STYLE, SPECTACLE, EXCESS AND THE BOLD AND THE BEAUTIFUL

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A Question of Genre: Style and Narrative

Much of the writing on daytime soap opera has focused on the genre's melodramatic form with particular emphasis being placed on the idea of excess: the excess of emotion, narrative form and style. John Fiske, among others, has argued that the hyperbolic excess that dominates the genre has the potential for opening up numerous and complex interpretative positions that reject the 'singular' meanings favoured by the classic realist text that has dominated Hollywood cinema (Fiske, 1987:90-91). Among the American soap operas currently broadcast on Australian daytime television, *The Bold and the Beautiful* epitomises the genre's capacity for producing a form that tests the boundaries, not only of the classical narrative, but of the soap form itself.¹

While, for the most part, *The Bold and the Beautiful* adheres to the logistics of the daytime soap (with its multiple plot lines, the break up of linear narrative, a televiual style that emphasises the emotive properties of the narrative etc.), from its inception the show has also experimented with incorporating stylistic devices which aim at conveying a 'slicker' look; a look central to the fashion world of the Forresters. Aside from the opulent sets and the plush Forrester mansion, the show often favours more filmic shots such as dissolves, split screens, split screen dissolves and a televiual version of depth of field shots, as opposed to direct cuts.

The idea of the soap opera extending beyond the conventions of its generic form has in many ways been typical of a number of soaps of the 1980s. Joyrich has stressed the flexibility of today's television genres: not only has melodrama influenced prime time television genres, but soaps themselves have been influenced by external sources such as police, crime and spy genres (Joyrich, 1988:130-132).² *The Bold and the Beautiful*, however, takes this overlap even further. Aside from the less intrusive filmic devices included in many of the episodes, often (and especially in some of the more climactic episodes) the show appears to break out of its generic conventions in a far more overt way, forcing the viewer to take notice. The show draws heavily on two antecedent narrative forms: the prime time soap and fifties' film melodrama.

Modleski has argued that in the daytime soap, the glamour and wealth of prime time soaps such as *Dallas* are played down. The "characters are just attractive enough so that their looks are not distracting" and the characters and settings connote "averageness" (Modleski, 1983:68). A mere glance at the cast of *The Bold and the Beautiful*, reveals

¹ Santa Barbara, which was recently cancelled in Australia, was renowned for taking the soap opera form to its limits - though in this case of Santa Barbara, the narrative excess centred around a form that approached parody.

² Aside from being influenced by television genres, the action plots of police and spy shows favoured particularly by *Days of Our Lives* and *General Hospital*, film plots have also figured increasingly in soap operas. For example, *The Young and the Restless* modelled the early Sheila Carter episodes loosely on *The Man that Rocks the Cradle* as have music video formats that tie up narrative threads dramatically by editing them to pop songs (Days of Our Lives featured a dramatic version of this to the sounds of Genesis during the Stefano DiMero/ death of the first Roman plot).
that this could not be further from the truth. While its various narrative threads unravel at the slower daytime pace, *The Bold and the Beautiful* appears to have a great deal in common with the high glamour world of prime time soap operas such as *Dynasty* and *The Colbys*, rather than shows like *General Hospital* or *Days of Our Lives*. Aside from the 'look' of opulence that *The Bold and the Beautiful* takes on, as with the prime time serials, there is less of an emphasis on the community of soap characters who have a town in common, and more of an emphasis on the ruling wealthy family - the Forrester clan and their contacts. While *Days of Our Lives* may focus on central families such as the Hortons, and wealthy villains like Victor Kiriakis, there is a greater sense of an interweaving community with people from all walks of life meeting at bars, restaurants and the docks. In *The Bold and the Beautiful*, on the other hand, the community tends to be held at bay by the walls of the Forrester fortress, to be breached only by characters who usually pound their way into the Forrester world.

Distracting looks?
Brooke Logan Forrester
(Katherine Kelly Lang)
and Ridge Forrester
(Ron Moss)

While *The Bold and the Beautiful* owes a great deal to the prime time soap, the most interesting divergence it makes is when, in episodes dealing with heightened drama, it slips into the form of the fifties melodrama. Although soaps do owe a great deal to this 'genre', they have developed a style of their own which is better suited to the demands of the televisual format. *The Bold and the Beautiful*, on the other hand, often favours a melodramatic filmic style, especially in the way formal devices are employed to the extreme in order to express interiority. The outcome is a predominance of style as a key conveyor of meaning rather than content. But as Flitterman-Lewis suggests, when television soap opera "tries to be cinema" something happens to disturb the television text (Flitterman-Lewis, 1987:198). As will be discussed below, in the case of *The Bold and the Beautiful* what occurs is a clash between a cinematic narrative form associated with closure and a televisual narrative form which evades such closure.
In his discussion of soap opera style, Jeremy Butler points out that "television and film analysts neglect 'style' in a search for 'meaning' - forgetting that style is always the device by which meaning is constructed." (Butler, 1986:54). Butler goes on to isolate a series of soap opera stylistic devices evident in As the World Turns, all of which hold true for The Bold and the Beautiful. The difference, however, is that The Bold and the Beautiful often merges a variety of stylistic components from different generic forms, the result being that the show exceeds even the average soap opera's capacity for creating temporal and spatial discordance.

One sequence that epitomises The Bold and the Beautiful 'style' consists of five episodes aired 3-7 May 1993. The episodes centre around the character Sheila Carter, resident nurse at Forrester Creations. Sheila has schemed and plotted her way into the Forrester clan, and gained the love of head patriarch Eric Forrester (ex-husband of Stephanie the great matriarch and ex-husband of Brooke Logan Forrester, the ex-Valley girl). True, this type of narrative entanglement is nothing new to soaps. However, the Sheila character came to Los Angeles and the world of The Bold and the Beautiful on the run from another daytime soap, The Young and the Restless set in Genoa City. There she had managed to switch Lauren Fenmore's baby in hospital, leaving Lauren with a sick child who eventually died. Meanwhile, Sheila (and husband Scott Grainger who was none the wiser to Sheila's machinations) were raising Lauren's child, Scotty. When things started to heat up, Sheila arranged her own 'death' by fire and made a quick getaway to Los Angeles and into the realm of The Bold and the Beautiful.

Narrative entanglement:
Eric Forrester (John McCall) and Sheila Carter (Kimberlin Brown)
The major threat posed to Sheila during these episodes of *The Bold and the Beautiful* is the presence of Lauren Fenmore who makes a guest appearance on *The Bold and the Beautiful* as fashion expert and family friend of the Forresters. Lauren is therefore to be present for the annual unveiling of the new Forrester Creations fashion show where Sheila will model the 'showstopper' wedding dress. Sheila's fear is that Lauren will destroy her new found love with Eric by exposing her for the baby snatcher and unbalanced individual she really is.

Though a discussion of this plot complication is beyond the scope of this article, the overlap of storylines emphasises the immediacy evident in the soap opera genre, an immediacy which suggests a flow to and from imagined cities. These imaginary worlds are constructed in such a way as to invite the viewer into reading a series of parallels between communities of people with interweaving narratives that link across fictitious cities in a soap opera U.S.A. - cities that find their way into the viewer's own community via the television. To some extent, the soap viewer's capacity for the suspension of disbelief fosters this sense of the soap community as a 'real' community every time a soap star departs from one show to become a character on another, bringing with them all the connotations associated with their previous characters and star personae. However, *The Bold and the Beautiful* takes this migration of soap personalities from one show to another even further by having the characters Sheila Carter and Lauren Fenmore from *The Young and the Restless* enter *The Bold and the Beautiful*. What is established is a clear relationship between two soap opera worlds. Nevertheless, despite attempts to set up a complex network of parallel worlds with seamless intersecting narratives, the confrontation between Sheila and Lauren merely reveals the contradictory nature of the soap opera form.

On the day of the fashion show, in an attempt to reconcile past differences with Lauren, Sheila heads off to the Excelsior hotel in order to confront Lauren and to convince her that she is now a changed person (the viewer, of course, knows otherwise). Driving to the hotel, in typical soap fashion, Sheila rehearses a monologue playing out how she is going to convince Lauren of her altered personality. We are then provided with a flashback to Sheila's recollection of her earlier days with Lauren. Again, flashbacks are common in soap operas; however, in this case the flashback is taken from the narrative space of another soap, *The Young and the Restless*. Deep in the throes of her own interiority, Sheila remains oblivious to the traffic - and the first sign of trouble occurs when a car horn is sounded in the offscreen space. Sheila reacts to the oncoming accident by turning her head (in slow motion) and the screen fades to black. Following the fade to black, she finds herself in the lobby of the Excelsior Hotel recovering from the accident. Informing the doorman that she has recovered, she asks for Lauren Fenmore's room number. To appreciate...
the narrative consequences of Sheila’s car accident and its possible alternative outcomes, we need to look closely at the events which surround it. The narrative segments of the first episode are as follows:

1. Sheila at Forrester’s contemplating how she’ll explain to Lauren that she is a changed and more stable individual.

2. Lauren at the Excelsior, Brooke arrives, they discuss Brooke’s relationships - and two pregnancies to father and son, Eric and Ridge.

3. Taylor and Ridge consummating their love, courier delivers flowers.

4. Titles.

5. Taylor and Ridge realise the flowers are from Brooke.

6. Lauren tells Brooke about ‘the woman’ who switched babies on her in hospital.

7. Sheila in car on the way to the Excelsior rehearsing her monologue to Lauren (includes flashback to The Young and the Restless) a car beeps, Sheila turns, screen fades to black.

8. Conversation between Brooke and Lauren, including Lauren’s flashback to The Young and the Restless - an altercation with Sheila.

9. Sheila in hotel foyer with doorman asking for Lauren’s room number.

10. Ridge and Taylor. Taylor is suspicious about Ridge and Brooke’s late night working session the previous evening.

11. Lauren and Brooke continue their discussion, Brooke leaves.

12. Ridge and Taylor.

13. Sheila arrives at Lauren’s apartment, about to reveal herself.

15. End titles.

The next four episodes mainly centre around Lauren and Sheila’s dramatic confrontation, the fashion show - which extends over one and a half episodes - and numerous discussions between Ridge and Brooke, Taylor and Brooke, Jack and Sally, Brooke and Eric, and other characters.
What is revealed in the fifth episode, however, is that Sheila, in fact, dreamed her confrontation with Lauren, the fashion show and the ensuing exposure of her past identity. While in written form this narrative development appears to be quite straightforward, watching the episodes opens up a series of gaps that similarly plagued Dallas during Pamela Ewing's 'dream' sequence which lasted an entire season - and in the process produced one spinoff. Sheila's dream raises too many structural incongruities which, in the end, cannot be resolved.

Is Sheila the author of all the narrative threads viewed over the five episodes - which include interchanges between Brooke and Lauren, Ridge and Brooke, Taylor and Brooke, and Sally and Jack? This possibility would appear plausible except for the fact that some of these storylines (for example, the discussion between Brooke and Taylor) begin during the dream sequence but continue after Sheila has woken up in hospital. Similarly, the Ridge and Taylor segments begin before the accident and continue into the dream sections.

Another possibility is that she is the author only of events dealing with her contact with Lauren and the fashion show itself. This alternative also creates interpretative difficulties because a number of characters also have conversations while present at the fashion show. If Sheila is dreaming the entire fashion show sequence, then it would imply that she has access to other characters' thoughts and personalities - she may be cunning, but mind reading isn't one of her talents. The other option is that we are dealing with two separate and intersecting narrative spaces: firstly, the 'real' narrative which includes the fashion show up until Sheila's arrival to model her outfit and the interchange between other characters, and secondly, the Sheila fantasy/dream which consists only of scenes in which Sheila is actually present.

If we are dealing with a combination of fantasy and reality, and the fantasy is dominated by scenes in which Sheila is present, again there are narrative incongruities and we find that no rule governs the logic of these episodes. For example, in the first episode, following the 'car incident', Lauren relates to Brooke the events that occurred in Genoa City. Lauren's exposition is accompanied by a flashback to an incident that occurred on The Young and the Restless in which Sheila and Lauren were engaged in a violent battle across the benches and floors of a hospital room. Until this point, the flashback is presented as being legitimately Lauren's, which would substantiate the proposition that Sheila is only the author of scenes in which she is present. However, the fight is interrupted by doctors and nurses who hold Lauren back. Typical of soap operas, Lauren is restrained in the background whilst Sheila occupies the foreground facing the viewer so that the audience can ponder the emotional responses of both characters. Out of Lauren's earshot, Sheila mutters to herself (and the audience): "You're gonna pay for this." The flashback sequence ends and Lauren
explains to Brooke: "And I did pay for it. But then, so did she - with her life." In the context of the events as they occurred on *The Young and the Restless*, Lauren’s access to Sheila’s utterance is an impossibility. In *The Bold and the Beautiful* she is responding to words she could not have possibly heard, suggesting, therefore that it is Sheila who, though not present in the scene in the physical sense (only via the flashback), is controlling the discussion between Brooke and Lauren in the fantasy narrative space. These are only some of the many narrative inconsistencies raised in this and the following episodes, narrative moments that play on a clash between fantasy and reality to the point where the tenability of narrative coherence is thrown into doubt.

Aside from the way these episodes exceed even the average soap opera’s disruption of conventional narrative ordering of events, the Sheila/Lauren/fashion show episodes are particularly interesting in the way that they break away from the soap style towards a more filmic style. In the second episode of the sequence, the drama and intensity of emotion come to a head between Lauren and Sheila, and Lauren threatens to call the police. Sheila’s response: “I can’t let you call the police”, signals a turning point in Sheila’s attitude. Until this point, Sheila has been willing to talk - to convince Lauren that she was a different woman, to plead with her to forget about the past and allow her to move on with her new life with Eric. Lauren announces: “This marriage will never happen. The past will not be forgotten”. These words become a cue that alters the style in which the conflict will be presented, a style marked by a clash between soap television style (tight close ups, studio camera work, two-shots, cuts motivated by characters talking) and a pronounced filmic style that owes a great deal to fifties melodrama. As Sheila snaps, the inner turmoil experienced by her - and the rising danger felt by Lauren - manifests itself externally in the more dramatic use of hand held cameras as the two characters confront each other. By the end of the scene, the visual style, coupled with the build up of dramatic music, becomes more frenzied. This culminates in Lauren being hit over the head with a vase, then tied up and locked in a cupboard to be disposed of by means of a one way trip off the ninth floor building after Sheila models the showstopper.

The next episode reveals even fewer stylistic devices in common with daytime soap operas and focuses on two events:

1. The fashion show, which includes three ‘models on the catwalk’ scenes and ends with Sheila modelling the wedding dressed designed by Eric.

2. Lauren’s escape and subsequent arrival at the fashion show with the police.
To the accompaniment of dramatic music, the urgency of Lauren’s cupboard ordeal and escape is further emphasised by a more dynamic use of camera work, including overhead shots, tracks and cameras placed at awkward angles. The overall effect emphasises both her dilemma and her mental state.

Intercut with Lauren’s dramatic attempts at escape are the lengthy displays of models parading the Forrester creations on the catwalk amidst the wealth and pomp of the high fashion world in a style that has more in common with music video than soap opera. The models’ movements are displayed in a highly slick and stylish array of edits that are dictated, not by the conversation between characters, but by the rhythm of background music (including George Michael’s ‘Too Funky’ and Roy Orbison’s ‘Pretty Woman’). The formal display and fast paced edits serve to capture the excitement and atmosphere in the room at the much awaited unveiling of the fashion event of the year. Edits and camera techniques take a variety of forms that rarely appear in soaps, including: cuts that are signalled by the flash of the photographers’ cameras in a manner that recalls Citizen Kane; wipes; dissolves; expressive camera angles; and slow motion. The most innovative example occurs during the ‘Pretty Woman’ scene when the models walk towards the camera to be frozen on screen, mimicking the taking of a snapshot which is ripped across the screen to reveal the next model in motion beneath.

By removing the usual vehicle of heightened emotion in daytime soaps which centres around the spoken word, what is emphasised instead is the collision of two separate emotional components of the scene, revealed primarily in visual terms. The first is the internal dilemma experienced by Lauren expressed visually in the more frenzied, active camera style and aurally in the accompanying music. The second is the excess of spectacle revealed in the Forrester fashion show. These two worlds and two emotional states (one involving fear and the internal, the other excitement, spectacle and the external) come together in the final scene when Sheila launches onto the catwalk. As Sheila, complete with veil, faces the crowd to the sounds of Dionne Warwick singing “What the world needs now, is love sweet love...”, Lauren arrives with the police. At this point neither is aware of the other’s presence.

From its inception The Bold and the Beautiful has not only focused on the Forrester’s obsession with the body beautiful, surface and sheer spectacle (emphasised in this episode by ‘Too Funky’ and ‘Pretty Woman’), but also on the significance of class and social status. Even though Stephanie Forrester, resident matriarch, has stood guard at her Beverly Hills mansion trying to ensure that the likes of Brooke Logan (the ‘Valley Girl’), Sally Spectra (queen of fashion hack jobs at more affordable prices), and Sheila Carter (the company nurse), stay down there with the masses where they belong, all these characters have managed to infiltrate the Forrester realm.
In this scene, the whites of Sheila’s customary nurse’s uniform are replaced by the whites of the wedding dress in the fashion show, which is in turn a sign of things to come for Sheila. The dress signifies - for Sheila at least - entry into the Forrester dream land. This ‘false’ fashion dress will soon be replaced by a real one when she marries Eric. The spectacle, which by this stage echoes Sheila’s euphoric dream state soon to come true, begins to alter, both visually and aurally. While Lauren watches intently, Sheila lifts her veil (dramatic extra-diegetic music takes over, wiping out the sounds of ‘What the World Needs Now’). Sheila turns her head in slow motion, presumably to meet the gaze of Lauren; the camera pauses on Sheila’s face and the end titles appear.

The opening of the final episode repeats the scene just described, once again displaying Sheila on the catwalk. But it is not until after the opening titles and advertisements that Sheila again turns, this time to meet Eric’s gaze as he presents her with flowers. And it is only after this triumphant moment that Sheila and Lauren become aware of each other’s presence. From this point, everything begins to break down. The ‘What the World Needs Now’ soundtrack is heard in distorted sounds revealing Sheila’s dreams crumbling around her. There are cuts to the press, photographers and police shot in slow motion as they watch her, exposed to this upper class world. The stylistic expression of Sheila’s interior state reaches a peak as she runs in slow motion and we hear a distorted “Nooooo...” coming from her coupled in the distance with the echoes of Lauren’s voice crying out: “It’s over”.

Sheila’s dream of entering the Forrester fantasy world of high glamour and beautiful people is shattered as Lauren exposes her to the Forresters and onlookers. She tells Sheila: “You tried to kill me. You tried to kill your own mother. You’re the devil incarnate”. Lauren’s words are succeeded by the voice of the patriarch, Eric: “I was going to ask you to marry me and you’ve been living a lie. Get out of here.” As the police drag her out, the music builds to a dramatic pitch. The last thing we see is the Forrester clan and her enemy Lauren Fenmore from Sheila’s point of view. To the audience it appears as though this is the end of Sheila Carter - the defeat of the transgressor upon the sanctity of the family has finally been signalled. However, true to soap opera form, the point of view of the people who rejected her dissolves into a close up of Sheila’s face as she wakes in hospital, recovering from a case of mild concussion with her ‘protector’ Eric by her side. She may have missed the real fashion show, but the ball is rolling again. Sheila may resume her plotting and scheming to become part of the Forrester clan.

While in these episodes, the producers of *The Bold and the Beautiful* step beyond the conventions of daytime - or prime time - soap opera by borrowing heavily from a filmic tradition, in the final analysis the disruptive narrative gaps of soaps are favoured over the closure of

*This repetition of certain dramatic events is quite common on *Bold and the Beautiful*, serving to heighten the drama by delaying resolution - which is never fully attained in any case.*
classical narrative structure. Soap televisual form and a televisual version of the melodramatic film come together to bombard the audience with emotional stimuli which refuse containment in the traditional narrative sense. In this respect, despite the influence of the fifties melodrama, the narrative ordering of events is rooted firmly in the soap form, defying narrative resolution.

**A Question of Gender: The Spectacle of Masculinity and the New Soap Heroine**

In her analysis of daytime soap operas, Nochimson focuses on *Santa Barbara*, *Days of Our Lives* and *General Hospital*, seeing these shows as exemplary of soaps which present the audience with female characters (such as Kimberley and Kayla Brady and Julia Wainwright) who create their own stories of female identity through encounters with the Oedipal dyad (Nochimson, 1992:99). She concludes her lengthy analysis by briefly mentioning that little attention has been paid to shows like *The Bold and the Beautiful* and *The Young and the Restless* which, according to Nochimson:

> ... embody a sadomasochistic resistance to the gender of soap opera narrative. In *The Young and the Restless*, the odd combination of mawkishness and ruthlessness in the central father, John Abbot, ..., empowers feminine values while disenfranchising the female characters in the show (1992:197).

It is implied that due to the apparent centrality of the patriarchs in both shows (a feature influenced by the corporate structure of prime time soaps such as *Dynasty* and *Dallas*) there appears to be little room for female empowerment.
On the surface, *The Bold and the Beautiful* appears to be about the reaffirmation of patriarchy, a point obsessively emphasised by the Oedipal drama that centres around Stephanie, Eric and Ridge. The show, however, is far more subtle in the ways it ruptures this narrative strategy, even though Stephanie Forrester’s matriarchal role places her firmly within an Oedipal narrative that serves the family, patriarchy and narrative closure. Despite Stephanie’s power, and despite all her efforts in weeding out individuals who threaten to rupture her desired narrative resolutions (her re-marriage to Eric, the perfect wives and husbands for her sons and daughters—in all, the perfect family), her attempts to produce narrative closure in terms of a happy and unified family are continually frustrated.10

The narrative ruptures created by Sheila, as the show’s villainess, are overt. But the person who has created more gaps than can be counted in Stephanie’s ideal narrative is Brooke Logan. Between these two character opposites, the villainess and the ‘woman as victim’, Stephanie is continually trying to give order to her system. In his discussion of excess in soap operas, John Fiske draws attention to the way various forms of excess (including the excess implied by the ‘villainess’ and ‘woman-as-victim’ characters) fracture the linear narrative. The ‘woman-as-victim’, in particular, throws open an invitation to analyse the male power that produces such victimisation (Fiske, 1987:193).

Having spent six years of air time playing victim to the Forrester system, and sacrificing her needs for the object of her desire, Ridge Forrester, Brooke has nevertheless managed to divert a number of Stephanie’s desired resolutions. After Brooke’s failed attempts at marrying Ridge the first time round (he married Caroline Spencer instead), Stephanie believed she had won. But having failed to marry the son, Brooke then married the father, Eric, and had his child. When that marriage was on the rocks and Stephanie believed she’d get her Eric back, Sheila stepped in and married Eric whilst Brooke turned her attentions...
Ridge’s first wife Caroline died. Whilst Brooke was married to Eric, she knew that her only true love was, in fact, Ridge with whom she was having an affair. During this period she fell pregnant a second time; everyone believes the child to be Ridge’s, but Sheila knows otherwise - she tampered with the paternity results, changing the name of the true father (Eric) to Ridge, thus ensuring that she could have Eric.

back to Ridge, creating havoc in Ridge’s second marriage to Taylor. What we are presented with here is a process which reverses the Oedipal system of exchange: it is the men in the show, particularly Eric and Ridge - father and son - who are up for barter.

A hero in the tradition of James Bond: Ridge

Nochimson argues that in soap operas, representative male heroes in the tradition of James Bond do appear but “they soon become involved in narratives that question their modus operandi.” (1992:42) Whilst Nochimson partly relates this to the fact that these men participate in narratives that refuse the promise of narrative closure, The Bold and the Beautiful provides another device that questions the construction of this particular type of masculinity. The two Forrester patriarchs, Ridge and Eric, in the tradition of fifties melodrama (particularly the films of Douglas Sirk) are nothing more than cardboard cut outs: they are ‘types’ who lack any real depth. They embody the traditional male hero of the classical narrative to a point of excess verging on parody, thus drawing attention to the codes that construct masculinity. One need only compare

12 In particular the Rock Hudson characters in All That Heaven Allows (1955) and Written on the Wind (1956), and the character played by John Gavin in Imitation of Life (1959).
them to characters such as Brooke and Stephanie, who are constructed with a complexity that leaves Ridge and Eric looking positively hollow. While the men may display the signs of strength, the true strength in this show lies in the female characters.

Fiske discusses the sexuality of the hunk in soaps and argues that the 'hunk's' sexuality is not always confined to his body but is contextualized through his relationships (Fiske, 1987:186). According to Fiske, where soap operas themselves focus on the relationship, the soap press emphasise the physicality:

...compensating for soaps' refusal to sexualize the body of the male in a feminised inflection of voyeurism (Fiske, 1987:187).

Contradicting Fiske's assertion, the camera in The Bold and the Beautiful frequently lingers over Ridge's partially naked body, inviting the women in his presence - and the audience - to look at the lean, rippling muscles that are Ridge Forrester. These Forrester men, particularly Ridge, exist to be read on the surface and so approach pure spectacle. This effect is heightened by the ways in which the image of Ridge circulates within the fan culture: 1991 saw the auction of the famous Ridge Speedos for $250 at a fan club luncheon.14

13 The objectification of the male body is becoming a common feature on soap operas. For example, in Days of Our Lives, any excuse is found to expose Roman Brady/Trike H Ogilvy's hairy, muscular chest. In the September issue of Soap Opera Update, the quiz 'Who Is Your Ideal Lover?' included pin-ups of male soap stars characterised as 'types' such as 'Romantic', 'Sensual', 'Sensible', with 'Lusty' Roman Brady warranting a two-page spread in which his naked physique was sprawled across a bed with a sheet suggestively covering his 'privates'. Contrary to Fiske's assertion, this type of objectification exists within the soaps as well as in the soap press.

14 Soap Opera Digest (October, 1991:128). The display of the male body has become something of a running joke on The Bold and the Beautiful. Sally Spectra's 'backless' party (screened 14/2/1994 & 15/2/1994) witnessed the guest appearance of Romance novel pin-up king 'Fabio' - complete with bulging pectorals - as well as a male strip show.

The pure spectacle of masculinity: Ridge
Even though the tradition of melodrama is evoked, the customary problematic endings of the melodrama are overridden in *The Bold and the Beautiful* through attention to soap opera conventions. Brooke may be down, but she is no Stella Dallas, ready to sacrifice everything for the sake of family and the patriarchal way. In the current episodes of *The Bold and the Beautiful* there are further developments that threaten to ruin Stephanie’s plans to remove Brooke from their lives forever. Up until this point, Brooke has been victim to the Forrester way (she has attempted to enter their family and be accepted by them, and in the process sacrificed her own identity) but she is currently undergoing a transformation.

Brooke invents the ‘BelieF’ formula for the Forresters, making them even wealthier than they already were. The Forresters realise that due to some mix up Brooke is not under contract and is therefore the legal owner of the formula without realising it. The ‘good son’ Ridge is sent on an errand by mother and father to get Brooke to sign a release form that will pass all rights to BelieF over to the Forresters. Brooke, driven by her love for Ridge and waiting anxiously to hear if Ridge is going to leave Taylor for her, signs the form, not pressing Ridge for an explanation because she ‘trusts’ him. Form signed, Ridge tells Brooke that he is staying with Taylor, and then leaves her alone in a woeful state of self pity.

Stephanie, of course, cannot wait to gloat, rushing over to inform Brooke of the implications behind the document she has just signed. This exchange results in the next few episodes centring around the struggle between two types of narratives: Stephanie’s desire for her ideal unified patriarchal family and narrative closure, and Brooke’s refusal to adhere to these conventions, thereby opening up the narrative gaps familiar to the soap opera narrative. The two are locked in battle across the institution of the family. During the episode shown on the 21 January, 1994, when Stephanie has informed Brooke about the implications of the document she has just signed and the possibility that she will now be purged from Stephanie’s life, the following exchange occurs.

Brooke: I’m not going to stand here and let you berate me like this.

Stephanie: I’m not going to berate you.

Brooke: No, but you’re taking pleasure in my pain and that’s even worse.

Stephanie: No, I’m not taking pleasure in your pain. I’m feeling your pain. The pain you’ve inflicted on me the last six years, me and my husband and my son.

Brooke: Stephanie, your misery is not my fault.
Stephanie: Oh yes it is! Would you take one good decent look at what you’ve done. You’ve destroyed my marriage, Brooke, and then you went and destroyed your own marriage to Eric. And then, if you could have gotten away with it tonight, you would have destroyed Ridge and Taylor’s marriage. You have violated... *violated* three marriages.

The final blow for Brooke comes when Stephanie states that “blood turned out to be thicker than water. His [Ridge’s] loyalty was to us and not to you.” From this point on, Brooke undergoes a change - with a little push from fate (Ridge getting the wrong copy of the document making Brooke the legal owner). The change in Brooke adheres to Nochimson’s model of the new heroine that emerged in the 1980s soap operas. Brooke finally refuses the Forrester way and as a result commences a journey towards realising her own female subjectivity and desires; desires that now have nothing to do with pleasing or accounting to the Forresters. In Nochimson’s words,

...there can be no end to HER. She will become a subject, an agent. Her desire will become, as it is not in Hollywood, the fuel for the soap opera’s narrative thrust. (1992:36)

With the realisation that “the Forresters protect the Forresters”, Brooke sets the co-ordinates to change the direction of six years of Forrester control. Donning her new ‘corporate look’ (complete with red suit and French twist) she faces the Oedipal trio head on. After explaining to Stephanie that she had better get used to getting down on her knees, and having informed the Forresters of the fact that she is now the new boss of Forrester Creations, Brooke leaves them with these final parting words:

Brooke: ....You know I have two children to raise, and they have a future. I want my children to have everything your children had, Stephanie. Eric Jnr. and Bridget are going to have the kind of life I never had.

Ridge: They have that anyway, Brooke.

Brooke: Oh, shut up Ridge. I can’t count on you, I can’t count on any of you.... I can only count on myself. So I’m providing for myself and my children. That’s what I’m doing, I’m providing.

(To Stephanie): You said you were purging me out of your lives. Well, thank you very much. I consider myself purged. (Tears the copy of the contract that would have signed BeLieF over to the Forresters).
(To Eric): And you Eric, the father of my child Eric Junior, my former husband, my trusted employer, here's to trust. (Tears contract).

(To Ridge): And you Ridge, you were the worst of them all - getting me to sign that contract when you were in love with Taylor and not me. Well here's to Taylor (tears contract), and here's to you (tears it again) and here's to all you frigging people. (Threws all the little pieces at them). You know, there's gonna be some changes around here and you'd better be ready for them. You damn well better be ready for them.

Soap operas have often been considered to provide women with a space in which attempts can be made to come to terms with the problematic public/private split enforced by society; a split which constructs the role of woman as nurturer, firmly embedded in the private and the familial (Kretzner & Seiter, 1991:155). In six years of air time, Brooke has attempted to fit herself into this model and succeeded only in sacrificing her own identity and her place in the public sphere by depending on men such as Eric and Ridge to represent her there. This episode is crucial with regard to the character of Brooke Logan in that it marks her shift into the public sphere on her own terms while simultaneously maintaining her place in the private sphere as mother and provider to her children. Her move signifies a collapse of the public/private dichotomy, the show opening up an avenue which provides numerous possibilities for the development of the Brooke Logan character.

Through its exploration of style, character and narrative, and its experimentation with new potential for melodramatic televised form, *The Bold and the Beautiful* has opened up a complex array of issues regarding future directions for daytime soap opera. It would appear that through a willingness to combine a diversity of story-telling modes, daytime soap occupies a unique realm within which to explore the relation between private and public worlds, realised through interior melodramas and the exterior of visual excess. At the same time, through a refusal to espouse narrative closure and an anarchic relation to the conventions of soap opera narrative form and even its own logics of time and place, *The Bold and the Beautiful* signals the instability of daytime soap opera as a genre.
References


Nochimson, Martha (1992), No End To Her: Soap Opera and the Female Narrative, Berkeley: University of California Press.