what she has done, she quickly closes the lid, but only hope is left in the jar. Crediting Serena in this way suggests that while she stirs up trouble in the Stephens household, she ultimately represents hope, unlike the threat represented by the other temptresses.

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21 This scene is remade in the 2005 film adaption (see Chapter 4).
Like the other characters that fill the role of temptress, visually Serena is set up in opposition to Samantha: her hair is dark and short; her makeup is heavier, with dark eyeliner, red lips and various beauty marks on the top of her left cheek (see Figure 3.7); and her clothes are more contemporary, revealing and sexy (she is seen in very short skirts and a lot of black). Free-spirited and unencumbered by family life (which represent patriarchal constraints), Serena functions as a direct comparison to Samantha and the domestic role she performs. Spigel notes that while this trope was ‘less than revolutionary, it did provide a premise for a more subversive kind of comedy that poked fun at social expectations about gender roles’ (2001:129). In I Dream of Jeannie, Jeannie similarly had an outrageous sister. Patriarchy could not contain Jeannie and Samantha’s powers, and their rebelliousness spilled over into a doppelganger character for each. As Spigel clarifies,

Samantha’s look-alike cousin and Jeannie’s look-alike sister were wacky, wild, swinging singles who functioned as hyperbolic depictions of nondomestic roles for women. They had numerous lovers, visited maharajahs, and travelled the universe at their whim. Even if these characters were depicted as irresponsible party girls of the free-love decade, they often directly confronted their feminine counterparts, criticizing the boring lifestyles Samantha and Jeannie had chosen. (Spigel 2001:129)

Endora points this out to Samantha in ‘The Corsican Cousins’ (#211) when she says, ‘Can’t you see what that feeble excuse for a husband is doing to you? He’s turning you into a live-in maid, an unpaid cook and a babysitter’. And then asks her why she does not want to be more like Serena: ‘She doesn’t worry about diapers, or dinners or country clubs. She’s footloose and fancy free. She’s quicksilver. She lives in the sparkle of a star, in a flash of colour’. In this way, Serena reminds both Samantha and the audience of the excitement and possibilities of the ‘other’, while also drawing attention to Samantha having made a choice (and consequently performing gender – see Focus Box 3.2 below). Serena sets out to marry a mortal in ‘Marriage Witch’s Style (#161), having seen it work for Samantha, but finds it is not right for her. This outcome reinforces the notion of diversity her very presence represents, and ensures she maintains her position as an alternative to the narrowly-defined roles patriarchy prescribes.

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23 Serena’s beauty mark is different in each episode – from a love heart or peace sign to the more political gender sign for women or dollar sign as the series progresses (see ‘Bewitched @ Harpies Bizarre: Serena’s Beauty Marks on Bewitched’ [c2001]). Asher explains that they tried to give Serena ‘the attitude of the time’ (Pilato 2001:39).

24 A double or doppelganger is a literary trope that dates back to the nineteenth century (see Walder 2001:78).
Focus Box 3.2: Samantha and Serena

Serena’s photo is on the front page of the newspaper after causing a riot at a love-in in ‘Hippie Hippie Hooray’ (#128). Larry mistakes the blonde Serena as Samantha and worries that their conservative client will object to the association, so Darrin invites Larry and Louise over to dinner to show him that it was Samantha’s cousin Serena. When Darrin offends Serena, it is left up to Samantha to play both herself and her look-alike cousin. With both characters having blonde hair in this episode (Serena usually has dark hair), the use of clothes and makeup in the performance of gender and construction of narrowly-defined roles is particularly striking. At the beginning of the episode when they are in the kitchen (see Figure 3.8), Samantha is wearing a pale pink, long-sleeved, pin-striped, tailored blouse with a front ruffle buttoned up to the collar and pale blue pants with her hair in a ponytail. Serena is in a short, bright blue and pink striped mini dress with pink tights. Her hair is much longer, worn down around her shoulders and she is wearing heavier makeup than Samantha, particularly around the eyes. Serena is also holding a brightly painted electric guitar. Through more saturated colours and modern styling (consistent with the fashion of the time), Serena is presented as a more vibrant and contemporary version of Samantha. The soft, conservative clothing and makeup worn by Samantha is consistent with her role as a housewife, while Serena’s role is that of the more liberated woman – associated at this time with ‘free love’ and the sexual revolution (signified by the guitar). These distinctions highlight that gender is not inherent or natural, but performed. Moreover, the performativity is heightened with Samantha pretending to be Serena during the dinner party – ‘popping’ back and forth between being herself and Serena in order to convince Larry and Louise they both exist.

Figure 3.8: Samantha and Serena appear together in the Stephens’ kitchen in ‘Hippie Hippie Hooray’ (#128).
Two Aunts, an Uncle and Dandy Daddy

While the roles of wife, mother and temptress are the most central to the narrative, there are further associated female and male roles within *Bewitched*. One such group of supporting characters can be identified as ‘maiden aunts’ and include Samantha’s Aunt Clara and the bumbling maid, Esmeralda. Played by the accomplished Marion Lorne, Aunt Clara (and her doorknob collection) appeared in 28 episodes over the first four seasons, while Alice Ghostly appeared as Esmeralda 15 times in the last two seasons. Although both had flawed magical powers that caused all kinds of misunderstandings and ‘goofs’, they were shown to be well-meaning witches who provided practical help (mostly baby-sitting), and in turn were treated with marked kindness by Samantha. Samantha particularly stands up for Aunt Clara, such as in ‘Samantha Meets the Folks’ (#14) when the newlyweds are first visited by Darrin’s parents. Although Clara’s arrival is inconvenient, and customarily bungled with a crash landing in the fireplace, Samantha insists she not be overlooked or sent away. In this way the show highlights a deficit in the patriarchal order, whereby if a woman does not subscribe to narrowly-defined gender roles (that of housewife, mother or temptress), she is relegated as not visible, relevant or valued. Aunt Clara (and later Esmeralda) demonstrates how all women, regardless of age and ability, are respected and acknowledged in the matriarchal magical world.

Similarly, the magical world provides a space for a masculine figure who sits outside patriarchal conventions – Uncle Arthur. Although Paul Lynde first appeared as Samantha’s nervous driving instructor, Harold Harold, in ‘Driving is the Only Way to Fly’ (#26), he returned in ‘The Joker is a Card’ (#41) as Uncle Arthur. While he only appeared in 10 episodes, his portrayal as the practical-joking, obnoxious Uncle Arthur was memorable. As identified earlier, queer theorists discuss both Lynde and his television persona because it offered audiences a fresh and different representation of masculinity. What Case describes as Uncle Arthur’s ‘queer manner’ (2000:199) – a subject position marginalised by patriarchy – is comfortably accommodated and maintained in the matriarchal magical world. Like Endora, Serena and Aunt Clara, Uncle Arthur serves to highlight the limitations of patriarchy’s conventionally prescribed gender roles, while offering an exciting, fun alternative.

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25 Even Darrin is kind to Aunt Clara.
Finally, Samantha’s father Maurice is likewise memorable despite only appearing in 12 episodes. While more traditional than Uncle Arthur, Maurice’s representation of masculinity is not wholly conventional. Aside from his ambiguous relationship with Endora, Maurice’s impeccable attire and grandiose manner identify him as a ‘dandy’ warlock. He wears a tuxedo in his first two appearances, and then is typically seen in a black and grey morning suit with gloves, a top hat and a cane (see Figure 3.9). This flamboyant style of dress is coupled with flamboyant exits and entrances, including arriving through a hole in the Stephens’ living room wall in a chauffeur-driven antique touring car in ‘Daddy Does His Thing’ (#167). Maurice is also an actor and, as he declares in ‘Samantha’s Good News’ (#168), his Shakespeare is ‘the greatest’. As Elisa Glick observes, the notion of a dandy is one consistent with ‘artifice, aestheticism and style’ (2009:170) which inherently foregrounds performativity. Jessica Feldman argues that the dandy is ‘neither wholly man nor wholly woman’ and is therefore a transgressive figure ‘who blurs these distinctions’ (1993:11). This is consistent with Maurice’s position as a masculine figure in a matriarchal world. Like Uncle Arthur, Maurice reflects Bewitched’s celebration of variations from conventional representations of gender, and in doing so provides respite from restrictive prescribed roles while emphasising performativity.

**Central Male Roles in Bewitched**

The less dominant male performances in Bewitched function to highlight the female roles and matriarchal power in the show. Having examined these roles, this analysis now turns to the central male protagonists around whom the females operate. Representations of mortal men in Bewitched are generally consistent with conventional patriarchal traits; particularly in scenes outside the Stephens home, such as in Darrin’s workplace – the offices of advertising firm McMann & Tate. Larry Tate and the array of clients with whom he does business are predominantly white, middle-class, heterosexual, mature, men. Set in the world of
advertising, they are aligned with commerce, representing the dominant ideology and influencing public opinion.\textsuperscript{26} While good natured and amicable, Larry does whatever it takes to win an account. He regularly contradicts himself in order to agree with the client and at times takes credit for Darrin’s ideas. Proud of his role as a ‘talented young ad man’, Darrin readily subscribes to the expectations of his profession by prioritising clients and capitalism. He brings work (and clients) home, stays up late to finish presentations and earnestly pitches campaigns for products ranging from cough syrup to dog food. Yet as Metz notes, not only does Samantha prove to be better at advertising than Darrin (when he is about to lose an account because of magical interference, it is Samantha who comes up with a catchy slogan – notably without using magic – to save the account)\textsuperscript{27}, but

[t]he subversive undercurrent of the show is that money, material goods, and advertising are aspects of human culture that are absurd to the witches, who can manipulate time and space and have instant access to anything they desire. (2007:88,92)

In this way, the advertising world – which represents everything that is important in patriarchy (money, power, influence, control) – is set up in opposition to the matriarchal/magic world. It also stands in opposition to the community attitude and notion of civic purpose demonstrated by Samantha as explored earlier (for example her social campaigns for traffic lights and a local park).

**Darrin**

Darrin’s desire to maintain normality and order is a central feature of *Bewitched* in terms of its narrative construction and ideological positioning. He represents patriarchy (as Endora represents matriarchy), and in doing so provides a foil for the inevitable disorder each episode brings. However, rather than simply being a white, heterosexual, middle-class (and therefore ultimately privileged) man in a

\textsuperscript{26} *Mad Men*, a contemporary show first broadcast in 2007, is set in the advertising industry during the same era and acknowledges the dominance of men in this position (see Tyree 2010).

\textsuperscript{27} See examples cited earlier in the discussion of diplomacy. Importantly, Samantha ensures Darrin receives credit for the ideas in front of Larry and the client.
patriarchal world, by marrying a witch Darrin not only acknowledges a system outside patriarchy, but makes a choice to engage with a matriarchal world. It becomes challenging when he has to deal with the magical world, because at that point he is forced to question the ‘naturalness’ of patriarchy as the status quo. This juncture is demonstrated in the show through Darrin’s frustration with Samantha’s relatives. Despite knowing that the witches have the power to do whatever they choose to him – such as casting spells that turn him into an animal for example – his patriarchal idealisation is so strong that he continues to try and impose these wider social conventions at home. Darrin identifies himself as ‘the man of the house’ or as he states in the Episode #201 ‘emperor of this castle’ (see Focus Box 3.1). Thus the transgressive aspect of his character is in showing how ingrained and naturalised are patriarchal ideals and expectations. Darrin also helps Samantha hide that she is a witch and in this way is complicit in the prescribed gender roles she performs. At the same time, the harder he works at ‘being normal’ the more his own gendering is exposed as performative.

One of the defining aspects of the role of Darrin is the way in which the show handled the casting change from Dick York to Dick Sargent at the start of the sixth season. Consistent with the practice of replacing performers in theatre, there was no direct explanation given for Darrin’s change in appearance in the storyline (although subtle references were made to the switch in ‘Samantha’s Better Halves’ [#185] where Darrin is split in two). Pilato reports that, despite the opportunity for magic to explain the change, there was concern it would have altered the dynamics of the show – namely Endora’s relationship with Samantha (2001:47). Similarly, having the couple divorce or Darrin killed off would upset the show’s balance. Even though Darrin appears to be somewhat ordinary and he is no match for magic, the series only works on the premise that he is worth Samantha’s efforts. Unlike other television sitcoms (such as The Honeymooners [1955-1956] and Married...With Children [1987-1997]) where the wife regards the husband with disdain, Samantha clearly adores Darrin (as he does her), and this is reinforced when they kiss and embrace at the end of each episode. The manner of his replacement maintains this relationship. Furthermore, it reasserts the show’s focus on Samantha and affirms the significance and relevance of the feminine subject position to the point that Darrin can be replaced unnoticed.\(^{28}\) As Endora remarks about mortals in ‘Be

\(^{28}\) The replacement of actors for Darrin without explanation has become a popular culture reference. For example, eldest daughter Becky is recast in Roseanne (1988-1997) with only an initially passing comment by Roseanne that after Becky moved out of home for a time and had now come back, she hardly recognised her. Then at the end of the episode (‘Homecoming’), the Connors are shown watching Bewitched and talking about the two Darrins when (the new) Becky says ‘well, I like the second Darrin much better’. Being
Chapter 3 – Performing Samantha: *Bewitched* on TV

It Ever So Mortgaged’ (#2): ‘Oh, they all look alike to me’. However, the change from York to Sargent did alter Darrin’s characterisation. Metz maintains that

[i]n retrospect it is clear that Sargent played the role of Darrin, the ‘normal’ husband and father on *Bewitched*, with an angry, sardonic edge not brought to the role by his predecessor Dick York, who offered a more genial, beleaguered interpretation. (2007:6)

The inference here is that Sargent’s closeted homosexuality impacted his interpretation of Darrin. And while Darrin’s acceptance of Samantha’s powers / agency increases while Sargent plays Darrin, it is also consistent with a corresponding trajectory across the show’s development. Moreover, to counter the drop in ratings that occurred as a result of York leaving the show, more magic was injected into the series (that is, special effects were increased) and more themed, historically-driven scripts were produced in the final seasons.

**Bewitching History**

As noted earlier in the chapter, the demonstration of an overriding matriarchy in *Bewitched* draws attention to the accepted conventions of patriarchy. The restrictive nature of prescribed gender roles within patriarchy and the performance of gender are highlighted by comparisons between the two power systems. The series’ deployment of history, through an engagement with historical characters and settings, situates gender and patriarchy in a broader historical context; reinforcing it as entrenched while foreshadowing change. History functions as a key theme throughout *Bewitched’s* eight season run. In the earlier seasons, this took the form of historical figures ‘accidentally’ appearing in the Stephens’ present day, including: Queen Victoria while Aunt Clara is recalling her days as a lady-in-waiting in ‘Aunt Clara’s Victoria Victory (#100); Napoleon Bonaparte in ‘Samantha’s French Pastry’ (#147) when Uncle Arthur goes to get dessert; and Julius Caesar when Esmeralda tries to make a salad in ‘Samantha’s Caesar Salad (#173). In later seasons, the central characters were transported back in time, such as when Samantha returns to the era of Henry VIII in the first two episodes of season eight and Endora sends Darrin back to get her. Metz indicates that while *Bewitched’s* relationship with history is particularly strong, the attention paid to the past is consistent with that of other sitcoms of the 1960s, including *The Andy Griffith Show* (1960-1968), *The Beverly Hillbillies* (1962-1971) and *I Dream of Jeannie* (2007:111). Such broad interest in historical signposts may be understood as a function by which progress, modernity

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replaced is also the topic of Jack’s insecurities in the *Bewitched* (2005) movie, which will be discussed in Chapter 4.
and change was foregrounded. As previously noted, the 1960s and 1970s were times of marked social and political upheaval, and the period between when the show was first developed and the final season filmed was such that a significant shift in social attitudes and expectations had occurred – particularly in terms of gender politics. There were also industrial changes in television during this time, including technological developments and differing production techniques, new shows and viewing habits to compete with, and as the series extended, a need to find new ways to keep the show fresh.

In season seven, six episodes were filmed on location when Samantha is summoned to a witches’ convention in Salem, Massachusetts. For Metz, this is ‘a very unusual occurrence for a cheaply produced telefilm sitcom’ and he suggests a greater ‘historical reality’ is achieved through the process (2007:100). From a purely industrial perspective, the location shoot was scheduled while the sets were being rebuilt as a result of a fire on Soundstage 4 at Studio Gems where Bewitched was filmed. Of course the two perspectives are not unrelated. As a mature show with strong themes and confidence in its textual strategies, the way the writers and producers chose to deal with an industrial issue is significant. The double episode that sets up the Salem series (#201 – see Focus Box 3.1 – and #202), involves High Priestess Hepzibah passing judgement on Samantha and Darrin’s marriage. Annoyed with Darrin’s insolence, she declares the marriage should be dissolved. When Samantha explains to Darrin that it would mean she would lose her powers, he protests (#202):

Darrin: Sam I won’t let you do it.
Sam: Isn’t that what you’ve always wanted?
Darrin: Yes, no, I mean I love you for what you are.
Sam: I’d still be what I am, I just wouldn’t have my powers.
Darrin: But that’s a part of you and I won’t let you give it up. I won’t let anything or anybody change you or dissolve our marriage – including the High Priestess Hepzibah. And I’ll get down on my knees if I have to but won’t stop until she accepts my apology.

But he does not have to, as Hepzibah retracts the dissolution when she meets Mr Hitchcock (played by Cesar Romero), an important advertising client on whom Samantha has placed a love spell. Hepzibah finds him charming and decides to ‘study the species a while longer before passing any major decisions’ (#202). Even though their marriage is saved by Samantha’s intervention and use of magic, it happens after Darrin has validated her powers as

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29 See ‘Bewitched @ Harpies Bizarre: Samantha Moves in for a Spell’ (c2001) and Peter Alachi (2006) for further details.
part of her identity and acknowledged her agency. The subsequent shows, set in Salem, are tied in with gender and historical gender politics. For example, when Samantha is sent back in time to the Salem witch trials in a mini dress, she is quickly ushered inside by another woman for fear of being arrested for indecent exposure. This draws attention to the performance of gender and, by highlighting the differences between past and present expectations, foregrounds progress and change.

The epigraph by Douglas (1995:127) that opens this chapter locates the success of *Bewitched* in its ability to be appealing while simultaneously providing respite and critique. Examination of the show’s exposure of patriarchal convention through an acknowledgement of the constructed and restrictive nature of gendered roles such as that of the housewife, mother and temptress, suggests that it was the critique (of male domination) that the audience found appealing and in the matriarchal world they found respite. While the show clearly resonated with the audience of the day, *Bewitched’s* ongoing popularity is remarkable and is a testament to the show’s ongoing relevance. However, the practice of syndication and the extent to which *Bewitched* has been shown in reruns is also a factor in that popularity. As mentioned in Chapter 2 and as will be discussed in following chapters, viewing practices such as reruns impact not only the market for adaptations, but how that adaptation is consumed.

**Reruns**

The advent of a variety of viewing platforms for audio visual product has ensured that generations of viewers have been exposed to *Bewitched*, although none have been as influential as the television rerun. Significant in both cultural and commercial terms, the sheer longevity and number of screenings the series achieved (and continues to achieve worldwide) through network reruns cannot be ignored. In *Rerun Nation* (2005:xi), Derek Kompare argues that despite television’s reputation for ‘liveness’ (maintained by what he calls the ‘simultaneous national experience’ of events such as the *Friends* [1994-2004] finale, election results, and reality television), repetition makes up the overwhelming proportion of on air programming. Kompare traces the impulse for cultural repetition to the industrialisation of print and asserts that the network television industry exploited this cultural imperative to connect with the past. John Weispfenning (2003) also examines the cultural implications of reruns and suggests that the expansion of cable in the US in the 1980s and 1990s saw a huge increase in the presence of reruns and therefore their significance.
Prior to World War II television (and radio) was predominantly a live format, and it was the shortfalls in production during and immediately after the war that both fostered the development of the technology for taping shows and led stations to seek out additional programming (Williams 1994:162-163). Initially, the equipment was expensive and executives reluctant, but by the early 1950s audiences were accepting the notion of pre-recorded shows with sitcoms such as *I Love Lucy* (1951-1957) and *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet* (1952-1966) leading the trend towards film (Williams 1994:162, 163,165). The increased availability of primetime programming on film was significant, and by the mid 1950s the networks began to replace the live variety shows and specials traditionally screened over the summer months with the filmed reruns (Williams 1994:165; Kompare 2005:79).

As well as filling the summer schedule, the mid 1950s saw another application for reruns: off-network strips, which is ‘the showing of a previously broadcast network program five times a week in a particular time slot’ (Williams 1994:165). As Williams attests, this trend ‘introduced many of the best loved reruns,’ including *I Love Lucy* which ran for almost eight years on CBS’s daytime schedule (from January 1957) before being sold to other markets (1994:166). *Friends*, *Seinfeld* (1990-1998) and *The Simpsons* (1989- ) are contemporary examples of this practice, which continues to structure network programming. A minimum of 100 episodes are needed for six months of stripping. This is now the magic number for networks in terms of economic viability and typically when programs are sold into syndication (Weispfenning 2003:166). As Williams identifies,

> Broadcast fees from the networks covered only part of production costs. Reruns brought a break-even point or, if the program enjoyed a lengthy network run, profits as stations would eagerly bid for a popular series with enough episodes to ensure successful stripping. (Williams 1994:169)

Reruns are an economic necessity for the network television and cable industries and, having never been off air, *Bewitched* can be held up as a prototype. Kompare lists it as one of the shows ABC relied on to fill out its daytime schedule when explaining how ‘stripped’ shows were screened in early evening, then ‘could be successfully “milked” yet again – for the network and national sponsor – before being released to local syndication’ (2005:82). After its

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30 Primetime programming on film rose from 44 percent in the 1956-1957 season to 83 percent in 1960-1961 (Williams 1994:165).
long run on daytime television, *Bewitched* was put to work yet again when it moved to Nickelodeon’s stable in late 1989.

The extent to which the show was rerun foregrounds two salient points: the nature of television consumption and viewing context. As identified in Chapter 2, television is a powerful and personal medium as it is viewed daily, over a number of (possibly formative) years, and in the private, domestic space of the home. Yet at the same time, in homes across the country (and beyond in other Western countries), other individuals are having similar experiences watching the very same show. In this way, a private and personal experience is also a collective one. Therefore the ideologies at work in *Bewitched* are not only an integral part of the formation of individual identity, but influence collective identity. Moreover, the screening and re-screening of the show provides constant reinforcement of those ideologies. In terms of context, a broad range of viewers over many generations have enjoyed *Bewitched*, and obviously a 1960s housewife will have had a different viewing experience to a 10 year old girl watching a rerun on Nickelodeon today. While certain variations across time and space are inherent, the show was notably re-contextualised when it became part of Nickelodeon’s Nick at Nite line up. Spigel asserts that because the network’s programming ‘eclectically places sitcoms from different decades back to back with one another, it implicitly narrates a history of women’s roles on television’ (2001:361). And contends that

> [s]uch tongue-in-cheek programs and promotions speak to a young, television-literate generation by constructing a vision of the past that implicitly suggests the ‘progress’ of contemporary culture. (Spigel 2001:361)

The viewer is subsequently positioned as more enlightened than the television characters (and audience) from the past. While there is a danger of contemporary audiences dismissing the show as irrelevant on these grounds, it could also be argued that this positioning works well for *Bewitched* as it is the position from which the matriarchal magic world within the show operates: the (magical) women in *Bewitched* were more enlightened all along! Because the modern, postfeminist viewer is aware of options for women outside those traditionally sanctioned roles of 1960s housewife and mother, they are more clearly able to recognise the performativity of Samantha’s role and thus engage with the show as a subversive text.
Chapter 3 – Performing Samantha: Bewitched on TV

Legacy

*Bewitched* is an almost fifty year-old show that continues to be both popular and relevant. Douglas determines that ‘[t]he show hailed young female viewers by providing, and seeking to reconcile, images of female equality – and, often, even images of female superiority – with images of female subordination’ (1995:133), and in a conflicted postfeminist society, this rationale continues to hold true. Importantly, it is because audiences can identify with Samantha that they find the conflict satisfactory. Douglas notes Samantha’s ability to balance the ‘passive and active’ (1995:133), and while she successfully engages in each of the two opposing hegemonies, the strength of the show lies in Samantha’s seeming ability to mediate between them. As the series progressed, this negotiation of power became more evident as Darrin’s gradual acceptance of magic represented an incorporation of female agency into the patriarchal world. *Bewitched* is most transgressive, however, through the matriarchal magical world, not only in allowing Samantha to expose the performativity of patriarchal gender roles, but in accommodating variations on gender norms, including Endora, Aunt Clara, Serena and Uncle Arthur. These alternatives provided respite from convention and, across generations of audiences, provide more varied opportunities for identification. Yet undoubtedly Samantha is at the heart of *Bewitched*, and perhaps most significantly in terms of the show’s legacy, she is the one who most successfully negotiates the two worlds. In doing so, she represents the possibility of dissolving the matriarchal / patriarchal divide. This potential is particularly appealing to a postfeminist audience and, together with the subversive exposition of gender performativity during a period of feminist gains, reinforces *Bewitched’s* contemporary relevance.

As will be discussed in the next chapter, these features, which operate within the usually-conservative genre of sitcom, are what make the show relevant and appealing as a source for contemporary film adaptation. *Bewitched’s* exposure of gender performativity, celebration of sisterhood through recognition of a matriarchal world and demonstration of Samantha’s mediating prowess are taken up by postfeminism, allowing one of TV’s most adaptable women to reach beyond her image as a 1960s housewife, and the small screen.
Chapter 4
‘WHAT WOULD SAMANTHA DO?’:
BEWITCHED ON FILM

Released in the United States and Canada on 24 June 2005, the film version of *Bewitched* announces its heritage by keeping the same name as the original television show.¹ Marketing for the film included plenty of nose twitches – with accompanying sound effect – and animated witch motifs reminiscent of the opening credits from the TV show (Columbia Pictures Industries 2005). The film incorporates the process of remaking the television series into its narrative, it is replete with intertextual references and even uses black and white clips from early original episodes. While clearly drawing on nostalgia to attract its audience,² the film adaptation works equally as hard to identify itself as contemporary and fresh. It is set in the modern day, showcases a host of top Hollywood talent, appeals to a postmodern audience’s sophisticated media literacy through broad-ranging intertextuality, and demonstrates struggles around gender roles in a postfeminist time. Beyond simple nostalgia and a scramble for box office sales, the film’s reliance on a 40 year old TV show has more cultural significance than a desire to return to the past – it has something to say about contemporary times, and more specifically, contemporary (first world) womanhood.

Nicole Kidman³ plays Isabel Bigalow, a witch who moves to the San Fernando Valley in Los Angeles determined to give up magic and have a ‘normal’ life.⁴ Playing opposite her is Will Ferrell⁵ as Jack Wyatt, a failing movie star who agrees to the role of Darrin in a remake of the popular *Bewitched* TV show. In an attempt to maintain the spotlight and salvage his career, he and his agent (Ritchie, played by Jason Schwartzman) insist that an unknown actress be cast

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¹ There is also a 1945 *Bewitched* film, written and directed by Arch Oboler. It is an American film noir and unrelated to the TV series.

² As noted in the previous chapter, the *Bewitched* TV series (1964-1972) continues to be popular in reruns today, having engaged an audience from several generations over five decades.

³ Kidman is an accomplished actor, who, at the time *Bewitched* was filmed, had won an Oscar, BAFTA, SAG and 3 Golden Globes. While the majority of her roles are dramatic, *Bewitched* was released the year after another comedic part in the remake of *Stepford Wives* (2004), having played a ruthless weathergirl who plots to kill her husband in the black comedy *To Die For* (1995), and a fiery witch in *Practical Magic* (1998).

⁴ Isabel’s decision to give up witchcraft is not fully explained in the film narrative. In an early scene at Bed Bath & Beyond with her father she accuses all warlocks of being like him (players) so it is inferred that her quest is driven by the search for something other than that – that is, ‘mortal’ love which is its own ‘magic’ in the film.

⁵ Ferrell is discussed further later in the chapter.
as Samantha. Jack spots Isabel out shopping, sees her wiggle her nose and convinces her to audition. While initially excited with how perfectly her new life appears to be unfolding, Isabel soon realises Jack’s self-serving motives, and her pledge to relinquish witchcraft is forgotten. Unfortunately, critics were not convinced by the onscreen couple, with the *Bewitched* film earning four Razzie nominations and one win for Kidman and Ferrell as the ‘Worst Screen Couple’. US box office sales of US$63 million fell short of the estimated budget of US$85 million; however, with international gross sales of US$131 million and worldwide DVD sales on top of that, overall the film can be considered commercially successful. This is consistent with Matthew Hancock’s (2010) assessment of the financial viability of film adaptations. He argues that 'box office earnings for adaptations are more consistent' and even advises the Australian film industry to consider producing more adaptations as they have 'a good chance of outperforming a typical original film' (Hancock 2010:4).

In cultural terms, *Bewitched’s* total revenue figures reinforce the film as significant and as having appealed to and accessed a mass, worldwide audience. As Kristel Thornell notes, ‘[p]art of the appeal of studying commercial films is that the patterns we notice presumably respond to the desires of a large viewing public’ (2010:19). This chapter explores how the film text relates back to the similarly commercial *Bewitched* TV show, how it manifests postfeminist nostalgia and how it comments on contemporary womanhood. As a contemporary film drawing on an established character(s) and narrative, the *Bewitched* film functions as a space in which the past and present are negotiated – a duality that correlates postfeminism and nostalgia. As discussed in Chapter 1, postfeminism connotes the pastness of feminism while nostalgia reflects back on the past. Yet both are active negotiations of (selective) remembering that take place in the present. These distinctions similarly characterise many adaptations. *Bewitched’s* status as an adaptation colours all aspects of the film, from inception to production and reception, and correspondingly informs this analysis. Further to the definition outlined in Chapter 2, Linda Hutcheon’s notion of adaptation is applied in detail in this chapter, and then the film’s structure is examined in a discussion that includes setting and genre. Postfeminist nostalgia is then explored through an analysis that continues the previous chapter’s breakdown of representations of femininity on screen by focusing on the central protagonist, Isabel, how she comes to understand her (postfeminist) life and the characters with whom she engages. In this way, the nostalgic aspects of
postfeminist identity are foregrounded, modern women’s relationships with past ideals are explored and contemporary representations of womanhood are recognised as particularly complex.

**Adaptations as Adaptations**

As noted above and detailed in Chapter 2, Hutcheon’s (2006) conceptualisation of adaptation, whereby texts travel or migrate to another medium or form in order to survive, is the definition employed by this thesis. Hutcheon incorporates a broad range of texts across various mediums in order to determine the ways texts adapt and how they are consumed. Audiences’ pleasure in cultural remediations is also part of her enquiry. While the cultural, social and historical contexts in which an adaptation is consumed should always be considered, Hutcheon suggests that '[p]art of this pleasure … comes simply from repetition with variation, from the comfort of ritual combined with the piquancy of surprise’ (2006:4). She observes that an audience who perceives ‘adaptations as adaptations’ will interpret and respond differently to those who are not familiar with their antecedent text/s, and describes the knowing audience as being involved in ‘an interpretive doubling, a conceptual flipping back and forth between the work we know and the work we are experiencing’ (Hutcheon 2006:139). While Hutcheon maintains that an adaptation must not rely too heavily on its audience to ‘fill in the gaps’ and should make sense to both its knowing and unknowing audience in order to be considered successful, the acknowledgement of an active oscillation between texts is critical.

Finally, Hutcheon offers a continuum model to accommodate not only a broad range of adaptations but the fluid relationships that exists between the revisited texts (2006:170-172). This is useful when considering that a film such as *Bewitched* – itself an adaptation that incorporates a (fictional) contemporary TV remake of a 40 year old show – is available on DVD at the same time as reruns of the original *Bewitched* TV show are aired on cable television and available on DVD. In the film’s promotional material, any identification with the terms ‘adaptation’ and ‘remake’ appear to have been rejected as the movie is marketed as a ‘re-imagining’. The emphasis is placed on the film’s fresh approach and incorporation of new ideas. According to producer Lucy Fisher, ‘We always knew we didn’t want to slavishly imitate the 1960s style of the show … What we did want to do, however, is somehow pay tribute to the essence of the show, though in a more modern, edgy context’ (Columbia
Pictures Industries 2005). Fisher’s comments lend themselves well to Hutcheon’s model. An evolutionary-style adaptation (for a contemporary audience) is acknowledged while the replication and subsequent competition a remake implies is avoided, so that the ‘old’ (still relevant and available) and ‘new’ are able to co-exist. The 2005 film is not just an updated version of the story for a modern audience: it presents a different perspective in a different format, having moved from television to feature film.

One of the most significant features of the move to feature film is the narrative structure. Traditionally, the story in a feature film follows a pattern of disruption, a conflict and resolution with the central character(s) undergoing a journey of growth or development, which differs from the circular narrative of a television sitcom (as discussed in the previous chapter). In the *Bewitched* film, Jack and Isabel follow the conventions of the romantic comedy genre by meeting, encountering obstacles and then coming together as a couple at the end. Isabel’s journey is one of self-discovery (understanding being female in a new, postfeminist world) and finding love. Yet it is a love with which the audience are familiar – even beyond generic expectations – as their union at the end of the film mirrors the beginning of the original sitcom. This is how the texts co-exist. Although the TV show and therefore Samantha and Darrin’s marriage predates the film by 40 years, narratively Isabel and Jack’s modern day relationship precedes it; that is, the relationship is at a formative stage. The film is not strictly a prequel because they are different characters in a different time, but their relationships are paralleled and analogies consistently drawn. The knowing audience enjoy watching the turmoil leading up to their inevitable (Hollywood-style) union – and the point at which the TV show they have known and loved takes over. The unknowing audience can still be satisfied by the self-contained nature of feature film. This conflation also impacts on Isabel’s journey, as it dissolves any linear approach to her relationship with Samantha. The texts thereby co-exist with a fluidity that encourages the audience to flip back and forth as Hutcheon posits, and reinforces the film as a space in which the present can comfortably and actively access the past.

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6 The closing scene in the film references the second episode of the TV series when Samantha uses magic to put a tree in the front yard of their new home, reinforced by the inclusion of the Kravitzes as neighbours. This scene is discussed further at the end of this chapter.
(More than) Once Upon a Time…

The challenge of adapting stories not only across time, but also formats, is not new. From orality to print in the nineteenth century and then from printed text to filmed images in the twentieth century, folktales and fairy-tales have successfully negotiated a number of shifts in the modes through which they are communicated. As such, Donald Haase proposes that folktales and fairy-tales provide a reference point for assessing the impact of the next major shift in information technology (2006:222). He observes that,

[t]ypically, the medium being challenged or replaced attempts to incorporate the new medium itself, creating an ‘innovation’ that approximates the new form but does not fully capitalize on it. These would-be hybrid forms are not necessarily abandoned as the new technology establishes itself; instead, they may become calcified expressions of the tensions between coexisting technologies as one tries to subsume the other and to draw on the other’s aura of authority, authenticity, or novelty. (Haase 2006:224)

The textual example to which Haase is referring is the opening of a story book page at the beginning of an animated film which draws attention to it being based on a collection of tales (such as in Disney’s Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs [1937] in order to capitalise on the authority of the Grimms’ collections). The opening sequence of Shrek (2001) parodies this trope. More recently, the predominantly live action film Enchanted (2007) employs animated sequences, most fully in the opening and closing scenes, to make its connection with Disney (the modern day Grimms) clear. In the Bewitched film, black and white clips from early episodes of the original TV show are used to similar effect – the first instance of which even opens with the narrator using the fairy-tale staple, “Once upon a time …”.

Added to the above, a series of clips from the Bewitched TV show are included in the film narrative. The sequence in which the first clip is shown occurs immediately after Jack’s pseudo-proposal to Isabel and her agreement to play Samantha in the TV remake. Within the film’s narrative, Isabel has never seen the show. As her father Nigel (played by Michael Caine) proclaims, ‘Bewitched! That’s an insult to our way of life.’ This allows Isabel to stand in for the unknowing audience. As Isabel has never seen the show, the other characters in the film explain various features of it to her. This ensures the film makes sense without prior knowledge of the TV series, yet also provides insight into the varying perspectives each character has on the original series. Moreover, her introduction to the original show (see Focus Box 4.1) functions within the narrative to set her on a journey to discover what it means to be female in a postfeminist world, by coming to understand the past in the form of
Samantha and what she represents. The use of clips from the *Bewitched* TV series lends authenticity to the adaptation (enhanced by it being in black and white),\(^7\) while establishing the context in which the adapted material will be employed; that is as an intersection of past and present, and predominantly from Isabel’s perspective (such as in the example below when Isabel watches the show and the camera angles accentuate her point of view). Moreover, they provide a reference point for the audience. The knowing audience is intended to recognise the clips, have their memory triggered and subsequently oscillate between the texts, while the unknowing audience are exposed to scenes that recur later in the narrative, which allows them a degree of intertextual satisfaction. In these ways, the embedded clips also function hypertextually (Genette 1997). Through hypertextuality or through intertextuality, contemporary adaptations such as *Bewitched* necessarily build on past modes and intersecting texts to create meaning.

**Focus Box 4.1: Isabel Meets Samantha**

Already cast in the remake of *Bewitched*, Isabel familiarises herself with the original series. In the first shot of this sequence, the television dominates the frame with the edge of the TV set providing a clear border – notably more than just the screen is in view – to foreground the medium. The first scene shown (and being watched by Isabel) is the one that opens the TV series – the pre-credit sequence to the first episode of the first season (*‘I, Darrin Take This Witch Samantha’* (#1) [1964]). It establishes how Samantha and Darrin meet and fall in love, and that they do so on the premise that Samantha is a ‘typical American girl’.\(^8\) This helps situate the adapted film’s narrative prior to the body of the sitcom (which is set after they are married) to focus on their meeting, as well as foreshadowing their coupling, which is a convention of the romantic comedy (romcom) genre (as discussed below).

The next shot is a wide shot of Isabel sitting on the edge of the coffee table watching the TV, as the black and white scene continues on its screen (see Figure 4.1). The room is bathed in a golden hue with sunlight coming through filmy curtains. Soft, cream furnishings including a Queen Anne chair, plush ottoman and lamps suggest a warm, feminine space, evoking an aura of yesteryear. Set against these buttery tones are contemporary silver/grey features on each side of the frame. On the right third of the screen the television sits on a trolley with shelves of silver and black machines (DVD player, video player and cable box) with a sleek flat screen on the top. Isabel mirrors the TV tower, sitting upright, wearing grey pants and a black, white and grey striped top. This frame offers a

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\(^7\) The black and white clips are used despite colourised versions of the first two seasons being readily available and more regularly shown in reruns.

\(^8\) The narrator states that Samantha is a ‘typical American girl’ and that Darrin is a ‘typical red-blooded American boy’. The inference is that ‘falling in love’ is an inherent human experience; that is, it is ‘natural’ and ‘normal’ and thereby sits outside magic and witchcraft.
Figure 4.1: Isabel watching the first episode of the *Bewitched* TV series in the *Bewitched* (2005) film.

visual representation of the past and present converging, as although there are contrasting styles, black and white is used to represent both old and new, and Isabel’s identification with Samantha is acknowledged.

The next series of shots are intercut between close-ups of the TV (with the original clip showing Darrin and Samantha ‘bumping’ into each other) and reaction medium close-ups of Isabel’s enjoyment and surprise. Her responses indicate a naivety towards the conventions of the genre and thereby reinforce her perspective as fresh and new. This sets Isabel up as a credible romcom character (that is, not cynical and therefore not ironic). The scene in which Samantha and Darrin bump into each other outside a department store is one that Isabel and Jack remake later in the film (as part of the TV show within a film), and Isabel’s responses to those sequences, like the audience’s, are informed by this scene. Within this sequence, the key themes of love, gender relations, the role of women, and the intersection between the past and present are all established.

Audiences are increasingly exposed to textual cues, devices and intertextual references, which requires a new level of media-literacy. In *Everything Bad is Good For You* (2005), Steven Johnson argues that popular culture has become more sophisticated and cognitively demanding over the last thirty years, and as a result, audiences are engaging with mass media in a more complex and intelligent way. He posits that the multiple threading in television dramas such as *Lost* (2004-2010) and *The Sopranos* (1999-2007) enhances analytic skills, that reality shows expose the complexity of human relationship and social networking, and video games provide an opportunity for sophisticated mental stimulation. Johnson demonstrates that there are fewer ‘flashing arrows’ or narrative cues given to audiences so that they understand the plot in *West Wing* (1999-2006) than in *Hill Street Blues* (1981-1987) for example, which
suggests that contemporary shows impose higher expectations on audiences (2006:73-74,77-78). The inference here is that contemporary audiences are more media- and genre-literate. They know how to read these texts, what to look for, what to expect and it does not all need to be spelt out for them. Jonathan Gray (2006) also identifies genre literacy as relating directly to intertextuality and audience participation. In Watching with ‘The Simpsons’, he determines that ‘[a]t the level of the individual viewer … a significant amount of genre understanding is intertextual by nature, based on the individual’s viewing experiences and history’ (Gray 2006:30). Engagement with contemporary texts is therefore changeable, inherently socio-cultural and reliant upon an active audience.

As already noted, an active audience is central to Hutcheon’s conceptualisation of the consumption of adapted texts. In ‘Foregrounding the Media: Atonement (2007) as an Adaptation’, Christine Geraghty looks for the signifiers in adaptations that invite the oscillation Hutcheon describes and identifies layered narratives, performances, and/or settings (whereby one way of telling the story is set against another) (2009:95). She suggests,

\[\text{[s]uch a layering is often indicated by the foregrounding of media signifiers which invite the audience to set one media experience against another, just as the process of adaptation involves shifting from one mode of media production to the other. (Geraghty 2009:95)}\]

Geraghty details these shifts in Atonement and the ways the film draws attention to its form, including close-ups of a typewriter, use of documentary footage, an extended steadicam shot and a sequence set in a television studio. She concludes that by employing these techniques, such texts actively seek to be recognised as adaptations as they ensure audiences’ vacillation between different versions of the story by including variants within the text itself (Geraghty 2009:107). The Bewitched film may not be as layered or narratively complex as Atonement, but the use of television and television screens as signifiers (beyond showing the black and white clips) does fit with Geraghty’s general contention. They function as cues for the audience to read the film as an adaptation, and for Bewitched this sets up the flipping back and forth between the TV show – and all Samantha represents – and the film, which is where the space for the past and present to interact, opens up. Some examples of when this occurs in the film include: at the media launch of the Bewitched remake, where screens are prominent; in each of their bedrooms, Jack and Isabel are seen watching reruns of the original Bewitched series, as well as Jack’s promotional interviews; and when Isabel’s father announces his presence in the lounge room via the television even though Isabel is only in the next room.
This consistent trope of screens is further facilitated by the film’s setting. The story operates around the characters remaking a TV show in Hollywood, and in doing so the film’s narrative structure draws attention to the mode of production, and therefore to the adaptation as an adaptation.

The Magic of Hollywood

The self-reflexive incorporation of a fictional text into another text is an established narrative technique. At the end of the sixteenth century Shakespeare situated a play within a play in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and again in *Hamlet*. More contemporary examples include: *Moulin Rouge!* (2001), a musical within a film; Charlie Kaufman’s *Synecdoche, New York* (2008), a play within a film; and *30 Rock* (2006–) and its predecessor *The Larry Sanders Show* (1992-1998), TV shows set amid the production of TV shows. These variants all draw attention to the process of production by foregrounding the mechanisms and practices of the industries in which they are set. Some films, such as *The Player* (1992) and *Get Shorty* (1995), use the backdrop of Hollywood to expose the filmmaking industry. *Bewitched* sits among these as it sets a TV production both within a film and in Hollywood. However, while there are elements of comedy that critique the industry – such as the role of agents, through the character of Ritchie, and the outrageous demands of actors (Jack asks for three trailers, a makeup team in matching jumpsuits, cake-day Wednesdays and a pet leopard) – the ‘magical’ status of Hollywood is upheld.

In the film’s opening sequence the camera flies over the ocean and the twinkling lights on the boardwalk as the sun comes up over suburban streets. The next frame is an overhead shot of (free-flowing) Los Angeles freeways, followed by an aerial pan around the iconic Hollywood sign. The fly-over shot dissolves into palm tree-lined streets, then overheads of suburban plots featuring crisp blue swimming pools, before coming to rest on the white picket fence and lush green lawn covered in rose petals that will be Isabel’s home. These establishing shots showcase Los Angeles and invite the audience’s recognition of a place known for its association with dreams, magic and screen stars. It also distinguishes the film from the original TV series which was set in Westport, Connecticut (although filmed on a back lot and studio in Los Angeles). This choice of location serves as a reminder of Hollywood as an

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9 The *Bewitched* movie opening is a nod to the animated title sequence from the TV show where Samantha flies over a city skyline at night making the stars twinkle.
industry, its long history and subsequently its position of authority in terms of narrative storytelling. This approach also highlights the constructed nature of the texts.

Focus Box 4.2: Isabel Meets Hollywood

Reverence for the magic and history of Hollywood is evident in a scene approximately two-thirds into the film when Jack and Isabel are alone, after-hours in the studio on the Bewitched sound stage. Jack had been teaching Isabel his acting tricks\(^\text{10}\) when she asks him to show her ‘the funny walk’. He says he will if she goes with him to ‘our [their] place’. On delivering this line, the music starts. It is the original theme song from 1964, “Bewitched” written by Howard Greenfield and Jack Keller, performed by Steve Lawrence. Although not instantly recognisable as the TV theme (different tempo from the version used in the opening and closing credits of the show) it evokes an atmosphere reminiscent of Frank Sinatra\(^\text{11}\) and the classical Hollywood era. Jack is seen at the lighting desk turning up the stage lights as the music kicks in. The next frame is an overhead shot of Isabel coming down the detached staircase, which was the focal point in many TV episodes. She is spotlighted with a large area of empty stage around her, clearly drawing attention to the mode of production. Similarly, Jack mimics the bounce on the bed he does in an earlier filming scene with stage lighting and plastic furniture wrapping clearly visible. In this way, even those not familiar with the original TV show recognise the use of repetition and self-reflexivity. These scenes are intercut with dance sequences. One is of Jack tap dancing but, rather than the elegant Fred Astaire-style, his is comedic (Ferrell-style), while other sequences are more traditional dances reminiscent of Hollywood films such as Easter Parade (1948) and An American in Paris (1951) (see Figure 4.2).

The scene concludes with a medium shot of the two in a spin and pulls in to a two-shot of them kissing. It cuts to a long shot of their silhouetted figures in the darkened studio, framed by the huge stage doors, then fades to black (see Figure 4.3).

\(^{10}\) Jack teaching Isabel how to act is clearly tongue-in-cheek as Kidman is a more celebrated /accomplished actor while Will Ferrell is identified foremost as a comedian and mimic.

\(^{11}\) The pilot used Frank Sinatra’s ‘Witchcraft’, and Greenfield and Keller (theme songwriters) were involved in writing hits for Sinatra, Connie Francis and Neil Sedaka who all epitomised the sound of that era (Burlingame 1996). The music used in this scene is consistent with the soundtrack for the whole film. The theme is composed by George Fenton who has a track record with orchestral/instrumental ensemble scores (consistent with the fantastical, romance genre). In some narratively literal connections, the soundtrack also includes known songs related to love and romance such as ‘City of Love’ and ‘L-O-V-E’ and witches and magic such as ‘Witchy Woman’ and ‘Every Little Thing She Does is Magic’.
The next scene opens with bright sunshine, chirping birds and an external shot of Isabel's house and rose-filled garden. Isabel wakes up (alone) in her pristine white bed, wearing modest pale blue, button up pyjamas and says to her cat, Lucinda, ‘Something magical happened all by itself’ (see Figure 4.4).

Figure 4.3: The mode of production is foregrounded in the adapted film with Jack and Isabel’s silhouetted figures dwarfed by the studio space housing the *Bewitched* set.

Figure 4.4: Isabel and her magical cat, Lucinda.

The pyjamas, the delivery of the line, and the bedroom décor all hark back to Doris Day films. Through exposure of production techniques and reminders of earlier eras, the Hollywood setting is clearly foregrounded.

Romancing the Genre

Like the setting, *Bewitched*’s genre is impacted by self-referentiality and Hollywood genealogy. Sisters Nora and Delia Ephron wrote the screenplay for the film, having previously teamed up for *Mixed Nuts* (1994), *Michael* (1996), *You’ve Got Mail* (1998) and *Hanging Up* (2000). Nora Ephron also wrote *Silkwood* (1983), *When Harry Met Sally* (1989) and *Sleepless in Seattle* (1993), which she also directed. She was the director on *Bewitched*, with Douglas Wick, Lucy Fischer and Penny Marshall producing. While these are well-established producers in the filmmaking industry, Ephron’s name carries weight with the movie-going audience, and the trailer for *Bewitched* is emblazoned with ‘from the director of *Sleepless in Seattle* and *You’ve Got Mail*’. Foregrounding production and industry, this also serves to generically position the film as a romantic comedy, and thereby link it to a further body of Hollywood texts (beyond those cited).

Aimee Morrison (2010:45) suggests that Ephron’s romantic comedies draw on the canon of classical Hollywood and in doing so have rejuvenated the genre. In ‘Newfangled Computers and Old-Fashioned Romantic Comedy’, Morrison (2010:44) examines *You’ve Got Mail* (1998) and identifies a nostalgia for classical romantic comedies in the film, calling it a `post-
new-romance film’; that is, without the irony and cynicism of the 1980s and early 1990s offerings. Morrison argues that,

Ephron's citation of classical Hollywood texts within the narratives of her romantic comedies and her incorporation of The Shop Around the Corner into You've Got Mail aim to reference and recapture a mode of genre filmmaking, not of real life. You've Got Mail's nostalgia is thus a second-order longing. Nostalgia is manifest at the formal level of filmmaking – the adaptation of a canonical text, a narrative arc drawing not from nervous or new romances but classic ones, and the abandonment of postmodern ironies – but not in the delineation of the contemporary diegetic real in which the narrative plays out. (Morrison 2010:46)

She maintains that in this way, the film does not ‘reject the here and now, but …remediate[s] it in order to create a space for meaningful interpersonal connection’ (Morrison 2010:55).

Nine years prior to You've Got Mail, Meg Ryan and Billy Crystal’s characters argued over the ending of Casablanca (1942) in their late night phone calls in When Harry Met Sally, and the scene on the top of the Empire State Building in Sleepless in Seattle is a reference to An Affair to Remember (1957) – a movie the central character Annie (Meg Ryan) identifies as the ultimate romantic encounter.\(^\text{12}\)

In the 2009 documentary From Weepies to Chick Flicks, Nora Ephron laments the difficulty in making romance work in contemporary films because of modern society’s liberal attitudes – ‘anything goes’ which means that there are no longer the obstacles there were before to provide the drama and intensity required to make the format work. In the documentary, both Nora and her sister Delia Ephron speak nostalgically of the Hollywood films they loved and discuss the impact of classical texts on contemporary films. Referring to the use of An Affair to Remember in Sleepless in Seattle, Delia Ephron remarks that ‘an old movie can make a new movie more romantic’ (From Weepies to Chick Flicks 2009). Her comment supports Morrison’s observations of You’ve Got Mail’s nostalgic remediation. Moreover, the filmic adaptation of Bewitched is consistent with her definition of a ‘post-new-romance’ genre and claim of a newfound confidence in the genre.

Romantic comedies are traditionally identified by their central narrative structure in which boy meets girl, boy loses girl, then boy gets girl. Tamar Jeffers McDonald suggests a broader

\(^{12}\) An Affair to Remember is central to the plot of Sleepless in Seattle. Annie and her best friend Becky (Rosie O’Donnell) are shown watching it on TV, it inspires Annie to write to Sam (Tom Hanks), and its universal appeal to women is suggested when Suzy (Rita Wilson) breaks down crying as she explains the plot to her husband Greg (Victor Garber) and brother Sam.
definition in *Romantic Comedy: Boy Meets Girl Meets Genre* (2007:9): ‘a romantic comedy is a film which has as its central narrative motor a quest for love, which portrays this quest in a light-hearted way and almost always to a successful conclusion’. For McDonald, this acknowledges that couplings are not inevitably heterosexual and that the emotions portrayed and elicited are mixed (including both laughter and tears). As well as the core narrative structure, romantic comedies are identifiable by a series of conventions, including visual characteristics (iconography) and ideology. Typical romcom iconography includes: an urban location; props, such as flowers, chocolates, candles and beds (often all together); special outfits for dates, which are tried on in a sequence accompanied by a non-diegetic song; and stock peripheral characters, such as the unsuitable alternative boyfriend or girlfriend. These are all evident in *Bewitched*. Flowers are prominent throughout, particularly in Isabel’s house and on her clothing in the form of appliqué on sweaters (see Figure 4.5) or printed accessories, and Jack arrives for their date with flowers and jewelry. Isabel wears a ballet-style, full skirt for their date which is accentuated in later dance scenes, and both characters are shown in or on their beds a number of times. As well as the visual cues, there are narrative cues that recur in romcoms. McDonald cites the ‘meet cute’, where the two protagonists meet in an unlikely or humorous way, the ‘masquerade’, when one or both is pretending to be someone they are not, and the embarrassing public gesture (2007:11). *Bewitched* has an unlikely meeting of the eventual couple when Jack sees Isabel twitching her nose through the book racks in the bookstore, and more pointedly the ‘masquerade’ of Isabel pretending to be normal / mortal, later revealing herself as a witch.

As a general rule, romantic comedies resolve with a successful coupling. Ideologically, this serves to reinforce the Western, capitalist tradition of monogamy and marriage. Despite McDonald’s broader definition, the vast majority of mainstream Hollywood romcoms are still heterosexual couplings which end with either a proposal or allusion to marriage. When Jack and Isabel reunite in front of Samantha and Darrin’s house on the TV show film set at the end of *Bewitched*, Jack suggests they have things to do, including ‘maybe after a while, we could get married’. The shot dissolves into an external shot of the same house on a suburban street. A graphic stating ‘six months later’ appears as Jack and Isabel drive up to the house. The symbolic gesture of Jack carrying Isabel over the threshold of the house (traditional after marriage), implies that they are married (and settled home owners). McDonald contends that,
reasons against coupling, seems to have acknowledged the difficulties of finding true love, it nevertheless continues to endorse the old fantasies. This illustrates the strength of the ideological mandate towards coupling and the industries which depend on romance to make money. (McDonald 2007:14)

Hollywood is one of those industries, with romantic comedies traditionally targeting and marketed at women. While Morrison suggests that this resolution on a small scale (the couple) provides a satisfaction and optimism inherent to the genre’s resurgence (210:54), Sherryl Vint posits that it is indicative of a ‘new backlash’.

In ‘The New Backlash: Popular Culture’s “Marriage” with Feminism, or Love Is All You Need’ (2007), Vint argues that the remakes of Bewitched and Stepford Wives (2004) demonstrate a pattern in popular culture in which the concerns of feminism are rendered comedic amid a postfeminist gender utopia. Love and the right man are the answer to all of a woman’s problems rather than society’s prescription of gender roles and systemic discrimination. Vint contends that this

[n]ew backlash compromises feminism’s ability to critique economic and other gender divisions that still disadvantage women, and it evacuates political consciousness from the consumption of popular culture by reducing gender questions to personal stories, refusing to acknowledge structural problems. New backlash motivates not through fear as in 1980s backlash culture, but through love. By making the right man the solution to the dilemmas of gender discrimination, new backlash texts make feminism comedic in the present and imply that even in the past feminism must have been mistaken or exaggerated problems because love is real, natural, and unchanging, preventing us from ever imagining a world in which most men treated women badly. (Vint 2007:163)

Stepford Wives and Bewitched were released in consecutive years and both featured Nicole Kidman. Both remakes are comedies although the original Stepford Wives (1975) was a horror, science fiction film in which the wives in the quaint town of Stepford, Connecticut are replaced with robots. As Vint notes, not only has the ending of Stepford Wives been changed to a happy one, but the beginning of the film establishes its treatment of gender. Joanna Eberhart (Kidman) starts out as a strong, confident figure. She is a successful network television executive producer, shown to be at the top of her field. However, when fired because her latest reality TV project fails13 Joanna’s credibility as a figure of feminine power and authority is quickly reduced with her suffering a nervous breakdown. While this functions

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13 The show Joanna spearheads is called ‘I Can Do Better’. It sets genders in opposition to one another (spouses choose between each other and escorts provided by the show) and foreshadows the film’s engagement with gender, marriage, monogamy and expectations around gender roles.
as the instigator of the move to Stepford and the treatment is comedic, as Vint points out, it also ‘denies the seriousness of feminist analysis of gender discrimination’ (2007:163).

Vint suggests that, similarly, *Bewitched* is ‘an antifeminist film in the guise of a feminist remake’ (2007:166). Samantha was the clear focus of the TV show (as discussed in the previous chapter); however the film’s focus is dispersed away from the female protagonist due to its use of a typical romance structure. More than sharing screen time, Ferrell steals the show in a number of scenes. For example, Ferrell’s talents are showcased when Jack is trying to say his lines in a range of flamboyant styles and voices during the TV show filming, while Kidman, as Isabel, stands on the sidelines only tugging at her ear to indicate she is performing magic. To show their sadness at being separated, Jack bursts into tears when children dressed as witches turn up at his door for Halloween while Isabel sits at home in bed finding Jack’s movies on all the television channels (Jack thereby features on screen despite the focus being her suffering) (Vint 2007:166). And while Vint acknowledges Janice Radway’s (1984) assertion of transgressive potential in the romance genre, she suggests it is thwarted in *Bewitched* by the film’s concern with ‘real’ love and the notion that ‘the magic that is natural love is acceptable while the guile of spells or other manipulations is illegitimate’ (2007:167).

Both the use of magic and the meanings it incorporates differ between the original and adapted texts. In the TV show, magic represents power and feminine empowerment. While Samantha says she will give up witchcraft for Darrin, magic and Samantha’s use of magic feature in every episode. Samantha maintains her ties with the magic world, which remains dominant and which Darrin comes to accept. In the *Bewitched* film Isabel gives up magic and turns her back on the magic world in order to find love. For Vint, ‘the fact that she tries to change herself not for a particular man but just for the sake of having a man makes Isabel’s stance even more problematic’ (2007:166), as the implication is that a strong woman will be unattractive to men. Love is celebrated as having its own magic. Yet witchcraft and the feminine power with which it is associated are closeted. For example, when Iris (Shirley MacLaine) – the actress playing Endora in the film’s TV remake – notices Isabel using magic

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14 Where Samantha twitches her nose in the TV series, Isabel tugs her ear to enact magic. This continues the physical demonstration of enacting power (as identified in Chapter 3), while distinguishing between the two characters. As noted earlier, although correlations between Isabel and Samantha are highlighted, the film also works to define Isabel as a separate entity.

15 As identified in the previous chapter, Darrin is increasingly complicit in the magic performed by Samantha as the seasons of the *Bewitched* TV show progressed. This can be seen to represent his (Darrin signifies the patriarchal world) acceptance of feminine power and empowerment.
on Jack during filming, she warns her to watch out for being seen tugging on her ear. Isabel asks if there are others (witches), to which Iris replies, ‘There are many others’, then pauses before saying ‘Many actors, they develop tricks, twitches really’. So although they are talking about being witches, Iris is using a cover of acting and demonstrating to Isabel that she should remain clandestine. This is reinforced later in the film when Isabel reverses the hex her Aunt Clara\(^\text{16}\) puts on Jack\(^\text{17}\) and determines to confront him. The audio tinkle that accompanies Samantha’s nose twitch and magic draws Isabel over to the Samantha doll (a Barbie doll dressed in a witch’s cape and hat) that sits on the shelf above the kitchen sink. She grabs the doll, says, ‘Butt out Samantha, I know what I’m doing’, throws it into the cupboard and shuts the door. Rejecting magic in what can be read as a postfeminist denial of the second wave feminism Samantha represents, witchcraft and feminine power are literally put in the closet.

In the *Bewitched* film, Hollywood’s relationship with women and magic is acknowledged intertextually, beginning with a nod to *Mary Poppins* (1964) in the opening sequence when slippered feet and a carpet bag come in to view as Isabel lands on her front lawn. The swirling rose petals mimic the swirling leaves in Mary Poppins’ entrance in the original film, as does the carpet bag, with the collapsible broomstick standing in for the magical nanny’s umbrella. Mary Poppins represents a gentle, domesticated magic and, not insignificantly, the film is set in London in 1910 during the suffragette movement in which the children’s mother is involved. Isabel’s cat is also shown in the opening scene and is reminiscent of Salem from *Sabrina the Teenage Witch* (1996-2003). The scene in which Isabel, Aunt Clara, and Isabel’s friends Maria and Nina dress in black capes and witches’ hats, light candles and use a barbeque as a cauldron to put a hex on Jack, draws on imagery from *Witches of Eastwick* (1987) and *Practical Magic* (1998), which also featured Kidman. However, the film’s engagement with magic and witchcraft is simultaneously undermined. For example, when the women are dressed in witches’ capes and hats doing a hex, it is portrayed as a game, with Maria singing ‘Witchy Woman’.

\(^{16}\) As in the original TV series, Aunt Clara (Carole Shelley) is a witch and is Isabel’s real Aunt in the film (that is, not a character in the TV remake). Aunt Clara is discussed in more detail later in the chapter.

\(^{17}\) During this sequence, ‘<<REW’ is shown on the screen to indicate the scene is being rewound; that is, the spell is being reversed. This draws attention to the mode of production – notably an outdated one – while also providing a visual reference to the use of magic. In this way, like physical transformations in the TV series, the audience can see what is being done and, in this instance, undone.
Isabel’s use of magic differs significantly from Samantha’s. In the TV show, Samantha used magic (in the mortal realm) generally for the benefit of others and a sense of social justice or greater good; that is, to teach someone who is treating others badly a lesson or to achieve a community goal. This is sharply contrasted with Isabel who enacts magic or power on a more individualist and self-serving level. For example, when ordering in the diner with her father, she turns the clock back to get breakfast which is only served before eleven in the morning. She uses magic to rent and furnish her house, and again to buy extra items for her new home at Bed Bath & Beyond when realising she does not have money on hand. In this way, the film links consumption and instant gratification with magic and power. Notably, this is what Isabel claims to relinquish in order to find love. The suggestion is that consumerist empowerment is not enough – that is, feminist gains that have facilitated women’s ability to work and be financially independent (represented by their consumption of goods), falls short. And as Vint posits, in the postfeminist utopia modelled by contemporary film adaptations such as Bewitched, the solution to that shortfall is ‘finding the “right” man’ (2007:162).

**A Postfeminist Affair**

Further to its production and initial consumption in a postfeminist new millennium (2005), Bewitched is an overtly postfeminist text because postfeminist issues are central to the film. The contemporary adaptation is concerned with women and their relationships with men, work and each other, while strongly featuring the media and popular culture. This ensures it is very much a film about contemporary, postfeminist womanhood. However, as an adaptation of a popular TV series, all aspects of production and reception are further permeated by intertextual references and nostalgic ideals. In this way, it is a vehicle for the exploration of postfeminist nostalgia. The oscillation between the TV show and contemporary film that an adaptive text facilitates ensures that Bewitched functions as a space in which past and present ideals of womanhood are negotiated. This film emphasises those associated with the homemaker, as they are the ideals most clearly exposed in the original TV show. One way these are demonstrated is through an aesthetic emphasis on traditional femininity and domesticity, particularly in terms of costumes and sets (which is also consistent with the TV show). Most significantly, however, the film uses Samantha and the Bewitched TV show within the narrative to inform and empower Isabel. Contemporary womanhood is explored via Isabel’s journey; that is, how she comes to understand being female in a postfeminist era and how she comes to define herself. Therefore the rest of this chapter will focus on examining...
the film in relation to Isabel and the areas that characterise postfeminist womanhood; that is, work, sisterhood and the men in Isabel’s life.

Isabel herself represents the tensions that are inherent in postfeminism. The fictional premise of the film, in which she is new to the postfeminist world or mortal realm, and has never seen an episode of the *Bewitched* show or the character she nostalgically represents, allows the investigation of the contradictory characteristics of postfeminism. Isabel arrives, having renounced the magical world, with the intention of setting up a home and finding not just a man to love but, as she tells her father, Nigel, while shopping at Bed Bath & Beyond, ‘a man who needs me… because he is a completely hopeless mess’. The introduction of this goal in a homeware store reinforces domesticity and the notion of home and women’s place in it, which are recurrent themes. Much of the action takes place at Isabel’s house (see Focus Box 4.1 and Figure 4.7) or on the TV show set which replicates Samantha and Darrin’s home. Significantly, it is the TV show set that Isabel locates as her ‘home’ at the end of the film by returning there after talking with her father:

Isabel: Daddy, what am I going to do?
Nigel: Go home.
Isabel: Where’s that?
Nigel: Wherever you’ve been the happiest.

Thornell notes that ‘[p]hysical appearance, its presentation and manipulation, constitutes a powerful facet of the representation of femininity’ (2010:19). For Isabel, the conflation of 1960s femininity and modern styling visually portray postfeminist nostalgia. Her costumes feature subtle floral motifs, soft pastel colours including pink and lemon, fitted sweaters (which show her figure without being revealing, again reminiscent of the sixties), as well as tailored pants, full, long skirts and flat shoes. Her makeup is subtle and blonde hair is loosely styled to suggest an overall image of effortless, natural beauty (see Figure 4.5). Kidman brings an approachable, yet sophisticated quality to the role which allows her to portray innocence without naivety. Her age allows the character to have previous experiences and to have a connection with those exposed to the original *Bewitched* show. It also positions her alongside other postfeminist screen characters such as Ally McBeal, Bridget Jones and Carrie Bradshaw. Isabel speaks in a breathy tone that is somewhat reminiscent of Marilyn Monroe, suggesting that beyond the innocence and sensuality, she may also be manipulative like Monroe in many of her films. The correlation with TV’s Samantha is signalled by the employment of the name Isabel, which is the Spanish equivalent of Elizabeth – and therefore
can be read as a nod to actress Elizabeth Montgomery. Throughout the film, comments are made about how closely Isabel physically resembles Samantha, including Jack’s ex-wife conflating the two characters saying, ‘You must be Samantha. You look just like the old one.’ This is also why Jack first notices Isabel. He sees her twitch her nose while reading through a space on a bookshelf in the bookstore and then pursues her because she wiggles her nose like Samantha, and she is hired mainly because of that similarity. Thus, meeting Jack and playing Samantha – events that change Isabel’s life – occur largely due to her physical appearance and presentation, rather than her skills and professional expertise. So while Isabel’s presentation acknowledges a postfeminist desire to incorporate past feminine ideals, she is also rewarded on that limited basis.

A Working Girl

It is only after setting up her house and meeting Jack that Isabel identifies the role of work in her new life. While she does not initially go looking for a job, work and the workplace become important areas in her life, and much of the film takes place in the public domain (although the film set is a domestic version as noted earlier). Isabel is introduced to the notion of ‘a job’ through a TV advertisement that equates working with self-esteem (see Focus Box 4.3). When she meets Jack and he offers her the opportunity to work, Isabel sees the chance to combine her desire for a man with those values imbued in work. Later, when things go badly with Jack, she asks her father not to get involved with Iris because she does not want to make her working environment any more difficult or uncomfortable, saying ‘Now that I turned out to be so wrong about him [Jack], my job is all that I’ve got.’ This provides an example of a key element of postfeminism and what Tasker and Negra describe as ‘an evident erasure of feminist politics, even as aspects of feminism seem to be incorporated within that culture’ (2007:5). Isabel’s right to have a job and be economically independent (magic aside) is not questioned or remarkable, nor is the feminist activism that achieved such rights

Figure 4.5: Kidman as Isabel, reading for the role of Samantha in the fictional TV remake of *Bewitched*.
acknowledged. This stands in contrast to societal expectations of Samantha as a housewife. Working outside the home was not an option in a postwar US TV series, rather community work was championed as a valid social contribution and used by the show to demonstrate empowerment (that is, that women can be more than just housewives and mothers). Instead, working in the *Bewitched* film is combined with the hallmark postfeminist trait of wanting both the job and the man. This duality is highlighted by Isabel becoming involved with a man with whom she works. The ultimate conflation of the two is demonstrated by the scene in which Jack convinces Isabel to take the job (acting in the remake) by getting on one knee and asking her to ‘Be my TV wife… Marry me.’

**Focus Box 4.3: Isabel Meets the Workplace**

Isabel is shown taking joy in mortal magic, that is everyday inventions including turning on the sprinklers, using the light dimmers and popping soda can tab tops. She has trouble getting the cable television connected, so she throws down the remote and tugs on her ear (the equivalent of Sam’s nose twitch to visually indicate she is enacting magic). In slow motion, the camera moves 360 degrees around her as the packing bubbles float and swirl (as did the rose petals when she landed in the front yard in introductory scene). The cable attaches itself to the television set and the room, previously strewn with boxes and wrappers, is cleaned up. Back in real time, Isabel surveys her work, says ‘There’, and ‘Let’s keep this between us Lucinda’ to the black cat. (Cats are associated with witches and a trope in magical stories. Lucinda is assumed to be similarly magical as she is shown creating a cat door for herself in Isabel’s new home). Isabel turns on the TV with the repaired remote control. The shot of the television is framed by the edges of the television set, thereby ensuring the viewer is aware they are watching her watching the TV (a mediated image). The image is Ed McMahon directly addressing the camera. He asks, ‘Is your self esteem low because you aren’t participating in the real world?’ A reverse medium close-up of an engaged Isabel answers, ‘Yes, my self esteem is very low.’ Then it cuts back to the framed television shot of Ed McMahon pointing at the camera saying ‘Well let’s face it, you need a job’.

TV host and announcer Ed McMahon hosted US talent show *Star Search* (1983-1995) and presented sweepstake prizes for American Family Publishers. In both these capacities he is linked to instant fortune and ‘making dreams come true’. In this scene, ideals of home are linked with consumption and having ‘things’, work is linked to self esteem (ultimately also consumption) and it is all shown to be mediated (receiving the message through the television acknowledges the role of the media). However, for Isabel it signals the contradictory nature of postfeminist womanhood. Despite her ideals of home and hearth (and use of magic/feminine power to achieve her household) McMahon (an older, masculine authority figure) informs Isabel that the only valid participation in the ‘real’ world is in the workforce, and incorporates (paid) work into identity by linking it with self-esteem.
Most significantly, it is through work – that is, her introduction to Samantha and enacting her in the TV remake – that Isabel’s journey of discovery and empowerment unfolds. Samantha and the original *Bewitched* show are acknowledged within the film’s narrative as significant through the act of remaking the show, including re-enactments of scenes from original episodes, and insertions of original clips (as discussed earlier). A further example is the presence of Samantha via a photograph of Elizabeth Montgomery taped to the mirror in Isabel’s dressing room (see Figure 4.6). This technique allows Isabel to engage with Samantha, whom she addresses directly. In one shot, the photograph sits level with the other three women’s faces, indicating her status as a contemporary, and is lit from below with a golden lamp. When Isabel realises Jack has been disingenuous and she is not the equal partner she thought she was, she looks to the photograph and asks, ‘What would Samantha do?’ This reinforces Samantha’s position in the film’s narrative as a symbol of empowered womanhood. It is also the point at which Isabel takes control and turns her work situation around, moving from passive bystander to active participant.

As discussed in the previous chapter, Samantha’s empowerment was largely highlighted in the TV show through performativity and the exposure of narrowly-defined gender roles, particularly that of housewife. Through her work as an actress filming the remake, Isabel is also connected with performance. This is highlighted by Jack when they first meet and he asks,

Jack: So do you wanna be rich and famous?
Isabel: I just wanna be normal.
Jack: Well, acting is better than normal. Yeah. You get to pretend to be normal.

Ultimately she is a witch, performing the role of an actress, pretending to be a witch, so issues of identity, self and performance are brought to the fore. While Samantha performed the role
of housewife in order to expose it as a restrictive construction for women, Isabel’s performance as an actress allows her access to the transgressive figure of Samantha. The points at which she utilises the empowerment Samantha represents, and those in which she rejects or belies the aspects of the TV series that can be read as subversive, demonstrate the complexities involved in negotiating contemporary postfeminist womanhood.

**Sisterhood**

Further to a commentary on the ideals of domesticity, both the TV series and adapted film acknowledge feminine solidarity. A postfeminist nostalgia for the sisterhood of second wave feminism manifests in the *Bewitched* film through Isabel’s engagement with friends and the portrayal of witches. As identified in the previous chapter, the original TV show constructed a whole matriarchal realm of support for Samantha, and provided her with a sense of sisterhood through the presence of her mother Endora, cousin Serena and Aunt Clara. In the film, Isabel rejects this realm, suggests she does not know where her mother is by stating that ‘She disappeared again’, and instead is supported by her father, Nigel. While Nigel’s presence acknowledges men’s role and stake in the postfeminist world, he is less involved with Isabel than Endora was with Samantha in the original TV series. However, the matriarchal realm is not completely absent from the film. Iris, who plays Endora in the fictional TV remake and is revealed towards the end of the film as a witch, assists and discretely guides Isabel at various times throughout the narrative. This role is supported by Iris being played by Shirley MacLaine (see Figure 4.7), who publicly acknowledges her belief in otherworldliness, particularly reincarnation. Like Agnes Moorehead who played Endora in the original TV show, MacLaine is a widely-experienced, award-winning actress. With boldly-coloured costumes, bright red hair, strongly-defined makeup and flamboyant gestures, she pays homage to the original show’s character (see Figures 3.6 and 4.7). However, where Endora provided an overt presence of feminine power in the TV series, Iris is notably muted and covert. In this way, Iris may be seen to represent second-wave feminism in the postfeminist world: integrated, but largely kept quiet. As noted
earlier, Iris says to Isabel in a hushed tone, looking furtively around that she’s not alone and that ‘There are many others’. This can be understood to suggest that not only witches but feminists are all around and, like the Samantha doll, in the contemporary postfeminist climate they are mostly in the closet.

As indicated earlier, Aunt Clara also makes an appearance in the film. Played by Carole Shelley in the film, her physical characterisation closely resembles that of the original show. Wearing a dark coat and fur stole, Aunt Clara arrives down the chimney and lands in her customarily awkward way in the fireplace with her handbag bursting open to reveal her beloved doorknob collection. Such a close adherence to the characterisation from the TV show functions as a nostalgic cue and an opportunity for the audience to engage with the text as an adaptation. Furthermore, as a ‘quirky’ character, Aunt Clara provides a point of interest in the narrative. She is responsible for putting a hex on Jack (‘to behave’) and, when her magic goes awry and Jack’s behaviour is too extreme, Isabel realises that magic is not the way to solve this problem. In the TV show, Aunt Clara’s presence demonstrated Samantha’s kindness and the strength of the bond among the family of witches. It also reinforced the value of women beyond a prescribed age and outside the roles of wife and mother. These features are less prominent in the film. When Aunt Clara, Isabel and her two friends all dress in black capes and witches’ hats to perform the hex, the performance of magic (representing empowerment) is undermined by the clichéd scene. Although the quartet of women serve to demonstrate the ideals of feminine solidarity, the exaggerated staging of this scene also suggests there is a degree of performance or role-playing involved in their empowerment, thereby diluting its significance (see Chapter 4 for further discussion of women and empowerment).

Early in the film, Isabel expresses her desire for friends: ‘I want to be like everyone else. I want to have friends and I want … to go to the Coffee Bean where we all discuss our problems, which are absolutely unsolvable’. (This is a reference to the TV show Friends and the group’s meeting place, Central Perk – indicative of Isabel’s mediated notion of friends and friendship). In Bewitched Isabel has two friends who help her navigate the postfeminist world, Maria and Nina, and her reliance on them is a further concession to a dilution of power. While friends of the central couple are a generic convention in romantic comedy, together the three women form a trio that is more in keeping with traditional representations
of women and witchcraft. Such imagery goes back to the Three Witches in *Macbeth* (c1603-1607) and recurs in Hollywood films such as *The Witches of Eastwick* (1987), *Hocus Pocus* (1993) *The Craft* (1996) and the TV series *Charmed* (1998-2006). Maria, played by Kristin Chenoweth, is Isabel’s next door neighbour. Chenoweth is known for her Broadway performance as Glinda the Good Witch in *Wicked* (2003), a postfeminist musical adaptation of *The Wizard of Oz* (1939). Her character in *Bewitched* resembles Glinda – a bubbly, popular blonde – in mannerisms and demeanour. Her other friend, Nina, acts in contrast to Maria. Isabel meets Nina at work where she is a writer on the show. With dark, short hair and glasses, she is presented as clever and serious (in opposition to the flirty, vivacious Maria). When a frustrated Isabel interferes in Jack’s scene during filming by getting the dog to jump into her arms instead of running to Jack, it is Nina who feeds her the witty line that steals the scene and gets the studio audience to laugh. However, unlike the TV show where Serena, for example, is presented as an alternative version of femininity, Nina functions as a warning. Although she is intelligent and good at her job (she is the only female writer on the team), she is portrayed as bitter and something of a stereotypical ‘man-hater’, with her suggestions for revenge on Jack including electrocution, doctoring photographs of him with farm animals and using tasers. This reinforces the notion that strong, independent women do not ‘get the man’.

The scene in which Nina, Maria and Aunt Clara have breakfast on the patio at Isabel’s house (see Figure 4.8) brings together the dual postfeminist nostalgias evoked by *Bewitched*. Setting the table for breakfast out on the terrace with flowers in vases, a matching tea set and floral

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18 Isabel says, ‘Thank God you didn’t have a Great Dane’ after catching the dog.
linen cloth on the side table serves to remind the audience of the *Bewitched* TV show. Many episodes began with Samantha and Darrin sitting down at the breakfast table (set with a tablecloth, flowers, coffee pot and orange juice – see Figure 3.3) or included scenes with Samantha out on the terrace (see Figure 3.5). The presence of Aunt Clara reinforces this cue. Furthermore, the setting evokes nostalgia for the 1960s homemaker and presents images associated with domestic femininity. Setting the scene among nature with trees, vines and sunlight supports the contrived ‘naturalness’ of these aspects of femininity. However, rather than presenting a married couple at breakfast (and thereby reinforcing Western patriarchy), the three women at the table (in this case Aunt Clara, Nina and Maria)\(^\text{19}\) represent feminine power and sisterhood. And in this way, the film facilitates the contrasting ideals of womanhood that exist in a postfeminist world. Significantly, Isabel moves in and out of the scene (she carries items from the kitchen to the table but remains standing and moving the whole time), so is shown to be participating and to this extent performing the role; however, she abandons it when she becomes involved with Jack.

### A Man (Who Needs Me)

As identified earlier, the male roles in the *Bewitched* film are more prominent than in the original *Bewitched* TV show, with a focus on the heterosexual couple rather than the female protagonist. As the focus of this analysis is Isabel and her journey, like the previous chapters’ discussion of male characters in the TV series, the men in the *Bewitched* film will be primarily discussed in terms of their relationship to the women with whom they interact. When Isabel’s father, Nigel, asks her in Bed Bath & Beyond at the beginning of the film about her move to the Valley (that is, the mortal realm), she tells him it is ‘Because it’s normal’, that she’s ‘through with warlocks, they’re all like you’ and instead she wants ‘a man who needs me’. Nigel’s response is, ‘Oh, no. You’re talking about love, aren’t you?’ This interaction establishes the premise of the film and explains Isabel’s reason for being there – she is looking for love, and for Isabel that means finding ‘the right man’. Moreover, it introduces Nigel and sets him up in opposition to the type of man for whom Isabel is searching.

\(^{19}\) Isabel sits outside the trio at this point, as their position remains consistent throughout the film while she mediates the continuum of feminine subject positions.
Taking over from Samantha’s mother, Endora, in the original *Bewitched*, Nigel watches over Isabel and serves as a representative of the magical realm in the film adaptation. Rather than a patriarchal regression, this transfer of authority can be read as an acknowledgement of men’s increased role and stake in women’s issues in a postfeminist climate. As with the rest of the supporting cast, Nigel is played by a well-known and accomplished actor. Michael Caine brings his distinctive voice and (British Cockney) accent to the role, while his description of love (‘You say “I love you” to someone you want to go home with, and then when things get messy, you say “I don’t love you anymore”’) and flirtatious manner recall his characterisation of Alfie in the eponymous 1966 movie. The usually cool Nigel finds he is affected by Isabel’s journey when he falls for the actress playing Endora in the TV remake, Iris (mirroring Jack in the film’s ending, Nigel conflates the characters and calls Iris ‘Endora’). Nigel and Iris’s relationship develops with a tongue-in-cheek tone that is consistent with that of Samantha’s parents’ relationship in the original show, and a suggestion that, like Endora, Iris just may be the more powerful (or savvy) witch. Moreover, foregrounding Nigel’s position in the magical (matriarchal) realm intimates that, like Uncle Arthur and Maurice in the TV show, the version of masculinity Nigel represents in the film (being a ‘player’ or playboy), sits outside the norms of postfeminist convention.

**Focus Box 4.3: Daddy in Disguise**

Nigel appears on grocery packaging to remain undetected when talking to Isabel while she is at the supermarket. This scene plays on a device used in the *Bewitched* TV show when Endora would appear (in miniature) in the fridge next to the milk or in the cupboard in the teacups so she could talk to Samantha without Darrin (or other mortals) seeing her. Endora would often comment on the dreariness of the domestic duties Samantha was undertaking, whereas the film’s incorporation of Nigel into images on packaging can be understood as a comment on consumerism.²⁰ Wearing a raincoat, rain hat and navy skivvy, he appears as the image of a fisherman on the frozen fish box – see Figure 4.9 (reminiscent of the Captain from *The Ghost and Mrs Muir* [1968-1970] – a series contemporaneous with *Bewitched*, with older characters and the masculine character embodying supernatural qualities). His face is

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²⁰ This is the second shopping scene with Nigel and Isabel (the first is in Bed Bath & Beyond) although this time Isabel has a job and is presumably buying the groceries with money she has earned from her job. That is, it represents her economic independence. She is also buying tubs of ice cream and other junk food which is a stereotypical representation of how women cope with heartache, such as in *Bridget Jones’ Diary* (2001).
Another warlock to appear in the film is Uncle Arthur. Like Aunt Clara, he is directly related to Isabel (that is, not a character in the TV remake occurring within the film), and his appearance and mannerisms closely follow that of Paul Lynde’s characterisation in the original *Bewitched* TV show. Steve Carell plays Uncle Arthur in the film and mimics Lynde’s facial expressions (see Figure 4.10), pattern of speech, delivers some well-known lines, such as ‘Where’s my Sammie?’, and appears in and cracks the mirror.21 In this way, Uncle Arthur functions as a nostalgic and adaptive cue, even stating that he has been stuck in reruns for years and needs ‘the sizzle of prime time!’ Furthermore, his comment to Jack that, ‘You have blonde highlights and had to wear a girdle on your last movie. Who’s calling who not real?’ highlights shifts in notions of masculinity. In the TV show Uncle Arthur represented a version of masculinity marginalised by patriarchy but maintained in the matriarchal magical world. Whereas in the film, Jack, whom Uncle Arthur acknowledges as having similarly incorporated traditionally feminine traits (dyed hair and figure-enhancing undergarments), is a mainstream movie star.22 One of Uncle Arthur’s central functions in the film’s narrative, however, is to help reunite Isabel and Jack and ensure they end up together.

Between the conventions of the genre and the audience’s knowledge of the show from which the film is adapted, Jack’s introduction as the actor playing Darrin signals him as Isabel’s match. Jack Wyatt is played by comedic actor Will Ferrell who was known in the US at the

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21 Jack mentions that Uncle Arthur cracking the mirror is one of his favourite things about the *Bewitched* TV show in an early scene, which sets the later occurrence up as satisfying for both the knowing and unknowing audience.

22 Jack most clearly identifies with the character of Uncle Arthur in the TV show from the start of the film, reciting his lines and recalling his appearances when discussing the remake with Ritchie and the producers.
time the *Bewitched* film was made for his impersonations and appearances on *Saturday Night Live*.\(^2\) Ferrell injects a physical humour into the character, a quality foregrounded through Jack’s role as an actor; that is, in scenes when he is playing Darrin (he overacts bumping into Samantha and falling on the bed in the remade episodes) and when he gives Isabel acting tips, which leads them back to the set and more physical displays of comedy in a dance sequence (see Focus Box 4.2). As part of the central couple in a filmic romcom, Jack is given more screen time than Darrin occupied in the original TV show, allowing the complexity of his character to be explored. Like Isabel, Jack’s journey reflects the tension of postfeminism, as he offers a masculine perspective on the changing state of gender roles and gender relations in a postfeminist world. Although he has money, power and fame, Jack is insecure and conflicted.

Jack’s uncertainty can be seen to represent what has been described as ‘masculinity in crisis’, referring to challenges to traditional notions of masculinity brought about by the feminist and gay rights movements (see Buchbinder 1994; Connell 2005). It incorporates the view that men no longer know where they stand in terms of how to behave (that is, how to perform masculinity), and the social expectations of their gender. (Postfeminist nostalgia for prescribed gender roles is related to this uncertainty.) This is demonstrated in *Bewitched* when Jack and his agent, Ritchie (see Figure 4.11), meet with the producers of the TV remake. On their way to the meeting, Jack is complaining about losing status as a movie star (his last film was a flop) and missing his wife, who, in a reversal of traditional gender scenarios, left him for an underwear model. In a display of homosocial behaviour (Ritchie pats Jack on the bottom, fixes his hair and slaps him on the back), Jack’s ego is bolstered and he is reassured.

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that taking on the *Bewitched* TV remake project is a good career move. However, during the meeting, as Jack agrees to an ensemble cast and tells the producers how much he loves Uncle Arthur, Ritchie pulls him aside.

Ritchie: You’re being a pussy, pussy, pussy!
Jack: No, I’m not. I want the show to be good.
Ritchie: You want the show to be… You know what? Jack Wyatt’s doing TV now because his film career ate it! And he's not even the clear star of his own show. Jack, screw Uncle Arthur. Hell, screw ensembles, man.
Jack: I'm being a pussy.
Ritchie: Yes. If this show tanks, you'll be on *Hollywood Squares* for years. You will also be the mayor of Pussytown.
Jack: I don't wanna be the mayor of Pussytown.
Ritchie: Get in there and be the sheriff of Ballsville.

Jack returns to the meeting with a swagger and list of outrageous demands, in an attempt to perform more traditionally dominant, aggressive masculinity. However, the scene dissolves into humour, indicating that such a style of masculinity is not supported in the postfeminist environment. Much of the film plays out with Jack switching between this kind of bravado and an almost child-like insecurity. For example, when he hears the poor results of audience testing (the second time, after Aunt Clara’s hex is reversed), he throws a tantrum by stomping and whining and then turning to Ritchie for a hug. In another instance, upon hearing television reviewers discuss the show’s casting, he screams down the phone to Ritchie, ‘Look, I don’t know if you know this, but I’m Darrin, okay? They replaced Darrin on the original *Bewitched* and no one noticed!’ As well as intertextual, this self-reflexivity indicates Jack has a greater awareness of gender roles in the postfeminist film than the assumed roles portrayed by the men in the TV show. Although exaggerated for comedic effect, Jack’s changeable behaviour demonstrates that men find the world confusing too and, like Isabel, Jack is trying to find his place in it.

Initially, Isabel finds the chaos that surrounds Jack appealing, as it is different from her previous experiences with warlocks. When Isabel first meets Jack she comments on him being ‘unkempt’ and ‘troubled’, adding that she thinks ‘the fact that you’re a hopeless mess is very refreshing. It moves me.’ So when he says ‘I need you’, she is hooked. However, Jack’s hubris becomes the foil for the witches’ magic and the source of much of the film’s humour. As discussed in the previous chapter, in the original show Samantha has an unshakeable faith in Darrin, despite the opinion of others – particularly that of her family. Even though Darrin is the victim of many (magical) practical jokes and insults, they never come from Samantha and
it is always clear how much she loves him. However, in the movie, Isabel’s emotions are conflicted with her saying how much she loves and hates Jack at the same time. Both Nigel and Maria reinforce that this notion of mixed feelings and turmoil is romantic love. In Isabel’s trailer after filming on set with Jack, Maria empathises with Isabel by relating a story of feeling similarly angry yet drawn to her ex-husband. Then in the supermarket when asked by her father if she is no longer in love with Jack, Isabel says, ‘I have never disliked a man more in my entire life … which proves that I am completely over him’. Nigel responds with the warning, ‘Not necessarily’. Then, when Isabel is rejected by Jack after revealing to him that she is a witch, she tells her father: ‘He's idiotic, and yet I find him completely charming. It's been like that since the beginning. Only now, I also hate him.’ Nigel simply declares, ‘Love’. While tension between Isabel and Jack is part of the generic convention of romcom and the narrative structure dictates that they meet, separate and then get back together (as identified earlier), the film’s portrayal of love is problematic because it is conflated with magic and power.

A key scene in the film is when Isabel tells Jack she is a witch. It demonstrates the conflation of love, magic and power while again relating Isabel directly back to Samantha and images from the original TV series. (Figure 4.12 and 4.13 show the visual similarities between the costume design in the original series and adapted film.) Wearing an emerald green top and fitted black skirt during the cast party, Isabel puts on a black coat with broad cuffs and a green
collar as she leaves, after trying to tell Jack she is a witch. This transforms her outfit into one that simulates Samantha’s flying suit (Figure 4.12) – a costume she only wore when overtly engaging with the matriarchal realm (such as attending the Witches Council or Witches Convention). While providing an adaptive cue, Isabel’s version of this costume serves to visually position her in the film as an embodiment of feminine power. Needing to convince Jack of her power (as a witch), she lifts him off the ground with the broomstick she has made appear, proving it can fly and that she is a witch. Yet this demonstration of empowerment is immediately rejected by Jack who literally shoos her away with a tree branch. This suggests he is destabilised by this version of Isabel for, unlike the TV show, the postfeminist film adaptation does not support such an overt display of feminine power. It is only after his encounter with Uncle Arthur (who is acknowledged as a masculine figure operating within a feminised space) that Jack identifies his and Isabel’s love as ‘natural’ (that is, outside magic) and he is able to accept Isabel. For Isabel, the quest has been to find ‘the right man’. While she comes to realise that this can only happen when she accepts being a witch (empowered), it has been a journey fraught with conflicting responses to that empowerment. The scene outside the cast party teaches Isabel that in a postfeminist world, displays of empowerment should be tempered. Ultimately, in adhering to romcom convention and coming together at the end of the film, as Vint (2007:162-163) identifies (and as previously noted), the broader issues surrounding gendered power and empowerment are reduced to an individual level and the belief that love will solve everything. This reinforces postfeminism’s focus on the individual, assumption that equality has been achieved, and move away from the social activism of second wave feminism.

**Back to Where We Started?**

Throughout the film, Isabel looks to a mediated past, through her engagement with Samantha and the *Bewitched* TV show, to understand contemporary postfeminist womanhood. The film’s structure allows access to its TV past with intertextual cues, embedded text and layered features that encourage an audience to identify it as an adaptation, thereby activating the oscillation Hutcheon describes. This in turn heightens nostalgia. However, because of a combination of the nature of the text from which the film is adapted and the contemporary postfeminist issues raised in the film with which it interacts, the nostalgia exposed is postfeminist nostalgia. In the *Bewitched* film, the postfeminist nostalgia most clearly evoked is for past ideals associated with domesticity and traditional femininity. The version of
femininity presented through costumes, props and sets (that feature floral patterns and pastel colours), together with an emphasis on the home (Isabel’s and the *Bewitched* set) highlight one desired aspect of contemporary postfeminist womanhood. Nostalgia for the matriarchal sisterhood from the TV show is also evident through the inclusion of Isabel’s friends Nina and Maria, as well as Aunt Clara and Iris. While this does not feature as strongly nor function as subversively as it did in the original series, the presence of solidarity in the film indicates its ongoing relevance and thus its recognition as another valued aspect of postfeminism.

The nostalgic features evoked by the film are clear and, while Isabel asks the question ‘What would Samantha do?’ she does not ask the question, ‘Why Samantha?’ It is not until the end of the film (which situates the narrative at the beginning of the series), that this is addressed. Jack returns to the empty set at the TV studios to find Isabel sitting on the front steps of Samantha and Darrin’s house. She’s contemplating leaving (the mortal realm) when Jack asks her to stay and work things out:

   Isabel: I can’t be normal because I’m a witch. I can’t be a witch because I really want to be normal. It’s not possible.
   Jack: Of course it’s possible. There’s tons of other witches who’ve done it.
   Isabel: Who?
   Jack: Well, maybe not tons of other witches, but at least one.
   Isabel: Samantha
   Jack: Caught between two worlds and yet completely happy. She lived happily ever after in fact.

The ‘two worlds’ – magical (matriarchal) and mortal (patriarchal) – reflect the core problematic of postfeminism and Samantha is posited as an example of how to successfully mediate between them. This direct comparison is followed by a conflation of Jack and Isabel’s with Darrin and Samantha’s relationships, as the final scene depicts Jack carrying Isabel into their new house. It is a replica of the remade show’s set (see Figure 4.14), and Isabel says, ‘Don’t you think the front lawn looks a little bare?’ as a small tree appears on the front lawn. Across the street the neighbour is peering through the window and shrills, ‘Abner!’24 This scene recreates elements from an early episode of the original show, ‘Be It Ever So Mortgaged’ (#2) in which Endora and Samantha try out different landscaping ideas when visiting Samantha and Darrin’s prospective new home. As the audience know that the Stephens have a happy future ahead, the implication is that Isabel and Jack will too, thus

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24 The neighbour is Mrs Kravitz, who, like Uncle Arthur and Aunt Clara, functions as an adaptive cue while delivering an instantly-recognisable line from the original series.
satisfying the genre’s need for a happy ending. While this resolution is narratively tidy and nostalgically aware, ending the new millennium postfeminist film where the original TV series began four decades earlier belies the transgressive spirit of the TV show and the feminine empowerment Samantha represents.

Focused on women and a matriarchal sisterhood, and exposing performativity and restrictive gender roles, the *Bewitched* TV series was a progressive text. At the centre of that text, negotiating the matriarchal and patriarchal worlds was Samantha. However, when adapted into a contemporary film, the agency and power of Samantha did not translate to Isabel. This is inherently acknowledged in the film, primarily through Isabel’s reflections (‘What would Samantha do?’) and statements such as the one made by Jack above. Isabel learns what it means to be female in a postfeminist world through the course of the film from Samantha, working on the *Bewitched* remake, and her friends. Yet despite forty years of feminism, Samantha is still clearly more empowered than Isabel. At best, even according to the film’s resolution, Isabel’s position is equivalent to Samantha’s at the beginning of the series. Recalling Hutcheon’s Darwinian analogy and the notion that characters and narratives are adapting to fulfil a purpose, this film adaptation reveals a dual purpose. First as a highly intertextual film, the *Bewitched* movie readily and consistently invites comparisons with the *Bewitched* TV series. This identifies the changes feminism affords, such as economic independence, which makes the role of second wave feminism more visible. Yet is also identifies aspects of past femininities that continue to be desired and/or relevant in the
postfeminist era, such as homemaking and feminine solidarity. Second, as a postfeminist film seeking to re-present a popular female figure, it draws attention to an ongoing re-definition of womanhood and femininity and the construction of gender.

In her discussion of *Emma* (1996) and *Clueless* (1995), Thornell (2010) notes that, despite ultimately conservative messages, the subtle complexities in the representations of women and femininity in film adaptations is significant. She contends that the examination of the constructions of Woman generated by the social technology of film, while hopefully illuminating the relationships linking the medium to society and to other texts, reminds us that such constructions are just this – constructions, and not objective truths… It invites us to view representations of the feminine as unstable and dynamic – open to interpretation, invention, and reinvention. (Thornell 2010:31-32).

Thus, further to the connection with the past and the relationship with second wave feminism that the original series represents, Isabel and the *Bewitched* film demonstrate the conflicts and tensions that permeate postfeminism and the complex nature of contemporary postfeminist womanhood. In the next chapter, the foundation of some of these tensions is explored. Through an analysis of the *Charlie's Angels* TV series, the manner in which feminism and femininity are negotiated is discussed, and the accommodation of new roles for women and emergence of new femininities is considered.
In January 1976, *Time* magazine announced American Women as the winners of their annual Person of the Year award. Under a headline of ‘Women of the Year’, the cover depicted a montage of headshots of twelve American women, chosen because they had ‘accomplished much in their own right in 1975, and they also symbolized the new consciousness of women generally’ (‘Women of the Year’ 1976). They included: the First Lady, Betty Ford; Connecticut Governor Ella Grasso; chief justice Susie Sharp; president of Smith College, Jill Ker Conway; tennis player Billie Jean King; Navy lieutenant commander Kathleen Byerly; and managing editor of Louisville’s *Courier-Journal*, Carol Sutton. While most of those featured were the first women to hold their positions (representing women breaking new ground in positions of power), the accompanying article emphasised that ‘[w]hat was exceptional in the year of American women was the status of the everyday, usually anonymous woman, who moved into the mainstream of jobs, ideas and policy making’ (‘Women of the Year’ 1976). The article quotes a range of figures, such as increases in women enrolling at graduate business schools (between 1971 and 1975 from 5 to 19 percent at Stanford and 6 to 33 percent at Columbia), and a Gallup poll result of 73 percent of people claiming they would support a woman running for President, as evidence of social progress. And while identifying economic equality as a significant obstacle, the main sentiment of the piece is that ‘feminism has transcended the feminist movement. In 1975 the women’s drive penetrated every layer of society, matured beyond ideology to a new status of general – and sometimes unconscious – acceptance’ (‘Women of the Year’ 1976). In November the same year, three very different women graced the cover of *Time*. They wore sequined evening gowns, looked alluringly and directly at the camera and were accompanied by the headline ‘TV’s Super Women’ (see Figure 5.1). They were the cast of the phenomenally popular prime-time show, *Charlie’s Angels*. 
Charlie’s Angels debuted in the US on the ABC network on 21 March 1976 with a 90 minute pilot, followed up by a weekly series which ran for five seasons from 22 September 1976. ‘Hellride’ (#1) was the first hourly episode and finished eighth in the weekly Nielsen ratings with a 45 share – unprecedented for a new series at that time. One month later, 92 percent of people surveyed by ABC had seen Charlie’s Angels, with 62 percent of male viewers and 68 percent of female viewers identifying it as their favourite show (Condon and Hofstede 2000:47). By November, the show achieved a 59 share, with an estimated 23 million households tuning in every Wednesday night at 10pm EST to watch the action and glamour as three sexy, female private detectives – Sabrina (Kate Jackson), Kelly (Jaclyn Smith) and Jill (Farrah Fawcett) – went undercover to solve cases for the unseen Charlie (voiced by John Forsythe) (‘TV’s Super Women’ 1976). Describing the fare as ‘aesthetically ridiculous, commercially brilliant’, the Time article that accompanied the cover depicted in Figure 5.1 is indicative of the opinion of the day. The show was panned by many critics as vacuous. TV Guide, for example, called it ‘TV’s first prime-time girlie show’, dismissing the three actresses as pampered ‘flowers’ and suggesting that the ‘[h]air stylist… may have the toughest job on the show’ (O’Hallaren 1976:26). Some feminists saw it as an affront to women’s liberation, with Judith Coburn describing it as ‘one of the most misogynist shows the networks have produced recently’ (cited in ‘TV’s Super Women’ 1976). Marjorie Rosen lamented at the Angels’ construction as ‘braless, mindless, walking-talking-sex-and-violence fantasies’ (1977:102), while Cathy Schwichtenberg focused on the role of the studios in the ‘exploitation and recirculation of the female image for further ratings mileage’ (1981:13). Yet Charlie’s Angels was a hit with audiences, and the network executives who were commanding US$100,000 per minute for ad spots during the show. According to the Time article, the series’ popularity and commercial success was due to timing: ‘Everybody knows about the power of a great idea whose time has

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1 See Appendix B for a full list of Charlie’s Angels episodes.

2 Nielsen ratings were developed by the Nielsen Company to measure the size and composition of television audiences in the US. A rating indicates the percentage of the total television population that tuned in to a particular program, while a share reflects the percentage of television sets actually in use during a timeslot that tuned in to a particular program.
come. What often gets overlooked is that the strength of a mediocre idea whose historical moment has arrived can be just as awesome’ (‘TV’s Super Women’ 1976).

It is both relevant and significant that these two Time covers and associated articles bookend 1976. By the end of that year, the notion of women as powerful figures had moved from those holding institutional offices to mainstream characters on television, demonstrating a different power and embedding issues of gender at a popular culture level, while also implying broader acceptance in society. Where Bewitched offered viewers the possibility of empowerment (through magic), Charlie’s Angels offered a (heightened) version of 1970s’ reality. It showed active, resourceful, independent women successfully doing what ten years earlier was only conceivable as a man’s job. Moreover, they were confidently sexy, glamorous women. On one level (as feminists of the day attested), their sexual portrayal was problematic, yet on another it reflected and appealed to changing social mores. In her introduction to Disco Divas, Sherrie A. Inness contends that it was through seventies popular culture that American society came to terms with the huge social upheavals of the sixties (2003:3). Charlie’s Angels can be seen to function in such a way. This chapter examines how, as a product of its (transitional) time, Charlie’s Angels demonstrates the negotiation of new femininities, and mediates women’s new roles, notions of femininity and difference. The way in which feminism and femininity engage is a central feature of contemporary post-feminism. Looking at how this struggle was approached and received in a popular forum such as this prime-time series when those issues emerged, provides an apposite insight into modern debates. It also provides a point of reference when examining the postfeminist film adaptation (see Chapter 6) and identifying which elements of the new femininities offered in the original Charlie’s Angels series re-emerge in the new millennium.

This chapter initially provides a context for the discussion by identifying three key elements that contributed to the climate in which the Charlie’s Angels TV series emerged and thrived: second wave feminism, the sexual revolution and network television. The history of the show and its structure is then outlined before exploring how the series demonstrates a negotiation between empowerment and difference. This is done by examining the role of Charlie, the manner in which the women undertake private detection, and the show’s engagement with notions of sexuality and sisterhood. Finally, the legacy of the original Charlie’s Angels is
addressed, including merchandising, the birth of ‘girl power’ and acknowledgment of the 2011 television remake of the series.

**Second Wave Feminism**

As noted in Chapter 3, the 1960s and 1970s were a period of significant change in America, including the establishment of second wave feminism and the call for greater equality for women. The divergence of feminism was one of the defining features of second wave feminism, with two major strands identifiable in America by the mid 1970s. The National Organization for Women (NOW) largely followed a liberal, Equal Rights tradition while, in contrast, the Women’s Liberation Movement (which had its origins in civil-rights, anti-Vietnam War and student protests of 1960s) was less formally organised and more radically based (active on university campuses, demonstrations etc). In terms of broader social impact, by the time *Charlie’s Angels* was in development in the early to mid 1970s, the endeavours of the liberal feminists were coming to fruition. When NOW was formed in 1966, three years after President John F. Kennedy’s Presidential Commission on the Status of Women, it sought ‘to bring women into full participation in the mainstream of American society now, exercising all privileges and responsibilities thereof in truly equal partnership with men’ (Gamble 2001:30). Founding member and inaugural president Betty Friedan used her profile, along with other women in the media such as Shirley Chisholm and Pauli Murray, to promote NOW’s cause, and by the mid 1970s the women’s movement had started to claim some legal victories. The Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) was re-introduced and passed by the US Congress (then sent to states for ratification, a process that remains incomplete). Title X (family planning and health) was passed in 1970 and Title IX passed in 1972, allowing equal opportunity in education, followed by the Women’s Educational Equity Act and Equal Credit Opportunity Act in 1974. In 1975 a law to require US Military Academies to admit women came into effect and in 1978 the Pregnancy Discrimination Act was enacted. Significant Supreme Court cases included *Reed v. Reed* (1971), which was the first equal protection case to prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex (over who would administer an estate), and *Roe v. Wade* (1973), which prompted national debate by ruling that laws prohibiting abortion are unconstitutional.
In 1972 Ms., the feminist magazine edited by Gloria Steinem, became independent (it was previously an insert in New York Magazine). Steinem (see Figure 5.2) provided a new public image for feminism with her mix of activism and allure. In a 1971 profile feature article in Newsweek, ‘Gloria Steinem: A Liberated Woman Despite Beauty, Chic and Success’, the first paragraph is devoted to a description of her physical appearance, including the following:

In hip-hugging raspberry Levis, 2-inch wedgies and tight poor-boy T-shirt, her long, blond-streaked hair falling just so above each breast and her cheerleader-pretty face made wiser by the addition of blue-tinted glasses, she is a chic apotheosis of with-it cool. (1971:33)

The single, heterosexual Steinem was also confident and independent. As Anna Gough-Yates observes, ‘Reputedly single by choice, Steinem’s sexual autonomy, combined with her media depiction as both desirable and glamorous, gave her lifestyle an intrigue and appeal for both men and women’ (2001:86). Thus the media-savvy Steinem came to represent a version of feminism that allowed independence while maintaining ideals of femininity (through sexual attractiveness). By the mid 1970s, not only was equality for women being recognised legally and accepted socially, but it could also be sexy.

The Sexual Revolution

In 1965, The Rolling Stone’s ‘(I Can’t Get No) Satisfaction’ spent four successive weeks at the top of the US Billboard charts and fourteen weeks in the top 100. With such a popular endorsement of sexually suggestive lyrics and the provocative band who sang them, its success signalled that the sexual revolution in the US was underway.3 In Make Love, Not War, David Allyn locates the beginning of the sexual revolution ‘in the early sixties because this was when white middle-class Americans first really began to accept the idea of young women having premarital sex’, and he observes the sexual revolution continuing until the late seventies (2000:5). Allyn contends that during those years, ‘the nation went through a period

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3 While there continues to be contention among scholars over the sexual revolution – when it occurred and in what ways (if any) it was revolutionary (see Eberstadt 2012, Escoffier 2003 and Kelly 2011) – this thesis draws on dominant popular history in its discussion of the period.
of rapid change that affected nearly everyone in some way or another’ (2000:5). A variety of factors contributed to the widespread social transformations that took place during this time. Amongst these were the campaigns for legal and sexual equality, the civil rights movement, women’s liberation, the gay rights movement, and the hippie counterculture. For women, sexual pleasure and reproductive rights were not just affected by women’s liberation, but enormously impacted by the introduction of the birth control pill (the Pill). In 1960 the Food and Drug Administration licensed the Pill, which effectively separated sex (and sexual pleasure) from reproduction. Women were encouraged to be more assertive with their sexuality and the ready availability of the Pill by the 1970s was a significant factor in facilitating the freer sexual mores of that time. The gay rights movement also emerged within the context of the sexual revolution. Staging the first Gay Pride March in 1970 in New York City, the gay and lesbian community sought to normalise homosexuality and challenge heterosexual notions of sexual identity, gender roles and sexual morality, while the youth, anti-war and hippie movements rejected the previous generation’s values (which included the monogamous, heterosexual, nuclear family) in favour of ‘free love’.

Perhaps the most significant effect of the sexual revolution was that sex was no longer confined to the private domain of family and reproduction. It was out in the open, and therefore part of the market place and consumer culture. Helen Gurley Brown tapped into the nation’s changing mood with the publication of *Sex and the Single Girl* in 1962, which sold two million copies in three weeks (Ouellette 1999:361). In her guide for the single, working woman, Gurley Brown controversially encouraged her readers to ‘reconsider the idea that sex without marriage is dirty’ and suggested that women could lead full sexual lives outside marriage (2003 [1962]:257,11). In 1965 Gurley Brown became editor-in-chief of *Cosmopolitan* – an influential association that she maintained for 32 years. As Bill Osgerby notes,

> [t]he Single Girl was a prevalent visual image across US popular culture during the 1960s, but it was in the pages of *Cosmopolitan* magazine that she was codified most completely. Originally a homely general features title pitched to American housewives, *Cosmopolitan* got a full makeover during the mid-1960s. Revamped and repositioned in the market as the glamorously exciting Bible of the Single Girl, the magazine’s features, editorials and advertising exuded a lively pizzazz [with] its heady cocktail of sexual freedom and stylish consumerism. (Osgerby 2005:209).

4 The hippie counterculture ‘implied rejection of the dominant culture and a decision to practise alternate lifestyles’ (Schulman 2001:17). Also see Terry Anderson (1995).

5 Gurley Brown’s book was not anti-marriage, but rather a guide to attracting, dating and conducting affairs with the most eligible men before marrying the best one (see Brown 1962; Ouellette 1999).
Ten years after *Sex and the Single Girl*, Alex Comfort’s *The Joy of Sex* (1972) was published. The illustrated sex manual spent eleven weeks at the top of the *New York Times* best seller list, 70 weeks in the top five and sold 3.8 million copies in its first two years of publication. Around this time, hard-core porn films secured mainstream releases and could be seen at local theatres. Films such as *Deep Throat* (1972) and *The Devil in Miss Jones* (1973) attracted large audiences as well as cult followings, and in 1977 the famously hedonistic discotheque Studio 54 opened its doors on West 54th Street in Manhattan, New York. Now part of the public domain, sex had become commodified and was being consumed on a mass scale. For Elana Levine,

the commodification of sex can also be seen as a democratization, in that most members of a consumer culture have at least some access to the marketplace, and the influence of the market can keep sex from being solely controlled and regulated by religious, governmental, or scientific forces. (2007:10)

While those institutions continued to have an influence, it was commercial television in the 1970s that exposed most Americans to broader ideas around sexuality on a regular basis. Previously a ‘family’ medium, 1970s commercial network television was, as an industry executive at the time admitted, ‘wallowing in sex’ (cited in Levine 2007:2).

Introduced to the general public in the late 1940s, televisions largely made their way into American homes during the 1950s with the number of US households owning a television set increasing from 9% in 1950 to 90% in 1962 (Harris 2004:7). By 1978 the figure reached 98%, with the majority of televisions in colour and many homes having two or more sets (Slocum-Schaffer 2003:179). As Stephanie Slocum-Schaffer observes, ‘[t]he decade of the 1970s was the second decade of television’s dominance of home life, and in some ways it witnessed the high point of television’s pre-eminence in American culture’ (2003:179). In 1963 Americans saw Kennedy’s assassination on television, images from the Vietnam War were seen on screens in their homes, and they witnessed the Watergate hearings in 1973. These (televised) events affected a shift away from the generally idealised imagery of 1950s and much of 1960s television, to content that more closely reflected the changes taking place in American society in the seventies. This included content that was more openly sexual than ever before. The extent of sexual imagery ranged from disco dancing in the Acapulco Lounge and

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6 *Deep Throat* earned US$25 million through its screening in 73 US cities. This remains a record for hard-core porn films (Levine 2007:2).
unambiguous sexual propositioning on *The Love Boat* (1977-1986), to a teenage love scene in *Dawn: Portrait of a Teenage Runaway* (1976)\(^7\) and the regular use of terms such as ‘rape’, ‘VD’ and ‘impotence’ in other made-for-TV movies. Levine also identifies bralessness as an essential feature of female attractiveness in shows such as *The Love Boat, Charlie’s Angels* and *Three’s Company* (2007:3). As well as being both titillating and fashionable (being suited to strapless outfits and halter tops), bralessness in the mid-seventies could also signify feminist liberation as a reference to bra-burning\(^8\) and women challenging the notion of body ideals (Inness 2003:36-37). Having become a dominant media form, American TV in the 1970s was perhaps the most culturally significant mode through which the influences of women’s liberation and the sexual revolution were circulated. While engagement with an audience is paramount for success in television, what was shown on television at that time was the direct result of programming decisions by the networks. To a certain extent, therefore, how America came to view women and sex was somewhat shaped by the network system itself.

**Network Television**

Since the 1950s, the CBS, NBC and ABC Networks (known as The Big Three), dominated US television,\(^9\) competing with each other for Nielsen ratings and advertising revenue. All three operated under similar corporate structures, scheduling practices and content, so variation in programming was the only means by which they could distinguish themselves. In the 1970s, they employed sex-themed shows to this end. As Levine contends,

> [w]hether by imitating each other’s successes or countering each other with variations on a theme, in the 1970s all three networks used sex to appeal to viewers. Inter-network rivalry produced the new sexual culture, ensuring its ubiquity, its limited diversity, and its commodified base. (2007:19)

\(^7\) See Levine (2007:100-119) for more on the significance of *Dawn: Portrait of a Teenage Runaway* and made-for-TV movies during this era.

\(^8\) The image of bra-burning was a response in the popular press to a demonstration in 1968 at the Miss America pageant in which items including bras, girdles, false eyelashes, wigs and copies of *Cosmopolitan* and *Ladies Home Journal* were thrown into symbolic rubbish bins (Inness 2003:36). However, they were not burned, as was widely reported. Susan J. Douglas contends that bra-burning became a metaphor ‘that trivialized feminists and titillated the audience at the same time…[I]t equated the women’s movement with exhibitionism and narcissism, as if women who unstrapped their breasts were unleashing their sexuality in a way that was unseemly, laughable, and politically inconsequential, yet dangerous. Women who threw their bras away may have said they were challenging sexism, but the media, with a wink, hinted that these women’s motives were not at all political but rather personal: to be trendy, and to attract men’ (Douglas 1995:160).

\(^9\) CBS and NBC were originally radio broadcasters, while ABC was a spin-off from NBC. These three networks held this position until Fox broke through in 1986 and multi-channel delivery through cable facilitated narrowcasting in what is termed the ‘post-Network’ era (Edgerton 2007; Lotz 2006).
Commercial factors facilitated such an outcome. Historically, CBS was the lead network, and central to their success was their long-standing association with advertisers Proctor and Gamble. Proctor and Gamble sponsored daytime ‘soap opera’ TV series, including CBS’s ratings leaders *As the World Turns* (1956-) and *The Guiding Light* (1952-). Soap operas are traditionally a daytime serial drama, or as Laura Stempel Mumford details, ‘a continuing fictional dramatic television program, presented in multiple serial installments each week, through a narrative composed of interlocking storylines that focus on the relationships within a specific community of characters’ (1995:18). They were (and, to some extent, continue to be) essential to the networks because they were highly profitable and ensured viewer loyalty (Levine 2007:21). In contrast, ABC consistently came in third with a low rating daytime schedule. However, changes to advertising regulations in the early 1970s resulted in ABC achieving a more equal economic foothold. Spurred on by audience responses to NBC’s top rating *Rowan and Martin’s Laugh-In* (1968-1976), ABC targeted the youth market for their daytime schedule with sexually suggestive game shows such as *The Dating Game* (1965-1973) and *The Newlywed Game* (1966-1974). Together with a revamped *General Hospital* (1963-) and the gothic serial *Dark Shadows* (1966-1971), ABC ensured youth and sexuality was part of its identity. In its prime time schedule, ABC premiered the *Movie of the Week* on 23 September 1969. Screening 90 minute, made-for-TV movies from a range of studios and genres afforded ABC some prime time success. Ultimately their strategy paid off, as ABC took the ratings lead in the 1976-77 season with the top four shows – including *Happy Days* (1974-1984), *Laverne and Shirley* (1976-1983) and *Charlie’s Angels* – and seven of the top ten (‘ABC-TV Wins’ 1977).

ABC had handled sex differently and attained results. Initially the more traditional CBS dealt with sexual and social issues in their sitcoms (see Levine 2007:23); however, they responded to ABC’s brand of sexualised TV with similar programming, such as the introduction of the glamorous daytime soap *The Young and the Restless* in 1973. Effectively then, the way changing social mores were reflected back to Americans across the three mainstream

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10 The FCC banned cigarette advertising and introduced the Prime Time Access Rule (PTAR), which reduced the minimum ad time from one minute to 30 seconds; both of which took effect in 1971. While the industry lost cigarette advertisers, the PTAR allowed networks to attract new advertisers and earn more for each advertising minute (now 2 x 30 sec spots).

11 ABC’s *Three’s Company* (1977-1984), which had only debuted a month earlier in March 1977, was ranked eleventh.
networks was influenced by the commercial successes of ABC’s formula. Moreover, the significance of women was acknowledged in terms of market share with ‘working women’ identified as a distinct and pertinent demographic category, first added to the A.C. Nielsen Company rating surveys in 1976 (D’Acci 1994:72). Consequently the ABC network’s programming decisions during this time (although commercially rather than politically driven), resulted in women being represented on screen in greater numbers and in new roles.

‘Gun-toting glamour-sleuths’

In her chapter on Charlie’s Angels in Action TV: Tough Guys, Smooth Operators and Foxy Chicks, Anna Gough-Yates contends that the show’s ‘brand of “liberated”, action-glamour femininity’ resonated with American audiences because it embodied the independent ‘single girl’ ethos of the time (2001:85). As noted earlier, that ethos came to be represented by Cosmopolitan whereby women were empowered through sexual confidence and their ability to deploy ‘sexuality as a weapon in a quest for material reward and personal fulfilment’ (Gough-Yates 2001:88). As exciting, sexy, independent, single women, Sabrina, Kelly and Jill (and the later Angels) enacted a shift from ‘Cosmopolitan Girl’ to ‘gun-toting glamour-sleuth’ (Gough-Yates 2001:88). Significantly, some of the most prominent TV roles in which women were cast at this time were those where they were undertaking less-than-traditionally feminine pursuits. In Police Woman (1974-1978), Charlie’s Angels and Wonder Woman (1975-1979) for example, the title characters were charged with solving crimes and catching criminals, using weapons, fast cars and physical strength to do so. Levine argues that,

it was the combination of the conventionally masculine and the conventionally feminine in these characters that spoke to the question of sexual difference, of woman’s difference from man and the degree to which that difference was natural as opposed to social. This question was central to the women’s liberation movement and debates over it, to the television industry’s struggle over what kinds of representations of women would be acceptable to the public, and to the television audience’s conflicted responses to the medium’s new female character type. (Levine 2007:125)

For Susan Hopkins, the mix of ‘masculine’ strength and ‘feminine’ sex appeal not only engaged a mass audience, in Charlie’s Angels it ‘marked the evolutionary beginnings of a new Girl Power; here the woman was holding the gun, not cowering in front of it’ (2002:130-131).12 While Inness (1999) maintains that the Angels’ toughness is ultimately undermined by

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12 As well as new roles for women in TV detective series, the medium of television offered a new approach for women in the private eye genre beyond the cinematic conventions of melodrama and film noir (see Gledhill 1987; Kaplan 1998). Over the course of a series characters could be shown in different settings and
their attractiveness, Whitney Womack asserts that, despite feminist criticism, the inherent value of *Charlie’s Angels* lies in what she identified with and saw in the show as a young child, which was ‘images of female intelligence, strength, solidarity, and community’ (2003:152).

Feminist readings of the representations of women in *Charlie’s Angels* were critical of what was perceived to be patriarchal servitude, exploitation and stereotypical imagery – see comments by Coburn (1976) and Rosen (1977) related earlier in the chapter. Connotations of ownership of women are evoked by the title (the character of Charlie will be discussed later in this chapter) and the show focuses on young, attractive, white, heterosexual, middle-class women. This limited version of womanhood denies issues of class, race, age and sexuality. However, as McKenzie Wark identifies in his preface to Hopkins’ *Girl Heroes*, postfeminism’s understanding of the inadequacy of all representations has led to the realisation that ‘rather than a critique of what is lacking in an image or a sign – its failure as representation – we might look instead to its potential to produce new significance’ (2002:xi). And as Douglas notes, there are ‘some interesting and pleasant surprises mixed in with the string bikinis and those hideous bell-bottoms’ (1995:213). She believes the reason *Charlie’s Angels* was such a phenomenon was ‘that it exploited, perfectly, the tensions between antifeminism and feminism’ (1995:213). Reading the nuances of that tension and examining the new femininities that emerged from it provides such an opportunity to ‘produce new significance’. *Charlie’s Angels* presented images of liberated women – strong, resourceful, educated and financially independent – but it also accentuated their difference (from men) within those images. They actively used sexuality and traditionally-assigned feminine qualities to perform what were previously masculine roles, and in doing so, reshaped those roles and existing notions of femininity as a means of negotiating difference.

**The Aaron Spelling Formula**

Aaron Spelling’s commercially-successful (and now signature) formula of injecting glamour into an existing genre was instrumental in providing the format within which women on television in the 1970s would negotiate feminism and femininity on screen. Detective shows aired on all three networks in the early part of the decade, including: *Barnaby Jones* (1973- circumstances, which allowed greater character development and further depth to their portrayal in response to audience feedback and issues of the day.
1980), Columbia (1971-2003), Hawaii Five-0 (1968-1980), Kojack (1973-1978), McMillan and Wife (1971-1977), Mod Squad (1968-1973), The Rockford Files (1974-1980), The Rookies (1972-1976), Starsky and Hutch (1975-1979), and The Streets of San Francisco (1972-1977). The Mod Squad, which Spelling had created, was bought by ABC while Leonard Goldberg was a director of development in New York. Goldberg left ABC and went into partnership with Spelling, and their first joint venture was The Rookies, starring Kate Jackson. Charlie’s Angels was originally pitched as The Alley Cats, featuring three glamorous female detectives named Allie, Lee and Catherine (Al-Lee-Cat), and was based on an idea Goldberg had conceived years earlier, inspired by the British TV series, The Avengers (1961-1969) (Condon and Hofstede 2000:5). When The Rookies was cancelled, Spelling and Goldberg invoked an option in Kate Jackson’s contract for another series. According to Condon and Hofstede, it was Jackson who suggested the characters work for someone they only speak to over the telephone or squawk box and, upon seeing a picture of three angels on Spelling’s wall, that the women be called ‘angels’ (2000:6). The use of ‘angels’ in the title not only identifies the women with goodness and beauty, but juxtaposes their active role in the public realm (as working women) against the restrictive idealised Victorian notion of an ‘angel in the house’.

Charlie’s Angels’ mix of action and glamour ran counter to the existing trend of gritty, serious detective shows, but it fitted with ABC’s new direction and was picked up by the network. Together, Spelling and Goldberg were responsible for a string of hit shows during that time, including The Rookies, S.W.A.T. (1975-1976), Starsky and Hutch, Charlie’s Angels, Family (1976-1980), Fantasy Island (1977-1984) and Hart to Hart (1979-1984). Spelling in particular believed audiences wanted escapism and enjoyed seeing beautiful people in luxurious locations. These traits featured most heavily in the shows he went on to produce without Goldberg, resulting in some of television’s biggest successes, such as The Love Boat (1977-1987), Dynasty (1981-1989), Beverly Hills, 90210 (1990-2000), Melrose Place (1992-1999) and Charmed (1998-2006). Even in early publicity for Charlie’s Angels, Spelling reinforces the show’s point of difference by discussing the use of film rather than video tape and releasing to the media budget figures for costumes and hair styling (O’Hallaren 1976). At

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13 The Angel in the House is a narrative poem by Coventry Patmore published between 1854 and 1862. It is an account of his wife Emily, whom Patmore believed to be the perfect Victorian wife. The term, ‘an angel in the house’ originated from the poem and was used to describe the Victorian ideal of ‘respectable middle-class femininity. Quiet beauty, purity, devotion and selflessness were some of the essential features of the domestic wife and mother’ (Black 2006:LIX).
the same time he played down the significance of the women’s roles as private detectives in the series and is quoted as saying ‘Anyone who thinks these girls are really private detectives… is nuts’ (O’Hallaren 1976). Rather than being dismissive of their ability to perform the requisite tasks, this comment may be more reflective of the intended tone of the show; that is, somewhat fantastical and firmly ‘tongue-in-cheek’ – particularly considering Spelling and Goldberg’s affection for *The Avengers*.

Spelling had already presented American audiences with a female private eye in the form of Anne Francis in the title role of *Honey West* (1965-1966) (see Figure 5.3). Fashioned heavily on *The Avengers*, West wears a black bodysuit, drives a racy convertible, is a Judo expert and communicates with her partner, Sam Bolt, via a transmitter in her lipstick case. Although it only ran for one season,⁴ *Honey West*, together with *The Avengers* and *The Girl From U.N.C.L.E.* (1966-67), signalled a break in conventional representations of TV femininity on US screens. These shows capitalised on the popularity of the spy genre, particularly the interest generated by James Bond, while creating further appeal and distinction by utilising women in leading roles. As Toby Miller notes, not only was it unusual for female characters to be shown working,⁵ it was particularly unconventional to have the central female character in an action series not romantically involved with the male lead (2010:153). The popularity of *The Avengers* in the UK and the series’ successful introduction into the US in 1966 (it was the first British series to appear on a US network in prime time), can be seen to have paved the way for future female spies on US TV. A decade later, *The Avengers’* active employment of women and appropriation of femininity into the

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⁴ Gough-Yates suggests this reflects that it was not the right time for this kind of show (2001:84); however, it could also be argued that instead of producing *Honey West*, it was cheaper for the network to import *The Avengers*, which it subsequently ran in the same time slot. See Julie D’Acci (1997) for a detailed analysis of *Honey West*.

⁵ Miller identifies content analysis that shows only 20 percent of working characters on US network television from the 1950s to the 1970s were women (2010:153).
spy genre reappeared on screen in *Charlie’s Angels*, with *The Avengers*’ privileging of aesthetics also re-emerging in the Spelling/Goldberg series.

*The Avengers* had a succession of female leads partnering John Steed (Patrick McNee) – most notably Catherine Gale (Honor Blackman), Emma Peel (Diana Rigg) and Tara King (Linda Thorson). However, the show was introduced to US audiences with Steed and Peel, and it is Emma Peel with whom US audiences are most familiar. As Prudence Black and Catherine Driscoll relate:

Her name was taken from a play on the idea that she should have ‘man appeal’, and while her married state, her martial skills, and even some of her visual style were inherited from Cathy Gale, Emma Peel brought another dimension to the woman’s role in *The Avengers* in that she was as calculating, ruthless and as witty as the ongoing male counterpart John Steed. (2012:68)

The show further highlights Peel’s capabilities by contrasting them with Steed’s in a series of role reversals. First, as Miller notes in Rigg’s debut episode, ‘The Town of No Return’, ‘Steed fights like a woman’ with an umbrella or honey jar while Peel is a martial arts master (1997:73). Peel’s choreographed fighting style accentuates her controlled, elongated body and her command of it. This ability to take command of a situation is reinforced at the end of the same episode with a closing shot of Peel driving away on a motorbike and Steed riding in a traditionally feminine side-saddle position on the back. Another contrast between the characters is a visual reinforcement of their distinction through the cars they drive and the clothes they wear. Steed drives vintage cars (usually a heritage green Bentley) and wears Edwardian suits with waistcoats and longer jackets fitted at the waist. Carrying a trademark umbrella and bowler hat (see Figure 5.5), he embodies tradition. Meanwhile Peel exudes modernity. As O’Day observes, Peel’s ‘bullet-like powder blue Lotus Elan sports car marked her out as the paradigm of the independent action heroine’ (2001:225). She wears leather outfits, boots, very short skirts (just before the mini was fashionable), and what became her
signature catsuit, the ‘Emmapeeler’ (see Figure 5.4). Furthermore, while Steed is almost always seen in a full three-piece suit, Peel wears numerous costumes in any given episode. This foregrounds her femininity while utilising it in the context of the narrative. As Black and Driscoll posit,

Mrs Peel uses the multiple sexual resonances of her clothing changes to equip herself for various tasks just as she uses her skills with music, swords, science and languages… Sex in *The Avengers* is, in fact, a kind of technological ‘know how’ to which Mrs Peel’s clothes are central. (Black and Driscoll 2012:71)

Thus through choreographed fighting, demonstration of modernity through cars and clothing, and deployment of sexuality in costumes for undercover missions, *The Avengers* incorporates women and femininity into the conventions of the spy genre.

Another defining feature of *The Avengers* that relates it to *Charlies’ Angels* is its aestheticism. Consistent with what George Melly describes as ‘pop camp’, the series relies on ‘exclusive knowledge about fashionable texts, clothes and manners that, oxymoronically, was conceived for and supplied to mass audiences’ (Miller 1997:27). Surreal and absurdist, the show routinely privileged style over content or adherence to reality – ideals consistent with sixties modernity and stylish commodity. It is a recurring theme Osgerby and Gough-Yates note across action series during the sixties and seventies, as they ‘can be seen as a kind of “lifestyle” television in the way they combine fantasies of thrilling adventure with mythologies of affluence and consumption’ (2001:3). This not only reflects the influence of Bond (looking good and enjoying yourself along the way – see Figure 5.5), but like the

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16 See Black and Driscoll (2012) for a discussion of Peel’s catsuit: how it codified technology, activity and sexuality in *The Avengers*, and how it represented control when Peel was wearing it. The ‘Emmapeeler’ – a crimplene, zippered catsuit – was introduced because US networks protested the short skirts worn in earlier episodes (Miller 1997:47).
fantastical context of the *Bewitched* TV show, suggests the ‘pop’ stylization of *The Avengers* is a necessary condition for the subversive appropriation of femininity. As Miller attests, there are criticisms of Peel and the other heroines that suggest strength and capability are intertwined with an emphasis on conventional female beauty or that realism has been sacrificed in favour of ‘superwomen’: the make-up never smudged, the men continue to admire. Such comments miss the variety of the female stars as well as the fantasy land of the story-line. Face, body, vehicle, clothing and apartment must be stylish if the diegesis is to cohere and the joke about the implausibility of it all be made. (Miller 1997:74)

While this element of camp and familiarity with the fantastical is more prominent in the 2000 *Charlie’s Angels* film adaptation (see Chapter 6), an emphasis on aesthetics and a ‘tongue-in-cheek’ tone are also features of the *Charlie’s Angels* TV series. As Jaclyn Smith proclaims when refuting that the show is sexist, ‘we think of it as a big fun fantasy thing’ (O’Hallaren 1976).

‘Once upon a time there were three little girls…’

Ultimately, the legacy of *The Avengers*, as well as *Honey West* and *The Girl From U.N.C.L.E.*, was that audiences saw strong, sexy women catching bad guys. A decade later, in *Charlie’s Angels*, they were presented with three sexy women catching bad guys. To differentiate the three, each character embodies a (stereotypical) ‘type’. Sabrina is ‘the smart one’, Jill is ‘the athletic one’ and Kelly is the more vulnerable ‘Southern Belle’ (see writers’ notes in Condon and Hofstede 2000:37-39). Sabrina Duncan is played by the most experienced actress of those hired to play the lead roles, Kate Jackson. Although formerly a model, Jackson refused to wear a swimsuit in the series (Condon and Hofstede...
2000:49) and is generally the most conservatively dressed with turtlenecks featuring prominently in her wardrobe. Rather than physical traits, her characters’ strong reliance on intellect is emphasised and she functions as the unofficial leader of the three. For example, when undercover in ‘Night of the Strangler’ (#3), Sabrina is the reporter while Kelly and Jill go in as models, and in ‘Bullseye’ (#9), Kelly and Jill are privates (new recruits) in the army while Sabrina is a nurse at the army hospital. In later seasons when Jill is replaced, Sabrina continues to orchestrate the Angels, such as in ‘Angels in the Backfield’ (#39) when they go undercover in a women’s football team, Kelly and Kris join the ranks of the team while Sabrina ‘calls the shots’ as the quarterback.

Farrah Fawcett was already known in the public arena from her appearances in various commercials – particularly for successful toothpaste and shampoo campaigns (see Condon and Hofstede 2000:11) – but she shot to stardom when cast as Jill Munroe in Charlie’s Angels. Despite only being in the first season and, due to contractual obligations, a further six guest appearances across the third and fourth seasons, Fawcett remained synonymous with the show (largely due to the marketing and merchandising associated with the series, which will be discussed later in this chapter). Jill epitomised the sunny, blonde ‘Californian girl’ who enjoys being outdoors and has a house at the beach. Her athletic prowess is foregrounded by undercover roles as a swimming coach in ‘The Mexican Connection’ (#2) and tennis coach in ‘The Killing Kind’ (#6). She uses her skateboarding skills to get away in ‘Consenting Adults’ (#10) and martial arts skills in a choreographed scene reminiscent of The Avengers in ‘Fallen Angel’ (#73). Jill’s athleticism is even reinforced in her departure as she leaves the Townsend Agency to become a professional racing car driver, replaced in the second season by her younger sister Kris (played by Cheryl Ladd).

Rounding out the trio is Kelly Garrett, played by Jaclyn Smith. Also a former model, she was the only original Angel to stay for all five seasons of Charlie’s Angels. As Smith had dance training, the show’s writers incorporated this into her character’s skill set with Kelly belly dancing in ‘Angels on Ice’ (#24), performing a dance routine for the talent section of a beauty pageant in ‘Pretty Angels All in a Row’ (#25) and going undercover as a showgirl in ‘Angels in Vegas’ (#47). She was a central protagonist for the full duration of the series so more backstory is given for Kelly than any of the other Angels, including that she was raised in an orphanage. Kelly’s vulnerability is reinforced when she is a victim in ‘Target Angels’ (#5)
and her childhood is recalled in ‘The Séance’ (#11), and her compassion and loyalty is emphasised by her relationship with an autistic boy in ‘To Kill an Angel’ (#7) and close friend in ‘Angels at the Altar’ (#72).

As identified earlier, the roles in which the three women are cast are restrictive in terms of race, class and sexuality, and while their characterisations are also somewhat reductive (as individually ‘smart’, ‘sporty’ and ‘vulnerable’) this can be seen to be offset by the show’s format and their functioning as a team. *Charlie’s Angels* was the first mainstream US prime-time show with multiple leading female roles. Ensemble casts provide the spectator with the opportunity for multiple points of identification. As a female ensemble, the combination of three women in *Charlie’s Angels* and the aspects of femininity and womanhood they collectively display allow diverse and varied identification. Not only is the spectator invited to identify with the single character s/he may most associate with themselves, but also facets of the other characters. This effectively disrupts the limited and narrowly-defined gender roles of patriarchal convention. Multiple female leads in *Charlie’s Angels* and the show’s ability to shift focus between those leads is a distinguishing feature of the series and part of its appeal. It also facilitates the series’ transgressive exploration of sisterhood and solidarity (a feature accentuated in the film adaptation – see Chapter 6), as the manner in which the women work together and rely on each other is integral to the show’s structure.

The premise of *Charlie’s Angels* is that the three selected women are able to further their careers and make full use of their training and abilities by leaving the police force and joining the Charles Townsend Detective Agency as private detectives. This narrative construct is explained (and consistently reinforced) at the beginning of each episode in the opening title sequence as a means of identifying the women’s role as active and credible, yet feminine (see Focus Box 5.1). The structure of the episodes remained fairly consistent across the series’ five seasons, with each episode opening with an event (usually a crime) such as a murder, abduction or robbery. The Angels gather together at the office where they are given their assignment by Charlie over the squawk box and, with the assistance of Bosley (David Doyle), share some background information on the client. They then develop a course of action, including cover stories, before setting out into the field. The bulk of the episode takes place on location where the Angels (and sometimes Bosley) uncover the full details of the

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17 All characters have come from the police force with the exception of Julie Rogers (Tanya Roberts) in the final season, who is a former model.
crime. Usually at least one of them is put in danger during the course of the episode, which culminates in an action scene that requires the efforts of all three women to secure their safety and solve the case (see Focus Box 5.3). The episode concludes with a debriefing that generally occurs back in the office and typically ends in a light-hearted way with sexual innuendo and banter between Charlie and the Angels. Framing the action and undercover sequences with office scenes at the beginning and end of each episode reinforces that, when undertaking those roles, the women are engaged in professional work (the office and the use of costumes while undercover will be examined later in the chapter). Moreover, it serves to confirm that their actions and behaviours are confined to certain situations, and therefore controlled. Within this framework, the show presents images of liberated women while playing to existing notions of femininity.

Focus Box 5.1: Opening Title Sequence

Like the deployment of role reversals in The Avengers, the opening title sequence in Charlie’s Angels uses contrasts to foreground the women’s capabilities in a non-traditional setting. This is predominantly achieved through juxtaposing the voiceover and visual images (see Figure 5.8). For example, although referred to as ‘three little girls’ in the voiceover, the images shown are of strong, accomplished women – one confidently firing a gun, another completing a rigorous obstacle course and the third using judo to flip her male instructor onto the ground. When the voiceover announces that they were ‘assigned very hazardous duties’, what is seen on screen is again discordant, as those duties are shown to be benign tasks: writing parking tickets; doing clerical work; and directing school children across the street. The message portrayed by these images is that, despite the three women’s abilities (as demonstrated at the academy), once in the police force, they were restricted to more passive (stereotypically feminine) roles.

This conflict sets up the shift in pace that occurs after the voiceover identifies that ‘now they work for me. My name is Charlie’ as Jill, Sabrina and Kelly stride confidently away from the police building and towards the camera. The theme music rises in pitch and volume, and the combination of bright graphics, silhouetted figures and action sequences (taken from episodes in the first season) showcasing each character, conveys the excitement and modernity of their new, active roles. The show’s stylised emphasis on action and recognition of women in a man’s world

Figure 5.7: Charlie’s Angels logo with stylised silhouettes from opening titles.
are reinforced as the sequence concludes with a bold silhouette of three women with long hair and feminine figures (see Figure 5.7). Two of the figures are holding masculine weaponry and one is in a martial arts pose. Their stance acknowledges the role of teamwork (they are literally protecting each others’ backs), while an explosion creates a fiery background and connotes the potential danger they face.

The following table (Figure 5.8) separates out the audio from the visual components of the opening title sequence of the *Charlie’s Angels* series to more fully demonstrate the juxtaposition between them.

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**Figure 5.8: Charlie’s Angels TV series Opening Title Sequence Breakdown**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TIME</th>
<th>AUDIO</th>
<th>VISUAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>00:00</td>
<td>V/O: Once upon a time there were three little girls who went to the Police Academy.</td>
<td>3 overlapping tinted orange boxes dissolve to expose an external shot of a Police Academy with cadets marching in an army-like formation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00:03</td>
<td>gunshots</td>
<td>Long shot of 3 firing targets on a wall (they are male silhouettes).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00:05</td>
<td>more gunshots</td>
<td>Medium shot of Sabrina in the police cadet uniform firing a gun.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00:07</td>
<td>theme music starts</td>
<td>Medium-long shot of Jill on police obstacle course wearing training tracksuit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00:10</td>
<td></td>
<td>Medium shot of Kelly (also in a tracksuit) pulling out to a long shot of her flipping the police instructor onto the mat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00:12</td>
<td></td>
<td>Medium shot of Sabrina in a full police uniform writing a parking ticket.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00:14</td>
<td>V/O: And they were each assigned very hazardous duties.</td>
<td>Medium shot of Jill sitting at a desk in full police uniform, pulling paper out of a typewriter as a pile of documents are put down next to her.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00:16</td>
<td></td>
<td>Close-up of a stop sign which pans across and pulls out to a medium shot of Kelly who is in full police uniform holding the sign while children cross the street.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00:18</td>
<td>V/O: But I took them away from all that, and now they work for me. My name is. Charlie.</td>
<td>Long shot of Jill, Sabrina and Kelly in civilian clothes leaving the Police Department building together. Jill waves to a uniformed officer walking in as they walk out towards the camera.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00:23</td>
<td>theme music crescendo</td>
<td>Frames of a silhouette of woman holding a gun with a blue background are layered, then the blue goes black, a graphic with 'Kate Jackson' appears in the bottom third of the screen and within the silhouetted figure, an image of Sabrina driving a racing car is seen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00:26</td>
<td></td>
<td>The silhouetted frame is drawn forward to expose the full frame and a sequence of shots of Sabrina taken from the first season, including turning to camera, running and pointing a gun.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00:32</td>
<td></td>
<td>Repeats the framed silhouette graphic with different silhouette and pink and red boxes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00:34</td>
<td></td>
<td>Black background with Jill rollerskating inside silhouetted figure and 'Farrah Fawcett' graphic. Full frame shows Jill tossing her hair, driving a car and playing tennis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00:41</td>
<td></td>
<td>Repeats the framed silhouette graphic with a silhouette in a karate pose and blue boxes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00:43</td>
<td></td>
<td>Black background with Kelly running from her car inside silhouetted figure and 'Jaclyn Smith' graphic. Full frame shows Kelly taking off a motorcycle helmet, as a photographer and as a model.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>00:51</td>
<td></td>
<td>Repeats the framed silhouette graphic with a male figure in bright green boxes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
While the central characters undergo little development across the five seasons of *Charlie’s Angels*, the series survived a number of cast changes. The first of these was when Fawcett left the show at the end of the first season.¹⁸ Her character, Jill, was replaced at the Townsend Agency by her younger sister, Kris Munroe (Cheryl Ladd). Ladd was an accomplished singer (she was the singing voice for Melody Valentine in the *Josie and the Pussycats* cartoon) and, like Smith’s dancing abilities, Ladd’s singing talent was occasionally incorporated into her character’s cover. When Jackson left at the end of the third season, audiences were introduced to Tiffany Welles (Shelley Hack), a former police officer from Boston whose father was a friend of Charlie’s. Hack had starred in commercials for ‘Charlie’ perfume – unrelated to the show but the producers liked the crossover. Unfortunately, the audience did not and the show’s ratings began to drop (Condon and Hofstede 2000:97). In the final season Hack was replaced by Tanya Roberts who joined the cast as former model Julie Rogers. This signalled a shift from Charlie hiring investigators with police training and subsequently the introductory sequence was altered. After four years of ‘Once upon a time there were three little girls who went to the Police Academy,’ in the last season the show opened with: ‘Once upon a time there were three beautiful girls. Two of them graduated from the police academy, the other graduated from a top school for models. And they each reaped the rewards of their exciting careers.’ To juxtapose the voiceover with the image (see Focus Box 5.1), Kelly is shown as a crossing guard, Kris operating a switchboard, and Tanya running on a treadmill while posing for a sports drink commercial. This move away from the established formula can be seen as the ‘beginning of the end’ for the series, with five of the first six episodes of the last season filmed in Hawaii and all three Angels wearing bikinis for the first time in the show’s history.

¹⁸ Fawcett left *Charlie’s Angels* after a dispute over pay and working conditions. Having received the People’s Choice Award for Best Newcomer in 1977, Fawcett demanded her salary be increased from US$5,000 to US$70,000 per week (Jackson was earning US$10,000 and Smith US$5,000) and her work reduced to six hours per day (Womack 2003:160). Yet as Womack notes, while male TV stars such as Fawcett’s then-husband Lee Majors were making over US$50,000 per week, ‘[h]er motivation for this fight with the producers was not so much a feminist battle for equal pay but a conflict with Fawcett’s husband, who wanted her to be a more traditional, stay-at-home wife’ (2003:160-162).
(see later discussion of costumes that notes the majority of episodes showing only one of the women at a time in revealing outfits). Moreover, as Condon and Hofstede report, the network needed 100 episodes for the most favourable syndication deal and with 92 produced at the end of the fourth season, it was worth the losses they were incurring to complete a fifth season (2000:116). The series did go into syndication and subsequently has been seen on free-to-air and cable television stations in the following decades and across a range of Western countries. Despite cast changes, the phrase ‘Once upon a time there were three little girls’, and the distinctive voice that spoke it, endures.

‘My name is Charlie’

Although unseen, Charlie is instantly recognisable as a traditional patriarch. As well as the deep, authoritative tone of his voice, the three women work for the Charles Townsend Detective Agency, he assigns their missions and the show’s title announces that they are his angels. As Charlie only interacts with the Angels over the telephone or squawk box (see Figure 5.9), this intercom device functions in the series as a signifier of his anonymity (it is also used to this effect in the film adaptation – see Chapter 6). During the sequences when the Angels and Bosley are speaking with Charlie, reverse shots of him talking to them over the telephone are also shown, although his face is always concealed. What is revealed instead is either the back of his distinguished grey head (connoting maturity), his hand (either holding the telephone or a scotch glass, cocktail or other beverage), or occasionally another body part obscured by a scantily-dressed female companion. He is always set among luxurious surroundings, which intimates his wealth and success while aligning him with contemporaneous playboy figures such as Hugh Heffner or James Bond. Yet as Douglas observes, Charlie is both a sophisticated and enlightened man (1995:213), for

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19 The sequences in which Charlie engages with the Angels varied between episodes and were not always sexually suggestive. For example in ‘Terror on Ward One’ (#18), which deals with the topic of sexual assault, the seriousness of the issue is reflected in the opening discussion which sees Charlie being served a drink by his elderly butler (rather than by a bikini-clad girl which is the case in other episodes).

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he recognises and enables the women’s talents and potential as private detectives. He also allows them some latitude to deal with the crime (or problem) faced, in whatever way they can; that is he requires them to use their own initiative. As Charlie’s voiceover opens each show, he establishes the tone and premise of the series while identifying his role in facilitating the Angels’ ‘liberation’ from the restrictive police force into the exciting, action-filled world of private detection (see Focus Box 5.1). Opening with ‘Once upon a time’, the action series immediately draws on a history of fairy-tales and suggests a suspension of belief. The fantastical tone and camp sensibility that relates the series back to *The Avengers* is then established with an initial juxtaposition of sound and images (see Figure 5.8), followed by boldly coloured graphics and imagery that is both active (such as Sabrina driving a racing car or Kelly running from a car about to explode) and feminine (including close-ups of Jill pouting and Kelly modelling).

For Womack, Charlie may be ‘more progressive and enlightened than the police bureaucracy’, but she still finds it problematic that the Angels are ‘rescued from this drudgery by a man’ (2003:155). However, Charlie’s anonymity can be seen to counter the gender imbalance as it ensures the emphasis of the show is firmly on the women. In ‘Target: Angels’ (#5) a criminal who has just been released from jail makes an attempt on the life of each of the Angels in order to locate and enact revenge on Charlie (who the criminal holds responsible for his imprisonment). During the episode, Charlie tells Sabrina, Jill and Kelly that he maintains his anonymity for their safety, as he has brought many people to justice over the years and created enemies in the process. While this is the only explanation offered for Charlie’s anonymity throughout the series, the episode still focuses on the capabilities of each of the Angels and their use of teamwork to solve the case. As a narrative function, Charlie’s anonymity can be seen to serve yet another purpose as, rather than representing the ultimate patriarch, he stands in for patriarchal society in a broader sense. Like the Kravitzs in the *Bewitched* TV series (see Chapter 3), Charlie functions as the Greek chorus in the show. Anthony Linden Jones (2011) observes that, while there are various modes through which this narrative device is employed in contemporary theatre and film, it is effectively used to provide commentary from within the narrative without intruding on the action.20 Charlie’s voice is used in a similar capacity in *Charlie’s Angels*. The show’s emphasis on his voice facilitates his involvement in the storyline without him being physically present, yet he

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20 For instance, Jones (2011) identifies the use of song as a Greek chorus in the Australian film *The Tracker* (2002).
maintains a regular presence as he is predominantly part of the opening and closing sequences in each episode. In this role, Charlie can be seen to represent society’s willingness to accept equality for women and appreciate their abilities and contribution in the public domain. He is shown to actively facilitate women in their new-found roles in the public sphere for, as well as the detective agency, it is revealed in ‘Angels Go Truckin’ (#70) that he has also financed an all-female trucking company. Moreover, as a traditionally masculine enterprise, Charlie’s agency provides a socially acceptable framework (for the time), within which the women can operate and subsequently infiltrate.21 In Charlie’s Angels it can be argued that the women are incorporated into private detection to the extent that Charlie utilises a female team for competitive advantage. This is expressed in the pilot episode when Charlie says, ‘This is a tough one Angels, doubt if I could do it myself. Needs the feminine touch.’

The other male character that regularly appears in Charlie’s Angels is the agency’s office manager John Bosley, known as Bosley. While Bosley’s primary function is to mediate between Charlie and the Angels, he also joins the three women on some undercover cases. One of the most significant features of Bosley is his almost complete lack of significance. He is a non-threatening figure, which Gough-Yates identifies as a ‘virtually sexless representation of masculinity’ (2001:90). When Bosley is interested in a woman or charged with diverting one on a case, it is usually revealed that he is the one being tricked, such as in ‘Angels in Waiting’ (#66) and ‘Cruising Angels’ (#80). While he functions as part of the team, it is mostly behind the scenes and in a more passive way than the Angels. Bosley runs computer checks, phones for backup and balances the accounts. Again the emphasis remains on the women in the show, which sharply contrasts with Police Woman (1974-1978), for example, in which Pepper Anderson (Angie Dickinson) regularly needs to be saved by her male partner, Bill Crowley (Earl Holliman). As a non-threatening character, Bosley also serves as comic relief and a reminder of the show’s tongue-in-cheek quality. In ‘Mother Angel’ (#55), for example, the agency’s eleven year old client, Samantha, says, ‘You’re not a very settled factotum Mr Bosley.’ To which Bosley dryly replies, ‘Fake totem, me?’

21 The need for a male figurehead for social acceptance and commercial success is also seen in the later detective series, Remington Steele (1982-1987). Although she is the owner and qualified detective, Laura Holt (Stephanie Zimbalist) creates a fictitious male boss to front the agency (an identity assumed by Pierce Brosnan’s character).
Feminising Private Detection

The women’s shift from public duty to private detection signposts the negotiation of feminism and femininity in *Charlie’s Angels* – that is, recognition of women’s differences from men while seeking equality between the sexes. Whether police officers or private detectives, these women are working in the public realm and outside the traditionally feminine domain of the home. However, it is as private eyes (the term itself is linked to blurred boundaries as it is a public profession that deals in private lives) that they are able to operate more liminally and negotiate traditionally masculine expectations with so-called feminine qualities. In an article published while the show was still in production, Sumiko Higashi argues they are ‘gumshoes in drag’ (1980). She contends that the ‘women assume male acts, postures and speech as detectives and become personalities in drag despite their pin-up appearances in bikinis, wrap-around towels, and abbreviated costumes’ (1980:51). While not a strong queer argument, Higashi’s observations concur with the notion that traditionally-defined gender roles and ideals are being negotiated in *Charlie’s Angels*, which invites an evaluation of how the women in the show inhabit a traditionally male genre. Therefore the next section of this analysis explores how femininity is incorporated into the conventionally masculine role of the private eye in the series, and focuses on the Angels’ office, cars and other ‘tools of the trade’ such as their use of guns and undercover personas. By feminising private detection in these ways, *Charlie’s Angels* offered the possibility of integrating femininity and feminism, and demonstrated the emergence of new femininities on U.S. screens during a transitional social period.

The Office

As noted earlier, the show opens and closes with the Angels and Bosley gathering in the agency office for the assignment and briefing, then debriefing of the case around which the episode is structured. As well as expansive and luxurious, which is consistent with the show’s emphasis on aesthetics, the office simulates a home environment rather than a traditional office space. Compared with a police station, such as the sterile grey one shown in ‘The Blue Angels’ (#22) when Sabrina goes undercover as a detective in the vice squad, or Jim Rockford’s shabby, cluttered office in *The Rockford Files* (1974-1980), the Townsend office is significantly more domestic. Home furnishings are used to decorate the room (see Figure 5.10), including a lounge suite, coffee table, hall table, a bar (at which the Angels are often
seen either mixing drinks or pouring coffee or champagne),\textsuperscript{22} a Venetian mirror and various bric-a-brac (such as Buddha head statues, vases and decorative ashtrays like the one in the foregrounded of Figure 5.10). Plush carpet, high ceilings and elaborate cornices and mouldings lend a further air of luxury to the room. The Angels and clients usually occupy the central area while Bosley is most often seated at his desk – a traditional wood and leather piece which is set behind the couch and houses the telephones and squawk box through which they communicate with Charlie. Bosley usually operates the telephones, although sometimes Sabrina sits at the desk. This layout promotes communication and interaction between the Angels (and client) as the seating area dominates the room, with the desk and more traditionally masculine/business-like aspects accommodated in a smaller area. Through this design and emphasis on the feminine (domestic) aspects of the space, the Townsend office is reinforced as a place in which the negotiation of traditional gender roles takes place.

Within the office, the Angels’ clothing similarly reflects their mediation of traditional gender roles. When consulting with clients, the women are usually wearing either long pants with a

\textsuperscript{22} As well as reinforcing luxury, the bar serves as a visual barrier to break up group shots. Rather than all the women sitting down, one person often stands, so the bar provides a point of interest and purpose for activity.
blouse or a suit (see Figure 5.10). This changes with the actress, across the seasons and there are some exceptions. However, in the office environment, the three women are shown to present a professional image through noticeably conservative dress. (Being well-covered in these scenes is a distinction from their often scant attire while undercover, which will be discussed later in the chapter). Yet their femininity is highlighted through clothing fit and fabrics with figure-hugging pants teamed with soft silks or luxurious sweaters. High-heeled shoes, make-up and styled hair (for which the actresses were famed), reinforce both the Angels’ femininity and the glamorous tone of the series. This incorporation of femininity into a traditionally masculine role can be seen to have influenced another female detective on TV with Cybil Shepherd’s character, Maddie Hayes, adopting a similarly glamorous style in *Moonlighting* (1985-1989).

**Tools of the Trade**

As well as their office space and attire, the Angels also feminised some conventional tools of the detective trade. All of the Angels are equipped with guns which are small revolvers. While the smaller guns distinguish them from the villains, who are shown with rifles and larger-calibre guns, they are also usually concealed by the Angels in their handbags. In accordance with the fashion of the day, Sabrina, Jill and Kelly typically carried clutch bags. Clutch bags are a style of handbag, in varying sizes, without a strap that therefore needs to be tucked under an arm or ‘clutched’ in one hand, effectively disabling the carrier from using that arm. However, the ultimately feminine symbol of a handbag\(^{23}\) is a tool for the female detectives as it carries more than just a gun – it is something they reach for when in danger or in a fight. For example, in ‘Love Boat Angels’ (#69), Kelly uses a lipstick from her handbag to mark a map on a coffee table thereby alerting the others to her location, while in ‘The Vegas Connection’ (#17) Jill uses her clutch bag as a gun. She comes from behind the suspect, pushes the corner of her bag into his back and tells him to drop his gun and put his hands up. She then picks up the gun he has dropped, tucks the bag back under her arm and points the suspect’s own gun at him. As he is facing away from her, he does not realise her bluff. The Angels’ handbags are also used to hide pocket cameras and skeleton keys for picking locks (which look like a small manicure set), such as the set Jill uses in ‘The Mexican Connection’ (#2) to open a locked desk drawer and tool Kris uses to break into the gym in

\(^{23}\) Identifying the handbag as ‘highly feminized’, Susan Hiner traces its genealogy back to nineteenth century France, and demonstrates how the handbag was ‘originally linked to women’s independence and practicality’ although was ‘ultimately co-opted by consumerist fashion’ (2010:181).
‘Angels in Springtime’ (#50). Thus the incorporation of the handbag as an effective tool for use in the more dangerous aspects of the job reinforces the show’s feminisation of the genre.

Cars are another feature of the detective genre and tool for the private eye. Jim Rockford conducted stakeouts in his gold Pontiac Firebird, while Columbo drove around in a battered Peugeot 403. The women in Charlie’s Angels have small sports cars, and the one most closely associated with the show is the Mustang Cobra driven by Jill in the first season and then by Kris in subsequent seasons (see Figure 5.11). The distinctive white car with blue stripes reflects Jill’s sporty, outgoing personality and symbolises her attraction to speed and action. Many episodes include car chases, with the Angels either following a suspect or being followed by one. Showcasing the women’s driving skills, these road pursuits run through city streets and down mountainous roads, such as in ‘Angels on a String’ (#15) and ‘Catch a Falling Angel’ (#84). These skills contradict the stereotype of women being bad drivers – further reinforced by the Angels adopting undercover roles featuring driving, including Sabrina as a rally car driver in ‘Hellride’ (#1), Kris and Tiffany driving semi-trailers in ‘Angels Go Truckin’ (#70)), and Jill maintaining her role as a professional racing driver in ‘Angel Come Home’ (#48). The car chases and storylines that facilitate them stress the action component of the series while reinforcing the women’s competencies in traditionally male roles.

However, the Angels are most often seen employing skills of wit, agility (including martial arts influenced self-defence) and teamwork to get themselves out of dangerous situations and solve cases. While not exclusively feminine characteristics, they signal a variation from traditional TV detective roles. For example, while the police are respected (they are called for backup and to intercept criminals), the women mostly rely on their own abilities and on each other, which includes using their police knowledge at times. In ‘Consenting Adults’ (#10) Kelly uses police jargon so the bartender thinks she is a police officer, and Sabrina and Jill use the same method when propositioned by the printing clerk while looking for a runaway boy in ‘To Kill an Angel’ (#7). Agility is emphasised over strength and shown to be valued,
such as again in ‘Consenting Adults’ (#10) when Jill eludes capture through her skateboarding prowess (see Figure 5.12), and when Kelly escapes from a locked storeroom through a skylight in ‘Angels on Ice’ (#24). Self-defence moves are choreographed and highly stylised. For example, in a rooftop battle with jewel thief Damien Roth (Timothy Dalton) in ‘Fallen Angels’ (#73), Jill’s martial arts style is reminiscent of Emma Peel in *The Avengers*.

Finally, a major component of the series format is the degree of communication between the Angels. In each episode the characters work out a way to meet in order to share information and move the case forward. For example, they meet in the preacher’s (Bosley’s) caravan in ‘Hellride’ (#1), at the poolside café in ‘Pretty Angels All in a Row’ (#25), in the sauna in ‘Angels in Springtime’ (#50) and at the highway diner in ‘Angels Go Truckin’’ (#70). These scenes highlight that the three women are working together whilst reinforcing the distinction between their professional and undercover personas. Thus, some of the Angels’ most effective tools as private investigators are derived from their differences from other TV detectives – that is, being three women working together. Notably, these are also the features accentuated in the contemporary film adaptation (see Chapter 6).

**Undercover Angels**

Successful outcomes are achieved for the Angels through their ability to go undercover, specifically where male counterparts could not go or would be more noticeable. At times the show challenges stereotypical ideals of femininity by placing the detectives undercover in traditionally sexist roles where they are confronted by chauvinism, sexism, and the objectification and exploitation of women. In various episodes throughout the series the women pose as showgirls, masseuses, prostitutes, cocktail waitresses, airline hostesses, models and beauty pageant contestants. The distinction between the detective (representing the liberated woman) and the undercover role being embarked upon is established at the beginning of the episode. For example, in ‘Lady Killer’ (#8) the Angels draw pencils to see
who poses for the (nude) centrefold. When Jill ‘wins’ she objects with, ‘Charlie! I haven’t posed nude since I was six months old’. In ‘Pretty Angels All in a Row’ (#25) they flip a coin to see who has to enter as contestants in the beauty pageant. Once undercover, there are times when they directly challenge the role, such as in ‘Lady Killer’ (#8) when Jill refuses to pose nude and in ‘Angels Go Truckin’’ (#70) when Kelly, posing as a diner waitress, drops a customer to the floor by twisting his arm when he harasses her. The diner owner and other patrons cheer – the customer even ends up helping them with the case. As Womack attests, ‘It is important to note that the men who treat them like sex objects never get away with it; sexism is clearly a punishable offence in the world of Charlie’s Angels’ (Womack 2003:159, emphasis in original).

The show also highlights feminist gains and the broader social changes occurring during the 1970s through episodes where the Angels are put in ‘all women’ versions of traditionally male endeavours. They go undercover in the Women’s Army Corp in ‘Bullseye’ (#9), join a women’s football league in ‘Angels in the Backfield’ (#39) and drive for an all-female trucking company in ‘Angels Go Truckin’’ (#70). As noted earlier in this chapter, legislation to allow women into the armed forces in the US was only passed in 1975, so the 1976 army episode was both topical and progressive in its support for women in these roles. However, some of the representations of women in these episodes are problematic, with a number of female characters cast as aggressive and masculine (particularly in ‘Bullseye’ [#9] and ‘Angels in the Backfield’ [#39]). This is consistent with the lesbian connotations attached to female villains (see later in this chapter) and can be understood as a strategy employed by the show to highlight the Angels’ femininity (and heterosexual normativity). Although liberated women performing male roles, a key component of the new versions of femininity presented by the Angels is that they are still sexually attractive to men. So while incongruous, the inclusion of these stereotypes reflects the status of feminism at that time and the show’s involvement with both existing and changing social preconceptions of gender.

Whether it is combat fatigues in the army, overalls and a helmet for rally car racing or modelling the skiniest bikini, the costumes worn by the Angels while undercover are foregrounded within the text as tools utilised in the execution of their role as private detectives. The Angels’ undercover roles are performative and their costumes most clearly demonstrate that performativity and exposure of the constructed nature of gender (Butler 1999
In direct contrast to the conservative clothing worn in the office environment (see Figure 5.10), the costumes worn by the women while undercover are often revealing, including bikinis, short shorts, midriff tops and evening gowns with plunging necklines. Importantly, while characters such as Daisy Duke in *The Dukes of Hazzard* wore tight, short denim shorts (later colloquially known as ‘Daisy Dukes’) paired with midriff and shoestring tops, similar outfits worn by the Angels were given a context (see Focus Box 5.2). Kelly wears a bikini while posing as a model in ‘Night of the Strangler’ (#3), Jill wears tight satin shorts when a roller derby member in ‘Angel on Wheels’ (#12) and Kris wears a beaded bustier as a knife-thrower’s assistant in ‘Circus of Terror’ (#27) (see Figure 5.13). Yet to reinforce that these outfits represent the undercover persona (rather than the empowered Angel), typically only one of the team is in revealing attire. For example, in ‘Circus of Terror’ (#27) while Kris is wearing a red, beaded bustier with choker, stockings and heels (see Figure 5.13), Kelly dons a khaki jumpsuit to ride a stunt motorcycle and Sabrina is in a full clown costume. In ‘Angels on Ice’ (#24) it is Kris’ turn in a clown costume, with Kelly in a leotard (and at one point belly-dancing in a men’s club) while Sabrina stays covered up in jeans and collared shirts.

**Focus Box 5.2: Uncovering for an Undercover Role**

Kelly takes a break from viewing films for a blackmail case in ‘Dirty Business’ (#16) when she overhears a suspicious conversation in the corridor of the film processing lab. When Kelly is at the coffee machine (in her role as private investigator), she is wearing jeans and a sweater (see Figure 5.14). Needing to be in disguise when she approaches the director she heard in the corridor, Kelly follows him out to lunch and, while she sits in her car watching him, the audience witness Kelly’s transformation. She puts chewing gum into her mouth and sunglasses on. The next shot is a close-up of the director eating his lunch in the foreground with Kelly walking into view in the background. A long shot of her walking towards the cafe shows that she has taken off her sweater and tied up her shirt to reveal her midriff, and is wearing the glasses and chewing the gum as seen earlier (see Figure 5.15).
Placing herself down on the stool next to the director, Kelly allows him to slowly look her up and down then suggestively tells him how she’d ‘do anything to get in a movie’. Her ploy is shown to have worked, as the next scene is with Bosley and all the Angels (Kelly is back to wearing the red sweater)

watching one of the ‘free form’ (pornographic) films the director admitted to making. Although a relatively simple costume, this example demonstrates the Angels’ use of traditional expectations around femininity to their advantage.

**Sexuality**

One of the most significant ways *Charlie’s Angels* interrogates the relationship between feminism and femininity is through the Angels’ use of their sexuality for the purpose of their work as private detectives. Using the argument that undercover roles are performative and this is the context in which the women’s sexuality is exposed and enacted, Gough-Yates argues that ‘[a] recurring theme in *Charlie’s Angels*, therefore, is the idea of sexuality as a performance – a masquerade which, while constructing femininity as a spectacle, also offers women a degree of empowerment and control’ (2001:89). Jill provides some examples by:
kissing her captor in ‘The Mexican Connection’ (#2) so Sabrina can escape from the wine cellar unnoticed; luring a cab driver out of his cab so they can use his car in ‘Target Angels’ (#5); and distracting a suspect at a cocktail party while Kelly breaks into his office and looks through his desk in ‘The Killing Kind’ (#6). Although considered tacky if not denigrating by today’s standards, it is notable that, above all, these tactics are harmless – especially compared to the more traditional male techniques of bullying and thuggish violence. The performativity to which Gough-Yates refers is emphasised by the tongue-in-cheek tone that often accompanies such ploys. For example, when Sabrina goes on a date with a suspect to lure him back to her room in ‘Night of the Strangler’ (#3), Kelly barges in (as arranged):

   Sabrina: You know if you’d been a few seconds later I’d have been defiled by that creep.
   Kelly: Now that’s the first time I’ve ever heard you complain about that.
   Sabrina: Hey, he wasn’t exactly Robert Redford. If he’d been Robert Redford I’d have said defile away.

This exchange also reinforces changing attitudes to women as a result of the sexual revolution, recognising that women are potentially sexual predators too or at least sexual instigators.

As noted earlier, being sexually attractive to men is a significant feature of the emerging femininities portrayed in Charlie’s Angels, and being single contributes to that portrayal. When any of the Angels have boyfriends, such as Kelly in ‘Target Angels’ (#6) (Alan Samuelson, played by Tom Selleck), Sabrina in ‘Angel in Love’ (#28) (Doug O’Neal, played by Peter Haskell) or Jill in ‘Fallen Angel’ (#73) (Damien Roth, played by Timothy Dalton), their romance or relationship ends by the conclusion of the episode – often with their love interest exposed as a criminal. In this way, the Angels’ heterosexuality is reinforced yet they remain single and therefore sexually available. Notably, the explanation given for Sabrina’s departure from the Agency was that she was newly-married and expecting a baby, which suggests that simply being married should not preclude a woman from working, although motherhood is a separate issue.

A further way the Angels’ sexuality is reinforced in Charlie’s Angels is by queering their female adversaries. In a conflation of stereotypes from James Bond novels and films, the

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24 For further discussion of representations of single women during this era, see Katherine J. Lehman’s Those Girls: Single Women in Sixties and Seventies Popular Culture (2011).
female villains / henchwomen are clearly coded as lesbians and include: the ‘butch’ prison matron, Max(ine), in ‘Angels in Chains’ (#4); Inga, an imposing masseuse in ‘The Killing Kind’ (#6); and the similarly perilous physical therapist, Zora, in ‘Angels in Springtime’ (#50). As noted earlier, masculine traits of physical strength and aggression are attributed to these characters in order to distinguish them from the Angels, especially in the all-female episodes. Gough-Yates affirms that ‘[b]y juxtaposing the detectives against such unmistakable lesbian stereotypes, therefore, the show hoped to anchor the characters securely around the norms of heterosexuality’ (2001:90). Highlighting Jill’s physical retaliation on a (lesbian-coded) corrupt competitor in the roller derby episode, ‘Angels on Wheels’ (#12), Douglas notes that ‘[w]omen like this got no empathy; they got cold-cocked – and not by men, but by other women’ (1995:215-216). For Gough-Yates, who recognises sisterhood and solidarity as a central theme in Charlie’s Angels, this exemplifies the show’s delineation of female relationships and need to ensure the Angels’ close friendship ‘was not interpreted as potentially lesbian’ (2001:90).

**Sisterhood**

Sisterhood and solidarity are strongly emphasised in Charlie’s Angels and this is perhaps the clearest way the series demonstrates the emergence of new femininities. As Gamble identifies,

> [t]he notion of sisterhood conveys the implicit assumption that all women have certain areas of experience in common on which a sense of identification can be founded…and asserts that relationships which do not include men are as, or more, important, than those that do. (2001:315)

Embodying female solidarity and co-operation, the ideals of sisterhood are central to the women’s movement and feature prominently in second wave feminist thought (see Gamble 2001; Siegel 2007; Whelehan 1995). Charlie’s Angels reflects this spirit in both the sisterhood between the three Angels and their solidarity with other (heterosexual) women. The sisterhood between the three Angels carries across all five seasons, despite cast changes, and is demonstrated through teamwork and the characters’ concern for each others’ well-being (see Focus Box 5.3). As well as undertaking private detection as a team by making use of multiple investigators in undercover roles and emphasising the communication between them to resolve cases, the group functions as a pseudo-family and, in doing so, models the notion of belonging and community. For example, when Kelly is injured in ‘To Kill An Angel’ (#7),
Sabrina and Jill tell the nurse they are her family. When Kris has amnesia after being hit by a car in ‘Angel on My Mind’ (#56), flashback sequences are used to highlight how much the three women rely on each other and are involved together outside the work environment. Kris’s sense of belonging is articulated when they are all gathered in the Townsend office at the end of the episode and, having regained her memory, she says ‘it’s nice to be home’. For Gough-Yates, it is a friendship reinforced by the absence of family (2001:90). In Bewitched, Samantha’s female community consisted primarily of her family (mother, cousin and aunts). Charlie’s Angels can be seen to have extended this ideal of female community beyond the family and into the public realm. In this way, the show promotes a model of cooperation among women rather than competition. Notably, this aspect of the show was undermined by a range of press articles during the series’ production which stereotypically inferred problems between the actresses (see Condon and Hofstede 2000:50).

Focus Box 5.3: Sisterhood (on a deserted island)

One episode that focuses on the Angels’ use of teamwork is ‘Angel Hunt’ (#79) in which the three women are lured to a remote island by a criminal, Malcolm Case (Lloyd Bochner), with a vendetta against Charlie. Elements of this storyline are appropriated in the contemporary film adaptation, and the imagery of the women arriving on the beach and looking up at the cliffs (emphasising that they are on their own and need to band together, against the elements) is similar to early scenes in the 2000 film (see Figures 5.16, 5.17, 6.22 and 6.23). These consistencies are related to teamwork and solidarity which also feature heavily in the film(s) (see Chapter 6). In the TV episode, while Charlie and Bosley work together to meet Case’s demands, the Angels have to use their own skills and ingenuity to survive being literally hunted without access to any traditional ‘tools of the trade’ or backup. Realising they are stranded, the women’s solidarity is foregrounded when Tiffany says,

I don’t know if I should say this, I haven’t known you two very long, but I’d like you both to know that you’re both as important to me as my own family. And I’m awful glad you’re here. Cause if you weren’t I don’t think I could handle this by myself.
Admitting she is scared, this scene also foreshadows Tiffany being the Angel in danger in this episode, as she is later captured while trying to disarm one of Case’s guards. Kris and Kelly then need to work together to overpower Case and the rest of his men so that they can free Tiffany and contact Charlie and Bosley to get off the island. Fashioning rope from woven vine, they make a trap and Kelly draws one of the men to chase her. He follows her along a path, and then Kris swings across the path on the vine and knocks him out—crediting Tarzan movies for the idea. When they see Case’s jeep approaching, Kelly says, ‘Now what would Tarzan do?’ (identifying with the male protagonist in the films) to which Kris responds, ‘He’d run, come on.’ The women outrun Case who, in keeping with the Tarzan analogy, is attacked by a tiger. This resolution suggests a natural justice is served while the Angels avoid being directly involved with violence.

Further to cooperation and sisterhood among the Angels, within the text a wider solidarity is also acknowledged through the assistance they offer other women. The format of the series facilitated this through the Angels’ contact with clients (they were regularly hired to locate, rescue, vindicate or protect a woman), as well as with women they encounter while undercover. As Womack asserts, ‘the standard Charlie’s Angels episode plot is a feminist fantasy of female community and sisterhood, of women helping other women to defy patriarchal oppression’ (2003:157). For example, when hired to investigate an assault on the daughter of a music school owner, Judy Harkins (Amy Johnston), by a local pimp, Freddie (Richard Lynch), in ‘Angels on the Street’ (#75), Kelly and Tiffany go undercover as prostitutes. As well as solving the case and helping the client, Kelly stands up to Freddie when threatened by him and points out to the other girls that he is a coward who plays on their fear. She encourages them to just ‘think about that’. For Douglas, although such undercover scenarios were ‘absolutely preposterous’, they ‘spoke to a fantasy about women being able to help other women against brutish, oppressive men, and they affirmed the importance of sisterly love’ (1995:314).
Consuming Women’s Liberation

While a separate project from Charlie’s Angels, the poster of Fawcett in a red swimsuit that came to symbolise the seventies (see Figure 5.19) was released only two months before the series aired in 1976. By the following summer (1977), eight million posters had been sold in the US and Charlie’s Angels was recognised as the season’s ‘runaway hit’ (Condon and Hofstede 2000:56,57; Higashi 1980:54). According to Higashi,

> [t]he sudden and phenomenal popularity of Farrah Fawcett-Majors, who became the media star of the year, can be understood within the context of the Angels’ campy humor. She has a girlish and playful appeal combined with a seductive ability to entice and then unman men – a quality which suited the concept of the series. (Higashi 1980:54, emphasis in original)

Importantly, the allure Higashi identifies goes beyond that of a traditional pinup and recognises the influence of Fawcett’s more liberated screen persona. Demonstrating an understanding of what will later become known as ‘girl power’ (see Chapter 6), Higashi locates the commercial appeal of this new version of femininity. While teenage boys hung posters of Fawcett on their bedroom wall, teenage girls across the US coveted ‘the Farrah flick’ haircut – a style Rosen suggests was attractive to girls (and women) because it carried the promise of confidence and allure that the TV character represented (1977:102). Further to replicating Fawcett’s ‘look’, fans could also be part of the trend through Charlie’s Angels merchandise.

As Gray notes in Show Sold Separately, ‘though Star Wars hardly invented the licensing and merchandising game, with Lone Ranger and other properties making considerable profits in previous years, the phenomenal success of its merchandise…began a new era (2010:177). Charlie’s Angels was in its second season when Star Wars was released in 1977, and was swept along on the merchandising wave with a plethora of Charlie’s Angels products on offer,

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25 The red swimsuit worn by Fawcett is housed in the Smithsonian Institution’s popular culture history collection in recognition of the significance of the poster, which Robert Thompson identifies as ‘one of the defining images of the 1970s’ (D’Zurilla 2011).
including: lunch boxes, notebooks, trading cards, radios, make-up sets, shoulder bags, dolls, playsets, Halloween costumes, art kits and walkie-talkies. Notably Hasbro’s *Charlie’s Angels* dolls appeared in the show when the owner of a toy factory presents each of the Angels with a doll in their own image after they solve the mystery in ‘Mother Goose is Running for His Life’ (#42). Gough-Yates posits that whether it is by adopting Fawcett’s hairstyle, attaining fashion accoutrements endorsed by the show or purchasing *Charlie’s Angels* merchandise, engaging with the show on this level was equivalent to buying into their lifestyle (and changing one’s own), and therefore their commercial products were symbols of women’s liberation (rather than of commercial capitalism and thereby women’s oppression as other feminists argued) (2001:93).

**Remaking Charlie’s Angels**

Through merchandising and syndication, *Charlie’s Angels* maintained a presence in popular culture long after its final season in 1981. The show was rerun on Turner Network Television (TNT) and TV Land in the US, is the topic of Condon and Hofstede’s (2000) ‘casebook’ and has multiple fan sites maintained on the internet (Womack 2003:153). And while it did not retain sustained popularity to the extent of the *Bewitched* TV series, for example, *Charlie’s Angels* did enjoy a resurgence of interest in the new millennium after the release of the film adaptations in 2000 and 2003. Subsequently, the DVD box sets of the first four seasons were made available with Sony Pictures staggering their release between 2003 and 2009. In Australia today, *Charlie’s Angels* is again on free-to-air television, screening daily on the Nine Network’s retro channel, Go!. As well as filling an expanded schedule (as discussed in the Introduction), the show’s re-emergence corresponded with Nine’s promotion of the 2011 remake of the *Charlie’s Angels* TV series. An earlier remake of the show was attempted in the late 1980s with *Angels ’88*; however, as Condon and Hofstede report, the series was cancelled before being aired (2000:133-135). Despite high production values, a known cast and strong promotion, the 2011 remake suffered a similar fate, as the decision to cancel the show was made after only four episodes aired, with a total of eight episodes produced.

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26 Hasbro Industries spent over US$2.5 million advertising the *Charlie’s Angels* dolls in 1977 (Condon and Hofstede 2000:275). Hasbro was in direct competition with Mattel, manufacturers of Barbie dolls. In 1978 Hasbro released Sabrina, Kelly and Kris and their ‘adventure van’ (an ‘action headquarters on wheels’ complete with camera, binoculars and headphones for the dolls). While the design of Barbie was modernised in 1971 so that her eyes looked forward, rather than submissively sideways as they had previously, she remained traditionally domestic by comparison in her 1976 ‘Star Traveller’ motor home (complete with dishes, towel and sunchair). See ‘YouTube: 1978 Commercials: Charlie’s Angels to Looney Bin’ (2010) for a comparison of the Hasbro and Mattel dolls, and Condon and Hofstede (2000:276-287) for a complete list of *Charlie’s Angels* merchandise.
Charlie’s Angels (2011) is set in Miami with Abby (Rachael Taylor), Eve (Minka Kelly) and Kate (Annie Ilonzeh) as the three latest Angels working for Charlie (see Figure 5.20). Diverging from the original series, the Angels are all ex-criminals who have turned their lives around and together with Charlie’s mediator, computer hacker John Bosley (Ramon Rodriguez), now work to fight crime. The 2011 show demonstrates clear associations with the seventies series, such as its combination of action and glamour, with ‘Runway Angels’ (#2) being set in the fashion world and the Angels charged with protecting an African King in ‘Royal Angels’ (#7).

‘Angels in Chains’ (#4) is a homage to the 1976 episode with the same title (also the fourth episode in the first season), although this time set in a Cuban women’s prison. The show has high production values with an emphasis on locations such as marinas and high-rise buildings (which is consistent with the original series), high fashion and star power with Rachael Taylor and Minka Kelly known for their previous film and television roles. Drew Barrymore and Leonard Goldberg were also initially involved in the series (executive producers on six and five episodes respectively). However, the series did not resonate with contemporary audiences, and in the highly competitive world of network television the poor reviews and falling ratings saw the show quickly cancelled (Watkins 2011). Arguably, not only was there nothing new (or relevant) about three women in high heels and Prada fighting crime, but as Linda Holmes (2011) laments, ‘If this is meant to be fun, mischievous camp, it emphatically is not. It is shot with tepid, gloomy self-seriousness’. Ultimately, the 2011 version’s failure to connect highlights the extent to which the 1970s series upon which it was based was able to successfully navigate and effectively reflect changing roles for women. Moreover, it confirms the significance of the original series being a show of its time.

27 Barrymore and Goldberg were both producers on the Charlie’s Angels films. Goldberg was also co-creator with Spelling and executive producer on the original Charlie’s Angels TV series.
Charlie’s Angels demonstrated emerging femininities during a period in which feminism was still developing and new feminist ideals were continuing to emerge. The women in the show undertook traditionally masculine roles by working in the public realm as private detectives, and through that role exhibited a strong sense of sisterhood and solidarity. Most importantly, however, the Charlie’s Angels TV series identified a key factor which continues to impact contemporary feminist debate; that is, the relationship between feminism and femininity. The way in which the women in the TV show were presented laid the groundwork for feminism and femininity to be combined, so that it was sexy to be an empowered, independent woman. As Hopkins identifies (2002:130-131), this is the foundation of girl power – a theme that features prominently in the film adaptations of Charlie’s Angels, and one which will be explored in the next chapter. Similarly, the style and generic conventions of Bond and The Avengers that influenced the TV series are also felt strongly in the new millennium films. The TV show reflects a shift in representations of women and femininity on screen brought about by second wave feminism and, in the following examination of the Charlie’s Angels films, it can be seen that the new millennium films respond to those representations in a postfeminist interpretation that seeks to reconcile past and present ideals.
Chapter 6

BLOCKBUSTING GIRL POWER: CHARLIE’S ANGELS ON FILM

High-kicking their way onto the silver screen, Natalie (Cameron Diaz), Dylan (Drew Barrymore) and Alex (Lucy Liu) play the eponymous Angels in the fast-paced, highly-stylised, new millennium film adaptation of the seventies TV series, Charlie’s Angels. Released in the US on 3 November 2000, Charlie’s Angels took US$40.1 million in its opening weekend, which was the second highest non-summer movie opening in box-office history (the highest was Toy Story 2 the previous November) (Wittstock 2000). The film went on to gross over US$125 million domestically and US$264 million worldwide (IMDb.com, Inc. 2012). As Melinda Wittstock (2000) from the London Observer remarked, ‘America is loving it and millions are flocking to see Cameron Diaz, Drew Barrymore and Lucy Liu flaunt their post-feminist, kitsch machismo’. While the TV show started out with relatively unknown actresses, the film functions as a high profile star vehicle with Diaz, Barrymore and Liu (see Figure 6.1) taking the reins as three new operatives working for the Charles Townsend Detective Agency. In the film, the Angels are charged with finding Eric Knox (Sam Rockwell), who is thought to have been kidnapped by Roger Corwin (Tim Curry). When found, Knox hires them to recover innovative voice-recognition computer software he claims was stolen from his company. However, it is revealed that he has actually hired them to steal the software in order to locate and kill their boss Charlie (voiced by the original Charlie, John Forsythe), whom he holds responsible for his father’s death in Vietnam. Assisted by Bosley (Bill Murray), the Angels protect Charlie by ultimately defeating Knox, his partner Vivian Wood (Kelly Lynch) and Corwin’s henchman, The Thin Man (Crispin Glover). The film expands on the TV series by delving further into the Angels’ private lives, and enlists Matt LeBlanc, Tom Green and Luke Wilson to play the Angels’ love interests.

Like the TV show in the seventies, the new millennium film was phenomenally popular, achieving not only record-breaking box office receipts, but strong DVD sales and Hollywood’s ultimate confirmation of commercial success – a sequel, Charlie’s Angels: Full Throttle, in 2003. Reviewers considered Charlie’s Angels’ (2000) high-voltage action
sequences fun and its trio of heroines a visual delight (see Howe 2000; McCarthy 2000; Scott 2000). In this way, the film maintains its connection with the TV series, which holds a similar place in popular memory as lightweight and hair-flick focused. However, just as the TV show worked within the context of its time to offer moments of empowerment for women and demonstrate new femininities (as outlined in the previous chapter), the Charlie’s Angels film, which is a product of its (postfeminist) time and (Hollywood blockbuster) format, provides similar opportunities for the disruption of gender norms. Like the Bewitched movie and TV series, the Charlie’s Angels film has a direct relationship with its TV predecessor, and it is those textual and thematic links that provide the conduit through which postfeminist nostalgia is exposed. This chapter identifies the similarities between the Charlie’s Angels texts — including women taking on traditionally masculine roles (as private detectives in the TV show and as action heroes in the film), exploring the relationship between feminism and femininity, and an emphasis on sisterhood — and contends that nostalgia for those features (and the desire for the transformation they represent) is evidence of their ongoing relevance. It also recognises that the elements of the film that differ from the series serve to highlight the postfeminist climate in which the film was produced. For example, the TV Angels appropriate sexist stereotypes to gain the upper-hand while undercover in a professional setting, yet in the film the same strategy is heightened and carried across the heroines’ professional and private lives, indicating postfeminism’s blurring of the public/private divide and contemporary women’s expectations of agency in both realms. Moreover, a discourse of ‘girl power’ is prominent in and around the film, impacting the production and reception of the text, while raising issues of control over image (including the camp aesthetic through which the film is presented) and the power such control affords women in a postmodern, media age.

To provide context for analysis of the adapted Charlie’s Angels films, the first section of this chapter examines the significance of star power, the advent of ‘girl power’ and the generic conventions of Hollywood blockbusters. It then moves into textual analysis, identifying the films’ intertextual strengths and exploring the mechanisms by which the women in the films enact agency: in their role as female action heroes; deployment of femininity; and demonstration of sisterhood. The chapter then investigates the impact of postfeminism and the notion of empowerment through image control, using Drew Barrymore as an example, followed by some concluding analysis of Charlie’s Angels and adaptation.
Star Power

In the seminal text, *Stars* (1979), Richard Dyer explores the significance of stardom and develops the idea that stars impact the way audiences anticipate and receive a text. He identifies stars as having ‘an existence in the world independent of their screen/”fiction” appearances’ (Dyer 1979:22). Yvonne Tasker defines them as ‘complex personas made up of far more than the texts in which they appear’ (1993:74), as stars are imbued with ideas and values. Moreover, this constructed ‘star image’ is commodified. The Hollywood system operates on an actor’s ‘bankability’, or box office potential, as films use a star to attract a mass audience. Stars are why films get made, how they are marketed, and largely determine their success, which is why Christine Gledhill describes them as ‘cogs in the mass entertainment industry selling desires and ideology’ (1991:prologue). Through extra-textual references, such as the actor’s previous roles and other information circulated in interviews, newspapers and magazines, stars ‘personalise social meanings and ideologies’ (Gledhill 1991:xiv). They can be seen to embody certain cultural archetypes and often become closely aligned with aspects of ideologies or identities, such as femininity, masculinity or sexuality.

Using three known actresses, *Charlie’s Angels* both multiplies and diversifies the effect of star power, as each of the three female leads offer the audience something different. Former model Cameron Diaz was best known at the time of *Charlie’s Angels*’ release for her roles in *The Mask* (1994), *My Best Friend’s Wedding* (1997) and *There’s Something About Mary* (1998). She brings expectations of the physical comedy that came with those roles, as well as her off-screen persona of being adventurous and fun, to the part of Natalie Cook. For Lucy Liu, aspects of her portrayal of the controlled, authoritative, formidable Ling Woo in the television series *Ally McBeal* (1997-2002) and the ruthlessly efficient assassin O-Ren Ishii in *Kill Bill: Volume 1* (2003) carry over to Angel Alex Munday. The self-reflexive, postfeminist attitude and humour of that show are therefore also associated with the actress and imprinted on the film. Finally, Drew Barrymore has been in the public spotlight since appearing as Gertie in *E.T.: the Extra-Terrestrial* (1982) at the age of seven. Having been through a turbulent adolescence (largely played out in the tabloids), her role as former bad girl Dylan Sanders in *Charlie’s Angels* plays to a personal history with which Generation X audiences would be familiar. Roles in romantic comedies such as *The Wedding Singer* (1998), *Ever*
After: A Cinderella Story (1998), and Never Been Kissed (1999) set up further expectations for the film and impact her characterisation of Dylan. Although the film was co-produced by Barrymore\(^2\) (together with Flower Films partner Nancy Juvonen and executive producer of the original TV show Leonard Goldberg), publicity around the film played down her role behind the scenes and instead focused on the combined star power of the three women on screen, with Diaz, Barrymore and Liu appearing together in interviews and on the red carpet to promote the film (see Figure 6.1). This is consistent with an industrial system in which the stars function as both the labour that contributes to the production of the text as well as critical marketing tools for that text (and associated merchandise) (Stadler and McWilliam 2009:267-268). While Diaz’s featured sequences (see Focus Box 6.1, for example) and top billing reflect the relativity of her star power (and reported salary),\(^3\) the strongest marketing position was to present all three actresses together, thereby broadening the appeal of the film with multiple opportunities for engagement and identification. The presentation of the three women together in this way also ensured that a girl power discourse was foregrounded.

Focus Box 6.1: Optimizing Star Power – Diaz Dancing

Diaz’s character, Natalie Cook, is introduced in a dream sequence which draws on popular culture references by alluding to Madonna’s 1984 Material Girl video clip (dressed in a shimmering diamond-like silver dress, Natalie is carried down stairs by male dancers in black suits) and Saturday Night Fever (1977) as she dances in a choreographed disco routine on a multi-coloured lightbox stage to ‘Heaven Must Be Missing an Angel’ by Tavares. As she is lifted up into the air by one of the male dancers, the shot zooms in to a medium close-up of Natalie’s face. As silver confetti falls down around her she looks straight into the camera and blows a kiss. With blonde hair, a broad smile,\(^2\)

Barrymore’s role as producer will be examined later in the chapter.

Star power is reflected in the salary an actor can command with Diaz reported to have earned US$12 million for Charlie’s Angels, while Barrymore earned US$9 million and Liu US$1 million. Following on from the success of the first film, Diaz commanded US$20 million for the sequel, while Barrymore and Liu received US$14 million and US$4 million respectively (‘The Movie Times: Actress Profiles [2012]).
frosted eye shadow and an athletic body (shown off in a backless halterneck dress) Diaz serves as a reminder of Farrah Fawcett, and together with the disco motif links the film with its TV past. The shot then dissolves into a smiling Natalie waking up in bed with sunlight streaming across her face and arms outstretched. The cream bedding and golden light reinforce the ‘angelic’ motif that is carried through the song lyrics while situating the character in a domestic setting. Each of the three leads are introduced in home environments in this way, ensuring they are established as having both private and professional lives (as is consistent with postfeminist expectations), although Natalie is the only one who wakes up alone (her love life carries through as a subplot as the film progresses). Getting out of bed, she puts her orthodontic retainer in its case—a residual of the headgear denoting a ‘nerd’ persona set up in the introductory sequence (see Focus Box 6.3)—and continues to dance to the music from her dream. Natalie is wearing a fitted purple tee-shirt without a bra, which again links in with the 1970s show and Fawcett, as well as Spiderman underpants which reinforce the anti-glamour, ‘nerd’ aspect of her character while making reference to the Star Wars-style merchandising that exploded during the late seventies. Natalie catches a glimpse of herself dancing in the mirror as a reverse medium shot then shows her watching her own bottom moving (see Figure 6.2). Turning around to face the mirror, an over-the-shoulder medium long shot and reverse medium close-up depict her enjoying the dance. When the doorbell rings, Natalie swings around and shimmies backwards across the floor.

Figure 6.2: Dancing across the bedroom floor in seventies-inspired underwear, Diaz (as Natalie) demonstrates a self-reflexive engagement in the ‘fun’ of her sexuality.

This scene is an example of the use of star power. Despite only lasting 14 seconds, the ‘bottom dance’ section of this scene was widely publicised, having been included on the trailer, shown during interviews and replayed thousands of times on YouTube. If it was an unknown actress, or if Diaz was dressed in jeans or flannel pyjamas, the scene (and possibly the film) would have made less of an impact. However, it could also be argued that the sequence attempts to turn the table on objectification by taking control of the gaze, as through the use of the mirror, Natalie is seen to be viewing her own bottom with delight.

4 The comparative relationship between Fawcett and Diaz has already been established by the image of Diaz skateboarding in the title sequence, which is a reference to Fawcett in ‘Consenting Adults’ (#10) (see Focus Box 6.3).
Girl Power

Linked to third-wave feminism and a celebration of girl-ness and difference, girl power stems from the underground riot grrrls movement of the early 1990s (Orr 1997; Siegel 2007). While postfeminism holds feminism and femininity in tension, third-wave feminism neither rejects nor tones down feminism and instead embraces the label. Moreover, it incorporates issues of race, class and sexual orientation by foregrounding issues of inclusion and diversity (Siegel 2007:142). These ideals were reflected in riot grrrl music culture with the punk band Bikini Kill, ‘zines’, and later the launch of publications like BUST (1993) and Bitch (1996) (Levine 2008:380). Circulating through the mass media, this then filtered into mainstream popular culture as girl power – a term popularised by the British pop group, the Spice Girls (see Figure 6.3). Central to girl power is the contention that women are sexual subjects (rather than sexual objects) who can have equal privileges to men while retaining their femininity. And while some feminists identify the movement as one which celebrates feminist gains (see Natasha Walter’s The New Feminism [1998]), others have criticised it as a consumerist marketing ploy that promotes traditional patriarchal objectification (see Germaine Greer’s The Whole Woman [1999]). Susan Hopkins acknowledges that girl power is open to aggressive commodification; however, her examination of the ‘girl heroes’ it produces – pop culture figures such as Madonna, the Spice Girls, Xena and Buffy – suggests that such prominent female figures have ‘successfully challenged norms of femininity and imparted important lessons to girls about growing up in a media age’ (Hopkins 2002:2). She argues that ‘[t]he girl hero is literally a sign of the times. She reflects the expanding influence of media / entertainment discourses and the associated

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5 Third-wave feminism is discussed in Chapter 1.
6 Zines are informally distributed photocopied pages of handwritten or typed material. Catherine Orr determines that, ‘[t]he importance and intrigue of these publications are found in their overtly declared dissatisfaction with mainstream representations of girls and women. Advertising, television and women’s fashion magazines are frequent targets of derision’ (1997:37). For examples of zines from the riot grrrl movement see Karen Green and Tristan Taormino’s anthology, A Girl’s Guide to Taking Over the World: Writings from the Girl Zine Revolution (1997).
triumph of fantasy, image and aesthetics’ (Hopkins 2002:5). Such discourses are evident in both the publicity surrounding Charlie’s Angels’ release, and the film’s visual treatment.

During interviews to promote the film, Diaz, Barrymore and Liu talked about how fun it was to make the movie together, how well they got along and how strong they felt doing kung-fu training (see Fischer 2003; Molitorisz 2003; Spirou 2009). Wittstock (2000) reports that ‘the three actresses live up to the buddy image, hanging all over each other, playing with each other’s hair and talking in unison’. In this way, images of fun, friendship, sexualised femininity, strength and ‘kick ass’ attitude are constructed by the women’s public appearances together and a girl power discourse is reinforced. In terms of aesthetics, the film is also consistent with girl power practice. While reviewing Charlie’s Angels for the Washington Post, Desson Howe (2000) begins to explain the plot but then literally dissolves into ‘…blah, blah, blah’ dismissing the storyline, because as Howe observes, ‘[t]his isn’t about content, anyway. It’s about form – the way the Angels look, their lifestyle, their three-musketeer partnership and the often stunning action scenes’. Charlie’s Angels is the first feature film directed by award-winning7 music video director McG, and he brings a strong visual styling to the movie. As production designer J. Michael Riva explains, ‘[t]here’s the world that you and I live in and then there’s the Angel World that has its own rules’ (‘Welcome to Angel World’ 2001). The film presents a heightened reality with a palette of strong primary colours, characters with exaggerated capabilities, and a clear sense of self-reflexivity. Such characteristics not only foster girl power, but speak to the notion of ‘camp’.

In ‘Notes on Camp’, Susan Sontag (2001 [1964]:275) states that ‘the essence of camp is its love of the unnatural: of artifice and exaggeration.’ It is ‘the consistently aesthetic experience of the world. It incarnates a victory of “style” over “content”, “aesthetics” over “morality”, of irony over tragedy’ (Sontag 2001 [1964] :287). Although there is an inherent fluidity about the term and its use (see Meyer 1994; Miller, D. 1993; Richardson 2006), Andy Medhurst’s working definition of camp as ‘a playful, knowing, self-reflexive theatricality’ is a particularly useful description when applying the term to screen texts (2001:29). As identified in Chapter 5, the original TV show incorporated a camp aesthetic that was influenced by The Avengers and reinforced by Spelling’s focus on glamour through costumes and locations and the show’s incorporation of a tongue-in-cheek tone. These aspects not only laid the

7 McG won Billboard’s Pop Video of the Year in 1997 for Smash Mouth’s ‘Walking on the Sun’ and the Music Video Production Association’s Pop Video of the Year in 1997 for Sugar Ray’s ‘Fly’.
foundations for a camp re-visioning, but are magnified in the feature film. Moreover, the deliberate nature of the film’s aesthetic construction is revealed in the special features section of the Charlie’s Angels DVD release through five featurettes that cover set design, costume design, stunt choreography, special effects and direction. In ‘Welcome to Angel World’ (2001), Riva reveals that the creative team decided at the very beginning to try and hit a style cooler and sillier and Saturday morning cartoonish... We talked about reds and we talked about golden yellows and we talked about mono-chromatic sets so we hit a tone that we knew right away... it wasn’t something we’d seen before. (‘Welcome to Angel World’ 2001)

Developing a distinctive look for each character is discussed in ‘Angelic Attire’ (2001), and details of where and how special effects are employed in the film are outlined in ‘Angelic Effects’ (2001) and ‘Wired Angels’ (2001). Exposing these processes clarifies the fantastical nature of the movie and heightens the audience’s awareness of its artifice. In ‘The Master and the Angels’ (2001), the three actresses are shown working with kung-fu master Cheng-Yan Yeun – emphasising the physical demands of training and how hard the actresses worked to perform the stunts, which also reaffirms girl power practices. Each package is introduced with a candy-coloured frame in which the Angel-inspired titles appear in a seventies-styled font to reinforce a discourse of fun and self-reflexivity. Niall Richardson argues that to distinguish camp from simple irony or parody, it ‘must be structured around gender. In other words, camp is an ironic performance of gender’ (2006:159). Thus it is through the film’s camp aesthetic that Charlie’s Angels draws attention to its engagement in discourses of gender. Hopkins identifies the ‘deliberately camp attitude’ of the film as a central feature of the remake and an indication of ‘the changing status of femininity and mass-mediated feminism’ (2000:132). She posits that,

[I]ike that other girl hero, Buffy the Vampire Slayer, the new Angels kick, bounce and fly through the air as living comic book characters... [they] are still sex objects, but they are sex objects that come with their own critique of sexism. Girl Power pre-empts serious critique by refusing to take itself seriously. In attempting to create a ‘cool and cutting-edge’ profile, the 2000 Charlie’s Angels talks back to girls on their own ‘knowing’ level. We know these are sexist stereotypes, the lines goes, but let’s have fun with them anyway. (Hopkins 2002:132)

And this is how girl power, camp and the film work – they expose the construction of gender and sexuality, and narrowly defined social roles and gender-based traits, through heightened performativity and self-reflexivity.
A Hollywood Blockbuster

Over the last three decades, changes in the film industry and a need to compete with other media and entertainment has seen a concentration of studios’ resources on the blockbuster film (Bordwell 2006; Turner 2006). A ‘blockbuster’ can be defined as an ‘aggressively promoted big-budget movie with high production values, big stars, massive simultaneous release patterns, and, increasingly, expensive special effects’ (Turner 2006:6). Due to the high costs involved, a limited number are made each year and producers are driven to reduce financial risks. As Turner observes, the result has been ‘that most of the blockbusters of today tend to be narratively conservative, featuring special effects and a limited group of established stars, and most often dependent on those elements for which an audience has already been established’ (2006:9). Movies which are based on a book (including comic books) or a Broadway show have proven appeal and therefore pose less risk. The merchandising tie-ins that come with such projects – a regular feature by the early 1980s (Bordwell 2006:3) – provide a further opportunity for profit and contribute to justifying the initially high costs of production. Charlie’s Angels is a Hollywood blockbuster and is shaped by its adherence to the blockbuster format. It employs a line-up of established stars, celebrates the use of special effects and was widely marketed to a ready-made audience (due to the cultural impact of the television series on which it was based, the film was able to tap into a broad nostalgia that did not rely on direct exposure to the original show, only an awareness of its concept).

The film also demonstrates elements consistent with what is termed ‘spectacle’ and ‘excess’, which is the notion of contemporary blockbusters being structured around ‘loosely linked, self-contained action sequences often built around spectacular stunts, stars and special effects’ (Buckland 1998:167). McG’s background in music video direction contributes to such a style in Charlie’s Angels and its appeal to a Generation X audience. However, Erlend Lavik (2008) moves away from the simplified ‘effects versus narrative’ debate that blockbusters

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8 See discussion in Chapter 5.
9 Increasingly, as Henry Jenkins (2006) notes, Hollywood blockbusters support tie-ins that converge across multiple media platforms. For example, with Charlie’s Angels, video games were released for the Playstation 2 and Nintendo GameCube in 2003 (around the same time as the movie sequel).
10 Levine (2008) identifies a number of shows that play on the Charlie’s Angels TV show format in this way, including Baywatch and the Spice Girls movie, Spice World (1997).
11 The movie soundtrack similarly reflects the film’s blockbuster format, appeal to Generation X and the influence of McG. Unlike the dominance of nostalgic tones heard on the Bewitched (2005) soundtrack, the music on the Charlie’s Angels (2000) soundtrack combines contemporary rock, pop, metal and grunge with some iconic seventies disco tracks. Most notably, it includes: Charlie’s Angels theme music remixed by English techno band Apollo 440; girl power group Destiny’s Child’s chart-topping ‘Independent Women Part 1’; and rock heavyweights Aerosmith.
attract. Instead he seeks to integrate the two in order to complicate the analysis of blockbuster films, which Lavik identifies as ‘some of the most prominent cultural texts in the world today’ (2008:183). He purports that while ‘visceral engaging [with] booming THX bass, aggressive editing, [and] in-your-face imagery…the fact that the physical thrills are narratively situated is absolutely crucial’ (Lavik 2007:51-52). This holistic perspective complements the recognition of Charlie’s Angels as a deliberately camp film that carries a girl power discourse, and supports serious discussion of the film because of rather than despite its blockbuster status. The movie resonated with a new millennium audience and the blockbuster formula proved financially successful so, as is often the case in Hollywood, a sequel soon followed (see Figure 6.4).

In Charlie’s Angels: Full Throttle (2003) the Angels are charged with retrieving two rings that hold coded information about people in the government’s witness protection program. Ex-Angel Madison Lee (Demi Moore) orchestrates the theft and sells to the highest bidder, including Dylan’s (Barrymore) former boyfriend Seamus O’Grady (Justin Theroux). The Angels retrieve the rings and again defeat the bad guys, just in time to attend the premiere of Maximum Extreme 2 – an action movie sequel starring Alex’s boyfriend Jason (Matt LeBlanc) at Mann’s Chinese Theatre in Hollywood. As well as a play on Mission Impossible II (similar poster art is displayed and the title abbreviated to ME2), the inclusion of the fictitious film reinforces the self-reflexive tone of the movie while providing a commentary on Hollywood practice. While the Angels engage in a climactic fight scene on the rooftops of the buildings that line Hollywood Boulevard,12 movie fans and paparazzi gather at the red carpet event below. Then when a bomb targeting the premiere is deflected by Bosley and explodes mid-air, Jason thinks it is part of the movie’s promotion and remarks ‘Wow, they’ve gone all out for this one’. Timothy Corrigan (1991) suggests that the expansion of special effects

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12 The rooftop fight scene carries strong overtones of Batman movies. Madison jumps from the rooftop in a bat-like suit and flies down to street level where she jumps into a car to escape.
capabilities from the mid 1970s directly relates to an increase in production of movie sequels. Geoff King concurs, noting that in franchises such as Terminator and Jurassic Park, sequels ‘provide the opportunity to display the latest advances in special effects capabilities (as well as simply providing “more of the same” as a “thrill ride”)’ (2003:124). Like the first Charlie’s Angels film, Charlie’s Angels: Full Throttle focuses on form over content, but true to the tradition of sequels, takes it a step further with bigger explosions, faster chases, bolder costumes and increasingly complex fight scenes. With largely the same creative team (the director, producers, cinematographer, set designer and costumer designer all return) and the three lead roles played by the same actresses, the tone and aesthetic of the first film is maintained, and thus the sequel can be seen to predominantly uphold the discourses already established. However there are also some differences between the films, most notably the addition of a former Angel as the central (female) antagonist, and this will be discussed later in the chapter.

Analysing Adapted Angels

The prominence of multiple women in the central roles of such a popular and commercially successful film ensured Charlie’s Angels attracted its share of academic interest. However most feminist commentators were somewhat underwhelmed. For example, Womack states that the 2000 film is neither a remake or revision but an ‘over-the-top parody’ in which the feminism of the seventies television series ‘is replaced with a watered down, Spice Girls brand of substanceless “girl power” that in many ways promotes rather than undermines traditional gender codes’ (2003:153). She maintains that the fantastical aspects of the film represent a removal from the reality that the TV show attempted, and strip the women of ‘their power and competence’; moreover, that the portrayal of their private lives ‘ultimately cheapens the claims made by Barrymore and Diaz that the film depicts female empowerment’ (Womack 2003:167,168). In Super Bitches and Action Babes, Rikke Schubart considers the Charlie’s Angels films alongside Lara Croft: Tomb Raider (2001) and Kill Bill Vol.1 (2003), classifying them as ‘high trash heroine action films’ (2007:291). The defining features of this category are that,

[e]everyone agrees they are merely ‘fun’ and that plot and content are irrelevant; the only thing which matters is the female hero and her body; and the portrayal of the female hero is related to an unspecified and unpoliticized empowerment of women. (Schubart 2007:291, emphasis in original)
Schubart proposes that the *Charlie’s Angel’s* ‘hyper-ironic tongue-in-cheek approach’ is its defence against claims of antifeminism, which is consistent with an assertion that the heroines function as avatars rather than characters with whom an audience are invited to identify. She suggests that,

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\text{[t]o be an angel or any other of the high trash heroines need not mean to be like the characters but can involve behaving or looking like them. Today’s stars are models of fashion, attitude, and action rather than role models of emotional identity construction. (2007:314, emphasis in original)}
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Yet for Elana Levine (2008), while *Charlie’s Angels* functions as a popular site in which feminism and femininity are negotiated, ‘the history of *Charlie’s Angels* from the 1970s to the present is a history of the construction of that which might be termed contemporary postfeminist hegemony’ (2008:376). Levine identifies postfeminist hegemony in the typically mediated assertion that ‘[b]ecause questions of equality and choice have been resolved in women’s favour it is up to the individual woman to make her own way, without the need for collective political action or sustained critique of systemic injustices’ (2008:376). She contends that,

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\text{[t]his mindset is assisted by post-feminist culture’s resolute focus on certain kinds of women – white, middle class, and heterosexual – a focus that pushes aside the experiences of those women unable by social position or circumstance to make the same kinds of choices. *Charlie’s Angels’* representational focus on women of social and economic privilege thus helps make it a typical text in the construction of post-feminist hegemony. (Levine 2008:376)}
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Levine posits that the original television series laid the foundation for postfeminist attitudes towards feminism and femininity through its introduction of feminism alongside ‘sex symbol femininity’, whereby the Angels’ ability to succeed in the traditionally male domain of private detection is closely associated with their status as sex symbols (2008:378). She then claims that those feminist aspects from the TV show were subsumed by an emphasis on femininity when adapted to contemporary films (Levine 2008:387). And in this way, Levine argues that postfeminism has naturalised an erasure of politics from gender through American popular culture over the three decades that elapsed between the TV series and the film, and that feminism and femininity ‘have become one and the same’ (2008:387).
In ‘Two Steps Forward, One Step Back’ (2005), David Roger Coon examines the promotional campaigns for the Charlie’s Angels films and Alias (2001-2006) television series, and asserts that ‘regressive promotional materials potentially hinder the texts’ ability to offer progressive gender imagery’ (2005:4). He maintains that, despite offering a gender-repositioning message (through the use of women in action roles and their control of image through the use of disguises), Charlie’s Angels (and Alias) relies on traditional female objectification and sex appeal to promote and sell the film (Coon 2005:3). Coon emphasises that extra-textual referents, such as movie posters and trailers, alter how the text is consumed, as the promotional material’s sexual imagery can either skew audience reception or turn sections of an audience away from seeing the main text. He contends that in this way, audiences are potentially denied the opportunity of viewing women on screen who are strong, intelligent and multifaceted (sex appeal being one component) (Coon 2005:3). Coon’s observations relate directly to Charlie’s Angels being a blockbuster film and an acknowledgment of the context in which it was produced, while at the same time foregrounding the film’s transgressive qualities. Similarly, this chapter seeks to identify those elements in the film that trigger postfeminist nostalgia – specifically the transformative ideals of feminine empowerment and sisterhood that were established in the original television show – while maintaining an awareness of the context in which the 2000 film was produced.

In the Bewitched movie the central character, Isabel, literally looks to TV’s Samantha for an image of empowered womanhood. In the Charlie’s Angels movies, the three female protagonists draw more closely on the feminine ideals established by their TV predecessors while interpreting them through the heightened aesthetic characteristics emblematic of girl power. To introduce the analysis of the film and its relationship with the TV show, adaptation theory is revisited and the role of intertextuality and self-referentiality highlighted. The chapter then focuses on the similarities and differences between the TV series and film in order to expose the evocation of postfeminist nostalgia. The features to be examined in the film that are consistent with the TV show include women in traditionally male roles, the use of costumes or disguises, the role of Charlie and the celebration of sisterhood. The aspects which differ from the TV series are then addressed, including the treatment of the central characters’ personal lives, postfeminist attitudes and control over image in the media age.

13 Alias centres on CIA agent Sydney Bristow (Jennifer Garner) and her life as a secret agent. As Coon notes, both Alias and the Charlie’s Angels films ‘feature leading women who are highly intelligent, skilled in the martial arts, and conventionally beautiful. They display a combination of traditionally feminine and masculine traits as they fight crime’ (2005:2).
Adaptation theory was discussed in Chapter 2 and again in Chapter 4 with Linda Hutcheon’s interpretation of adaptation identified as the theoretical model adopted by this thesis. The continuum she posits qualifies a broad range of texts as adaptations while recognising the fluid relationships they maintain (Hutcheon 2006:170-172). She affirms that the stories that are adapted serve a particular cultural function; that is, there is a reason they are continuously updated and re-told, and therefore they deserve detailed consideration. Moreover, Hutcheon draws attention to the manner in which they are consumed by distinguishing between an unknowing and a knowing audience (those who are familiar with the antecedent text/s) and proposes that the knowing audience is actively involved in ‘an interpretive doubling, a conceptual flipping back and forth between the work we know and the work we are experiencing’ (2006:139). As identified in the discussion of *Bewitched* (2005) in Chapter 4, intertextuality and self-referentiality are key components in adaptations. In *Charlie’s Angels* direct references to the original TV series are instrumental in establishing this connection, such as the use of: a variation on the 1970s theme music; silhouetted forms in the title sequence (see Focus Box 6.3); the familiar red brick exterior of the (Charles Townsend Detective) Agency’s office; and use of the original (now ‘retro’) squawk box. However, such texts do not just reference back to the source text upon which they are based, they also rely on broader popular culture knowledge. As discussed in Chapter 4, this is consistent with postmodernism and an increasingly sophisticated, media-literate audience. Importantly, the intertextual cues function as signifiers to read the ‘adaptation as adaptation’, inviting the oscillation Hutcheon describes. Some examples in the *Charlie’s Angels* adapted film include: an early reference to ‘another movie from an old TV show’ (a complaint made by Dylan in disguise as Mr Jones about the fictitious *T.J. Hooker: The Movie* screening on the plane in the opening scene); the inclusion of Natalie at a taping of the seventies TV show *Soul Train.*
Train (see Figure 6.5), and a trigger to recall E.T. (1982) when Dylan knocks on the back door of the house in which the eighties blockbuster was filmed (see Figure 6.27).

Through intertextuality and self-reflexivity, Charlie’s Angels invites its knowing audience to move between the original text and the adapted text. In doing this, the film provides an opportunity to reflect on the competing ideals of femininity upheld during the periods in which the two texts were produced. Representations of women and womanhood across two eras thus come together in this space. Identifying the features that have remained consistent suggests that they are the aspects contemporary culture seeks to connect with, or for which nostalgia is held. As a postfeminist movie (produced in a postfeminist time, concerned with postfeminist issues) it is postfeminist nostalgia that is being evoked, and an examination of similarities and differences between the original TV series and the filmic adaptation exposes these nostalgias.

**Jane Bond: Female Action Hero**

In the Charlie’s Angels TV show, the women on screen reflected the women’s movement of the era by taking on men’s (real world) roles, first as police officers and then as private detectives. In the contemporary adapted film, the central female characters in Charlie’s Angels still adopt traditionally male-dominated roles; however, the most significant way they do this in the highly-mediated new millennium is in their capacity as action heroes. In Working Girls: Gender and Sexuality in Popular Cinema, Tasker notes that the majority of big-budget action films focus on male protagonists, relegating women to supportive, often romantic, roles (1998:67). While there are some exceptions – such as Alien (1979), Terminator 2 (1991), The Long Kiss Goodnight (1996) and G.I. Jane (1997) – the female protagonists in these texts can be seen to conform to generic stereotypes, which Tasker identifies as “the “butch” type, the tomboy and the “feisty heroine”” (1998:68). Yet Hopkins sees a shift away from these stereotypes in the new millennium, and contends that “[p]op culture is embracing the image of a female action hero who is both tough and cute” (2002:108). Citing Xena: Warrior Princess (1995-2001), Buffy the Vampire Slayer (1997--

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14 Soul Train (1971-2006) was America’s longest-running musical variety show. Created and first hosted by Don Cornelius, the show is best known for featuring soul and R&B artists during the 1970s and 1980s. According to Brian Stelter (2008), ‘Soul Train helped glamorize black music, featuring performances by James Brown, Aretha Franklin, Michael Jackson and other hit makers. But the real stars were the young dancers who would strut their stuff, laying the groundwork for countless dance programs, including current ones like Fox’s So You Think You Can Dance? [2005-].'
2003) and Charlie’s Angels (2000) as examples, she determines that ‘[i]n keeping with the girl power climate, these action heroes play on the seductive contradiction between their excessive femininity and their excessive strength’ (Hopkins 2002:108).

The marketing for the Charlie’s Angels film overtly situates the women in the role of action heroes with a teaser trailer that aligns the text with the James Bond franchise, through both its visual composition and establishment of the narrative (see Focus Box 6.2). Building on the original series’ relationship with the aesthetics of Bond and that era’s appetite for the spy genre (as discussed in Chapter 5), the adapted movie continues its stylistic connection with the Bond franchise through director of photography Russell Carpenter, who was the cinematographer on the Bond spoof True Lies (1994), and second unit director Vic Armstrong, who also worked on many Bond films.

**Focus Box 6.2: Teaser Trailer**

The teaser trailer opens with the silhouette of a single ‘man’ walking down a backlit hallway and turning towards the camera (see Figure 6.6). A baritone voiceover states, ‘It’s a dangerous world out there. And when it’s time to fight high-tech espionage and international terrorism, the most powerful leaders in the world call on one man.’ As the voiceover continues with, ‘Because only he can call on them,’ the figure splits into three with one leaping up and the other two flipping out to each side (see Figures 6.7, 6.8 and 6.9). Continuing to walk forward, the figures are frontlit to reveal Liu, Diaz and Barrymore (see Figures 6.10 and 6.11). As Coon identifies, ‘The teaser is quick to demonstrate the ways in which the film will try to contradict audience expectations… [and] immediately shows how women will be taking over traditionally male roles in the film’ (2005:4). The use of silhouette, a monochrome set and the shape of the tunnel are reminiscent of Bond title sequences, as is the single, suited, apparently male figure set to ‘fight high-tech espionage and international terrorism’. The stylised martial arts moves also identify the tone of the action. In the opening gun barrel sequence of Bond films, James Bond traditionally turns to
camera and shoots a gun – demonstrating his ‘license to kill’ with a symbolically phallic weapon in a masculine display of power. In comparison, the Angels demonstrate their harnessing of girl power through use of the controlled, elongated female body and their combined efforts (teamwork/sisterhood) in order to achieve the same goal. The women are also similarly costumed in dark suits, maintaining consistency with the suave Bond image while also presenting an image of professionalism that suggests they are to be taken seriously.

The relationship with Bond films is also quickly established in the Charlie’s Angels movie with an opening sequence (prior to the titles) heavily influenced by Bond conventions. Set up as a single shot (although revealed in the DVD’s special features as spliced), the camera flies through the clouds in the Columbia Pictures logo into a passenger plane where a man dressed in an African boubou and kufi comes out of the bathroom and takes his seat in first class next to a nervous man, who has a bomb concealed under his zipped coat. The African man grabs the man with the bomb and they hurl out the emergency door of the plane, passing a black helicopter on their descent. A figure dives from the helicopter, removes the bomb with only seconds to spare (it explodes mid-air), grabs the man who was carrying it and releases a parachute. The African man’s boubou also releases into a parachute.

Meanwhile, a gold and red speedboat comes into view, driven by Diaz who is wearing a gold bikini (see Figure 6.12). The skydiver drops into the boat with the man who had the bomb and takes off the black helmet to reveal herself (with an extended slow motion hair toss – see Figure 6.13) as Liu. Diaz asks, ‘Nice flight?’ with a giggle before lining up the boat to receive...
the African man. The thwarted terrorist points and screams, ‘You crazy bastard’ to which the ‘African man’ responds (taking a voice modulator out of his mouth) in Barrymore’s voice ‘I think you mean crazy bitch’. In a nod to Mission Impossible a latex mask is pulled off, and with her bright orange hair flowing in the breeze (see Figure 6.14), Barrymore says, ‘Damn, I hate to fly’ and takes off the bodysuit. The theme music comes up and the speedboat accelerates with the smiling women standing together at the front of the boat. This scene demonstrates the way Charlie’s Angels defines itself as an action film, with a fast-paced opening scene featuring a helicopter, skydiving, speedboat and an explosion, while clearly referencing Bond in terms of styling, the gold bikini and use of gadgetry. The allusion to Bond is particularly significant as his character is one with whom style and sexuality are synonymous, suggesting that these characteristics need not be denied in an action hero(ine). As identified in the teaser trailer (see Focus Box 6.2), it also establishes the women as functioning in roles conventionally undertaken by men. This is demonstrated through the skydiver’s reveal at the end of the speedboat scene which is also a direct reference to the original TV series. Dressed in black leathers (see Figure 6.13), Liu’s removal of her helmet invites a recollection of the TV pilot in which Kelly (who is dressed in black leathers because she is riding a motorbike) surprises the doorman who addresses her as ‘sir’ before she removes her helmet and shakes out her hair. Moreover, the use of slow motion while Liu self-consciously tosses her hair, signals a deliberate self-referentiality and cues the audience to identify the tongue-in-cheek tone of the film.

Charlie’s Angels further disrupts the role of the traditional action hero by presenting three central protagonists. As in the TV series, having three women ensures more diverse representations and broader opportunities for identification and engagement than would be the case with a single protagonist. Whilst this was a component of the TV show (see Chapter 5), the film places more emphasis on the differences between the women. This is reflected in the title sequence which, while maintaining strong textual ties with the original series, shifts the
focus away from women’s fight against institutional sexism to one of individual choice (see Focus Box 6.3). This also follows the progression from second wave feminism, where women openly sought social and political equality, to postfeminism, which assumes that such equality is already achieved and it is up to the individual woman to seek it out. For Levine, the implication of the title sequence is that, unlike the TV show, ‘Charlie doesn’t have to save them from their unfulfilling lives; instead they can choose to work for him’ (2008:384, emphasis in original). This assumption of choice is inherent in postfeminism and consistent with the film’s girl power discourse. However, the title sequence’s focus on difference also sets up the film’s approach to the women’s deployment in their roles as action heroes, as it is through harnessing their differences with teamwork that they are seen to triumph.

Focus Box 6.3: An Updated Title Sequence

The title sequence for the adapted film is introduced with three layered, boldly coloured graphics boxes repeating the silhouetted image of the three women standing together, facing forward, each with one hip thrust forward. The screen then divides into three boxes which show each Angel as a teenager (see Figure 6.15) as the familiar voice of Charlie states: ‘Once upon a time, there were three very different little girls’. Zooming in to the first box so it fills the whole screen, Diaz is introduced as Natalie and is shown doing stunts in a ‘student driver’ car to the soundtrack of Wham’s ‘Wake Me Up Before You Go Go’. She is wearing headgear, braces, pink overalls and a Princess Leia hairstyle to indicate that her character is ‘nerdy’ and together with the music locates the clip in the early eighties. Liu is then identified as champion show-jumper Alex, who receives adulation and the winner’s trophy as Flying Lizards’ ‘Money (That’s What I Want)’ plays, suggesting that not only is she a high achiever, but she
comes from a more privileged background. Then with the flick of a cigarette lighter embossed with the American flag, Barrymore is introduced as the risk-taking rebel, Dylan. She wears jeans, a black singlet and denim vest with her arm in a cast and lights a cigarette in the girls’ bathroom with Joan Jett’s ‘I Love Rock ‘n’ Roll’ playing. As the voiceover continues with, ‘who grew up to be three very different women’, the shot cuts back to a split screen with the three characters as young women. It then shows each individually – Natalie winning a game show (Jeopardy!), Alex as an astronaut, and Dylan punching her Sergeant and walking out of the police academy barracks – as the voiceover concludes: ‘But they have three things in common. They’re brilliant. They’re beautiful. And they work for me. My name is Charlie’.

Like the original series, the sequence then moves into a montage of shots that show the Angels in action, including images that reference the first season of the TV show. For example, the first shot is of all three characters in combat gear, drawing on ‘Bullseye’ (#9), while Natalie skateboarding down the street is an homage to Farrah Fawcett in ‘Consenting Adults’ (#10) (see Figure 5.12), and the women shackled together in prison uniforms references ‘Angels in Chains’ (#4). Finally the three Angels are shown running, and as a fiery explosion erupts, they leap into the air, the sky behind them turns orange and red, and their outlines are drawn forward into golden, stylised shapes that move and spin around to reveal the film title (see Figure 6.15). The stance of the outlined figures replicates that of the silhouettes in the opening shot.

The sequence identifies with the original series through strong textual links, including Charlie’s voice, the use of coloured graphics boxes and re-created scenes from TV episodes. However, it also defines itself as having moved into a postfeminist context – as Charlie foregrounds when stating, ‘They’re brilliant. They’re beautiful. And they work for me.’ The combination of physical beauty and professional accomplishment signify the duality of postfeminism. Moreover, rather than foregrounding institutional sexism through the juxtaposition of the women’s capabilities and the inert roles assigned by the police force in the TV series opening (see Focus Box 5.1), the movie sequence foreground the women’s development through their choices. For example, Alex is shown in an astronaut suit walking across the tarmac alongside men, suggesting that she was not restricted in her aeronautical career by gender; rather, she made a choice to move on from that field. Providing each character with a background in the title sequence is not only useful for the movie format, but highlights their differences, thereby establishing the premise on which the Angels’ teamwork is founded. As each of the women has different skills, they complement each other. The final shots reflect the style of action and employment of teamwork that can be expected in the film as the outlined figures leap together through the air and, with clean lines and no weapons, the stance adopted by the female images evoke power and sexual confidence.
Feminised Action

One of the most distinctive differences between the male action hero and the *Charlie’s Angels* women as action heroes is the manner in which they engage with their adversaries and achieve their goals. As identified in the teaser trailer (see Focus Box 6.2), the Angels do not brandish guns, but instead use their bodies as weapons, often with stylised kung-fu moves that depict heightened abilities through special effects (with wires and harnesses – see Figures 6.24 and 6.25) in the tradition of Hong Kong martial arts movies. While acknowledging the style of action in *The Avengers* which filtered through to the *Charlie’s Angels* TV series, the adapted film capitalises on the success of a contemporaneous release, *The Matrix* (1999), and utilises renowned stunt choreographer Cheung-Yan Yuen to achieve similarly exaggerated effects. Use of the women’s bodies in this way also represents a sense of corporeal empowerment that is consistent with the discourse of girl power: as Diaz states in an interview with Serena Donadoni for ‘The Cinema Girl’ (2000),

> We’re not doing a body count movie…and we want to empower these women with their own strength and their own capabilities. There’s something about being faced with danger and being able to protect yourself with your own hands rather than pulling a trigger, which any coward can do. We wanted to make a film screaming with energy and life…[and] replace what we’ve all become conditioned to expect from an action movie. (cited in Donadoni 2000)

The adoption of this form of martial arts ensures there is still combat and fighting (complementing the other staples of the genre – explosions and chases), which is essential for the franchise’s transition from action TV to blockbuster film. Moreover, the stylisation and theatricality of that combat contributes to the camp aesthetic of the text and foregrounding of gender, with those characteristics also benefiting from the continued success, in the twenty-first century, of martial arts sequences in blockbusters such as *Lara Croft: Tomb Raider* (2001), *Kill Bill: Vol. 1* (2003), and *Kill Bill: Vol. 2* (2004). In the *Charlie’s Angels* movie the martial arts scenes showcase teamwork among the women (see Focus Box 6.4), which distinguishes the adapted text from other action films. And with an underlying theme of sisterhood and the women adopting men’s roles, the film adaptation draws strongly on the TV series, evoking postfeminist nostalgia for the feminist ideals it incorporated.

Another way the Angels perform as action heroes is by operating undercover – a characteristic that featured prominently in the TV show and is further explored in the film. In some cases, the women literally take on a masculine role through their disguise. For example,
Dylan uses a latex mask and bodysuit in conjunction with a voice modulator to pose as an African man (Mr Jones, played by LL Cool J) in the opening sequence (described earlier). Natalie and Dylan dress as men in grey business suits with wigs, moustaches and beard stubble, and utilise their disguise, which also includes synthetic skin and contact lenses for palm and eye recognition software, to access the Red Star mainframe. However, the Angels most often ‘disguise’ themselves by appropriating sexist female stereotypes. As in the TV show, costumes are used to identify when the women are undercover; however, in keeping with the tone of the film, the costumes are more distinct and playful, and thereby highlight performativity even more directly than the seventies’ series.

For example, when the Angels and Bosley are disguised as pit crew at the race track, they dress in bright blue jumpsuits, with red piping and a side panel of red stars. Dylan has platinum blonde hair and Natalie has long dark brown hair (the change in hair colour and style reinforces that the characters are undercover). Looking over her sunglasses, Natalie attracts Corwin’s attention while Dylan and Alex go to his car. With bright red lipstick, frosted blue eye shadow and deep cleavage on display (see Figure 6.17), Dylan distracts the chauffeur as Alex attaches a surveillance camera to Corwin’s briefcase in the boot of the car. The bold primary colours, which are a cartoonish cross between Speed Racer (1967-1968) and Captain America (1979), foreground the heightened reality and performativity of this scene, and Dylan’s styling is reminiscent of a 1970s calendar girl or billboard for automotive-related products (tyres, oil, or mechanical tool advertisement).

Another example of the Angels adopting an overtly sexist disguise is when they dress as Swiss Misses (see Figure 6.18) for a singing telegram in order to scan the retinas of a Red Star employee (which Natalie duplicates onto contact lenses for her male disguise as described above). Again the technique employed is distraction – Bosley scans the target with the scanner hidden in the bell of the sousaphone he is playing, while the girls entertain with a song and dance routine. The outlandish costumes make the scene humorous and to some...
extent parody the TV Angels (the shape of the skirts worn by Dylan and Alex is similar to the costume Kris wore when disguised as a doll in ‘Mother Goose is Running for His Life’ [#42]), with the new millennium Angels more blatantly and stereotypically sexual using open-mouth postures, blowing kisses and presenting cleavage (see Figure 6.18). This draws directly on the television show and its interrogation of the relationship between feminism and femininity – particularly in terms of the women utilising their femininity to get the job done (see Chapter 5). For the postfeminist adapted film, this display is consistent with girl power, within which the performance of overt sexuality is linked with women being ‘in control’ rather than passivity (Hopkins 2002:134). Hopkins posits that in the Charlie’s Angels movie, ‘[m]ale lust is positioned as a weakness, which the Angels exploit at every opportunity’ (2002:134). One of the clearest examples of this trait is demonstrated in the sequel when the Angels perform a burlesque routine with the Pussycat Dolls at a nightclub dressed in very revealing costumes. While less ironic than the ‘Swiss Misses’ sing-a-gram, the highly sexualised performance serves a purpose in the narrative, as Dylan and Alex procure a security pass and keys from a distracted off-duty driver, which are later used to access the docks. Thus the women are acknowledged as the ones in control – of their bodies, their performance of gender, and, with the acquisition of keys to the docks, the (weaker) male. As heralded in the pages of BUST and central to the girl power ethos, it is women’s ownership of their sexuality and this kind of control that is disruptive (Siegel 2007:144). Like the original TV series, the deliberate use of femininity while undercover in the film (such as the singing telegram and burlesque dance) is contrasted with the Angels attire while working but not undercover. Conveying professionalism with an
identifiably different and more conservative style that includes shirts with collars, tailored pants and jackets (see Figure 6.19), the women emulate their seventies counterparts and reinforce the performance of gender.

**Charlie**

In Chapter 5, the original ‘Charlie’ was identified as representing patriarchal society, and while this still applies in the adapted film, he does so with a different dynamic from that which was present in the TV show. In the original series, Charlie’s power is demonstrated through his role as a playboy figure, shown in the company of beautiful women while trading flirtatious innuendo with the Angels. In the film he presents as a more fatherly figure, which is consistent with the real-time lapse of 25 years, and is reflected in Forsythe’s voice. When Knox leaves Dylan tied up to go after Charlie, Knox says ‘That’s one more Daddy you’ll never know’. Towards the end of the film when Alex, Dylan and Natalie look for Charlie at his beach house, a photo of the Angels in a frame on the table is shown in the foreground (it is a candid shot rather than posed publicity shot and sits next to the Buddha head statue from the office in the original TV show, intimating endearment and nostalgia). This arrangement, together with the lit cigar and hot cup of coffee next to a game of checkers on the table, suggests not only a narrow escape, but a different lifestyle and set of priorities to those projected by the younger Charlie, living his playboy lifestyle in the LA mansion that the TV Angels visited in ‘Target: Angels’ (#5). This insight into a more subdued existence comes just after the Angels save Charlie’s beach house from being hit by a missile, demonstrating his vulnerability to attack, and reliance on their skills and abilities. Yet rather than an indication that Charlie is less powerful in the new millennium (narrow escapes also occurred in the TV series), these concessions to a changing relationship between Charlie and the Angels can be read as an acknowledgement of a broader distribution of power across genders.

In the final scene of the film, it is implied that Dylan catches a glimpse of Charlie on the beach behind them. Mirroring the TV show format, the Angels and Bosley debrief with Charlie over the telephone at the successful completion of their mission. Dylan asks over the speakerphone: ‘Is there any chance you’ll be joining us, Charlie?’ to which he replies, ‘I’d love to, Angels, but I have some precious treasures to watch over’. Dylan then looks over her shoulder to see a man talking on a mobile telephone turn and walk away from them (see Figure 6.20). As Natalie asks, ‘So Charlie, how will we ever know you really truly exist,
unless you come down here and have a coconut with us?’ and Charlie responds, ‘Faith, Angels. It’s called faith.’ Dylan smiles to herself and they all toast ‘To Charlie’. While this scene carries religious undertones, with notions of an unseen father calling on angels to have faith, it can also be seen to suggest an affirmation of empowerment for the women. Where Charlie represents patriarchal power, it could be argued that, by allowing Dylan to see him, he is confirming the dissipation of that power, and his call for the Angels to have ‘faith’ is in their own power and empowerment. Indeed, given that Charlie merely negotiates with clients and assigns tasks – and even needs to be ‘saved’ by the Angels at one point in the film – it might be that the Angels dominate.

Figure 6.20: While they are all on the phone with Charlie at the end of the movie, Dylan glances over her shoulder to briefly see him watching on.

Bosley

Bosley performs a similar function in the adapted film as he did in the original TV show, in that he facilitates the relationship between the Angels and Charlie. This function is highlighted in the 2000 movie when he is kidnapped by Knox, because Bosley’s telephone is the only one that Charlie calls. Bosley’s kidnapping also foreshadows Charlie being in danger. However, while Bosley assists the three women at times (as does the same character in the TV series), his main role in the film is comedic. Bosley is played by Bill Murray who is known for comedy performances on stage and screen. Originally a stand-up comic, Murray starred in movies such as Caddyshack (1980), Stripes (1981), Ghostbusters (1984) and Groundhog Day (1993). He also featured on Saturday Night Live between 1977 and 1980 (with original cast members Dan Aykroyd and John Belushi), which saw him on television at

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15 The choice of Dylan as the character who sees Charlie can be understood in relation to Barrymore’s elevated position of power due to her role as producer, which will be examined later in the chapter.
the same time as the original Charlie’s Angels series. As Bosley, Murray draws in further intertextual and comedic references when he wears an Austin Powers-inspired suit (see Figure 6.21), and when he dons a giant sumo suit at Corwin’s party, reminds audiences of TV’s Bosley and his clumsy disguises. Like the Angels, however, Bosley’s costumes are purposeful as his presence ensures the Angels’ entry into the party (they pose as his escorts – see Figure 6.21), then he distracts Corwin (with sumo wrestling) while the Angels track The Thin Man.

Bosley’s position as subordinate to the Angels is reinforced when the character is played by a different actor in the sequel film. African-American comedian Bernie Mac takes over the role of Bosley in Charlie’s Angels: Full Throttle, introducing the issue of people of colour to the text and increasing the character’s self-reflexivity. Unlike in the Bewitched TV show, for example, where the change to a new actor for Darrin is not acknowledged in the narrative (see Chapter 3), in the Charlie’s Angels film sequel, Bosley’s substitution is highlighted.

One of Mac’s first lines in the movie is ‘So what does a “Bosley” do around here?’ which draws attention to his performance of the role as well as reflecting on that character’s functionality in both the TV series and earlier film. Playing on the TV show’s replacement of Jill with her sister Kris, Mac’s Bosley is identified as the brother of Murray’s Bosley. This also sets up the involvement of Bosley’s mother in the sequel, and, within the parameters of comedy and camp, Mac’s presentation of black stereotypes. When he takes their young charge, Max, to his mother’s house in South Central LA to keep him safe from the Irish mobster, O’Grady, modified (‘suped up’) cars playing loud music by rap artist Snoop Dog are cruising up and down the street as Bosley’s mother comes outside with a scarf in her hair and her hands on her hips. She asks him what trouble he is in then orders Bosley and Max inside. Later, when Bosley is playing the board game Cluedo with his brothers and Max quickly works out the answer, Bosley’s mother says, ‘took one in just like him many years ago, remember?’ as the camera zooms in on a photograph of Murray on the wall. In this way the narrative anomaly is resolved (an explanation of how they are ‘brothers’ is explained) and the
notion of the role of Bosley as replaceable is reinforced with this scene also setting Max up as a potential future ‘Bosley’.

**Sisterhood**

One of the most prominent features of the *Charlie’s Angels* TV series is its demonstration of sisterhood, particularly the way the Angels work together and look out for one another (see Chapter 5). It is also one of the most empowering aspects of the show. Significantly, sisterhood is also a feature that is celebrated in the film, which suggests the film’s encouragement of postfeminist nostalgia for the empowerment that a sense of sisterhood and solidarity provides. As in the TV show, the demonstration of sisterhood in the adapted film is particularly evident in the Angels’ work environment. The original series framed each episode at the beginning by showing the women together in the office being given the details of the case, and then again at the end discussing the resolution (with trademark tongue-in-cheek quips). This format reinforces the ideals of teamwork and importance of communication. The film maintains this structure with an early scene in the office explaining the case and introducing the client, and concludes with a discussion that starts on the couch in Charlie’s beach house (through a conveniently-located squawk box), then continues on beach chairs (see Figure 6.19), as the team have been sent on vacation by Charlie for a job well done (also the office was blown up earlier in the film). These scenes highlight communication as an essential component of the Angel’s operation and showcase the camaraderie between the women through their playful banter, which in turn demonstrates their knowledge of each other’s personal lives. However, the solidarity between the women is most clearly displayed during choreographed fight scenes and action sequences (see Focus Box 6.4). For example, after following The Thin Man out of Corwin’s party and through city back streets, Alex and Dylan give Natalie a footing to jump over a chained fence into the Chinese alley where their battle with him takes place. Dylan rolls over Natalie’s back in a kicking move, and also swings Alex around as a weapon to knock backwards The Thin Man, who is armed with a sword produced from his cane. Whilst not necessarily able to defeat him alone, together the Angels are an effective team who complete the task and achieve the goal. Opposing the stereotypical assumption that professional women are competitive with one another and not

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16 The closing scene on a beach can be seen as a nod to the TV series’ many Hawaiian episodes, particularly those in the final season. Notably, while everyone else is drinking cocktails in coconuts and Buddha heads, Dylan (who has caught a glimpse of Charlie) is drinking James Bond’s signature drink – a martini.

17 A neon sign for ‘Yuen Yee Fruit & Vegetables’ at the entrance to the alley is a reference to stunt choreographer Cheung-Yan Yuen.
able to get along together, these demonstrations of teamwork and solidarity in the films invite and reflect postfeminist nostalgia for the same spirit of sisterhood that was portrayed in the *Charlie’s Angels* TV series.

Focus Box 6.4: The Lighthouse Mission

The Angels emerge from the ocean on a rocky beach in sleek, black scuba gear with deeply plunging necklines (see Figure 6.22). The imagery highlights the isolation of their location in a manner similar to the initial shots in ‘Angel Hunt’ (#78) (see Focus Box 5.3), and with the women changing out of their scuba gear into predominantly black attire, the scene also alludes to Bond movies (particularly *Goldfinger* [1964] and *Thunderball* [1965]). Teamwork is foregrounded as the Angels form a huddle (see Figure 6.23) and identify their plan: Alex will head to the roof to find a signal, Dylan will seek out Knox and Natalie will retrieve Bosley. Alex scales the cliff face and then the lighthouse wall to reach the satellite dish. Dylan ‘drops in’ on Knox to find Vivian is also there and the women exchange puns. Then, as Knox binds Dylan to a chair, Vivian notices Natalie on the surveillance screen she is monitoring, just as she reaches Bosley, who is locked in a tower-style room in a reversal of the fairy-tale damsel-in-distress cliché. Dylan’s containment and the discovery of Natalie complicate the Angels’ task, which in turn increases the need for teamwork. Meanwhile, in the roof space, Alex connects a laptop to Knox’s satellite when a pygmy nuthatch bird flies in to sit on the window ledge. Alex muses out loud, ‘red wire, blue wire,’ reflecting a discussion she had with her boyfriend, Jason, earlier in the film. Alex then went on to explain how a bomb mechanism works. The discrepancy between his surprise at her knowledge (as he thinks she works as a bikini-waxer) and her actual accomplishments foreground the

Figure 6.22: Alex, Natalie and Dylan arrive on the beach.

Figure 6.23: The Angels agree on a plan.

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18 In *Goldfinger*, Bond emerges from the water in a wetsuit, plants explosives in an enemy base and then unzips his wetsuit to reveal a dinner jacket. Scuba diving also features prominently in *Thunderball*, with Connery appearing on the cover of *Life* magazine in a wetsuit unzipped to his waist to promote the film.
postfeminist issue of competing gender ideals – specifically balancing professional success with traditional domestic expectation. Similarly, the reference to the pigmy nuthatch flags Natalie’s competence, as her knowledge of this rare bird’s call led them to Knox’s hideout. This occurs just before a sequence in which she literally attempts to balance her professional and private worlds by answering a telephone call from prospective boyfriend Pete while battling Knox’s henchmen. Seeing their defeat on the surveillance monitor, Vivian says to Dylan, ‘Never send a man to do a woman’s job’ and goes after Natalie herself.

The pigmy nuthatch bird also alerts Alex to the presence of The Thin Man. The film intercuts between Natalie and Vivian, who drop down the internal space of the bell tower, and Alex and The Thin Man who cuts the rope while swiping at Alex, releasing the bell down towards the other two. In this way the action remains distinct but connected, which ensures there is perspective as to where everyone is situated, reinforcing the team dynamic and the audience’s investment in all aspects of the action. With Dylan tied up and Natalie and Alex locked in battle, Knox is able to keep Charlie on the telephone long enough to trace his call and locate his position. Seeing the trace is complete, Alex is distracted long enough for The Thin Man to execute a leaping kick to her chest sending her through the roof, bouncing off a lower roof to the paved area below. Echoing this image, Natalie and Vivian fly through an arched door, down stone stairs into the courtyard. Natalie, who is still on the telephone to Pete, pauses to ask him to hold on (he says, ‘Is this a bad time? You just seem a little distracted’), at which time Vivian kicks the telephone out of Natalie’s hand. Realising it is not Charlie on the other end, Vivian smashes the telephone. Natalie responds with ‘Hey, I like that guy’ and high kicks the wooden door thrown at her so it smashes into pieces. The implication is that now she is really mad, as before it was just work and now it is personal. This is reinforced by Natalie exclaiming, ‘Do you know how hard it is to find a quality man in Los Angeles?’ while punching the pinned-down Vivian.

As the threat to Charlie increases, the Angels begin to triumph over their adversaries. Action sequences intensify with highly choreographed stunts coming to the fore. This includes a scene that commences with Dylan, who is still tied to a chair, posing with her legs apart and elevated as she tells her five male attackers that, ‘By the time this is over, every one of you will be face down on the floor and I’m going to moonwalk out of here’. Pausing throughout the fight, she describes each of her moves, which emphasises that her actions are both controlled and performed. Out on the

![Figure 6.24: Displaying high-wire martial arts moves, Alex battles The Thin Man.](image)

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19 Alex’s disastrous cooking is an ongoing joke throughout the film, yet reflects her character’s deep desire to become domesticated.

20 Dylan pauses in the middle of the fight to describe the kung-fu poses she adopts as first, ‘King Kong palm’, then ‘Buddha on lotus’, and finally ‘And that’s kickin’ your ass’ (a line that was used extensively in the film’s promotion).
terrace, Alex lands a high kick to The Thin Man’s chest similar to the one that sent her off the roof (see Figure 6.24), while Natalie’s moves mirror Alex’s (see Figure 6.25), bringing the two battles together. Dylan then comes through the doorway and lassoes The Thin Man and Vivian with a heavy chain that finally brings them to the ground. Thus, despite facing conflict on multiple fronts, the Angels – as a team – are ultimately able to execute their plan. Individual battles reinforce the film’s emphasis on the differentiation between the women; however, the introduction of the scene, its staging and resolution, all underscore the solidarity between the women and how much they rely on each other to work effectively, and in this case, defeat Knox’s crew.

In the TV show the women also espoused the ideals of sisterhood away from work by showing they could rely on each other. While the Angels’ private lives are more developed in the contemporary adapted film, the friendships which are forged between the women are similar to those of the TV show. In the movie this is mostly demonstrated through their discussions about their love lives. For example, Natalie and Alex tease Dylan about her suitor, The Chad, and more generally about her bad taste in men, Alex and Dylan give Natalie dating advice (including flirting tips such as ‘Flip your goddamn hair’), and the three women consider whether Alex should disclose the true nature of her job to her boyfriend Jason. In this way, they can be seen to be bonding over the double lives they lead, and how to balance career success with personal relationships. Such issues are distinctly postfeminist and reinforce the film’s shift away from second wave feminism and the broader notions of sisterhood strongly associated with the women’s movement at that time. The TV Angels sought to help other women (usually represented as a client or victim within their investigation – see Chapter 5), in a united fight against institutional inequality and banding together of women against ‘the man’. In the adapted film, however, the modern fight and common goal acknowledged by the women is in finding a ‘life balance’, which includes making room for a man (and children), and it is through this shared discourse that the postfeminist Angels demonstrate solidarity.
The Other Woman

Standing in opposition to the teamwork and postfeminist solidarity the Angels represent is ex-Angel Madison (Demi Moore), who appears in the sequel as a freelance operative. Working for the highest bidder and exposed towards the end of the film as villainous, Madison functions as a warning of what happens when the balance between work and private lives is not maintained and the ideals of sisterhood are rejected. Since her break-through role as Jules in *St. Elmo’s Fire* (1985), Moore has portrayed a range of strong female characters – including Erin Grant in *Striptease* (1996) and Jordan O’Neill in *G.I. Jane* (1997) – and brings elements of these roles to the film. During an interview while promoting the first film (long before casting for the sequel), Liu commented that, ‘Our movie isn’t like *G.I. Jane* where they took the femininity away from the woman … We embrace our femininity … We are women, we have hair, and we can fight’ (cited in Levine 2008:385).

Moore brings this intertextual toughness and difference to the sequel. And while the notion of good versus evil is foreshadowed by the introduction of the character in a black bikini which directly contrasts with Natalie’s white bikini (see Figure 6.26), regressively, the film reverts to the suggestion of lesbianism to clarify this divide. In the final fighting scene in a deserted theatre in Hollywood, Madison holds a gun to Natalie’s head and says, ‘look into your heart, Natalie, you’re just like me’. Natalie responds, ‘I’m nothing like you Madison, I have something you’ll never have’ and she grimaces as Madison breathes into her hair, licks the side of her face and kisses her cheek. ‘What’s that?’ she asks, to which Natalie replies, ‘friends’. The close-up of the two women pans up to reveal Dylan and Alex swinging across the stage towards them. The *Charlie’s Angels* theme music fills the soundtrack as a choreographed fight sequence (similar to the one in the Chinese alley in the first film where the Angels battle The Thin Man), results in the three Angels defeating Madison and sending her to a fiery grave. As well as foregrounding the power of teamwork and sisterhood, which is consistent
with the film’s girl power discourse, the adapted text’s treatment of adversarial females sits alongside that seen in the TV series (see Chapter 5). In the original show, women other than the Angels were mostly either victims the Angels were helping in the name of sisterhood, or lesbian villains. By portraying Madison as a lesbian, the adapted film maintains this position and reinforces the ongoing significance of heteronormativity in popular representations of postfeminist womanhood and femininity.

**Postfeminist Angels**

As identified earlier, the women in the contemporary *Charlie’s Angels* film adaptation operate as hyper-real action heroes, and, in doing so, subvert traditionally-defined gender roles. Certainly the movie does not offer a detailed depiction of the Angels’ daily domestic lives, as its narrative focus is the espionage world and the women as Agency operatives. Yet even with a focus on the central characters’ professional roles, the film provides more insight into the Angels’ private lives than the TV show ventured, which suggests a desire to see more rounded characterisations of women in a postfeminist era. It is also significant that, in the adapted film, Alex, Dylan and Natalie are less successful in their private lives than they are in their professional lives. Although the sequel seeks to redress this, the three women’s struggle to match personal fulfilment with professional accomplishment is consistent with a popular postfeminist discourse that circulated in texts such as *Bridget Jones’ Diary* (the 1996 novel and 2001 film) and *Ally McBeal*, and foreshadows the focus on relationships seen in *Sex and the City*. The tenuous nature of the Angels’ relationships with boyfriends suggests that (despite postfeminism) they do not ‘have it all’. And while the *Charlie’s Angels* films do not necessarily provide answers, they do highlight central postfeminist issues. For example, although trained as an astronaut, neurosurgeon and now spy, Alex is unable to bake edible muffins and in the first film tells her boyfriend that she is a bikini waxer so he does not feel threatened. Having negotiated this relationship, Alex then confronts her father’s expectations in the second film. Dylan’s bad judgement in men is shown to impact her professional life when she sleeps with the client in the first film (Knox who is then revealed as the villain), and in the sequel has her past exposed by her murderous ex-boyfriend, O’Grady. The narrative of Natalie’s love life is the most developed of the three Angels, which is consistent with Diaz’s elevated star power. The films chronicle from her meeting Pete (Luke Wilson) during

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Corwin’s party in the first movie, to moving in together at the beginning of the sequel. Natalie also most clearly demonstrates the difficulties involved in balancing a work and home life, as she meets Pete while undercover, talks on the phone to him while mid-fight (see Focus Box 6.4), and then is the topic of Dylan and Alex’s discussion on who will leave the team first (and why) during a stakeout at the beach in the Charlie’s Angels sequel. Moreover, the final scene of the sequel is set up as though Pete is proposing to Natalie when he kneels and presents her with a small box containing a tag with the name ‘Spike’ engraved on it and asks her if they can get a puppy together. Pete’s gesture is about the couple taking on responsibility together (although not yet at the level of marriage or children). This version of commitment is a relief to all three Angels as it defers answering the question of whether a woman can be married with a family and be an Angel at the same time, which was not the case during the period in which the original series aired in the 1970s. By blurring the boundaries between public and private lives in these ways, the film demonstrates the competing ideals of femininity – professional equality and success, and a return to traditionally domestic ideals – that are at the heart of postfeminist tensions.

Drew Barrymore and Controlling Image

One of the defining features of postfeminism is its relationship with the media, and in a mass-mediated age, gender, image, feminism and popular culture are inextricably linked. Hopkins identifies the power of ‘imaging’ in this mix and concludes that ‘[i]f media representation signals “exploitation” and “objectification”, it also signals cultural authority and influence. For a generation that has grown up in the multimedia age, the female media star is the very epitome of power’ (2002:215). To this end, recognition of self-reflexivity becomes crucial to reading a film text such as the new millennium Charlie’s Angels, and discerning where potential opportunities for empowerment lie. Along with being a celebrity in her own right, Barrymore co-produced both Charlie’s Angels films through her own production company, Flower Films. This position enables Barrymore greater control over her image than her co-stars, and this control is reflected in the heightened self-reflexivity her character exhibits in the films. As noted above in Focus Box 6.4, during the Angels’ mission to retrieve Bosley from Knox’s lighthouse in the first film, Dylan is captured, tied to a chair and left with five of Knox’s henchmen. Yet she inverts the role of victim by putting her feet in the air, and with her legs spread open, holds back her attackers as she explains how she will overpower them and moonwalk out of the room. Dylan then carries out her plan through stylised kung-fu
moves and super-human flips which are intercut with slow motion breaks and pauses for her narration of the action. In this format, Dylan is shown to be in control of both the fighting action, and the overall scene. The choice of martial arts over guns is foregrounded as Dylan labels each move as though giving a demonstration – a choice influenced by Barrymore in her role as producer – and the tongue-in-cheek tone is upheld as the scene closes with Dylan’s promised moonwalk to a snippet of Michael Jackson’s *Billie Jean*.

Another example of heightened self-reflexivity for Barrymore’s character in the *Charlie’s Angels* film is after Dylan narrowly escapes being shot by Knox and falls backwards out through a plate-glass window. Wrapped in a sheet and dangling two storeys above a steep hill, the sheet tears and she tumbles down the hill naked, landing in a suburban Los Angeles backyard. The dishevelled Dylan covers herself with an inflatable flower-shaped pool ring.\(^{22}\)

Figure 6.27: Barrymore’s role in Hollywood is foregrounded by Dylan’s appearance at the back door of the house in which *E.T.* was filmed.

and knocks on glass patio doors to ask two boys who are playing an alien video game inside (discussing whether either of them had ever seen ‘boobies’) for ‘a little help’ (see Figure 6.27). While a poster of *E.T.* sitting above the television serves as an overt reminder of the film that shot Barrymore to fame, the house and backyard in which this scene is filmed is the same one that was used for Elliot and Gertie’s (Barrymore) house in *E.T.* (Alaway 2009). Such intertextuality not only promotes an awareness of Barrymore’s long association with

\(^{22}\) The shape of the pool ring references the name of Barrymore and partner Nancy Juvonen’s production company, Flower Films.
Hollywood, but reinforces her role and influence in it as a producer, and the subsequent empowerment that controlling her own image brings.

While not emphasised in the promotion of the first film, interviews with Barrymore to promote subsequent Flower Films productions (including the *Charlie’s Angels* sequel) reveal her drive to produce films with strong roles for women (Almereyda 2009; *Inside the Actors Studio* 2003). In a narrative comparable to Madonna’s recent push to co-write and direct *W.E.* (2011), the story of American divorcee Wallis Simpson (see Dargis 2012; Hiscock 2011; Wolf 2011), Barrymore spearheaded the adaptation of the seventies series by involving Diaz, Goldberg and McG. And while Barrymore is a third-generation actor (her grandfather, John Barrymore, great uncle, Lionel Barrymore and father, John Barrymore Jr, were actors), it is her role as a producer that affords her the strongest influence in the film industry and enables her to control her own image.

**Conclusion**

Through the blockbusting girl power that permeates the contemporary film adaptation of *Charlie’s Angels*, postfeminist nostalgia for feminine empowerment and the ideals of sisterhood that were fostered in the seventies TV series (in response to second wave feminism) is evoked. The heightened reality and camp aesthetic of the film promotes self-reflexivity and presents the audience with an opportunity to critically assess gender in the film. Like their TV predecessors, Natalie, Dylan and Alex employ femininity and sexuality as tools in their roles as agents. However, the overt and heightened presentation, combined with the underlying premise of control over one’s own sexuality and image that girl power promotes, ensures that the Angels’ use of femininity and sexuality are clearly identifiable in the film as performative. From the use of stereotypically sexist costumes to utilising the female body as a weapon through highly stylised kung-fu moves, the hyper-reality and tongue-in-cheek tone alert a knowing audience to the film’s subversive potential and exposure of traditional gender roles and ideals as constructed. And in this way, the postfeminist adapted film continues the TV show’s negotiation of feminism and femininity.

The *Charlie’s Angels* film also draws on the original series’ disruption of traditional roles by positioning the three central protagonists as ‘action heroes’. Having three women at the centre of the action and as the focus of the film provides more diverse representations of
womanhood and femininity, and multiple opportunities for identification. In adopting the traditionally masculine role of action heroes, women’s fight for equality can be seen as having moved into a postfeminist-inspired, mediated space. Moreover, as identified in the film’s updated version of the familiar opening title sequence (see Focus Box 6.3), the emphasis on political action has shifted away from second wave feminism’s protest of institutional inequality to a postfeminist reflection of individual responsibility. Yet by maintaining the original show’s format of multiple female leads and emphasising sisterhood and solidarity through effective teamwork and positive portrayals of female friendships, this postfeminist shift also alludes to a dissipation of power. Co-produced by women, starring women and appealing to women and men, this female-centric text resonated with a new millennium audience. While being a blockbuster locates Charlie’s Angels within a traditionally conservative format, it also ensures it is a text that is widely available and viewed by many. Considering the similar popularity of the original TV series, there is a potentially significant overlap of viewers and therefore a considerable ‘knowing audience’ who are able to oscillate between the texts and reference the TV show while watching the film (Hutcheon 2006). This means that the contemporary film functions effectively as a space in which past gendered ideals are negotiated with contemporary, postfeminist ones.

While triggering postfeminist nostalgia for empowerment, sisterhood and the desire for transformation they represent, Charlie’s Angels also recognises traditional ideals by drawing attention to postfeminist tensions between women seeking and attaining equality in the workplace, and expectations of domesticity. In the film this is played out by the juxtaposition between the Angels’ professional competence and flaws in their domestic ability or problems in their relationships with men. This central theme is an ongoing issue for postfeminism, and one that re-emerges in subsequent postfeminist texts, including one of postfeminism’s defining texts, Sex and the City (1998-2004). The Sex and the City TV series and recent films Sex and the City: The Movie (2008) and Sex and the City 2 (2010) are examined together in the next chapter. As a more recent postfeminist film adaptation of an earlier postfeminist show, interrogation of the Sex and the City film (and sequel) provides an opportunity to consider postfeminist nostalgia in a broader context (in which postfeminism reflects back on postfeminism), as well as assess the transgressive potential of postfeminism as a mediating space for multiple gendered ideals.
Chapter 7

MEDIATING POSTFEMINISM: SEX AND THE CITY ON TV AND FILM

The SATC movie picks up where the TV show left off, with the four familiar gal pals – now in their forties and settled in relationships – brought back together on the silver screen for Carrie’s wedding to Big (Chris Noth). Like the adapted texts already examined in this thesis, the SATC film evokes postfeminist nostalgia; however, where Bewitched and Charlie’s Angels expose nostalgia for second wave feminist ideals, SATC elucidates nostalgia for aspects of early postfeminism. As postfeminism necessarily incorporates elements of second wave thought, the film’s mediated reflection on what is already a self-aware text results in a particularly rich and complex nostalgia, providing an opportunity for the negotiation of a multiplicity of femininities and ideals that span feminism’s history.

As noted in Chapter 2, the SATC TV series and adapted film are being examined in this thesis in a single chapter. This is primarily due to the structure of the adapted film which is a narrative extension of the series, incorporating the same characters, played by the same actors in similar settings, largely orchestrated by the same creative team (including the director, writer, producer and costume designer). While the shift in medium and focus ensure the film qualifies as an adaptation, these consistencies, together with the short space of time between the end of the series and the film’s release (four years), promote an inclusive discussion. Moreover, where separate analyses of the Bewitched and Charlie’s Angels TV series facilitated the identification of what are essentially postfeminist traits – progressive for shows produced during the rise and consolidation of second wave feminism – SATC is already widely recognised as a postfeminist text (see Tasker and Negra 2007:14). In outlining the TV show’s impact and legacy, then, the first part of this chapter investigates SATC’s relationship with postfeminism, its influences and themes, then considers the series’ ending before moving on to the film adaptation and sequel. The TV series made its mark on both feminism and popular culture, yet SATC’s cinematic move is significant to this thesis because it is the only

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1 See Chapter 2 for the definition of adaptation utilised in this thesis. In SATC the focus shifts from the search for romantic love in the TV series to an exploration of the repercussions of having found love in the film (see discussion on the film later in this chapter).
mainstream Hollywood, female-centric TV to film adaptation released since *Charlie’s Angels* (2000) and *Bewitched* (2005). The films thereby provide an opportunity to examine postfeminist nostalgia in a contemporary context. This chapter demonstrates how the *SATC* movie reflects back on the TV show and the early postfeminist ideals it helped disseminate – including women’s talk, ownership of public space, sexuality and sisterhood. It also analyses the significance of intertextuality beyond the film’s engagement with the TV show and how that contributes to the adapted film’s participation in an ongoing dialogue between past and present notions of femininity and womanhood. Thus, through critical textual analysis of the *SATC* film, the contemporary context for and broader applications of postfeminist nostalgia are identified, and postfeminism’s mediating role in the wider feminist movement is considered.

**Sex and the City on TV**

*SATC* first aired in the US on the premium cable channel Home Box Office (HBO) in June 1998 and ran for six seasons, with the final episode seen on 22 February 2004 by a record 10.6 million viewers. Based on Candace Bushnell’s 1996 book of the same name (a compilation of her columns from the *New York Observer*), the *SATC* TV series won seven Emmy Awards and eight Golden Globes. It featured on *Time* magazine’s cover in August 2000 (see Figure 7.4) and then in a September 2007 edition, was listed as one of the top 100 TV shows of all time (Poniewozik 2007). The series garners ongoing popularity: it continues to be seen in rerun on both cable and free-to-air channels world-wide, has been released on DVD multiple times, is supported by active online fan sites, achieved box office success when adapted into a movie format, and spawned a movie sequel. *SATC* is also the focus of sustained scholarly attention (for example, see Akass and McCabe 2004; Arthurs 2003; Gerhard 2005; Jermyn 2009; Markle 2008).

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While *SATC* consistently rated highly, the season finale attracted 2.7 million more viewers than the series’ previous record of 7.9 million, making it the biggest audience for HBO since *The Sopranos*’ fourth season premiere in September 2002 (Berman 2004).

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Initially responding to the juxtaposition between strong criticism of the show and high ratings, Kim Akass and Janet McCabe’s anthology, *Reading ‘Sex and the City’* (2004), brings together a range of critical perspectives and opens the field to discussions on the series that engage with sex, sexuality, fashion, narrative and fandom. Part of the TV Milestones series, Deborah Jermyn’s *Sex and the City* (2009) adopts an historical perspective. She looks at the show’s TV predecessors, including *I Love Lucy, The Mary Tyler Moore Show* and *Golden Girls*, and contends that *SATC* did ‘more than any other television text preceding it to push back the boundaries governing television’s representations of sex and its exploration of female sexuality, language, and the intricacies of female friendship’ (Jermyn 2009:91-92). Laura Tropp suggests that ‘part of the fascination of *Sex and the City* for viewers, critics, and scholars is that it attempts to challenge traditional notions of sexuality and femininity’ (2006:861). Most importantly, it is recognised that *SATC* is a text that resonates strongly with a wide audience. It is a show that speaks to women’s independence, solidarity and empowerment, while incorporating the fairy-tale aspects of romantic love and finding Mr Right, and to that end it speaks to, if not defines, popular postfeminism.

Conceived in the late 1990s, *SATC* was on air at the same time as *Ally McBeal* (1997-2001) and, along with *Bridget Jones’ Diary* (2001), similarly incorporates the modern single-girl narrative in which the duality of independence and looking for love are juxtaposed (see Akass and McCabe 2004; Di Mattia 2004). The city (New York and more specifically the uptown area of Manhattan) features in the show as a central protagonist, with Carrie (Parker) not only coming to New York City looking for love, but loving the city. It is this urban setting that demarcates *SATC* from earlier domestic comedies on TV and the traditional ideals associated with suburbia. Moreover, the series foregrounds the female perspective through its narrative construction. Carrie is a New York-based columnist and provides the narration for each episode. This usually follows her musing over ideas for her next column, with the four women providing different perspectives on dating disasters and sexual experiences as material for Carrie’s writing. Miranda is a corporate lawyer who is cynical about relationships. Her cynicism is countered by Charlotte, who is an art gallery manager and a hopeless romantic. Liberated PR consultant Samantha is sexually explicit and aggressive, while Carrie sits somewhere in the middle of the group, demonstrating traits that relate her with each of her friends. Like *Charlie’s Angels*, the ensemble female cast offers multiple and varied sites and opportunities for gendered identification. While these representations are restricted to white,
heterosexual, financially-secure women (a criticism of the show and postfeminism more generally – see Henry 2004:70; Lotz 2001:109; Vavrus 2000:425), the framing narration ensures it is clear from the start of each episode that the story is being told through a feminine lens. Moreover, through open, frank and often public discussion (see Gerhard 2005; Henry 2004), the women’s range of perspectives and the notion of varied feminine ideals are further validated.

As a prominent postfeminist text, SATC is entwined with popular culture. The series feeds into and draws from star power, has a television pedigree and cross-media ties. Through previous film roles, Parker and Cattrall were already established names in Hollywood before appearing in SATC. Aside from playing Kelly’s friend in a 1979 episode of Charlie’s Angels, ‘Angels at the Altar’ (#72), Cattrall featured throughout the 1980s in movies such as Porky’s (1982), Mannequin (1987) and Masquerade (1988), while Parker was more active in the 1990s, appearing in L.A. Story (1991), Honeymoon in Vegas (1992), Hocus Pocus (1993) and The First Wives Club (1996). Series creator and writer Darren Star had previously worked for Aaron Spelling’s TV production company in Los Angeles and was responsible for creating the teen drama Beverly Hills 90210 (1990-2000) and its prime-time soap spin-off Melrose Place (1992-1999). Spelling productions are renowned for their glamour and Star’s move to New York saw this translate in a foregrounding of fashion on screen. Dubbed ‘the fifth character’ on the show, Bruzzi and Gibson (2004) identify the significance and ‘spectacularity’ of fashion and costuming on SATC. Links with fashion labels, magazines and runway events reinforce the postfeminist ethos of power through consumption as the four central characters are regularly depicted shopping, dining, or socialising – often with raised martini glasses in hand, drinking their signature cocktail, the classic cosmopolitan (or ‘cosmo’ – see Figure 7.2). And it is no coincidence that their drink of choice has the same name as the magazine edited by Sex and the Single Girl author Helen Gurley Brown for so many years.\(^3\)

\(^3\) See Chapter 5 for a discussion of Brown, Cosmopolitan magazine and the single-girl ethos.
When the four stars of the show appeared on the cover of *Time* in August 2000 (see Figure 7.3), the headline read ‘Who needs a husband?’ and the accompanying article cites women espousing the merits of being single (Edwards 2000). This came just two years after the infamous ‘Is Feminism Dead?’ cover which included Ally McBeal (the character) alongside Susan B. Anthony, Betty Friedan and Gloria Steinem as representative of feminism’s historical progression (see Figure 1.1 and discussion in Chapter 1). Again, fictional characters, this time from *SATC*, are depicted – in the popular press, at least – as representative of postfeminist womanhood and a mediated text representative of postfeminist ideals. Yet, while the series’ protagonists are identified as appropriating ‘public as well as private space for a women’s discourse [and] the primacy of women’s friendship’ (Thornham 2007:78), a large proportion of the six seasons produced of *SATC* are devoted to the women’s quest for love. As Joanna Di Mattia observes, ‘Although promoted as a show about sex and the single girl, it features an active engagement by its female protagonists in the renegotiation of the classic romance fantasy’ (2004:17).

In *Women, Feminism and Media* (2007), Sue Thornham considers the shows’ ‘re-authoring and re-possession of the romance narrative’ in light of the final episodes in which Carrie leaves New York to live in Paris with her boyfriend Aleksandr (Alex) Petrovsky. Thornton argues that, by shifting Carrie’s romance narrative to Paris, ‘Carrie herself comes to stand in for the post-feminist freedoms and pleasures identified with New York’ (2007:79). Cracks appear in Carrie’s relationship with Alex when she loses her inexpensive but irreplaceable ‘Carrie’ necklace – signifying her identity and the ideals of love, work, friendship and self-image as an author that are inextricably linked with New York. Realising she does not want to give up on her (postfeminist) desire to ‘have it all,’ Carrie leaves Alex, only to run into Big (her ‘big’ long-time New York love) in the hotel lobby. In this way Big functions as rescuer (Prince Charming); however, this traditional romance resolution is conflated with postfeminist choice, as Carrie’s union with Big comes after she rejects another version of

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4 The *Time* article focuses on women being single despite the characters in the TV series moving in and out of relationships.
‘happily ever after’ in which she does not work and lives in luxury in Paris with the handsome, successful, Russian artist, Alex. Moreover, as Thornham notes, romance is ‘not achieved without considerable discomfort: displacements and disavowals abound in these final episodes’ (2007:80), with the changes in Samantha, Miranda and Charlotte’s lives functioning as a counterbalance to the whirlwind fairy-tale in Carrie’s. And while the series was criticised for its seemingly tidy ending – as Diane Negra observed, SATC ‘came to closure in a strikingly ideologically conservative fashion with the safe settlement of its four ensemble members into commitment and motherhood’ (2009:10) – this contrast with the show’s legacy of mainstreaming overt female sexuality, the intricacies of feminine friendship and Manolo Blahnik shoes, speaks to the contradictions that sit at the core of postfeminism.

**Sex and the City on Film**

Written and directed by TV series director Michael Patrick King and starring the same four actresses as the TV show, the SATC movie was released in the US in May 2008 (June in Australia), just four years after the series ended. Although a reasonably short period separates the two, the US had undergone significant political and social changes during the decade since the TV series began. Marked by a legacy of terrorism and 9/11, the political climate shifted when Barack Obama became the first black American to hold the office of President in 2009, and his campaign slogan ‘Yes We Can’ became a symbol of hope for the country. It was also the decade that saw social media boom with Twitter, iPhones and Google saturating the popular culture landscape. And while Britney Spears topped the charts in the late 1990s, it was Lady Gaga and her brand of gender ambiguity and boundary-pushing performance (Halverstam 2012) that marked the second half of the first decade of the new millennium.

The SATC film picks up a few years after the TV show left off. With each character in a long-term relationship and all managing busy lives, Carrie, Miranda, Samantha and Charlotte are initially reunited to celebrate and prepare for Carrie’s marriage to Big. When Big calls off the
wedding (which has become an elaborate, public event) the women rally together to comfort and console Carrie. Fans responded favourably to the return of the Manhattan gal pals, with the film grossing over US$415 million worldwide and, as with the Charlie’s Angels movie, a sequel soon followed with Sex and the City 2 released two years later in May 2010. Reviews for both films, however, were generally poor with recurrent criticism of each film’s premise, length (almost two and a half hours) and absence of the sharp wit and pithy commentary that characterised the TV series (see Dargis 2008; Scott 2010; Sharkey 2010; Wilson 2008). In a scathing review of the first film in The New Yorker, Anthony Lane (2008) states that SATC ‘was not strictly a movie. It was more like a TV show on steroids’. Importantly, Lane’s comments highlight the changing nature of screen production and reception in the new millennium. As the original series was shot on film, featured film actors and screened without ad breaks on HBO,5 the line between what constitutes ‘film’ and ‘television’ were already somewhat blurred. However, like the Bewitched and Charlie’s Angels films before it, SATC’s move to film is marked by the stylistic considerations of a Hollywood blockbuster.6 The movies’ big budget and high production values are reflected in the extensive number of high-fashion costume changes and more varied location shooting than is seen in the TV series (the characters travel to Mexico in the first movie and Abu Dhabi in the sequel). SATC was also marketed like a blockbuster, with aggressive, co-ordinated global promotion that included: red carpet events (a premiere in London for the first film and one in New York for SATC 2); television, radio and magazine interviews; the simultaneous release of the movie soundtrack; cross promotions such as the re-release of the full TV series on DVD in a box set with a free movie ticket; and an online presence with an official website and range of ‘unofficial’ fan sites and blogs. Yet SATC also follows Bewitched and Charlie’s Angels by identifying as a postfeminist film adaptation.

The Bewitched film adaptation foregrounds the notion of reinterpretation through its textual construction of remaking a Bewitched TV show within the movie and publicising the 2005 film as a ‘re-imagining’. The central character, Isabel, has been renamed, and in a way reconstructed. Guided by the advice of her friends and modelling provided by the progressive Samantha, Isabel explores contemporary femininity and discovers what it means to be female

5 This is also a feature of The Sopranos (1999-2007). See Edgerton and Jones (2008) and Leverette, Ott and Buckley (2008) for further details on HBO.
6 See Ashley Elaine York (2010) for a discussion of ‘women’s blockbusters’ – a genre of film she identifies as having emerged in the new millennium, of which SATC is cited as an exemplar.
in a postfeminist world. In the *Charlie’s Angels* movies, a stronger spirit of continuity is fostered, particularly through the consistency of Charlie – both having the same actor voice the character, and having Charlie continue operating the Charles Townsend Detective Agency. The inference is that Natalie, Dylan and Alex have succeeded the original Angels (and are the latest in a line of female agents), which is supported by the presence of a former Angel, Madison (Moore), in the second film. Such a sense of continuity within the adaptation process is even more clearly utilised in *SATC’s* move to the silver screen, as the film’s narrative follows almost directly on from the TV series (the four years between productions transpires as three years in the lives of the characters). It is an adaptation because it shifts medium, adjusts focus and presents the themes and characters in a new context – women in their forties rather than the thirty-somethings of the TV series, as recognised by the celebration of Samantha’s fiftieth birthday in the closing scene of the first film.

*SATC* also evokes postfeminist nostalgia. As already noted, the TV series is an early postfeminist text and, therefore, the film reflects on, and induces, nostalgia for the ideals of early postfeminism. The relatively short period between the texts (the first film was released four years after the series ended, compared to 19 years between the first *Charlie’s Angels* film and last TV episode, and 33 years for *Bewitched*), suggests that the gap is closing on the amount of time during which nostalgia for popular culture texts manifests. Moreover, it suggests that postfeminism has changed during the decade that has transpired since the TV series was conceived, with postfeminism entering a more mature period that facilitates broader reflection. As postfeminism is inherently multiple and necessarily includes elements of the past within it, (mature) postfeminist nostalgia for earlier postfeminism is particularly self-reflexive and responsive. The *SATC* movie therefore functions as a fertile space in which a mediated past is engaged in a dialogue with a reflexive present. *SATC* is not just a narrative of four women’s stories but a feminine discourse that exposes the tensions between traditional and emancipated or politically-informed ideals. The analyses of *Bewitched* and *Charlie’s Angels* demonstrated that these two aspects of postfeminist nostalgia typically coexist in postfeminist adaptations. How each of these themes manifests in the film adaptation is discussed next in this chapter, as well as *SATC’s* emphasis on sisterhood, female solidarity and use of intertextuality.
Happily Ever After

In the SATC TV series, ideals of traditional femininity are typically represented by Charlotte through her optimistic romanticism and open desire for marriage and a family. These traditional values are visually reinforced through costuming with Charlotte regularly dressed in sundresses and A-line skirts in soft floral prints or conservative gingham and accessorised with an Alice headband, pearl necklace or twinset sweater, denoting the 1950s ideal to which she aspires. This styling continues in the film adaptation as Charlotte is happily married with one child. Moreover she signifies the ongoing relevance of traditional ideals as the birth of Charlotte’s second child is one of the narrative devices used to lead Carrie back into the arms of Big and affect a happy ending. Charlotte and her daughter Lily also facilitate the Cinderella theme that narratively underlies the first film. Cinderella is identified as Lily’s favourite story. Carrie reads the storybook to her at bedtime while babysitting; Carrie colours in a Cinderella colouring book with Lily while the four women have lunch at a restaurant; Lily wears a Cinderella costume when Carrie joins Charlotte’s family for trick or treating at Halloween; and it is a Cinderella Valentines’ Day card that Charlotte sends Carrie on Lily’s behalf.

The fairy-tale is utilised by the film in a number of ways. In identifying Cinderella as a children’s story, SATC acknowledges its influence on the formation of identity and gender ideals and expectations. After reading the storybook to Lily, Carrie tells the enchanted three year old that she should know early on in life that things do not always turn out the same way as in fairy-tales. When Lily giggles and asks for the story again, Carrie knowingly laments, ‘And another one bites the dust’. The fairy-tale is the motif that connects Carrie with Lily, who, as an extension of Charlotte, also represents traditional femininity. Although Carrie does not want children of her own, she demonstrates warmth and maternal instincts when engaging with Lily (unlike Samantha for example), and therefore is aligned with the traditionally-defined role of motherhood. Finally, the Cinderella motif reinforces the romance narrative between Carrie and Big. From the first season of the TV series, Big was associated with a fairy-tale script as Carrie’s narration in ‘Valley of the Twenty-Something Guys’ (#4) confirms: ‘Once upon a time, in a kingdom far away, a certain man and a slightly less certain woman kept bumping into one another. They seemed to meet everywhere – on street corners,

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7 Charlotte runs into Big in a restaurant and goes into labour so he takes her to the hospital. When Carrie arrives at the hospital, Charlotte’s husband Harry tells her that Big said he had been writing to her. Carrie then discovers his emails (see Focus Box 7.1).
at parties. It was almost as if they were dating accidently.\(^8\) And while the film makes contemporary concessions, it demonstrates nostalgia for these traditionally-defined gender roles through adherence to that fairytale script, including Big’s proposal on bended knee (see Focus Box 7.1) and the film’s resolution of the couple’s simple but more intimate marriage ceremony and celebration.

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**Focus Box 7.1: Carrie’s Glass Slipper**

Carrie has just discovered the emails Big sent her after calling off the wedding – including the retyped love letters by Beethoven, Byron, Keats and Voltaire – when her telephone rings. Dressed in a classical floor length, white wedding gown with a full skirt, Carrie’s former assistant, Louise (Jennifer Hudson) is on the other end of the phone, calling Carrie from St Louis to remind her that the sale on the Fifth Avenue apartment she and Big purchased would be final at six o’clock. As it is now five o’clock in New York, she has only one hour to get over to the apartment to collect the unworn, US$525 Manolo Blahnik shoes she had left in the closet. Like Cinderella rushing home before midnight, Carrie races out the door and down the stairs of her apartment building, into a cab and over to the empty penthouse apartment. She opens the double doors and walks into the empty, expansive lounge room, which is reminiscent of a (fairy-tale) ballroom with a parquetry wooden floor, candelabra light fittings and tall, arched French doors (see Figure 7.6). Then when Carrie goes into

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\(^8\) The narration that sets up the romance narrative with Carrie and Big bumping into each other also bares a striking resemblance to the opening of the *Bewitched* TV series (see Chapter 3).
Chapter 7 – Mediating Postfeminism: Sex and the City on TV and Film

Figure 7.7: In another Cinderella moment, Big slips the jewelled shoe onto Carrie’s foot after proposing.

decided to live happily ever after.’ Realising it is almost six o’clock, Carrie gets up but Big turns, and on bended knee takes her hand and asks her to marry him. Picking up one of the jewelled blue shoes, he says, ‘See, this is why there’s a diamond. You need to do something to close the deal’, and slips the shoe on her foot (see Figure 7.7).

Consistent with the Disney version of Cinderella, the colour palette for the entire sequence is blue and white. When Louise calls Carrie from the bridal shop, she is surrounded by white with only her grandmother in blue and niece in denim blue jeans. In Carrie’s apartment (when she receives that call – see Figure 7.5), she is wearing a cream sleeveless shift dress and her white phone, curtains, lampshade and silver laptop are all framed by bright blue walls. Finally, the penthouse apartment is empty (white walls and wooden floor in the lounge), and the closet is cream with empty silver bar shelving. Big is wearing a plain black suit, white shirt and black tie with a subtle blue stripe and Carrie is still in her cream dress with a short cream coat covered in silk roses, so the only colour in the room is the bright blue Manolo Blahnik shoes (see Figure 7.7).

The film’s focus on marriage and weddings further supports the presence of postfeminist nostalgia for traditional ideals of femininity. This is consistent with a number of contemporary films with a wedding discourse, including 27 Dresses (2008), Bride Wars (2009), The Proposal (2009) and Bridesmaids (2011). The spectacle of the wedding (as opposed to the institution of marriage) is often the focus in these narratives and in SATC this is represented by the wedding dress. Carrie initially finds a vintage cream dress by an unknown designer to wear for her wedding (see Figure 7.8). As a vintage piece it has an

9 Cinderella wears a blue gown to the Prince’s Ball in the Disney version of Cinderella (1950). This is one of the most widely disseminated and recognisable images of a fairy-tale princess in contemporary popular culture. The glass slipper is also shaded pale blue in the animated film.
instant connection with the past, and the classically tailored design conveys traditionally conservative feminine ideals. However, Carrie is invited to participate in a photographic shoot with *Vogue* magazine in order to represent ‘a bride at 40’ (years of age). After Vivienne Westwood, the designer of one of the dresses she models, sends her the couture gown as a gift, the wedding plans become more elaborate (marginalising Big’s wishes for a simple but meaningful event, and focusing on a hugely showy event) and are eventually derailed. When Carrie marries Big at the end of the film, it is in New York’s City Hall with little fanfare and she wears the vintage dress she originally found, with the blue Manolo Blahniks with which Big proposed (see Focus Box 7.1 and Figure 7.8). In this way, the adapted film foregrounds the traditional ideals of marriage – signified by the simplicity of the event and the vintage dress – yet the inclusion of the shoes that are ‘synonymous with metropolitan modernity and femininity’ (Niblock 2004:145) simultaneously reflect postfeminist consumerism and fairy-tale fulfilment.\(^{10}\)

**Walking the Walk and Talking the Talk**

Although the wedding theme and nostalgia for traditional feminine ideals are prominent in *SATC*, the film adaptation also draws heavily on the early postfeminist representations of empowered womanhood that the TV show itself helped to establish. The TV series celebrates female community, privileges women’s talk and demonstrates the assertion of agency through female sexuality. Nostalgia for such postfeminist political ideals is evoked in scenes in the adapted film that are reminiscent of these features – particularly those in which the four women are shown together, literally walking and/or talking. This is signalled in the film’s opening sequence (see Focus Box 7.2) when Carrie smiles at encountering younger versions of herself and her friends walking along Manhattan’s streets – a suggestion that a new

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\(^{10}\) According to Sarah Niblock, each of Manolos’ designs ‘embodies a fantasy narrative, the shoe enabling the wearer to access, in a Lacanian sense, a more ideal and complete version of herself’(2004:145). In a rejection of second wave feminists’ objections to the physical limitations stiletto heels impose on women, Niblock further contends that ‘Blahnik’s shoes are a response to cultural and gender shift, allowing emancipated women to be attractive yet imperious and goddess-like’ (2004:145). Both the TV series and film emphasise consumerism and feature shoes, clothes and handbags. As a further postfeminist concession to the traditional wedding, Carrie carries a yellow clutch purse during the marriage ceremony instead of a floral bouquet.
generation of women have incorporated the postfeminist ideals that the series’ protagonists represent. Importantly, the same scene ends with the nostalgic trigger of the film’s four central protagonists – the familiar image of Charlotte, Carrie, Miranda and Samantha – confidently striding along the footpath chatting and laughing in a demonstration of solidarity, enjoyment of feminine community and ownership of public space (see Figure 7.10), as discussed below.

Through the typically postfeminist lenses of consumption and fashion, the four friends reflect on the past and that of earlier representations of womanhood with a walk down memory lane when Carrie is packing up her apartment and sorting through her closet. Taking turns in modelling various styles from the 1980s and 1990s – from ruffled taffeta, leopard prints and shoulder pads to pop art prints, ultra short skirts and even the ballet dress from the TV show’s opening sequence (see Figure 7.12) – Carrie observes: ‘It took four friends three days to put twenty years into 38 boxes’. Run-D.M.C’s 1986 cover of Aerosmith’s *Walk This Way* provides the soundtrack as the women sit on the bed laughing at their fashion history. This provides a nostalgic cue that identifies not only an historical context for the fashion, but highlights the women’s progress through the decades that the fashion represents. There is even a nod to the future and the next generation with Lily taking a turn to model an assortment of evening bags.

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**Focus Box 7.2: Opening Sequence of the *SATC* Film**

Opening on the Manhattan city skyline and accompanied by the familiar keyboard notes and saxophone riff, the *SATC* film quickly establishes its close allegiance with the TV series. The montage of aerial, canted and tracking shots of Manhattan buildings rest on a store window which reflects the urban scape while displaying its attractions: designer shoes, handbags and the status they represent. The camera tilts down on a mannequin dressed in a lipstick red mini dress and sunglasses, holding a diamante

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11 Carrie looks around the empty apartment as this voiceover concludes. The last thing left, which she unplugs and tucks under her arm as she turns off the light and walks out, is her laptop. This is significant because it symbolises her work (which represents independence), mediated engagement with world and, even though it is a contemporary item, the laptop functions as a nostalgic trigger because of its prominence in the TV show. As in the original series, while the attention is on the women’s private lives in the adapted film, an awareness of their professional roles is maintained.
purse and lounging on a leather sofa. It then cuts to a medium shot of an attractive but understated woman peering into the same window, dressed in a crushed beige overcoat with no accessories, denoting a lack or absence of the glamour contained in the window (and city) and her desire for it. At this point the narration begins with Sarah Jessica Parker reprises her role as New York-based columnist Carrie Bradshaw, who observes that ‘Year after year, twenty-something women come to New York City in search of the two L’s: labels and love.’ As the credits sweep across the screen, the image of the woman looking in the store window is framed in a circle (part of the graphics that eventually become the lettering for the film title) with close-ups of first a Chanel and then a Dior handbag dominating the foreground. A cut to a split screen of two individual men, then one of a man jogging – to represent a range of desirable love interests – is quickly followed by a medium tracking shot of the back of four women’s legs (in high heel shoes, carrying shopping bags) walking along the footpath. As the shot tilts up it dissolves into a side shot to reveal four young women reminiscent of Carrie and her friends – one with red hair stands in for Miranda, one with a hat, funky clothes and long blonde hair represents Carrie, one with straight dark brown hair and a sundress for Charlotte, and finally in a little black dress carrying a Chanel shopping bag is the Samantha in the group. As they turn the corner on a busy Manhattan street they pass Carrie walking in the opposite direction. One of the women compliments Carrie on her dress (a vintage white and gold dress with an oversized flower – a nod to the flower brooches featured in the third season of the TV series – see Figure 7.9) and she smiles knowingly, reinforced with: ‘Twenty years ago, I was one of them.’ This line identifies the subject position from which the film is being presented (forty-something women), while both acknowledging that subject’s past and identifying with a further group (twenty-somethings). Stating that she had ‘gotten the knack for labels early’ and she then ‘concentrated on [her] search for love’, Carrie identifies her friends’ role in helping her through this search. She continues walking down the footpath (towards the camera), and introduces each of her friends through a voiceover narration as they meet up, resulting in a familiar shot of the four women walking abreast along a Manhattan street (see Figure 7.10). This imagery signifies the ‘gal pal’ ethos of the series, which can be identified as a more intimate representation of female friendship and one that differs from that promoted by ‘girl power’ (see Chapters 5 and 6).

Another means by which nostalgia for political empowerment is evoked is in the film’s restaurant scenes which foreground and validate women’s talk and appropriation of public
space. While the four women are having lunch in Manhattan, Carrie is colouring-in with Lily (again including a new generation), when Miranda asks the group how often they each have sex now they are in committed relationships. She explains the challenges of juggling her commitments (as wife, mother and career woman) and a frank and humorous discussion ensues. While the topic is not as sexually explicit as some broached during the show’s six seasons on TV,\footnote{Although rated R in the US (MA+ in Australia), sex and the sexually explicit content that helped define the SATC TV series, is largely absent from the film adaptation and sequel. This is consistent with blockbuster films and their commercial imperative of appealing to the broadest audience.} the format and comic timing is consistent. As Astrid Henry asserts, ‘Humour is used as a strategy for addressing what are often difficult and complicated issues’ (2004:69). Moreover, ‘[I]ike its representation of women’s talk, Sex and the City’s regular depiction of women’s laughter is worth noting …for its implicit feminism’ (Henry 2004:69). Thus, the women’s use of open communication and laughter in the movie’s restaurant scene draws on one of the TV series’ most powerful feminine acts, and its political value is buoyed by its enactment in the public space of a busy restaurant.

The significance of women’s talk is reinforced in the SATC film adaptation when Carrie and Big’s wedding is cancelled and a shattered Carrie is taken down to Mexico (on what was supposed to be her honeymoon) by her three friends. Sitting at a table in the hotel restaurant, drinking margaritas (paralleling their many dinners drinking cosmos in New York), Carrie says, ‘After everything I know, after twenty years of everything we’ve learned, I threw it all away for the thrill of putting his name on the honeymoon suite. If I met me now I wouldn’t know me.’ Commiserating, Samantha responds, ‘As long as we’re going down this road, I can’t believe that my life revolves around a man. On what planet did I allow that to happen?’ (referring to having moved to Los Angeles to manage her boyfriend Smith’s career). It is a serious conversation, lightened only by Charlotte’s refusal to eat anything other than pre-cooked packaged pudding (for fear of catching a food-related illness). Yet even without overt laughter, the ‘implicit feminism’ Henry (2004:69) identifies is apparent through the women’s return to the same format of the four friends seated around a table voicing and validating their subject positions, especially when confronted with difficult problems. Moreover, both Carrie and Samantha are literally nostalgic for their former selves, and this is showcased through their reliance on female solidarity.
Sisterhood

Perhaps the most significant feature of *SATC* – both the TV show and films – is its depiction of sisterhood and female solidarity. Unlike any other mainstream US series of its time, *SATC* privileges female friendship and the power of a feminine community. Despite the film’s placement of its protagonists in committed heterosexual coupleings (and various falling-outs between them), the solidarity between the women is shown to have remained strong and carried across to the adapted text (and sequel). At times the strength of sisterhood is demonstrated through one friend turning to another, such as Miranda calling Carrie for comfort on New Year’s Eve in the first film, or Charlotte opening up to Miranda about the frustrations of motherhood in the second film. At other times it is the four women banding together when things go wrong, such as the protection Carrie’s friends provide when she is left at the altar. However, the power of female solidarity is also overtly celebrated with some of the most humorous and colourful scenes being those in which all four women are shown to be enjoying each other’s company, such as over lunch or the impromptu fashion show in Carrie’s apartment (as discussed above). Moreover, depictions of the group together frame the film with an opening sequence that starts the movie with ‘gal pal’ imagery (see Focus Box 7.2) and the final scene returning to the four women and their friendship as they join in celebrating Samantha’s birthday. This ensures that sisterhood and the ideals of a feminine community are the legacy of the franchise.

As already identified, the *SATC* film is closely aligned with the TV series upon which it is based. It not only has the same central and supporting characters, but they are performed by the same actors in practically the same setting, orchestrated by largely the same creative team. As a postfeminist adaptation, however, the film relies on further textual cues to not only facilitate oscillation between the original series and adapted text, but also to situate the narrative in a broader history of media, popular culture and story-telling. Like the *Bewitched*'s opening titles reminds audiences of the TV series’ origins.

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13 Sarah Jessica Parker served as a producer on the movie, after having produced and executive produced a number of the TV episodes. This is comparable to Drew Barrymore’s role in *Charlie’s Angels* (see Chapter 6). There was also a strong female presence in the creative team for *Bewitched* (2005), which was written and directed by Nora Ephron and co-written by Delia Ephron.
and Charlie’s Angels film adaptations, the SATC movie incorporates reworked theme music and an appropriation of the opening sequence from the TV series into its early frames as a means of acknowledging its heritage (see Focus Box 7.2). However, the SATC film then seeks to clarify itself as an adaptation by referring to the protagonists’ histories through imagery formatted onto book pages reminiscent of a fairy-tale or story book (see Focus Box 7.3 and Figure 7.13). Due to the close temporal and textual proximity of the original series and adapted film, this technique can be seen to provide a secondary semantic shift and textual distance between the narrative modes. Moreover, it recognises the full history of the franchise (which commenced with a book based on a collection of newspaper columns – referenced within the TV series by the insertion of bus ads for Carrie’s newspaper column in the opening titles [see Figures 7.11 and 7.12]), and the multiple ways in which audiences engage with popular culture texts. This theme continues with close-ups of computer screens and TV screens throughout the film (as in the Bewitched adaptation – see Chapter 4), recognition of traditional narrative forms with the public library chosen as the original wedding venue and references to classical poets and poetry exchanged between Carrie and Big, and acknowledgement of more contemporary texts with the exposition of the Vogue magazine fashion shoot.

Focus Box 7.3: Turning the Pages

Opening the movie with a familiar shot of Carrie through her apartment window, the camera tilts up from street level and zooms in on Carrie sitting at her laptop typing. Foregrounding the textual techniques that ensure the adaptation is viewed ‘as an adaptation’, the camera shifts from an extreme close-up of the computer screen as Carrie types in the names of each of her friends, to her holding the books in which she details their exploits. It then moves to a close-up panning across an open book page that reads ‘Then Charlotte said’. The unknowing audience then get a quick rundown of past events, while the knowing audience re-experience the TV show highlights, together with an update of what has happened since they last saw the characters. The sequence incorporates clips from the series intercut with storybook frames (for example, see Figure 7.13) and new material. The montage
of different media invites oscillation between old and new texts as well as between the past and present, and in doing so draws attention to the story-telling function of the film. As discussed in Chapter 4, textual technique also foreshadows the Cinderella motif that recurs throughout the film.

Figure 7.13: A scrapbook page of Charlotte’s first marriage neatly reviews her past and situates the audience. (as discussed earlier – techniques such as page-turning graphics draw on a history of telling tales (particularly fairy-tales), and with such imagery comes the expectations embodied in those tales – including those around gender. This see Focus Box 7.1). After explaining each of her friends’ ‘chapters’, Carrie comes to her own. She goes through the men in her life as they correlate to the seasons of the TV show and concludes with her and Big in Paris, which is where the series ended. Her narration continues with, ‘Three books and three years later we still feel like those four single girls. And even though time had moved us on, I managed to stay exactly where I was: in love.’ This line signals the shift in focus for the film, that is, negotiating love and commitment, rather than the quest to find love, which is the narrative premise of the TV series.

Like the Charlie’s Angels films and their nod to the James Bond franchise, SATC employs broader intertextuality beyond recalling the TV series; most notably by referencing classic Hollywood films. There are direct references, such as when Carrie is given a DVD of Meet Me in St Louis (1944) for Christmas by her personal assistant, Louise, which she watches on New Year’s Eve. The embedded black and white clip serves as a reminder of SATC as an adaptation, its position within the romance genre and the generations of women whose representations on screen have contributed to contemporary ideals of femininity. As the audience watch Carrie viewing a DVD of a movie that is over 60 years old, the ways in which women access and engage with historical imagery and ideals are foregrounded. A subplot to the collapse of Carrie and Big’s relationship is Miranda and Steve’s separation. Mirroring An Affair to Remember (1957), in which a couple played by Cary Grant and Deborah Kerr agree to meet at the top of the Empire State Building if they wish to continue their love affair,

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14 The star and director of Meet Me in St Louis are respectively Judy Garland and Vincente Minnelli, who are Liza Minnelli’s parents. Liza Minnelli has a cameo appearance in SATC 2.
Miranda and Steve designate the Brooklyn Bridge as their meeting point. Adhering to generic convention and foreshadowing the central couple’s reunion, Miranda and Steve meet up on the crowded bridge.

Further references to classical Hollywood include costuming and staging. Big has a penchant for black and white Hollywood movies, which is evident when he calls Carrie ‘kid’ (reminiscent of Humphrey Bogart in *Casablanca* [1942]) and in his style of dress. When the audience first see Carrie and Big together in the film adaptation, they are meeting to view a Fifth Avenue apartment (they purchase the penthouse apartment in that building, and it is ultimately where Big proposes – see Focus Box 7.1). Waiting for Carrie, Big is leaning against the awning in a dark brown suit, black shirt and dark brown tie with his hair slicked back. Dressed in a 1950s inspired floral green dress with a full skirt, co-ordinated coat and carrying an Eiffel Tower purse (see Figure 7.14 – the purse is a reference to Paris where the TV series ended with Big telling Carrie that she was ‘the one’), Carrie gives a little wave as she skips across the road to reach Big. They embrace with a passionate kiss as the camera moves slowly around them in a close-up that catches a glint of sunlight in the process. Through costumes, lighting, mannerisms and staging, this moment in the film has a distinctly ‘old Hollywood’ feel and serves as a trigger point for recalling a long tradition of love stories on the silver screen.

**The Push and Pull of ‘Tradition’**

The *SATC* film draws on classical Hollywood imagery and incorporates traditional ideals through identification with romance narratives, fairy-tales and ultimately Big and Carrie’s marriage at the end of the first movie. As noted earlier, these features both incorporate

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15 This scene from *An Affair to Remember* is similarly re-configured in *Sleepless in Seattle*, as discussed in Chapter 4.
postfeminist concessions and sit alongside the more progressive aspects of contemporary womanhood forged by the TV series during early postfeminism and recalled in the adapted film. Importantly, this postfeminist inclusion of traditional ideals serves as a starting point for the most recent text discussed in this thesis, the SATC sequel. While the narrative of SATC 2 sees the four friends set off together on a luxury trip to Abu Dhabi – a move away from ‘the city’ and single-girl connotations to a shopping ‘label land’ – the film continues to explore core postfeminist themes by exposing ongoing tensions between traditional expectations and feminist or liberated ideals. In a special features documentary on the SATC 2 DVD, Sarah Jessica Parker and Michael Patrick King are discussing the central characters’ evolution through the TV series and films when King signals that one of the second film’s main themes is ‘tradition: how we fight or don’t fight with traditions even today’ (‘So Much Can Happen in Two Years’ 2010). Parker suggests that ‘Carrie Bradshaw is a … perfect example of someone who is really trying to re-define what tradition means for her’. As she is now married to Big, King suggests the central drama for Carrie in this film is a lack of drama and the couple’s decision not to have children means she will not be a mother (taking away the imperative for marriage), so Carrie is asking ‘Are we (two) enough? And am I a wife?’ (‘So Much Can Happen in Two Years’ 2010). In a follow up segment, ‘Marry Me, Liza!’(2010) (a reference to Liza Minnelli’s appearance as the minister for Stanford and Anthony’s wedding), Parker goes on to observe that, ‘The wedding is what opens the movie. It’s the big set piece for the movie and in many ways it establishes this idea of pushing against tradition. And the tradition really sneaking in despite your best efforts to be unconventional.’

In contrast to the understated ceremony that closes the first film, the wedding that opens SATC 2 is a glamorous, black and white themed production reminiscent of classical Hollywood musicals from the 1930s and 1940s. It is filmed on an enormous sound stage with a choir and orchestra, and features Minnelli performing a song and dance routine. Despite these traditional cues, it is clearly a contemporary affair – it is a gay wedding (Carrie’s friend Stanford is marrying Charlotte’s friend Anthony), Carrie dresses in a tuxedo and is the ‘best man’, and Minnelli’s performance incorporates Beyonce’s ‘Single Ladies (Put a Ring on It)’ song and dance moves. In its camp extravagance, the scene incorporates irony by exaggerating stereotypes and inverting convention, thereby foregrounding gender and sexuality. Yet it also works to situate these contemporary performances in broader cultural and historical contexts through intertextual references. The tradition to which King and Parker
refer is inextricably linked with gender-based power relations. Therefore, in navigating the push and pull of tradition, SATC 2 demonstrates an interrogation of gendered stereotypes, ideals and roles narrowly prescribed according to traditional values. Importantly, this is how the SATC adaptations are most transgressive and where their strongest political potential lies. Like other texts that evoke postfeminist nostalgia, the SATC films provide a space in which multiple past and present representations of womanhood and femininities are accommodated. Such spaces facilitate the negotiation of competing gendered ideals, and foster the broadening of boundaries and recalibration of established expectations for women.

**Postfeminist Potential**

In its move to film, SATC appears to have traded sex and the search for Mr Right, for weddings, babies and the minutiae of committed relationships. However, rather than a regression to the prescribed patriarchal roles of yesteryear, these ostensibly traditional values are incorporated into a broader postfeminist tapestry in the SATC films, and in doing so become part of a larger feminist discussion. The focus for the central characters in the adapted texts has changed from looking for love to maintaining love, so marriage, family and relationship issues are central components of the films’ narratives. The significance of this shift is two-fold. First, in moving forward to this next stage of life with the same characters (and actors), the film adaptations signal a maturation of postfeminism. The four women served as an analogy for postfeminism in the new millennium while on TV, and they continue to do so a decade later, as both they and postfeminism take time to reflect back in the adapted films. Second, while the focus has shifted, the issues new to the film are explored within the same framework as the TV series that promoted feminine empowerment; that is, through a show of sisterhood, women’s talk, appropriation of public space, and friendship. These aspects are not only integral to the films, but necessary inclusions for the contemporary texts to function as successful adaptations. They are familiar cues that feature amongst the weddings and relationship dramas, signalling the integration of a multiplicity of ideals and expectations within the text, and demonstrating the broader impact of feminism.

As postfeminist adaptations of a defining postfeminist text, the SATC films mediate postfeminism. Differences between the TV show and films indicate changes in postfeminism, and postfeminist nostalgia highlights those aspects of womanhood and femininity that continue to be relevant. The adapted films provide the spaces in which all these ideas and
ideals sit alongside one another, and in doing so offer the potential to resolve competing models. The contemporary film adaptations of *Bewitched* and *Charlie’s Angels* expose postfeminist nostalgia, and serve to remind postfeminism of the ongoing relevance of past ideals and political value of re-engaging with second wave texts and femininities. By re-mediated a postfeminist text, the *SATC* films demonstrate postfeminism’s maturity – its reflexivity and the significance of multiplicity and negotiation – and thereby signal postfeminism’s role in the wider feminist movement currently being debated and to be continued into the future.\footnote{See Clare Hemmings (2011) and Lynne Pearce (2004) for analyses of the ‘feminist narrative’ and the ways in which feminism approached discussions of feminisms.}
Conclusion

**ANGELS, WITCHES AND GAL PALS: THE FUTURE’S IN THE PAST**

*Bewitched* and *Charlie’s Angels* are postfeminist film adaptations that celebrate the feminine ideals pivotal to the TV series upon which they are based and, in doing so, highlight the ongoing relevance of those ideals. Their contemporary interrogation of characters, themes and concepts from the earlier shows acknowledges the historical and socio-cultural influence of 1960s and 1970s TV. More significantly, however, it secures the thread that connects second wave ideals with postfeminist womanhood. This thesis’ analysis of contemporary films adapted from TV texts is consistent with Hutcheon’s (2006) claim that adapted stories survive because they serve a cultural purpose. It also recognises that the women in the stories chosen for in-depth study are labelled as ‘angels’ and ‘witches’ – terms that invite a fantastical interpretation and invoke the tradition of fairy-tales and a narrative form comfortable with adaptation, employed over many generations as a means of exploring social mores, morals and boundaries.¹ While instantly identifiable as feminine stereotypes (based on the long-standing imposition of a good/bad dichotomy on women – see Summers [1994]), these labels are complicated by the screen representations of central female characters and the audience’s relationship with those characters. The involvement of television characters in film adaptations (and postfeminist nostalgia more generally) is critical because of their impact on both individual and collective identity. Television consumption is an intimate, (mostly) regular, domestic experience. Therefore (as discussed in Chapter 2), when audiences identify with television characters, they are incorporated into the subject’s (individual) identity, contributing to their understanding of issues such as gender and their formation of gendered ideals. Yet television is also a collective experience, with viewers around the world watching the same shows. This ensures similar (and at times simultaneous) experiences, which, although not identical, are certainly shared.

As discussed in Chapter 1, postfeminism operates comfortably within the environment of popular culture, which includes screen mediums (the focus of this thesis). Defining

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¹ *Sex and the City’s* use of the Cinderella motif similarly engages with the tradition of fairy-tales.
postfeminist televisual texts *Ally McBeal* and *Sex and the City (SATC)*, for example, demonstrates how postfeminism both taps into this shared experience and contributes to it. So when investigating postfeminist nostalgia, films that respond to television texts stand out as obvious sources for enquiry. They are also potent sources. Like the music and movies from a person’s teenage years, the television shows from the 1960s and 1970s evoke a powerful nostalgia in the new millennium. Using such an analogy, second wave feminism can be seen as feminism’s turbulent, passionate, rebellious, politically active adolescence. Adaptations that re-visit this emotive period provide an opportunity to reflect upon the ideals of the era (in the context of the current one), investigate and assess how these have been applied in the subsequent period, and present the clearest examples of postfeminist nostalgia in relation to screen media texts. However, in a mature postfeminist era, postfeminist nostalgia is not limited to reflecting back on the 1960s, 1970s or even 1980s. As demonstrated in Chapter 7, the adaptation of *SATC* to film – a series that spanned the late 1990s and early 2000s – acknowledges a wider application for postfeminist nostalgia and indicates its broader potential. This concluding chapter will review the findings of the thesis and discuss the impact of postfeminist nostalgia. A comparison of the texts chosen for in-depth study is undertaken – specifically the film adaptations of *Bewitched* and *Charlie’s Angels* – then postfeminist nostalgia’s contemporary application is considered in light of the *SATC* films, followed by a concluding analysis of the future of reflecting on the past.

**Postfeminist Nostalgia**

Postfeminist nostalgia mobilises popular culture to promote postfeminism’s position within broader feminist history. Bringing together the past and present, and accentuating the recurrent themes of negotiating change and navigating multiple gendered roles, postfeminist nostalgia highlights postfeminism as a state in which attitudes towards feminism and women’s social, cultural and political positions are recalibrated. The definition of postfeminism that has framed this thesis hinges on the popular assumption of the pastness of feminism, ‘whether that supposed pastness is merely noted, mourned, or celebrated’ (Tasker and Negra 2007:1). Within this notion of pastness is a past – a history – which in itself is an acknowledgement of where feminism has come from and consequently what it has (and has not) achieved. As identified in Chapter 1, when postfeminism is approached from this perspective, like nostalgia, it can be recognised for its mediating qualities. Therefore, postfeminism potentially functions as a space in which past issues are resolved and goals
redefined, so that feminism (as a set of political movements) can move forward. Postfeminist films that foreground a mediated feminist past – such as the film adaptations examined in this thesis – enable this kind of negotiation. While the identification of a trend of contemporary adaptations exposed a postfeminist desire to explore the past, the textual analyses of the *Bewitched* and *Charlie’s Angels* TV shows and movies revealed that the adaptation process facilitates the work of postfeminism in two ways. First, by inviting the oscillation between texts Hutcheon (2006) describes, whether that is through direct means such as the insertion of clips from the original show as is the case in the *Bewitched* film, or less directly through recreated scenes and reworked theme music (present in both *Bewitched* and *Charlie’s Angels*), the adaptations draw attention to the socio-cultural changes in expectations of gender-defined presentation, behaviour and roles over the decades between the original and contemporary productions. This allows direct comparisons to be drawn, making visible the role of second wave feminism and supporting postfeminism’s position in a broader feminist history. Second, in identifying what has not changed – that is, which elements the films retain as relevant for a modern audience – the adaptation process picks up on features from the antecedent texts (in this case TV shows) that are essentially postfeminist. This not only identifies them as transgressive for their time, but speaks to the question of why these characters and shows are adapted in the first place and returns to the notion of their function as narratives that recur because they serve a cultural purpose. The themes identified by postfeminist nostalgia that recur across the texts continue to hold currency within contemporary postfeminism and are in this way staking their claim within the broader feminist agenda.

**Angels and Witches**

While both are postfeminist Hollywood film adaptations of earlier television shows, the *Bewitched* and *Charlie’s Angels* films also demonstrate some distinctions that provide further insight into postfeminist nostalgia, and it is therefore useful to compare and contrast the findings of their analyses. Due to the differences between the *Bewitched* (1964-1972) and *Charlie’s Angels* (1976-1981) TV shows, the two contemporary films examined in depth, *Bewitched* (2005) and *Charlie’s Angels* (2000), allowed the dual aspects of postfeminist nostalgia to be explored. The *Bewitched* film primarily demonstrated nostalgia for aspects of a traditional past in which domestic ideals are associated with women and femininity, while the *Charlie’s Angels* film more readily identified with a political past by situating women as active participants in the public domain and addressing female empowerment. However, both
contemporary films highlighted aspects of both elements, which is consistent with the duality of popularly conceived postfeminism (wanting independence as well as Colin Firth). Although evident at varying levels, this suggests that the two aspects necessarily coexist; that is, one without the other is not specifically postfeminist nostalgia. What is also consistent across both films is the spirit of sisterhood and female solidarity. It may seem obvious when discussing women and feminisms, but having the notion of sisterhood recurrent through the television shows and movies from the 1960s to the present day (as discussed in Chapter 7, it is also a prominent feature of the SATC TV series and films) highlights its continuing relevance within postfeminism.

Also related to differences in the TV series but highlighted in the adapted films are the implications of the generic constructions of the film texts. Bewitched is a romantic comedy and Charlie’s Angels is primarily an action film. As well as a disparity in tone and energy, the films utilise their central female characters differently. Charlie’s Angels has an ensemble cast of three women who are the consistent focus of the narrative and clearly identify the feminine discourse, whereas Bewitched focuses more on Jack and Isabel as a couple (as is the convention with romantic comedies), which dilutes the female subject position. This diverges from the original TV series in which Samantha was the nucleus of the show. Moreover, the Angels are more overt in their embodiment of feminine power (girl power in the case of the Charlie’s Angels movies), while Isabel denies her ‘powers’ (magical powers are equated with feminine empowerment in the textual analysis – see Chapters 3 and 4), until towards the end of the Bewitched movie. Again generic conventions contribute, with complications of overcoming obstacles or differences part of the romantic comedy toolbox, while the demonstration of confidence, skill and teamwork sit easily in an action setting. Importantly, all the adapted films – that is Charlie’s Angels, Charlie’s Angels: Full Throttle, and Bewitched – are major Hollywood films, so part of their generic attributes are consistent with blockbusters. This ensures they are ultimately conservative texts and goes a long way in explaining why a contemporary reading of the TV shows positions these as significantly more progressive than the films. Furthermore, the Bewitched TV series, and Samantha particularly, stand out as transgressive. As a show produced across a period of significant social, cultural and political change, there is an appealing subtlety to the Bewitched series in its non-didactic approach to representing female agency on screen. This subtlety has proven powerful and,

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2 Bewitched functions as a blockbuster in terms of the film’s big budget, A-list casting and aggressive promotion.
considering the show’s longevity, may hold the key to its successful balance between critique and empowerment.

Another distinction between the films is how they relate back to their antecedent texts. As is essential in an adaptation, they both rely heavily on intertextuality; however, it is executed differently in the movies. *Bewitched* employs highly visible, textual mechanisms of adaptation such as embedded clips and multiple media, as well as the narrative construct of the characters remaking the *Bewitched* TV show within the adapted *Bewitched* film. These techniques strongly encourage the audience to flip back and forth between the original and adaptation and heighten their awareness of the ‘adaptation as adaptation’ (Hutcheon 2006). While more general intertextuality is also included in *Bewitched*, such as through consistencies with the TV show in terms of supporting characters and musical cues, *Charlie’s Angels* relies more heavily on the broader type of intertextuality. This includes generic references such as James Bond styling and sequences, as well as recognition of the era in which the TV show was produced with nods to the 1970s and early 1980s in the form of Natalie’s (Diaz) visit to the set of Soul Train, disco dancing, and the screening of the fictitious *T.J. Hooker: The Movie* on the plane in the opening scene. More direct links to the *Charlie’s Angels* TV series include modernised theme music and opening credits (see Focus Box 6.3), as well as the use of John Forsythe as the voice of Charlie in both films and TV angel, Jaclyn Smith, in a cameo appearance in the sequel.

**Beyond Angels and Witches**

The textual analyses of the *Bewitched* and *Charlie’s Angels* films (in Chapters 4 and 6) identified the themes and context of postfeminist nostalgia: the variations between the texts highlights the degree to which it functions as a mechanism for postfeminism in negotiating past and present gender ideals. While the texts that reflect on the 1960s and 1970s provide the most potent examples, postfeminist nostalgia is not confined to this era. Rather, it is drawn to any past period that retains elements against which contemporary femininity seeks to be reconciled. Through the textual analyses of *Bewitched* and *Charlie’s Angels*, the process of adaptation was identified as particularly conducive to elucidating postfeminist nostalgia. As Hutcheon (2006) explains, adaptation is constantly shifting and in the new millennium texts are being reworked and reconstructed over shorter time periods. As a result, adaptation can be seen to engage with nostalgia in ever-shortening cycles. The *SATC* films, *Serenity* (2005)
Conclusion – Angels, Witches and Gal Pals: The Future’s in the Past

(based on the TV series *Firefly* (2002-2003)), *The Simpsons Movie* (2007), *Star Trek* (2009) and *The X-Files: I Want to Believe* (2008) all exemplify this shift. Within the context of transmedia storytelling (see Jenkins 2006), they also signal the media’s changing attitude towards adaptations. Ultimately adaptation, like nostalgia, invites reflection. The *SATC* films demonstrate the contemporary relevance of such reflection. Despite the compressed time period between the TV series and films, and the consistency in characterisation and narrative, the adaptations demonstrate a discernible shift in focus, which, in *SATC*, reflects changes in postfeminism.

Mobilising the analyses of *Bewitched* and *Charlie’s Angels*, the discussion of *SATC* in Chapter 7 extends the application of postfeminist nostalgia. The *SATC* movies are postfeminist texts responding to an earlier postfeminist series. This mediation of postfeminism facilitates the negotiation of a range of past ideals with contemporary expectations and fosters a clearer acknowledgement of the multiplicity of women, womanhood and femininity. Issues related to traditional femininity such as weddings, marriage and family, for example, are integrated with the politically-empowered acts of women’s talk, appropriation of public space and demonstration of female solidarity and friendship. Like *Bewitched* and *Charlie’s Angels*, this highlights the duality of postfeminism. As a reflection on the recent past, the changes in the texts also reveal changes in postfeminism. Thus, the *SATC* adaptations identify both the maturation of postfeminism and its significance as a negotiating space, showing that postfeminism not only remains relevant, it maintains a valid and active role in the feminist movement.

**Back to the Future**

In the first *SATC* film, while looking for a Halloween costume to wear trick or treating with her five year old son, Miranda can only find two types. She holds them up to Carrie and says, ‘That’s it? The only two choices for women: witch and sexy kitten.’ Carrie quickly responds, ‘You just said a mouthful there, sister.’ The cultural stereotypes and feminine ideals circulating throughout popular culture are pervasive and persuasive. Popular culture is a rapidly changing environment with the regular introduction of new technologies, integration of old technologies, preservation of some, adaptation of others and, with the advent of transmedia story-telling, simultaneous use of multiple platforms and dispersed narratives. This process sees popular culture increasingly fold back on itself, with representations of
representations and ever-deepening intertextuality woven into the fabric of the books, games, television shows, movies, advertisements, fashion, music and websites that are produced and consumed on a daily basis. In such an environment, tracing representations of gender and closely examining how gendered ideals are presented garners even greater significance.

The examination of *Bewitched* and *Charlie’s Angels* undertaken in this thesis employed the intersecting paradigms of postfeminism and nostalgia to investigate the appeal of resurrecting and adapting female characters from TV’s past for contemporary, postfeminist Hollywood screens. The textual analysis of the adapted films revealed the conditions in which postfeminist nostalgia manifests. The first of these is the presence of a dual nostalgia, with aspects of both traditional and political pasts reflected in the contemporary text. There are also textual components that facilitate postfeminist nostalgia. These include characters and storylines that incorporate an engagement with the past as well as costumes, soundtracks and identification with generic conventions that foreground the recurrence of past ideals within a postfeminist environment. The in-depth studies also expose the significance of the adaptation process to the manifestation of postfeminist nostalgia, as it is by identifying which aspects of the original text are retained in the adaptation (and subsequently which are excluded) that postfeminist nostalgia is most clearly demarcated. Finally, postfeminist nostalgia is recognised for its mediating potential. As a means of reasserting past ideals in a contemporary context, it facilitates a dialogue between the past and present, and in this way offers the potential to reconcile varied and multiple gendered ideals.

The discussion of *SATC* demonstrates the validity of postfeminist nostalgia beyond *Bewitched* and *Charlie’s Angels* and outside adaptations of texts directly impacted by second wave feminism. As a postfeminist adaptation of a postfeminist text, *SATC* negotiates multiple, contradictory ideals and representations of femininity and womanhood on a number of levels. Yet it is only by examining such a text through a nostalgic lens – whereby nostalgia for past representations and ideals is an active and performative expression of contemporary desires to engage with the past (rather than return to it) – that its multiplicity is exposed as a feminist tool.

The proliferation of retro imagery across the popular culture landscape, and in screen media particularly, confirms a widespread postfeminist desire to engage with the past. This thesis
demonstrates how a feminist research method can be applied to analysing and interpreting media texts. It has established the relationship between postfeminism and nostalgia through analysis of postfeminist film adaptations of past television texts and provided an important framework for characterising postfeminist nostalgia. It has further recognised that this nostalgia serves a purpose: it foregrounds past ideals of femininity in a contemporary context, which provides an opportunity for their comparison and negotiation. Moreover, postfeminist nostalgia locates postfeminism within a broader feminist framework and clarifies its role as a mediating agent. The exposition of these aspects of postfeminism by this thesis opens the field of feminist media studies to further investigate an even wider range of nostalgic texts and media. New film adaptations of television shows, adaptations from other media, further appropriations of the characters already examined here (such as fan-based remediations), and the opportunities new technologies provide for greater access to nostalgic texts are potential areas for future research. Such intersecting topics are able to build on the foundational work provided by this thesis and contribute to a greater understanding of how postfeminism both engages with and utilises popular culture, and nostalgia’s role in that relationship.

Whether it is a trio of action-charged Angels, a home-making witch or a quartet of strutting gal pals, the women on Hollywood’s big screens today serve to remind audiences of more than when those characters were on small screens. These adaptable women represent a particular nostalgia that seeks to reconcile past feminine ideals with the multiplicity and complexity of contemporary femininity. Postfeminist nostalgia thrives in adapted texts that identify gendered themes which are still relevant to postfeminism, while highlighting the changes that have occurred in gender relations over time. This grounds postfeminism and locates it within the context of feminism more broadly. Offering moments of reconciliation, these texts demonstrate postfeminism’s potential to work through past issues and make way for feminism to move forward. The success of the Bewitched, Charlie’s Angels and Sex and the City adaptations signal postfeminist nostalgia’s broad appeal, which makes it a valuable strategy for feminism. A key component of feminism’s future is not only recognising its past, but recognising women’s interest in the multiplicity and depth an engaged experience with the past brings. It is postfeminist nostalgia that offers such an experience, through angels, witches and contemporary culture’s eminently adaptable women.
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Appendices

Appendix A

Bewitched Episode Guide

Season 1: 1964-1965

#1 I, Darrin Take This Witch Samantha
#2 Be it Ever So Mortgaged
#3 It Shouldn’t Happen to a Dog
#4 Mother, Meet What’s His Name
#5 Help, Help, Don’t Save Me
#6 Little Pitchers Have Big Fears
#7 The Witches Are Out
#8 The Girl Reporter
#9 Witch or Wife
#10 Just One Happy Family
#11 It Takes One to Know One
#12 And Something Makes Three
#13 Love is Blind
#14 Samantha Meets the Folks
#15 A Vision of Sugar Plums
#16 It’s Magic
#17 A is for Aardvark
#18 The Cat’s Meow
#19 A Nice Little Dinner Party
#20 Your Witch is Showing
#21 Ling Ling
#22 Eye of the Beeholder
#23 Red Light, Green Light
#24 Which Witch is Which
#25 Pleasure O’Riley
#26 Driving is the Only Way to Fly
#27 There’s No Witch Like an Old Witch
#28 Open the Door Witchcraft
#29 Abner Kadabra
#30 George the Warlock
#31 That Was My Wife
#32 Illegal Separation
#33 A Change of Face
#34 Remember the Main
#35 Eat at Mario’s
#36 Cousin Edgar
Season 2: 1965-1966

#37 Alias Darrin Stephens
#38 A Very Special Delivery
#39 We’re in for a Bad Spell
#40 My Grandson the Warlock
#41 The Joker is a Card
#42 Take Two Aspirins and Half a Pint of Porpoise Milk
#43 Trick or Treat
#44 The Very Informal Dress
#45 …And then I wrote
#46 Junior Executive
#47 Aunt Clara’s Old Flame
#48 A Strange Little Visitor
#49 My Boss the Teddy Bear
#50 Speak the Truth
#51 A Vision of Sugar Plums
#52 The Magic Cabin
#53 Maid to Order
#54 And Then There Were Three
#55 My Baby, the Tycoon
#56 Samantha Meets the Folks
#57 Fastest Gun on Madison Avenue
#58 The Dancing Bear
#59 Double Tate
#60 Samantha the Dressmaker
#61 The Horse’s Mouth
#62 Baby’s First Paragraph
#63 The Leprechaun
#64 Double Split
#65 Disappearing Samantha
#66 Follow That Witch (Part I)
#67 Follow That Witch (Part II)
#68 Divided He Falls
#69 A Bum Raps
#70 Man’s Best Friend
#71 The Catnapper
#72 What Every Young Man Should Know
#73 The Girl with the Golden Nose
#74 Prodigy

Season 3: 1966-1967

#75 Nobody’s Perfect
#76 The Moment of Truth
#77 Witches and Warlocks are My Favorite Things
#78 Accidental Twins
#79 A Most Unusual Nymph
#80 Endora Moves in for a Spell
#81 Twitch or Treat
#82 Dangerous Diaper Dan
#83 The Short Happy Circuit of Aunt Clara
#84 I’d Rather Twitch Than Fight
#85 Oedipus Hex
#86 Sam’s Spooky Chair
#87 My Friend Ben
#88 Samantha for the Defense
#89 A Gazebo Never Forgets
#90 Soapbox Derby
#91 Sam in the Moon
#92 Hoho the Clown
#93 Super Car
#94 The Corn is as High as a Guernsey’s Eye
#95 Trial and Error of Aunt Clara
#96 Three Wishes
#97 I Remember You…Sometimes
#98 Art for Sam’s Sake
#99 Charlie Harper Winner
#100 Aunt Clara’s Victoria Victory
#101 The Crone of Cawdor
#102 No More, Mr. Nice Guy
#103 It’s Wishcraft
#104 How to Fail in Business with All Kinds of Help
#105 Bewitched, Bothered and Infuriated
#106 Nobody but a Frog Knows How to Live
#107 There’s Gold in Them Thar Pills

**Season 4: 1967-1968**

#108 Long Live the Queen
#109 Toys in Babeland
#110 Business, Italian Style
#111 Double, Double, Toil and Trouble
#112 Cheap, Cheap!
#113 No Zip in My Zap
#114 Birdies, Bogies and Baxter
#115 A Safe and Sane Halloween
#116 Out of Sync, Out of Mind
#117 That was No Chick, That was My Wife
#118 Allergic to Macedonian Dodo Birds
#119 Samantha’s Thanksgiving to Remember
#120 The Solid Gold Mother-in-Law
#121 My What Big Ears You Have
#122 I Get Your Nannie, You Get My Goat
#123 Humbug Not to be Spoken Here
#124 Samantha’s da Vinci Dilemma
#125 Once in a Vial
#126 Snob in the Grass
#127 If They Never Met
#128 Hippie, Hippie, Hooray
#129 A Prince of a Guy
#130 McTavish
#131 How Green was my Grass
#132 To Twitch or Not to Twitch
#133 Playmates
#134 Tabitha’s Cranky Spells
#135 I Confess
#136 A Majority of Two
#137 Samantha’s Secret Saucer
#138 The No-Harm Charm
#139 Man of the Year
#140 Splitsville

**Season 5: 1968-1969**

#141 Samantha’s Wedding Present
#142 Samantha Goes South for a Spell
#143 Samantha on the Keyboard
#144 Darrin Gone! And Forgotten
#145 It’s So Nice to Have a Spouse Around the House
#146 Mirror, Mirror, On the Wall
#147 Samantha’s French Pastry
#148 Is It Magic or Imagination
#149 Samantha Fights City Hall
#150 Samantha Loses Her Voice
#151 I Don’t Want to be a Toad, I Want to be a Butterfly
#152 Weep No More My Willow
#153 Instant Courtesy
#154 Samantha’s Super Maid
#155 Serena Strikes Again (Part I)
#156 Cousin Serena Strikes Again (Part II)
#157 One Touch of Midas
#158 Samantha, the Bard
#159 Samantha, the Sculptress
#160 Mrs. Stephens, Where are You?
#161 Marriage Witch’s Style
#162 Going Ape
#163 Tabitha’s Weekend
#164 The Battle of Burning Oak
#165 Samantha’s Power Failure
#166 Samantha Twitches for UNICEF
#167 Daddy Does His Thing
#168 Samantha’s Good News
#169 Samantha’s Shopping Spree
#170 Samantha and Darrin in Mexico City
Season 6: 1969-1970

#171 Sam and the Beanstalk
#172 Samantha’s Yoo Hoo Maid
#173 Samantha’s Caesar Salad
#174 Samantha’s Curious Cravings
#175 And Something Makes Four
#176 Naming Samantha’s New Baby
#177 To Trick-or-Treat or Not to Trick-or-Treat
#178 A Bunny for Tabitha
#179 Samantha’s Secret Spell
#180 Daddy Comes to Visit
#181 Darrin the Warlock
#182 Sam’s Double Mother Trouble
#183 You’re So Agreeable
#184 Santa Comes to Visit and Stays and Stays
#185 Samantha’s Better Halves
#186 Samantha’s Lost Weekend
#187 The Phrase is Familiar
#188 Samantha’s Secret is Discovered
#189 Tabitha’s Very Own Samantha
#190 Super Arthur
#191 What Makes Darrin Run?
#192 Serena Stops the Show
#193 Just a Kid Again
#194 The Generation Zap
#195 Okay, Who’s the Wise Witch
#196 A Chance on Love
#197 If the Shoe Pinches
#198 Mona Sammy
#199 Turn on the Old Charm
#200 Make Love Not Hate

Season 7: 1970-1971

#201 To Go or Not To Go, That is the Question
#202 Salem Here We Come
#203 The Salem Saga
#204 Samantha’s Hot Bedwarmer
#205 Darrin on a Pedestal
#206 Paul Revere Rides Again
#207 Samantha’s Bad Day in Salem
#208 Samantha’s Old Salem Trip
#209 Samantha’s Pet Warlock
#210 Samantha’s Old Man
#211 The Corsican Cousins
#212 Samantha’s Magic Potion
#213 Sisters at Heart
#214 The Mother-in-Law of the Year
#215 Mary, the Good Fairy
#216 The Good Fairy Strikes Again
#217 The Return of Darrin the Bold
#218 The House That Uncle Arthur Built
#219 Samantha and the Troll
#220 This Little Piggie
#221 Mixed Doubles
#222 Darrin Goes Ape
#223 Money Happy Returns
#224 Out of the Mouths of Babes
#225 Samantha’s Psychic Pslip
#226 Samantha’s Magic Mirror
#227 Laugh, Clown, Laugh
#228 Samantha and the Antique Doll

Season 8: 1971-1972

#229 How Not to Lose Your Head to Henry VIII (Part I)
#230 How Not to Lose Your Head to Henry VIII (Part II)
#231 Samantha and the Loch Ness Monster
#232 Samantha’s Not So Leaning Tower of Pisa
#233 Bewitched, Bothered and Baldoni
#234 Paris, Witches Style
#235 The Ghost Who Made a Spectre of Himself
#236 TV or Not TV
#237 A Plague on Maurice and Samantha
#238 Hansel and Gretel in Samanthaland
#239 The Warlock in the Gray Flannel Suit
#240 The Eight Year Itch Witch
#241 Three Men and a Witch on a Horse
#242 Adam, Warlock or Washout
#243 Samantha’s Magic Sitter
#244 Samantha is Earthbound
#245 Serena’s Richcraft
#246 Samantha on Thin Ice
#247 Serena’s Youth Pill
#248 Tabitha’s First Day at School
#249 George Washington Zapped Here (Part I)
#250 George Washington Zapped Here (Part II)
#251 School Days, School Daze
#252 A Good Turn Never Goes Unpunished
#253 Sam’s Witchcraft Blows a Fuse
#254 The Truth, Nothing But the Truth, So Help Me, Sam
Appendix B

Charlie’s Angels Episode Guide

Season 1: 1976-1977

#1  Hellride
#2  The Mexican Connection
#3  Night of the Strangler
#4  Angels in Chains
#5  Target: Angels
#6  The Killing Kind
#7  To Kill an Angel
#8  Lady Killer
#9  Bullseye
#10 Consenting Adults
#11 The Séance
#12 Angels on Wheels
#13 Angel Trap
#14 The Big Tap-Out
#15 Angels on a String
#16 Dirty Business
#17 The Vegas Connection
#18 Terror on Ward One
#19 Dancing in the Dark
#20 I Will Be Remembered
#21 Angels at Sea
#22 The Blue Angels

Season 2: 1977-1978

#23  Angels in Paradise
#24  Angels on Ice
#25  Pretty Angels All in a Row
#26  Angel Flight
#27  Circus of Terror
#28  Angel in Love
#29  Unidentified Flying Angels
#30  Angels on the Air
#31  Angel Baby
#32  Angels in the Wings
#33  Magic Fire
#34 The Sammy Davis Jr Kidnap Caper
#35 Angels on Horseback
#36 Game, Set, Death
#37 Hours of Desperation
#38 Diamond in the Rough
#39 Angels in the Backfield  
#40 The Sandcastle Murders  
#41 Angel Blues  
#42 Mother Goose is Running for His Life  
#43 Little Angels of the Night  
#44 The Jade Trap  
#45 Angel on the Run  
#46 Antique Angels

Season 3: 1978-1979

#47 Angels in Vegas  
#48 Angel Come Home  
#49 Angel on High  
#50 Angels in Springtime  
#51 Winning is for Losers  
#52 Haunted Angels  
#53 Pom Pom Angels  
#54 Angels Ahoy!  
#55 Mother Angel  
#56 Angel on My Mind  
#57 Angels Belong in Heaven  
#58 Angels in the Stretch  
#59 Angels on Vacation  
#60 Counterfeit Angels  
#61 Disco Angels  
#62 Terror on Skis  
#63 Angels in a Box  
#64 Teen Angel  
#65 Marathon Angel  
#66 Angels in Waiting  
#67 Rosemary, for Remembrance  
#68 Angels Remembered

Season 4: 1979-1980

#69 Love Boat Angels  
#70 Angels Go Truckin’  
#71 Avenging Angel  
#72 Angels at the Altar  
#73 Fallen Angel  
#74 Caged Angel  
#75 Angels on the Street  
#76 The Prince and the Angel  
#77 Angels on Skates  
#78 Angels on Campus  
#79 Angel Hunt  
#80 Cruising Angels  
#81 Of Ghosts and Angels  
#82 Angel’s Child
#83 One of Our Angels is Waiting
#84 Catch a Falling Angel
#85 Homes, Sweet Homes
#86 Dancing Angels
#87 Harrigan’s Angels
#88 An Angel’s Trail
#89 Nips and Tucks
#90 Three for the Money
#91 Toni’s Boys
#92 One Love…Two Angels (Part One)
#93 One Love…Two Angels (Part Two)

**Season 5: 1980-1981**

#94 Angel in Hiding
#95 To See an Angel Die
#96 Angels of the Deep
#97 Island Angels
#98 Waikiki Angels
#99 Hula Angels
#100 Moonshinin’ Angels
#101 He Married an Angel
#102 Taxi Angels
#103 Angel on the Line
#104 Chorus Line Angels
#105 Stuntwoman Angels
#106 Attack Angels
#107 Angel on a Roll
#108 Mr. Galaxy
#109 Let Our Angel Live