

LAWYERS, JUSTICE AND THE STATE

The Sliding Signifier of Law in Popular Culture

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This article examines how the concept of 'law' is culturally defined through a semiotic analysis of some of the ways in which law is constructed in popular culture. The article goes on to map the changing signifier of law across a number of film and television series, from the heroic lawyer to the embodiment of the 'state', the police officer and the government agent. In each case, analysis is provided of how the change in signifier alters the corresponding signified of 'law' — and the implications this change has for the pursuit of justice and fidelity to the rule of law. It is suggested that the popular cultural signifier of law has slid further and further away from the modern rule of law towards an increasingly transcendent and interventionist pursuit of justice, pushing the boundaries and promoting debate over what law can and should be.

The policeman's job is only easy in a police state. That's the whole point, captain. Who is the boss, the cop or the law?

— 'Mike' Vargas (Charlton Heston), *Touch of Evil*

You're only Spider-Man Dad, not God.

—Charlie Deed (to her father, Judge John Deed), *Everyone's Child*

Introduction

The term 'law' has many possible meanings, not just in legal institutions (where it can refer to positivist law, natural law, Indigenous law or police powers) but also in the wider culture. Law, it seems, is a malleable concept, its definition often depending upon the context in which it is found. Despite this, legal and cultural theorist Steve Redhead notes that conventionally 'in jurisprudential and political theory', law is taken as a given — 'we assume that we know what it is and where to find it, and also what it does'.¹ Redhead goes

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¹ Redhead (1995), p 10. Interestingly, this does not seem to be the case in practice. The adversary system is, in part, based on the idea that law can be interpreted differently. Similarly the composition of courts acknowledge that judges interpret

on to suggest that this is in fact ‘a powerful (legal) fiction which may be crucial to the exercise of political power and legal authority across many different fields, especially the “cultural”’.²

One possible starting point for understanding how law is culturally defined is through Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure’s notion of *semiotics*,³ the study of communication. Adopting a structuralist approach to communication, de Saussure breaks down communication practices into a series of units called *signs*. A sign is anything that produces a meaning. Each sign is comprised of a physical component (the *signifier*) and a mental concept associated with that physical component (the *signified*). The relationship between the signifier and the signified is called *signification*, the process by which meaning is made.⁴ Thus, when we are confronted with a statue of justice, an image of a courtroom, or the figure of a lawyer or a policeman, we can understand them all as the physical *signifiers* of the mental *signified* — law.

Saussurean semiotics is therefore useful because it provides a set of tools to describe how law is culturally constructed. It permits an analysis of culture without the imposition of value judgments (based on artistic or moral merit) and, unlike empirical sociology, can focus on individual texts rather than large-scale patterns.⁵ Furthermore, despite criticisms that it is too abstract and formalist in its approach, semiotics is committed to the *social* production of meaning. For Saussure, meaning is not contained in a single sign, but rather exists in the various sorts of relationships into which a sign enters.⁶ Of particular importance here would be the relationship between law and justice. Saussure therefore seems to be acknowledging that meaning is *contextual*. This is incredibly important in the analysis of law because, as noted above, the very meaning of law seems to depend on the context in which it is found. Therefore, as the physical signifier of law changes, so too does the mental concept of law that is signified.

This article adopts a semiotic analysis of some of the ways in which law is constructed in *popular* culture. The article maps the changing signifier of law in popular culture from the heroic lawyer to the embodiment of the ‘state’, the police and the government agent. In each case, analysis is provided of how the change in signifier alters the corresponding signified of ‘law’ — and of the implications this change has for the pursuit of justice and fidelity to the rule of law.

The examples are all drawn from film and television because, as Meyrowitz notes, film and television are the most prevalent popular cultural

laws differently; some believe the constitution, for example, to be a living document while others turn to what the original drafters of the law intended.

² Redhead (1995), p 10.

³ de Saussure (1983 [1916]).

⁴ De Saussure (1983); Hawkes (1977).

⁵ Fiske (1982); O’Sullivan et al (1994).

⁶ Culler (1976).

forms and therefore the most accessible to a mass audience.⁷ As Roland Barthes notes, ‘iconic images [be it Perry Mason or Harry Callaghan] distil complex details [of legal process] into blissful clarity’.⁸ This makes film and television ‘the main source of *common* knowledge about the law ... [exerting] a powerful influence on ordinary people’s attitudes to, and expectations of, law and the legal system’⁹ because they *are* so much more accessible to the general public than law reports or even visiting courtrooms for themselves.

Beyond simply representing the legal system, we can also read film and television as being in a dialogic relationship with these ideas, actively commenting upon these notions of law and justice. Cultural theorist Douglas Rushkoff,¹⁰ for example, has suggested that ‘popular cultural forums’ (like film and television) offer a ‘conceptual interface between the order of our laws and the chaos of our world’¹¹ that makes them ‘the place for us to evaluate our rules and customs’.¹² Film and television are therefore vitally important for making visible how law is constructed and, in the very process of representing law on screen, putting these ideas into the public sphere where they can be debated and contested.¹³

Following Bennett and Woollacott’s study,¹⁴ the examples are wide-ranging (from America, England and Australia) and there is some deliberate slippage between film and television. It is submitted that any other approach would be too limiting, abstracting texts from the wider culture and ‘the shifting orders of inter-textuality’¹⁵ which both elucidate their meaning and demonstrate how widespread these ideas of law truly are. Focusing on lawyers, policemen and government agents, this article aims to trace ways of thinking about law across related areas of popular culture by following ideas through intertexts with common concerns. The article then concludes with a consideration of why these ideas are important and what they can tell us about the changing nature of ‘legal authority’¹⁶ in the wider culture.

⁷ Meyrowitz (1985).

⁸ Barthes (1972), p 143.

⁹ Laster (2000), pp 10–11. It is important to note that, while I agree with Laster’s proposition that texts form ‘the main source of common knowledge about the law’, I downplay the idea of ‘influence’ with its implications of power over the viewer.

¹⁰ Rushkoff (1994).

¹¹ Rushkoff (1994), p 51.

¹² Rushkoff (1994), p 52.

¹³ For more on this idea of the public sphere. see McKee (2004).

¹⁴ Bennett and Woollacott (1987), pp 55–69.

¹⁵ Bennett and Woollacott (1987), p 59.

¹⁶ Redhead (1995), p 10.

Justice and Law

A central consideration in analysing the way law is culturally constructed is the relationship between law and justice.¹⁷ However, as Barry notes:

Despite more than 2000 years of political theorizing the notion of justice still has no settled meaning: it is the paradigm case of an essentially contested concept. It is not simply that there are fundamental disputes at the normative level ... it is the fact that there is so little agreement as to what the *concept* stands for that causes serious problems.¹⁸

In his keynote speech at a Cardozo Law School symposium on deconstruction and law,¹⁹ Jacques Derrida claimed that, since justice transcends the legal system, it can never be wholly immanent. Following Plato,²⁰ Derrida views justice as something ‘beyond’ the legal system, something quite apart from legal rights and remedies.²¹ Indeed, Derrida quotes Montaigne when he states: ‘Laws keep up their good standing not because they are *just* but because they are laws.’²² This allows for the possibility of justice being something that exceeds or even exists in opposition to the law.²³

Justice can therefore be categorised in two ways: as *procedural justice* (relating to fairness and ensuring that the proper procedures have been followed); and as *substantive justice* (relating to getting the ‘right’ or ‘correct’ result, even at the expense of some procedural fairness). The classification reveals justice’s relationship with the law. Procedural justice is *subordinate* to the law. Here justice remains just another aspect of the law, with fairness and closure remaining the true aims of the legal system. In contrast, substantive justice *is* the aim of the law. Other aspects of the law (like fairness or closure) may necessarily be suspended or ignored to achieve it.²⁴

Clearly, then, the pursuit of justice has a significant impact on the form that law may take. Indeed, Derrida famously pronounced that ‘deconstruction *is* justice’.²⁵ Legal scholar Douglas Litowitz sees this as ‘laying the

¹⁷ Fiebelman (1985).

¹⁸ Barry (2000), p 135.

¹⁹ Derrida (1992).

²⁰ Balkin (1994).

²¹ Derrida (1992), p 10.

²² Derrida (1992), p 12.

²³ Derrida (1992), p 16.

²⁴ This article is therefore adopting a pragmatic view of justice as the ‘correct’ or ‘fair’ result, predicated on the notion that something is ‘just’ when individuals get what is due to them — a definition which fits both these ideas of justice. In part, the article plays into the debates around moral relativism in accepting that justice does have a different meaning depending on where it is found — though in this case this is produced more by its relationship with law than its social or cultural context.

²⁵ Derrida (1992), p 15.

groundwork for ... an almost dialectical struggle between law and justice'²⁶ — or, more precisely, that 'the call to do justice to the other is what spurs the deconstructive process into action, and hence the very process of deconstruction is a process of seeking justice'.²⁷ Here, then, the act of seeking justice itself shapes the law, creating instability in the law and resulting in at least two different forms of law, what I have termed *modern* law and *pre-modern* law.²⁸

Modern law refers to 'black letter law', based around the idea of the Rule of Law. I've termed this concept 'modern law' because the Rule of Law is itself at the very heart of modernity, both as an important part of the public sphere and as a way of ensuring the continuing maintenance of 'order' and 'certainty' — two of the central concerns of modernity.²⁹ Modernity's belief in progress through rationalism resulted in a corresponding rise in the presence of the courtroom and the idea of empirical argumentation as a locus of justice, leading Max Weber³⁰ to conclude that law itself legitimated the modern state.³¹

The Rule of Law is defined by contrast with the 'rules of man' — arbitrary, ad hoc decisions. Its most basic requirements are consistency, through rules fixed in advance, and public knowledge and fairness, through neutral application.³² The modern ideal of law is therefore based around *rationality*. It aims to provide *due process*, ensuring fairness and equality. To a certain extent, it also seeks to provide *reassurance* that the legal system is the best forum for dealing with criminal and civil issues as it ensures objectivity and impartiality. In modern law, then, justice remains procedural in that it is

²⁶ Litowitz (1997), p 97.

²⁷ Litowitz (1997), p 102.

²⁸ This is based in part on Lyotard's (1985) notion of a 'multiplicity of justices, each one of them defined in relation to the rules specific to each [language] game': (1985), p 100, emphasis added. Here I'm suggesting that the intersection of justice and law actually results in a 'multiplicity of laws', each based on 'the rules specific to each game' — that is, the place of justice in the law. We could include postmodern law here as well, but for reasons of space this article remains focused on pre-modern and modern law.

²⁹ Sarup (1996), p 50, citing Zygmunt Bauman.

³⁰ Max Weber (1991).

³¹ American legal historian Jerold Auerback (1983) concurs, stating that 'no longer is it possible to reflect seriously about American culture without accounting for the centrality of law in American history and society' (p 115). It is certainly valid that Auerback's argument regarding the centrality of law in modern society also applies, at the very least, to England and Australia as well. We can break down the relationship between law and the modern state further: civil litigation encourages an aggressive form of individualism; criminal law legitimates military power (both foreign and domestic); statute law governs surveillance, both directly and indirectly (through regulation), providing transparency and equality to all citizens; test cases encourage research and development (progress); and the legal system, as a whole, enshrines equality through access and fair representation (at least in principle).

³² Fallon (1997).

just another aspect of law, to be considered and balanced against these other requirements.

In contrast, a pre-modern ideal of law privileges justice over equality and emotion over rationality, with emotion often viewed as a conduit to the 'truth'. This ideal of law is 'pre-modern' in the sense that it has a connection to the 'sacred', the (pre-modern) forms of church law or divine law in ancient societies. Here, kings or clergy were said to have a direct conduit to the will of the divine and therefore came to personify the law themselves.³³ In pre-modern law, justice is clearly substantive in that it is the aim of law, overriding concerns of due process or equality.

The Lawyer

As an officer of the court, and hence a representative of the legal system, the lawyer is one of the most common signifiers of law. In film and television, the lawyer is often presented as the heroic protagonist of the legal drama, the visual antecedent of the *legal thriller*, because the drama typically comes out of the relationship between the lawyer and the legal system of which they are a part, rather than from the relationship between the lawyer and the criminal.³⁴ A number of *Perry Mason* (1957–66) episodes bear this out, where Mason has to work *against* the legal system to prove his client's innocence. Similarly, in *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1962), Atticus Finch's struggle to exonerate Tom Robinson is framed as a struggle by a moral lawyer *against* a flawed and bigoted justice system.

In some instances, legal dramas suggest that professionalism, working within the constraints of the system, can itself be heroic.³⁵ When DAs Richard Bey (Jason Kravits) and Helen Gamble (Lara Flynn Boyle) go to lunch after losing a case on the television series *The Practice* (1997–2004), Bey reassures Gamble that they are the heroes because they are trying to uphold justice and put away the criminals (an argument often replicated by the DAs in *Law & Order* (1990–)). *The Practice's* defence lawyer Eugene Young (Steve Harris) reminds the lawyers at his firm that their courage to represent unpopular clients makes them heroic — an argument that echoes the sentiments of defence lawyers in films from *Compulsion* (1959) to *In the Name of the Father* (1993). Similarly, *The Verdict's* (1982) Frank Galvin (Paul Newman) is presented as heroic because he learns how to overcome his alcoholism and depression, work hard and win a case. Here, Galvin's move toward professionalism is presented as heroic.

The lawyers in each of these examples clearly signify the modern ideal of law: their professionalism maintains faith in the legal system; the fact they are heroic simply by discharging their duty, or attempting to discharge their duty, reinforces the need for due process; and the fact that resolution occurs in the courtroom underscores the importance of rational argumentation. But legal

³³ See Feldman (2000).

³⁴ Bainbridge (2004).

³⁵ Menkel-Meadow (2001), p 1319.

dramas do not form an homogenised discursive whole, and more often than not quite a different form of law is signified.

In May 2003, the American Film Institute nominated Atticus Finch (Gregory Peck), the indomitable Southern lawyer of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, as the greatest hero in the history of motion pictures.³⁶ The main reason given for Finch's nomination was his role in fighting racial prejudice through his defence of the alleged rapist Tom Robinson.

At first glance, Atticus Finch's victory in *To Kill a Mockingbird* seems to be an endorsement of the modern ideal of law, signified by a lawyer simply discharging their duty; however, as Simon notes,³⁷ Finch concludes the film by engaging in an obstruction of justice. Sheriff Heck Tate and Finch collude to say Bob Ewell's death was an accident rather than the act of Boo Radley, who was defending Finch's children from Ewell's attack. To be fair, Finch does argue against the sheriff, saying that Radley should go to trial as the killing is justified, but he ultimately concedes Tate's point that the legal system that has just failed Tom Robinson will most likely fail Boo Radley too.³⁸

Here, then, Finch is clearly not operating as an officer of the court. Justice relies on what Simon terms Finch's moral pluck — 'a combination of transgression and resourcefulness in the vindication of justice'.³⁹ In *To Kill a Mockingbird*, then, justice is found to lie outside and occasionally (as here) in opposition to the legal system. Similarly at other points in the film, Finch is forced to act outside his role as Robinson's lawyer, standing guard over his gaol cell to protect him from a lynching and engaging in a good amount of detective work to 'prove' (though not to the jury's satisfaction) that Robinson is incapable of the rape ascribed to him. Finch's nomination as 'hero' relies in equal measure on his abilities inside the courtroom and, at certain moments, acting outside or even in opposition to his role as lawyer. Finch therefore incorporates aspects of both the 'modern' and 'pre-modern' ideals of law — a mixture of rationality and emotion where due process is frequently overridden by the pursuit of substantive justice.

Simon pursues this idea of moral pluck through the literary works of John Grisham and the television series *LA Law* (1986–94)⁴⁰ — and it is an idea that can be applied to the analysis of what may be thought of as other 'heroic' lawyers too, most notably *Perry Mason*. Originating in Erle Stanley Gardner's stories in a variety of pulps (including *Black Mask* magazine) in 1933, *Mason* always straddled a variety of genres as his tales were part legal procedural and part pulp thriller.⁴¹ *Perry Mason*'s transition to radio (1943–55) marked the

³⁶ *Age*, 14 June 2003.

³⁷ Simon (2001).

³⁸ The original scene occurs in Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1960) at 286–91. For another discussion of the scene as a justified 'cover up', see Atkinson (1999).

³⁹ Simon (2001), p 422.

⁴⁰ Simon (2001).

⁴¹ Mason's transition from pulp to courtroom procedural is demonstrable in a comparison of *The Case of the Velvet Claws* (1933), which takes place entirely outside the courtroom, and *The Case of the Sulky Girl* (1934), which features a

addition of another genre, soap opera, that was later abandoned for the long-running television series (1957–66) featuring Raymond Burr, from which the character is probably best remembered.⁴²

Some critics have been quick to dismiss *Perry Mason*'s importance as a legal drama because of the inordinate amount of time Mason spends on detective-work,⁴³ and the fact that he loses only once (and then only because the defendant refuses to reveal information that would save her). I prefer to think of Perry Mason as one of the most subversive of all law shows because of its implicit idea that a lawyer discharging their duty is not enough to be heroic. As with Atticus Finch, to be heroic necessarily requires a combination of legal and extra-legal action.⁴⁴

This idea of combination, of justice requiring a combination of the legal and the extra-legal, is important. Mason's victories depend on both his legwork (usually through private investigator Paul Drake (William Hopper)) outside the courtroom and his devastating cross-examinations within. Indeed, the trademark courtroom confessions which conclude almost every episode of the television series are only used irregularly in the novels. These confessions seem indicative of a desire to reassert the idea that justice (as represented by the confession of guilt) is ultimately found in the courtroom, even if such a finding is reached through a combination of legal and extra-legal means. So, while substantive justice is clearly *Perry Mason*'s aim, finding the 'correct' result in the courtroom also provides some measure of reassurance in the modern legal system as the appropriate forum.

Collins and Javna⁴⁵ see *Perry Mason*'s structure — of a crime, an innocent accused, Mason and company engaging in detective work to find the truth and a concluding courtroom showdown — as moving 'beyond formula into ritual'. At its heart is this notion that discharging one's duty as a defence attorney (defending one's client to the best of one's ability) is not enough to be heroic. Rather, it is necessary to go one step further and uncover who is actually guilty. Furthermore, any amount of rule-breaking (and occasional law-breaking) is presented as justified in light of Mason's end result; in *The Case*

lengthy courtroom interrogation. Mason carried on for 82 novels, a few short stories and a novella before crossing over to films in 1934.

⁴² The soap opera elements were spun off into another television series, *The Edge of Night* (1956), which utilised the same radio cast with new character names. The *Perry Mason* television series returned in 1973–74 with a different cast as *The New Adventures of Perry Mason*. Finally, there was a series of telemovies, *The Perry Mason Mysteries* (1985–93), marking Raymond Burr's return to the role which ran until (just after) his death.

⁴³ For example, Steven Bochco, creator of *LA Law*, describes *Perry Mason* as a mystery series; Collins and Javna (1988) classify it as a private eye series.

⁴⁴ This was highlighted in the *Perry Mason* newspaper strip (1950–54), where Mason was continually reminding his clients 'I'm a lawyer ... not a policeman' (*The Case of the Innocent Thief*) or 'you need a detective, not a lawyer' (*The Case of the Nervous Horse*) — and, of course, in both these cases Mason ends up lending a hand (Mason, 1989).

⁴⁵ Collins and Javna (1988), p 29

of the *Curious Bride*, for example, Mason ‘bought an apartment building so he could legally change the locks and doorbells and screw up DA (Hamilton) Burger’s evidence’.⁴⁶

This is a ritual that is replicated in later series like America’s *Matlock* (1986–95), Australia’s short-lived *Case for the Defence* (1974) and, again to a lesser extent, the UK series *Rumpole of the Bailey* (1978–92) (in Rumpole’s occasional interest in finding who really committed the crime). In some ways, *The Practice* can also be classified as following this trend. Sometimes the defence lawyers do track down the real culprit or, in a neat inverse of the *Perry Mason* tactic of breaking down the guilty party on the stand, accuse someone else of the crime. The lawyers on *The Practice*, Thomas suggests,⁴⁷ are therefore heroic ‘in the sense of going beyond their typical call of duty’.⁴⁸

More recently, the British legal drama *Judge John Deed* (2004–) presents a heroic judge in much the same mould as Finch and Mason. The promotional literature describes him as ‘contemptuous of the rules created by an archaic and out of touch bureaucracy, his passion for justice and maverick approach set him at odds with the Lord Chancellor’s department’.⁴⁹ Deed (Martin Shaw) is frequently seen to ‘transgress’ the laws of his office by giving the accused another chance to speak before the jury, fraternising with the defence barrister and even conducting private searches on judges he considers may be corrupt.

While all of these men remain officers of the court, frequently they must act outside the scope of their role as a lawyer — and sometimes in direct contravention of it — to achieve justice. This is a clear endorsement of the pre-modern ideal of law, where substantive justice becomes the primary motivator, even where other legal rights and duties must be suspended to achieve it. As such, these lawyers in the Finch-Mason-Deed mould represent the first slide in the signification of law away from the modern rule of law and towards a more pre-modern conception.

The Police Procedural

The distinction between the modern and pre-modern forms of law is well made in Orson Welles’ classic film *Touch of Evil* (1958, reconstructed 1998). The film depicts the struggle between ‘modern’ chairman of the Pan American Narcotics Commission, Ramon Miguel ‘Mike’ Vargas (Charlton Heston), and ‘pre-modern’ corrupt policeman Hank Quinlan (Orson Welles) in the Mexican border town of Los Robles (itself a metaphor for the larger issue of the treatment of Mexicans by American law enforcement). Motivated by the unsolved murder of his wife, described as ‘the last killer that ever got out of my hands’, Quinlan is corrupt insofar as he plants evidence on suspects he

⁴⁶ (Collins and Javna (1988), p 30.

⁴⁷ Thomas (2001).

⁴⁸ Thomas (2001), p 1511. This means *The Practice* is advancing two ways for lawyers to be heroic — one is by discharging their duty, the other is by going beyond their duty.

⁴⁹ Channel Seven website.

considers guilty of a crime. In one of his early encounters with Vargas, Quinlan juxtaposes the policeman's role quite clearly against the lawyer's:

Adair: Hank's a born lawyer, you know.

Quinlan: Lawyer! I'm no lawyer. All a lawyer cares about is the law!

Vargas: Captain! You *are* a policeman, aren't you?

Quinlan: Mmm ... Aren't *you*? You don't seem to be very fond of the job.

Vargas: There are plenty of soldiers who don't like war.

Quinlan: Hmmm ...

Vargas: It's a dirty job enforcing the law, but it's what we're supposed to be doing, isn't it?

Quinlan: I don't know about you. But when a murderer's loose, I'm supposed to catch him.

The way Quinlan places the capture of the suspect above due process clearly marks him as a signifier of the pre-modern ideal of law. Indeed, Quinlan's frequent comments that 'we'll get evidence' point to the way he fabricates evidence as a way of proving the guilt of the people he suspects. As far as he's concerned, he never framed anybody but rather was 'aiding justice' — that is, getting the 'correct' result. The point is well made when Vargas tries to expose Quinlan's corruption, culminating in the quotation that heads this article:

Quinlan: Our friend Vargas has some very special ideas about police procedure. He seems to think it don't matter whether a killer is hanged or not, as long as we obey the fine print ...

Vargas: Well, no, captain ...

Quinlan: ... in the rule books.

Vargas: ... I don't think a policeman should work like a dog-catcher ...

Quinlan: No?

Vargas: ... putting criminals behind bars. No! In any free country ...

Quinlan: Aw ...

Vargas: ... a policeman is supposed to enforce the law, and the law protects the guilty as well as the innocent.

Quinlan: Our job is tough enough.

Vargas: It's supposed to be. It has to be tough. The policeman's job is only easy in a police state. That's the whole point, captain. Who is the boss, the cop or the law?

For the purposes of this article, Quinlan's corruption is less important than his assertion that the police generally signify a pre-modern ideal of law.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ While this paper accepts Barthes' and Foucault's notion of 'the death of the author', this also seems in keeping with Welles' original intention. There is evidence that Welles' work in *Touch of Evil* was inspired by the beating and blinding of black naval veteran Isaac Woodward Jr by police in South Carolina. On the *Orson Welles Sketchbook* (BBC-TV, 7 May 1955), Welles comments: 'I

Indeed, as if to prove the point, the very modern Vargas himself has moved towards a pre-modern ideal of law by the end of the film when he is reduced to illegally taping Quinlan to prove his guilt.

In police procedurals, films and series which focus on the workings of police, the signifier of law presented is either ‘the police force’⁵¹ or ‘the individual policeman’.⁵² These signifiers represent another slide away from the modern ideal of law where rational inquiry is frequently abandoned in favour of instinct or emotion, where individual rights are suspended for the good of the community and crime’s ‘causes and definitions [become] self-evident, that criminals are easily recognisable and the punishments that we should give them, obvious’.⁵³ Ironically then, despite the police and the state being profoundly modern institutions, the police are signifiers of a *pre-modern* ideal of law.

The classic example here is the film *Dirty Harry* (1971). The title foregrounds, even celebrates, Harry Callahan’s (Clint Eastwood) ‘dirtiness’, his lack of respect for the legal system in favour of doing whatever is deemed necessary to control crime (here, bringing the sniper Scorpio (Andrew Robinson) to justice). This is exemplified in a scene Chase describes where Harry clashes with DA William T Rothko over the abuse of a suspect’s rights.⁵⁴ Ultimately it is Harry who delivers his own transcendent justice with the (now immortal) quip: ‘Do I feel lucky? Well, do you? Punk?’ As Scorpio reaches for his gun, Harry blows him away. His final rejection of the modern ideal of law is revealed at the film’s end when Harry skips his police badge across the water. Harry becomes a signifier of pre-modern law through his desire to protect community rather than individual (Scorpio’s) rights, through his ‘direct line’ to the truth (appointing himself Scorpio’s executioner) and through his often complete lack of accountability (his rejection of modern law at the movie’s conclusion).

Of course, police procedurals are not always uncritical of police as exemplars of the law. Some foreground ‘the ideological and coercive work of the police’⁵⁵ as evident in series featuring ruthless or just plain corrupt cops like *The Sweeney* (1975–78), *The Shield* (2002) and recent seasons of *The Bill*. Similarly, there are many hybrid forms of the police procedural, creating an ever-changing signifier of ‘the law’ applicable to series as diverse as *Cagney*

am willing to admit that the policeman has a difficult job, a very hard job. But it’s the essence of our society that a policeman’s job should be hard. He’s there to protect the free citizen, not to chase criminals — that’s an incidental part of his job.’ (quoted in Comito 1985), which seems to elucidate the difference between pre-modern and modern law, if not using that exact terminology.

⁵¹ As in the UK *The Bill* (1984–), Australia’s *Blue Heelers* (1994–) or the US *Hill Street Blues* (1981–87).

⁵² Be it America’s *Columbo* (1971–77), Australia’s *Boney* (1972–73) or England’s *Inspector Morse* (1987–2000).

⁵³ Grant (1992), p 58.

⁵⁴ Chase (2002), pp 73–74.

⁵⁵ Clarke (1986, 1992).

and *Lacey* (1982–88), *Cracker* (1993–) and *Inspector Morse*.⁵⁶ However, common to all of these series is a narrative Toby Miller identifies as belonging to the detective genre but which is just as applicable to the police procedural:

The villain and the detective depend on each other through an overarching third term: the law *and its embodiment in the state*, which one must elude and the other convince that justice be meted out.⁵⁷

It is this conception of ‘the state’ that is important here — a ‘state’ that, despite its legal implications,⁵⁸ for the most part is seen to exist without the presence of lawyers. This disenchantment with the legal system is best demonstrated by what is *not* shown. Most police procedurals are discrete. They end with the capture of the criminal, the implication being that it is here that justice occurs, sparing us the intricacies of the legal system, its failures and its delays. As Friedman notes,⁵⁹ popular culture often displays an ‘impatience with technicality and procedure’ through its depiction of technicalities as ‘obstructions to justice’.

The interrogation room has come to replace the courtroom on police procedurals as the locus of ‘truth’ and ‘justice’ in series like *NYPD Blue* (1993–2005), *Homicide: Life on the Street* (1993–99) and more recently *Law & Order: Criminal Intent* (2001–). *NYPD Blue*’s Andy Sipowicz (Dennis Franz) regularly abuses and slaps suspects. Greg Medavoy (Gordon Clapp) strikes a suspect with a telephone book. *Homicide*’s Frank Pembleton (Andre Braugher) engages suspects in complex mind games, whittling away at them until they crack. *Criminal Intent*’s Robert Goran (Vincent D’Onofrio) does the same. As Sterne notes,⁶⁰ all do this without reference to a code of conduct (like the Amnesty International 1996 Report) and always without the presence of a lawyer. Most often, suspects are tricked into not calling their lawyers in the belief that it will ‘be easier’ for them if they don’t. Here the policeman becomes the transcendental justice figure, as aptly demonstrated in an episode of *Law & Order: Criminal Intent*.⁶¹ During the police room interrogation, the terrorist Ethan says: ‘I was sent by God.’ To which Detective Eames (Kathryn Zerbe) (Goran’s partner) replies: ‘So were we.’

The production of a confession replaces the verdict as the moment of catharsis in these dramas, providing both resolution and a sense of justice, with detectives often rewarding themselves afterwards for getting ‘results’. In the police procedural, then, it is the arrest of the suspect that provides narrative

⁵⁶ Creeber (2001), pp 19–23.

⁵⁷ Creeber (2001), p 18, emphasis added.

⁵⁸ Following on from Weber’s (1992) idea that law legitimated the modern state, by ‘state’ I refer to a legal association, a ‘juridically organized nation, or a nation organized for action under legal rules’ (Baker 1951). Baker therefore sees the state as existing for law: ‘it exists in and through law: we may even say it exists as law’.

⁵⁹ Friedman (2000), p 556.

⁶⁰ Sterne (2000).

⁶¹ 18 March 2003.

closure, bypassing the legal system (and its attendant requirements) with a 'Book 'em Dano' (as Jack Lord provides in *Hawaii Five-O* (1968–80) and a cut to the end credits.

The Lawyer and the Policeman

When lawyer characters are present, they are often treated with at best a healthy distrust and scepticism, and at worst outright hostility. Lawyers are portrayed as impediments to the police investigation; the rights of the accused are seen to stand in the way of the pursuit of justice. But, as Toby Miller notes, there is one way in which the lawyer can be included in the police procedural:

the police need togetherness to survive rather than utility-maximising individualism. This affective bond allows protagonists to maintain a sense of self as they are sent into situations that frequently bear no relationship to their own existence.⁶²

Therefore, the only way lawyer characters are given any sort of respect or place in these series is if they become a part of the police community. In *NYPD Blue*, for example, ADA Sylvia Costas (Sharon Lawrence) is only really accepted as part of the community when she commences a relationship with Detective Sipowicz (Dennis Franz). After this, she is seen in more domestic situations. Similarly on *Hill Street Blues*, Public Defender Joyce Davenport (Veronica Hammel) is only accepted as a part of the system through her relationship with Captain Frank Furillo (Daniel J Travanti). *Hill Street Blues* consistently demonstrated Davenport's acceptance into the community in the way most episodes ended with Furillo and Davenport in bed, rather than through her work in court (which remained rarely seen).⁶³

An interesting example occurs in the Australian series *Stingers Undercover* (2000–04), which introduced a lawyer character, Ingrid Burton (Rebecca Gibney), in its 2002–03 season to capitalise on the interest in the American legal series then airing on Australian television.⁶⁴ *Stingers Undercover* revolves around the activities of a police undercover unit, the principal member of which is Peter Church (Peter Phelps). At the end of the 2001 season, Church's team-mate Oscar Stone is killed by Kevin Conrad. The 2002 season opens with the episode *Collateral Damage*, depicting Conrad's trial and the introduction of Ingrid Burton as Kevin Conrad's attorney.⁶⁵

⁶² Quoted in Creeber (2001), p 18.

⁶³ Indeed, during the fifth season (1984), Davenport briefly switched sides, becoming an ADA and prosecuting cases (before returning to the Public Defenders Office at season's end).

⁶⁴ This was part of a trend that included the launch of Channel 7's legal comedy *Marshall Law* and ABC's legal/medical drama *MDA*.

⁶⁵ Burton is also constructed as very sexual. She's tall, her gown hangs open to enable point-of-view shots of her legs and she wears her wig well back on her head to make the most of her long, blonde hair. By way of explanation, prosecutor Dawson Lynch (Christopher Gabaldi) tells Church: 'Burton is a very astute lawyer ... she's very persuasive with the jury.'

Burton is cast very much at odds with the undercover unit. She represents the man who killed their partner and seems to take pleasure in her job. Here and in subsequent appearances, Burton will not only represent someone whom the undercover unit is investigating but will actively encourage them to sue the unit for some perceived wrongdoing.⁶⁶ Burton's first appearance also features the first of many exchanges with Church:

Church: Ever wonder if it's worth it — defending these low lifes?

Burton: Don't take it personally. It was a court appointment.

Church: So that's your excuse?

Burton: I do my job, Peter. The difference is I do it within the law.

Burton falls back on this line 'It's my job' to defend her role in the legal system time and again. In many ways, it follows the approach of Eugene Young (*The Practice*), *Compulsion* and *In the Name of the Father* (as outlined above), where being heroic is simply discharging one's duties. 'I'm a lawyer, it's what I do' she says in *Breakdown* and again, 'It's my job' in *Partners in Crime*, but it is in *Scratch me Lucky*, as she begins a sexual relationship with Peter following a chance encounter in a bar, that she sets out to explain her position:

Burton: It's my job.

Church: Defending slime?

Burton: Everyone's entitled to the best possible defence. It's the only way we can protect the innocent.

Church: But you know [your client's] guilty don't you?

Burton: Guilt's for the jury to determine. I'm just an officer of the court.

Burton is therefore a signifier of the modern ideal of law. She is heroic simply by virtue of doing her work, discharging her duty and ensuring due process is followed.⁶⁷

This particular episode ends with Church and Burton in bed together. Although some of their adversarial nature remains visible in the fact that Church is secretly taping confessions Burton makes (which could lead to perjury charges in the future), it is the first indication that Burton's role may change. Like Sylvia Costas and Joyce Davenport, she starts being seen in social settings (*The Whole Truth*) and visits Church at his headquarters

⁶⁶ As in the episode *Separation Anxiety*, where Burton encourages Miles Vanderhoeven (Tony Richards) to sue both the unit and Angie Piper (severally) for negligence.

⁶⁷ Burton also accepts that this sets her apart from Church. In the episode *Payback*, she tells Church: 'You think we're on opposite sides don't you? Professionally, socially, morally'. This neatly delineates the differences between the modern and pre-modern ideals of law they signify.

(*Payback*). While there is some lingering confusion over their professional and private lives, Burton is more readily accepted into the *Stingers* team, first to assist the team in catching the escaped Conrad (*The Whole Truth*) and then helping Angie Piper when Church disappears (*Breakdown*). Also noticeable is that Burton's 'I'm a lawyer' routine is starting to break down, as is tellingly revealed in *Partners in Crime*, where the following exchange occurs:

Church: Well, I'm a cop, you're a lawyer.

Burton: Doesn't that bother you? That we can't be friends with each other? ... If you had any evidence you'd lay charges [against Burton's client Stig Endquist (Tim Robertson)].

Church: And you'd defend him.

Burton: It's my job. Something that you're making really bloody difficult for me to do.

Here she is expressing some doubt over her position. Her signification of the modern ideal of law has been problematised. Indeed, her position has shifted so much over the course of the season that by the last episode she is actively helping Church in his operation against Endquist, a position that leaves her own life in jeopardy in the season cliffhanger. Burton has become part of the undercover community. Through a sexual relationship, she has been accepted into that community and then subsequently proves herself as part of that community. She has become a sliding signifier of law, moving almost completely away from the modern ideal she first signified toward a pre-modern one. Endquist's individual rights, to representation, to due process, are suspended for the communal good.

Following her rescue at the start of the next season and the end of her affair with Church, Burton proves her 'pre-modernity' by performing a 'sting' herself. Burton empties a number of Endquist's bank accounts, effectively exposing his schemes and bankrupting him (thus bringing him to justice) and also supporting herself as she goes into hiding. Justice is achieved, Endquist is arrested and Church grins as Burton (literally) flies off into the sunset; Burton has become a 'stinger' too. She now embodies a pre-modern ideal of law, completely removed from the modern ideal she once signified.

Burton, Costas and Davenport are all indicative of a trend in police procedurals: that, to be accepted into the police community, the lawyer must necessarily sacrifice part of their modern role as lawyer and embrace a more 'pre-modern' role.⁶⁸ When this does not happen, the lawyer remains a fringe figure, largely obstructionist and often reduced to a caricature or stereotype, symptomatic of the way some elements of modernity — like fairness and equality — are consistently sidelined in police procedurals.

⁶⁸ It is notable, of course, that all of these examples are female and their acceptance begins with a sexual relationship with the male police characters.

Government Thrillers

While the lawyer and the policeman are still perhaps the most common signifiers of law, increasingly, in the wake of the September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, a new signifier of law has been appearing with increasing regularity — the government agent. The government agent features in the American series *Alias* (2001–), *Without a Trace* (2002–) and *24* (2001–) and the English series *Spooks* (2002–)⁶⁹ and, perhaps most famously, the *James Bond*, *Mission Impossible* and *Jason Bourne* film franchises.⁷⁰

The government agent is a signifier of law that slides still further away from the modern ideal of law and towards a purely pre-modern one because not only is justice the perceived aim, it is pursued with few limitations. The threat of death (as classically represented by James Bond's licence to kill) or torture (as evidenced by Jack Bauer's actions in *24* or Michael Vaughn's actions in *Alias*) are both presented as justifiable ways of achieving substantive justice. Once again, we can see that this is a significant shift if we compare, for example, the interrogation scenes from the *Law & Order: SVU* Season 6 episode *Rage* to the interrogation scenes in *24*. In *Law & Order: SVU*, Detective Elliot Stabler (Christopher Meloni) is seen setting up the interrogation room for Gordon Rickett (Matthew Modine), a child rapist he tried to convict 14 years earlier and who he now suspects has murdered a young girl. Stabler ensures the lights flicker, Rickett's chair is uneven and has the heat turned up. He does everything to make Rickett as uncomfortable as possible. He even has food and drink provided in the hope that it will force Rickett to use the toilet. In contrast, *24* features Counter Terrorism Unit (CTU) agent Jack Bauer (Kiefer Sutherland) shooting suspects in knee caps, squeezing bullet wounds and making it appear he has executed someone — all presented as legitimate means of obtaining information from a suspect.

The signifier of law has therefore shifted from the intimidation and threats (of the police procedural) to actual physical torture. As television writer Clive Thompson notes:

this crop of smart thrillers ... began twisting the thumbscrews right after 9/11, three years before Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib [the facilities where mistreatment of terrorist detainees occurred] hit the headlines. *Alias* launched nineteen days after the World Trade Center attacks ... The shows are unusually good at capturing the dark sensuality of

⁶⁹ *Spooks* is known as *MI-5* in America.

⁷⁰ At the time of writing, there are 26 *Bond* films (the latest is 2006's *Casino Royale*), three *Mission Impossible* films and two Jason Bourne films — *The Bourne Identity* (2002) and *The Bourne Supremacy* (2004). It should also be noted that the government agent/spy genre is also prevalent in children's entertainment, including the film series *Spy Kids*, *Agent Cody Banks* and *Alex Rider* and the television series *James Bond Jr* and *Kim Possible*. This is the only signifier covered by this paper that also features in a children's format. While they are more restrained than their adult counterparts, there is still little respect for the modern ideal of law in these children's series.

torture: the Cartesian horror of being trapped in a vulnerable body, the sub-dom relationship of the torturer and his victim.⁷¹

Most interesting for Thompson is that often ‘it’s the good guys in the tormentor’s seat’⁷² and they are celebrated as heroic in their endeavours to garner the truth from their suspects. Jack Bauer, for example, is referred to as heroic a number of times in *24*, no more so than in the final episode of Season 4 where the head of CTU, defending Bauer’s decision to raid a Chinese consulate for information (killing a consular official in the process) says: ‘We’d be burying a million Americans now if it weren’t for Jack Bauer. He’s a hero.’ Here we have a clear statement of the pre-modern ideal of law; the ‘right’ result, the ‘correct’ result, has occurred — and justifies whatever means were used. Justice and preventing terrorism are conflated into one and the same thing.

In these government thrillers, as in the police procedural, lawyers are again sidelined and seen as an impediment to the delivery of substantive justice. In *24*, for example, a terrorist suspect calls ‘Amnesty Global’ to get a lawyer and ensure due process applies. Here the point is well made: terrorists are about to get their hands on a nuclear warhead, millions of American lives are in the balance and Bauer believes that only this suspect can help them. He needs to make him talk, by any means necessary. The lawyer therefore becomes an impediment to justice. To drive the point home, Bauer even asks his superiors: ‘Why won’t he let us do our jobs?’ Unlike the police procedural, there is no provision for the lawyer to join the community here.

But while Bauer is diegetically celebrated as a hero, most of the last episode of *24*’s fourth season is given over to exploring the repercussions of the government’s meddling. The Chinese demand Bauer be turned over to them, President Logan doesn’t authorise Bauer’s murder but certainly won’t do anything to stop it, and the national hero becomes a problem that needs to be disposed of. What is at issue here is best expressed by (former) President David Palmer (Dennis Haysbert), who will not allow Bauer to be turned over to the Chinese because ‘they’ll put you on trial to propagandise about American interference’. It is this ‘making visible’ that the government fears, and to some extent it is this ‘making visible’ (of the liminality of law, of the ways in which suspects are intimidated and questioned) that forms the basis of the intellectual work these series are engaged in. As Thompson notes,⁷³ ‘the fact that such shows cater to our creepier revenge fantasies isn’t reason to condemn them; for all their flash and gore, they can also be a step toward a moral debate’ — this is an idea to which I return below. The presentation of torture as policy in series like *24* demonstrates how far the signifier of law has slid, as crime fighters (arguably the rubric under which lawyers, police and government agents all fall) become ever more brutal in their efforts to achieve justice and the state suffers the repercussions of its endless meddling.

⁷¹ Thompson (2005).

⁷² Thompson (2005).

⁷³ Thompson (2005).

The increasing prevalence of ‘the state’ as the signifier of law in popular culture parallels the increasing intervention of ‘the state’ in the real world, particularly post-September 11 and particularly in the area of proactive law. Here, there has been a notable expansion and concentration of power in the executive⁷⁴ and a move towards interventionist justice. In the United States, the *Patriot Act*'s⁷⁵ expansion of the investigative powers of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has led to accusations of racial profiling and discrimination that are defended as proactive measures. The ongoing ‘war on terror’ is also couched in terms of spreading freedom in the world and therefore ‘an urgent requirement of our nation’s security’,⁷⁶ thereby demanding intervention. In Australia, proactive anti-terrorist legislation aims to broaden the definition of a terrorist act to enable prosecution of people who are *plotting an attack* (ABC News Online). Similarly interventionist *ASIO Legislation Amendment Act 2006* amendments to the *National Security Information (Criminal and Civil Proceedings) Act 2004* would enable the Australian Security Intelligence Office (ASIO) to commandeer information from journalists.⁷⁷ In all of these Acts, we see a continuing shift away from the modern ideal of law with its emphasis on due process, fairness and a right to trial toward a pre-modern ideal of law where individual rights are suspended and justice is prioritised.

Part of the problem in legislating against terrorism seems to be in defining the term ‘terrorism’ itself. There remains no accepted definition of terrorism at international law. More particularly, the problem arises in *distinguishing acts of terrorism from an armed struggle waged by national liberation movements*. The United States, for example, defined the September 11 attacks as acts of war rather than crimes outside a war context which led to terrorism being treated as *sui generis* (of its own kind) rather than as a crime under existing modern law. This encourages the use of the metaphor ‘war on terror’, with the word ‘war’ itself justifying the use of ‘emergency powers’, the ‘suspension’ of certain liberties and the demarcation of a clear beginning (an act of war like the September 11 attacks), rather than politically contextualising the attacks or responding through the modern legal system — as a number of European countries did. In the United States, there is therefore a shift towards a pre-modern ideal of law which requires new methods to achieve increasingly nebulous ideas of substantive justice.

Indeed, this shift toward the pre-modern is articulated by a number of sources. For example, the Justice Department and the FBI blamed their intelligence failures regarding the September 11 attacks on their over-reliance

⁷⁴ Pillar (2005) notes that this is very much a product of the times. Post Watergate and the Pike and Church committees there had been a curtailing or controlling of executive power rather than an expansion (6).

⁷⁵ Full Citation: The ‘Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism (USA PATRIOT ACT) Act of 2001’ (HR 3162).

⁷⁶ (Bush 2005),

⁷⁷ *Fifth Estate* (2005).

on a criminal justice (modern) approach to counter-terrorism.⁷⁸ The ‘pre-modernity’ of the state’s approach is underscored by the frequent restatement of the US administration’s aim to ‘bring terrorists to justice for their crimes’,⁷⁹ which deliberately highlights ‘justice’ rather than ‘trial’. As noted earlier, in all of these sources, justice and preventing terrorism are equated as being one and the same.

Perhaps the greatest irony is that, as German notes: ‘Terrorist groups almost never refer to themselves as terrorists, but rather as soldiers, revolutionaries, holy warriors’;⁸⁰ therefore, terrorists themselves are enacting a pre-modern form of law, with clear links back to the sacred and the belief that substantive justice is on their side. The line between terrorist and hero therefore becomes a matter of perspective, and this serves as a reminder of how nebulous a concept substantive justice truly is. Finch and Mason’s transgressions are only justified by their client’s innocence, Stabler and Burton by the suspect’s guilt, Vargas by Quinlan’s corruption and (arguably) Bauer by the terrorists’ imminent attack. The further the signifier slides away from the modern rule of law, the more difficult it becomes to justify a ‘hero’s’ actions.

Conclusion

The popular media are alternatively dismissed as liberal (and therefore unceasingly critical of right-wing policy) or conservative (and therefore controlled by big business interests who use the media to hegemonically reinforce their private opinions). But when we take the time to study popular culture’s signifiers of law (from Atticus Finch through to Jack Bauer), we find instead some quite complex intellectual work being undertaken.

First, they make visible the mutability of law as term of definition and the commensurate change in government policy this permits. As Thompson notes: ‘For the past three years shows like *Alias*, *24* and *MI-5 [Spooks]* have provided a perverse mirror of the real-life response to terror. They’ve reflected, and sometimes eerily predicted, the rise of torture as a government policy.’⁸¹ Thus, while the Guantanamo military tribunals are presented as the public face of state law (merging war and crime into one), popular culture makes visible other less popular state policies — including extra-judicial detention, intimidation and torture — by making them the basis of fictional narratives and bringing them into the public sphere, via the popular media, for wider dissemination. are, in Redhead’s terms,⁸² exposing the ‘(legal) fiction’ that is presented as ‘legal authority’.

Second, popular culture promotes debate about the relationship between law and justice and the balance involved in preserving human rights while protecting security interests.

⁷⁸ *9/11 Commission Report* (2004), p 423.

⁷⁹ US Department of State (2004), p ix.

⁸⁰ German (2005), p 11.

⁸¹ Thompson (2005).

⁸² Redhead (1995), p 10.

Certainly Rushkoff's idea that popular culture is 'the place for us to evaluate our rules and customs'⁸³ seems to be being borne out. Bob Cochrane, co-creator of *24*, has publicly stated that one of the series' roles is to explore debates around torture, law and justice⁸⁴ and in this, at least, it appears to have been successful.⁸⁵

The signifier of law, from lawyer to policeman to government agent, has slid further and further away from the modern rule of law towards an increasingly transcendent and interventionist pursuit of justice. In so doing these signifiers continue to interrogate the law and push the boundaries of what law can be, well beyond the relatively limited and circumscribed space of the courtroom towards increasingly problematic pre-modern notions of 'justice' in the wider society. It is a form of intellectual work similar to the notion of 'work[ing] at the limits of what the rules permit, in order to invent new moves' that Lyotard advances,⁸⁶ not only moving the law closer to justice but also promoting debate about how law and justice work together in the wider culture.

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⁸³ Rushkoff's (1994), p 52.

⁸⁴ Thompson (2005).

⁸⁵ Certainly *24* has achieved this. The Council of American Islamic Relations (CAIR) and a number of other groups complained about the representation of Muslims in Series 4, leading to the screening of ads reminding viewers that most Muslims are good people.

⁸⁶ Lyotard (1985), p 100.

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Columbo, NBC Network, 1971–77; ABC Network, 1989–93
Compulsion, Dir Richard Fleischer, 1959
Cracker, ITV1 Network, 1993–96
CSI: Crime Scene Investigation, CBS Network, 2000–
Dirty Harry, Dir Don Siegel, 1971
Hawaii Five-O, CBS Network, 1968–80
Hill Street Blues, NBC Network, 1981–87
Homicide: Life on the Street, NBC Network, 1993–99
Inspector Morse, ITV1, 1987–2000
In the Name of the Father, Dir Jim Sheridan, 1993
Judge John Deed, ITV, 2004–
LA Law, NBC Network, 1986–94
Law & Order, NBC Network, 1990–
Law & Order: Criminal Intent, NBC Network, 2001–
Law & Order: SVU (Special Victims Unit), NBC Network, 1999–
Law & Order: Trial by Jury, NBC Network, 2005
Matlock, NBC Network, 1986–92; ABC Network (US), 1993–95
NYPD Blue, ABC Network, 1993–2005.
Perry Mason
 — radio: 1943–55
 — television (first run): CBS Network, 1957–66.
 — television (second run / different cast): CBS Network, 1973–74
Perry Mason Mysteries, The, NBC Network, 1985–97
The Practice, ABC Network (USA), 1997–2004.
Rumpole of the Bailey, ITV1, 1978–92
The Shield, FX Network, 2002–
Spooks, BBC, 2002–
Stingers Undercover, Nine Network (Aust), 2000–04
The Sweeney, ITV1, 1975–78

To Kill a Mockingbird, Dir Robert Mulligan, 1962

Touch of Evil, Dir Orson Welles, 1958 (reconstructed 1998)

Trial and Retribution, ITV1, 1997–2004

The Verdict, Dir Sidney Lumet, 1982

Without a Trace, CBS Network, 2002–