

1978-1979

| | 7:30 | 8 | 9 | 9:30 | 10 | 10:30 | 11 PM |
|----------------------------|------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|------------|----------------------------|-------|
| THE HARVEY BRYAN MYSTERIES | | 9 BATTLESTAR GALACTICA | | MOVIE | | | ABC |
| NEWS | | 11 BEARY | | ALL IN THE FAMILY | 9 ALICE | 3 ELIZ | CBS |
| THE WALKER & WALKER | | 20 THE BIG EVENT IS | | | 2 LIPSLINE | | NBC |
| | | 10 WE'LL BE BACK | 10 PAPERATION | 2 NFL MONDAY NIGHT FOOTBALL | | | ABC |
| | | 11 WE'VE GOT | 4 PEOPLE | 7 ONE DAY AT A TIME | | 4 LOU GRANT | CBS |
| | | 12 WE'VE GOT | 5 MOVIE | | | | NBC |
| | | 13 HAPPY DAYS | 6 LAURENCE AND | 4 THIS IS | 3 TAXI | STARKY AND HUTCH | ABC |
| | | 14 THE PAPER CHASE | MOVIE | | | | CBS |
| | | 15 GRANDPA GOES TO WASHINGTON | THE BIG EVENT (II) | | | | NBC |
| | | 16 EIGHT IS ENOUGH | 3 CHARLIE'S ANGELS | | 3 VEGAS | | ABC |
| | | 17 THE | 4 IN THE | MOVIE | | | CBS |
| | | 18 DICK CLARK'S LOVE WEDNESDAY | MOVIE | | | | NBC |
| | | 19 MORK & MINDY | 3 WHAT'S | 6 HARNEY MILLER | 5 SOAP | 2 FAMILY | ABC |
| | | 20 THE WALTONS | 7 HANNAH FIVE O | | | 11 BARNABY RHOES | CBS |
| | | 21 PROJECT UFO | 8 QUINCY | | | 2 M.S.B. | NBC |
| | | 22 DONNY AND MARIE | 4 MOVIE | | | | ABC |
| | | 23 PIONEER WOMAN | 2 THE INCREDIBLE HULK | | | 2 FLYING HIGH | CBS |
| | | 24 THE WAVEBLY | 3 THE ROCKFORD FILES | | | 6 THE BOBBI CARPIS SYSTEMS | NBC |
| | | 25 CARTER | 2 APPLE PIE | THE LOVE BOAT | | 8 FANTASY ISLAND | ABC |
| | | 26 RHODA | 5 GOOD TIMES | 6 THE AMERICAN GIRLS | | DALLAS | CBS |
| | | 27 CHPS | 2 SPECIALS | | | SHARD OF JUSTICE | NBC |

Continuous and continual, the media day fragments.

—Henri Lefebvre¹

I was a TV kid. Not like Mike Teevee in *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory*. I didn't identify with or as television characters, and I didn't speak only about my knowledge of television (in fact, I found it a little mortifying when I heard kids perform such monologues before class started—admitting, basically, that they spent every evening at five o'clock watching reruns of *Adam 12*). But I certainly told time by television: whether via Saturday morning cartoons, weekday afternoon game shows like *Match Game '75*, or the Tuesday night fare of *The Muppet Show*, *Happy Days*, and *Laverne and Shirley*. By high school, it was daytime soaps—at least in the off-season of track and cross-country—which told me not just what time it was (2 pm for *General Hospital*, 3 pm for *All My Children*), but also what day it was (very little happened on Tuesdays, whereas Fridays, of course, had cliff-hangers). Television was a means of both managing time and passing time for me, as it was and is for so many viewers.

Television also produced in me a sense of anticipation and expectation. I remember quite clearly, in my brief heady days as a rocker chick, driving across town with the guys to our friend's house with cable television, and therefore MTV, waiting, sometimes fruitlessly, for an Iron Maiden video before going back home across the river. A little lovestruck—not for the band, but for the boy with cable—I didn't want the video to play. Instilled in me, perhaps, was a desire for something else. Of course this sort of experience of mediated anticipation wasn't unique to me. This sensation and sensibility is designed by the very organization of US broadcast television. Split into fragments, as Lefebvre acknowledges, television invites us to wait for the commercial to end, the narrative to begin again; we anticipate not just a particular kind of action or knowledge but also that series which follows the one we are currently watching. And at the end of every prime-time episode, we anticipate another to come a week later. Of course, that particular form of mediated time doesn't find its origins in television but in other serial forms, such as nineteenth-century novels, fragmented in magazines to keep the readers buying

for the next installment. Given this history, we might say mass media has perfected a rhythm of waiting in its consumers and its citizens.

In 1984, Nick Browne wrote: "Television establishes its relation to the 'real,' not only through codes of realistic representation, but to the schedule, to the socially mediated order of the *workday* and the *workweek*. In this way, television helps to produce and render 'natural' the logic and rhythm of the social order."² But Browne was writing around the same time I was waiting for the elusive Iron Maiden videos: this was, after all, the period of the long, last gasp of the dominance of the broadcast network era and the comforting tyranny of its scheduling of our lives. Not only were cable networks like MTV being added into the mix but, about eight years out of the box, VCRs were allowing viewers to "shift time." Today, those broadcast networks still structure our days via their relatively tenacious programming of morning news shows, game shows and soaps (the latter, sadly, taking their own last breaths), afternoon talk, the news, entertainment reporting, prime-time comedy, competition and drama, more news, and more talk. But look at any of our hundreds of other options on basic or luxury cable, and you no longer know what time it is.

My older brother was an incredibly good kid: while I might have been watching a soap (or maybe reading a novel or baking cookies) in the afternoon, he was building a shed in the backyard. So his own television transgressions were more notable—and more acceptable—than my own. I remember one morning learning he had stayed up past midnight to watch reruns of *Rod Serling's Night Gallery*; an episode in which earwigs literally enter through a man's ears and eat his brains gave my brother nightmares (some thirty years later, I can't get it out of my head, either). These days, 1 am doesn't mean anything on television: no longer is it the hour we can anticipate fodder for our dreams or when we might be able to catch a rare classic film. Rather, with classic movie channels running twenty-four hours a day, another channel devoted to science fiction programming, and even "on demand" choices, we can get scared over breakfast or watch *Out of the Past* on a Thursday afternoon. News comes to us not only in the evenings, but continuously, day and night. Sports isn't only on the weekends or Monday evenings, and if we didn't catch that Packers game in 1969, we can likely catch it on ESPN Classic. Even more likely, we are simply not watching along the schedule as it is organized, instead designing our own timelines through time-shifting technologies, seemingly built right into the machines themselves—at least through cable lines—and no longer

needing a material form like a videotape to house our recordings. Rather, these digital recordings, like the signal itself and the time it no longer designates, can simply disappear back into the ether from which they came.

These seemingly expanding options not only shift our days, but they change our sense of narrative and history as well. The cable network FX plays episode after episode of the original *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* on a daily basis, often intermixing seasons and changing cast members. If you're lucky, you can catch a marathon of *Murder, She Wrote* on the Hallmark Movie channel, which does the same. This structure alters our sense of narrative and temporal anticipation. All we begin to expect is more of the same. Strangely, the more consistent—and the greater (as in ten hours rather than one of one particular series)—these televisual fragments that we experience, the more likely we are to experience also the loss of a sense of present, historical, and narrative time. I would say, too, that television itself is "losing" time. If to mediate is to resolve differences, or to "come in between" (say, us and the calendar), the continual flow of one series or one genre quashes difference. Such television programming doesn't administer time: it simply passes it.

Of course there are still exceptions. Many viewers maintain a schedule of "appointment television," even if they can easily catch the very same program again through their DVR or "on demand" options. But what about those more ephemeral programs, like the daily local news or game show? Thanks to Parkinson's and age, my father doesn't always know what day it is any longer. But he does know how to mark individual days: by when lunch and dinner are served in his senior residence and, if someone reminds him, when his bridge game takes place. And he knows that at seven o'clock *Jeopardy* comes on. When I visit him for an early supper, I know that I will stay with him until 7:30. And when 7 pm rolls around in my own time zone, thanks to television, I think of him.

1 Henri Lefebvre, *Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time, and Everyday Life*, trans. Stuart Elden and Gerald Moore (London: Continuum, 2004), p. 47.

2 Nick Browne, "The Political Economy of the Television (Super) Text," *Quarterly Review of Film Studies*, vol. 9, no. 3 (Summer 1984).