SEPTEMBER 2009: **DRAMA**

Media Magazine

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Reading Red Riding

Bond and beyond

Learning to Tweet

Representations in TV drama

Drama in the news

The webisode story

MM

English & Media Centre

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The English and Media Centre
18 Compton Terrace
London N1 2UN
Telephone: 020 7359 8080
Fax: 020 7354 0133

Email for subscription enquiries:
rebecca@englishandmedia.co.uk

Managing Editor: Michael Simons

Editor: Jenny Grahame

Editorial assistant/admin:
Rebecca Scambler

Design: Sam Sullivan and Jack Freeman (edition.co.uk)
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editorial

For those of you just starting out, welcome to the wonderful world of Film and Media Studies; for those of you returning for an A2 year, welcome back, hopefully with the results you wanted; and for everyone, welcome to the first of this year's editions of ***MediaMagazine***.

This issue explores the theme of Drama from a wide range of perspectives. Starting with the basics, Mark Ramey considers the differences between the experiences of theatre and cinema, and asks what makes a drama cinematic, while Nick Lacey explores some of the essential differences – and similarities – between the big and small screen with a study of ***State of Play*** from TV drama to Hollywood blockbuster. Stephen Hill takes a historical approach to the development of TV drama in its social and historical context, and demonstrates its changing technologies and representations through analysis of Mike Leigh's iconic 70s comedy of manners ***Abigail's Party***.

From an industry perspective, screenwriter Ian Pike describes the traumas of developing a new prime-time spin-off drama series for BBC 1, while our interview with Daisy Monahan takes you inside the world of BBC Drama research, script-editing, and production. Chris Budd examines the frequently undervalued role of music in TV drama, and Jerome Monahan introduces webisodes, the newest short-form approaches to online drama, along with the economic and marketing issues they raise in their quest for audiences.

Vampires, both real and metaphorical, seem to be the dramatic flavour of the month, with case studies of ***Being Human***, ***Twilight***, and ***Let the Right One In*** (and check out **MoreMediaMag** online to read some student reviews of the latter). And whatever else, don't miss Roy Stafford's brilliant analysis and contextualisation of ***Red Riding***, hailed as one of the most important series of the decade.

Elsewhere, you can brush up your knowledge of Twitter, explore the impact of media platforms and changing technologies, and unpick the lesser-known work of a true hero of British screen drama: Sean Connery. And please visit our Front Page News feature, and make a bid for your very own double-page spread.

Not bad for the first issue of the year. And there's more – Reality in December (copy deadline 14th September), Fantasy in February (9th November), and Humour in April (8th February); and new **MediaMagClips** online in September, also available as downloadable podcasts. As always we want to hear from you, and to publish your writing and production work – so mail **jenny@englishandmedia.co.uk** with your proposals.

Meanwhile: have a good term!

Jenny Grahame

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front page news

BIG SCREEN

September 18th: We're anticipating the arrival of director Oliver Parker's ***Dorian Grey*** based on the Oscar Wilde novel in which the protagonist manages to avoid the ageing process by channelling all his ugliness – physical and moral – into a portrait. The film stars Colin Firth and Rebecca Hall and should be a treat. In an interview cached on YouTube (**http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d2gDp3a65Lo**) Parker talks of blowing the dust off the original novel and it is clearly a feature with all sorts of modern resonances – not least our obsession with youth and beauty.

September 25th: ***Case 39*** which involves Renee Zellweger playing an idealistic social worker who saves an abused 10-year-old girl from her parents only to discover that the girl is not as innocent as she thinks. It sounds interesting in the light of general anxieties about child protection but also in the great tradition of children as conduits of malevolence in film and horror literature. Also out on the 25th is the big screen contribution to the Darwin Bicentenary. ***Creation*** stars Paul Bettany as Darwin and Jennifer Connelly as his wife, Emma (**http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emma_Darwin**).

October 2nd: A modern version of the classic film noir ***Beyond a Reasonable Doubt*** (**http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1183251/**). We'll be watching out for a new high-concept comedy set in a world in which no one knows how to lie, until a writer happens upon the skill. ***The Invention of Lying*** stars a much-in-demand Jennifer Garner and has Ricky Gervais and Patrick Stewart doing turns (**http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1183251/**).

October 9th: A new Martin Scorsese film – which despite his patchy recent form is always an occasion. ***Shutter's Island*** does sound a bit like ***The Wicker Man*** – policeman investigating a disappearance on an isolated island in which nothing is as it seems, but that is in itself is not a criticism (**http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1130884/**).

November: Among the highlights that will be setting our pulses rushing is the remake of the fantastic 1941 horror ***The Wolfman*** (**http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Wolf_Man_(2009_film**). Those old Universal horror movies of the 1930s and 1940s were very special so let's hope this retains some of the charm and pathos of the original alongside the special effects. It stars Benicio del Toro of ***No Country For Old Men*** fame. Which neatly segues into the release on **13th November** of ***The Road*** which like ***No Country*** was originally written by Cormac McCarthy. It may be a gruelling experience if the novel is anything to go by.

SMALL SCREEN

Dramatic horizons

Given the focus of this edition, here are some TV dramas you can anticipate this autumn, the majority of which are BBC enterprises. If you are laid up at home, then one guilty pleasure might be the day-time series ***Land Girls*** – a five-parter commissioned as a part of the 70th anniversary of the start of the Second World War. It boasts a cast including Nathaniel Parker, Sophie Ward and Danny Webb (**http://www.bbc.co.uk/pressoffice/pressreleases/stories/2009/06_june/04/landgirls.shtml**).

Meanwhile the search for new crime and legal procedure narratives sees BBC 1 set to screen some of the cases tackled by real-life William Garrow due to be played by Andrew Buchan, aided and abetted by his trusty sidekick Southouse played by Alun Armstrong. Filming will be well underway by the time you read this. To keep up-to-date you are advised to look out for new posts on the BBC website (**www.bbc.co.uk/tv/comingup/garrowslaw**). And just when some are suggesting a pull-back from traditional costume dramas, the BBC spoils the picture by commissioning a new two-part episode of ***Cranford*** for Christmas. Other dramas coming soon are ***Desperate Romantics*** on BBC 2, ***Breaking The Mould*** on BBC 4 and ***Emma***, ***Cranford Christmas***, ***Survivors 2*** and ***Lark Rise to Candleford 3*** all for BBC 1.

SOCIAL NETWORKING

Network your future?

The idea of a post-graduate qualification may

seem a long way off just now, but it might be of interest to know that one day your expertise in social networking will have real commercial value. Witness a new MSc in Information, Communication and Society (ICS) on offer through City University London. Its blurb underlines the changing nature of communication in the Web 2.0 world:

> **Social networking sites such as Facebook and YouTube have become essential communications tools in the fight to contain Swine Flu, the creation of political campaigns and the co-ordination of aid efforts across the globe. In response to employer demands and the important role that social networking and other Web 2.0 systems now play in society, City University London has launched an Information, Communication and Society MSc for graduates to learn how to manage and interpret digital information.**

Among the groups of likely 'takers', the University targets political campaigners. For more information about the course and scholarships, call 020 7040 8512.

ADVERTISING

Eat Colin – save the planet's fish stocks

It is rare to see such an obvious attempt to alter consumer taste, so do check out Sainsbury's ongoing campaign to encourage the British public to try pollack, a tasty, cheaper and more sustainable alternative to cod. To make pollack more appealing to UK shoppers, Sainsbury's has appointed a panel of experts to give the fish a complete makeover; including rebranding the species with a new name, creating limited edition packaging designed by Wayne Hemingway, and using inspiring recipes from London's oldest French restaurant, Mon Plaisir. Although abundant in UK waters, it's the French who have a love affair with UK pollack, importing over 70% of it from our shores every year. Taking inspiration from across the channel, Sainsbury's has renamed the fish 'Colin' (pronounced 'Colan') which is French for pollack when cooked.

Join the marines

In a recent ***MM*** we examined the methods that the army uses to encourage recruitment. The armed forces use some of the most sophisticated methods to keep the ranks filled, and as we build to the launch

of the next James Bond outing, look for parallel advertising campaigns designed to cash in on the franchise's allure with young people. Now building on last November's hugely successful mobile Bluetooth campaign launched with the cinematic release of ***James Bond Quantum of Solace***, the Royal Marines Commandos are teaming up with T-Mobile to target 18-24-year-olds. The Royal Navy's elite amphibious fighting force is embracing mobile as a highly effective medium and views T-Mobile's WAP portal as a key element in its ongoing foray into mobile recruitment. According to the publicity:

> **The Royal Marines Commandos are taking over the T-Mobile WAP homepage, as they target the youth market's love for all things digital and downloadable.**

BRANDS

The company **eSay-uk.com** are eager to promote the latest marketing phenomena whereby companies encourage people to recommend their products to their online communities of social network friends, and get paid for their pains. eSay-uk is at the forefront of developing this kind of communication and so it has a vested interest of course, but it is interesting how increasingly brands are seeking to exploit this frontier. According to Simon Parslow at eSay-uk.com, the craze is set to become a mainstream phenomenon as today's consumer realises that a more hands-on approach to product purchasing can be financially rewarding.

Headfunk is one of the latest products to come on board. It makes iPod and iPhone accessories aimed at today's urban teens and exemplifies the eSay-uk.com approach. The brand invites its consumers to spread the word through posting promotional videos, pictures and T-shirt designs on to their websites, blogs and vlogs (**www.eSay-uk.com**).

Digital Britain – what does it really mean?

As ***MediaMag*** goes to press, everybody's talking about **Digital Britain**, the government report by **Lord Stephen Carter** into **the future of digital communication in the UK** published in June. It's too early for us to be sure what it all means, but by the time you read this, things might be a little clearer. See the panel (right) for the eleven points which we at ***MediaMag*** think are most important – and helpful to you in your AS or A2 case studies.

Front Page News is compiled by Jerome Monahan.

- **Speeding up access:** by 2012 everyone will have access to 2Mbps broadband. £200m of the BBC's funding is to be set aside for this. There will be major investment in the next generation of superfast broadband to ensure it is available UK-wide.
- **Radio switches over:** by 2015, all AM and FM radio stations will have switched over to digital.
- **Phones get faster and better:** current and next generation mobile coverage and services will be speeded up.
- **Ofcom** will be given a new role: to carry out a full assessment of the UK's communications infrastructure every two years.
- **Piracy:** a 'robust legal and regulatory framework' will be put in place to combat digital piracy.
- **BBC licence fee:** the Digital Economy Bill proposed by the government will confirm the Report's proposal to 'top-slice' the BBC licence fee, primarily to secure news in the nations, regions and locally. Around 3.5% of the BBC licence fee will be allocated to pay for ITV's regional news programming by independent news consortia. The money will be 'ring-fenced' and can only be used to fund ITV regional news. **For:** Independent News Consortia, who will be able to bid for the money; and politicians, who value ITV news programming. **Against:** BBC Trust, who say this could set a precedent for future governments to further whittle away the licence fee for their own favourite projects, and could undermine the BBC's independence.
- **ITV** will be allowed to reduce its public service obligations in the lead-up to digital switchover, and its news functions will be part funded by the top-slicing.
- **Channel 4** is to team up with BBC World (the commercial arm of the BBC) to champion new talent across all digital platforms. It is to demonstrate a solid commitment to children's media, particularly programmes targeting older children and teens. **For:** this will help to halt the decline in original content for children (currently only one hour in five on UK TV); and will ensure children hear voices other than the BBC. It will also help to solve Channel 4's £150m annual funding problems. **Against:** Five, who had hoped to link up with Channel 4.
- **Media mergers** are to be clarified and monitored, with a stronger role for Ofcom in regulating local mergers.
- **Digital participation:** there will be a three-year national plan to improve digital participation, and a programme of digital switchover in public services. There will also be guaranteed funding for three years for targeted marketing and outreach, and a new 'Digital Inclusion Champion': Martha Lane Fox.
- **Making digital content pay:** there will be more investment to promote innovation, experimentation and learning around creation and monetization of digital content.

And finally:

- What could ***you*** do with this double-page spread?
- For the last 29 issues of ***MediaMag***, our first two pages have always been given over to snippets of news, gossip, previews and links you might find useful in your studies. We wondered what it might be like to ring the changes, and what would happen if we offered the editorship of this double-page spread to you, our readers.
- What would you like to see here – and could you produce it for us? It could include: some of your group's production pieces or artwork, letters to the editor, responses to articles or themes in a previous issue, your own version of Front Page News with items you would find really useful, coverage of an event or production from your school, college or youth group, a guide to your favourite internet sites, short pieces of personal film or TV criticism ... the choice is yours.
- If you or your Film or Media group are interested in becoming guest editors of these pages, here's what to do. Pitch us your ideas – creative, critical, big or small– in bullet-point form or brief notes in an email to jenny@englishandmedia.co.uk. Make sure you include your full contact details, plus your school information, and send any illustration ideas, artwork or graphics as attachments. On receipt we'll get back to you directly, and take it from there. There'll be a fee of £150 if we use your ideas.
- And don't forget, ***MediaMag*** is always looking for new writers, ideas, and the opportunity to put you in print. So get in touch.

READING RED RIDING

a different kind of television event

Adapted from four novels to an ambitious three-part TV series by acclaimed screenwriter Tony Grisoni, with three highly individual directors, *Red Riding* has been haled as landmark TV. **Roy Stafford** provides the historical, institutional and production contexts for this dark and complex narrative and analyses its controversial representations of time and place.

Channel 4 extra.net Press Site for *Red Riding*

I hope *Red Riding* feels like a very different kind of television drama event; a trilogy of thrillers that will keep viewers on the edge of their seats...

Head of Channel 4 Drama, Liza Marshall 'Making of' on the programme website

The broadcast of ***Red Riding*** as three feature-length films on Channel 4 in March 2009 was indeed heralded in the UK as a major television event. The films were heavily promoted by Channel 4 and commentators across the media felt obliged to discuss the programmes in feature articles as well as the usual TV listings and reviews of the previous evening's viewing.

Two factors made ***Red Riding*** an event. One was the sense that here might be a UK production that could match all the critical acclaim that has surrounded prestige US series such as ***The Wire*** and other more popular series such as ***Lost***, ***The Sopranos***, ***Sex in the City*** and so on. These series do not command the highest ratings in the UK, but they are popular with specific audiences and are accessed in new ways – via personal video recorders, DVD box-sets and, illegally as well as legally, via internet downloads. UK television broadcasters have to some extent lost credibility with younger and better educated/higher income audiences who have shifted to US programming.

The second factor, which is clearly related, is **the relative decline in television drama production in the UK** (whether real or simply as audience perception) in the face of increased production costs for drama and the increased success of relatively cheaper reality TV formats. This meant that as well as references to American series, ***Red Riding*** was also anticipated as a drama that could be considered alongside the 'classic' drama productions of the 1980s and 1990s – in particular the more 'gritty' Northern dramas such as ***Our Friends in the North*** (1996) written by Peter Flannery, or ***Boys from the Blackstuff*** (1982) and ***GBH*** (1991) written by Alan Bleasdale. Wishing for a return to these kinds of production signifies nostalgia for a period when television arguably played a different role in people's lives. The three series referenced above all **directly linked the lives of relatively 'ordinary' people to the great social and political changes of their period of production** or, as in ***Our Friends in the North***, to a much longer period of recent UK history.

When the first reviews of ***Red Riding*** appeared and the audience figures for the first film were reported, it seemed that the whole project would justify the hype. After all three films were screened, it was apparent that the audience numbers had fallen back and that there were a number of dissenting voices. Nevertheless, ***Red Riding*** stands as an important television event, whether the audience was large or small; and the questions that the event raised for Media Studies are not necessarily concerned with the critical reputation of the finished product. For students of Media Studies, ***Red Riding*** provides a useful case study for exploring key concepts.

Preparation and production – the institutional factors

Red Riding was produced by **Revolution Films for Channel 4**. The quartet of books written by David Peace appeared over four years from 1999 to 2002. **Andrew Eaton**, who formed Revolution Films in 1994 with **director Michael Winterbottom**, wanted to adapt the four novels and chose **screenwriter Tony Grisoni**, with whom he and Winterbottom had made ***Out of This World*** (UK 2002), as the best person to adapt the stories. He reasoned that Grisoni would retain the 'spirit' of the novels, but also create something distinctive as a potential filmic narrative. Eaton approached Channel 4 who had previously funded Revolution Films' ***The Road to Guantanamo*** (UK 2004) (the first UK film to be simultaneously released on television, DVD, download and a small number of selected cinemas) to negotiate a deal which would cover the main production funding in return for UK rights. The three films will be **distributed to cinemas outside the UK** with IFC picking up North America. In addition to Channel 4, the production had two other partners: **the digital facilities company LipSync and the Regional Screen Agency, Screen Yorkshire** (contingent on the bulk of location shooting taking place in Yorkshire). This kind of funding structure is the norm in the UK film industry, but relatively unusual for filmed television drama.

Early on in the production process, Channel 4 felt that their available budget would only allow three rather than four films to be made. This meant that Grisoni had to find a way to re-shape the story structure and to reduce the number of characters in what is a complex narrative. **The whole trilogy cost around £6 million** (about average for three 100-minute 'prestige filmed TV dramas' such as ***Lewis*** or ***Midsomer Murders***). But ***Red Riding*** was a more ambitious project in terms of technical requirements, with an unusually starry cast. A cinema feature on this scale would hope for a larger budget (although UK film budgets are falling generally in 2009).

Narrative and genre

The four David Peace novels are simply titled ***1974***, ***1977***, ***1980*** and ***1983***. Each story is rooted in historical detail. The central event, in the context of West Yorkshire's social history, is **the hunt for the infamous Yorkshire Ripper** (the serial killer Peter Sutcliffe) which spanned the years 1975-80. ***Red Riding*** is not about the Ripper as such, although the killer (not called Sutcliffe) does make an appearance at the time of his arrest and his methods and overall behaviour patterns are used in the plot. The real story of the quartet is about **corruption involving the police, journalists and property developers** with deliberate confusion over killings that appear to be linked to the Ripper enquiry. This central story begins as early as 1969 and carries through to 1983 with many of the same characters involved throughout. Many of the 'Ripper connections' are in the second novel, ***1977*** – the one that was not adapted as such. Instead, Grisoni used some of the material from ***1977*** in his adaptation of the other three stories, and combined characters and sometimes changed their functions so that the trilogy still had a coherent story arc. Even so, the complex structure caused problems for the audience. On one level, each of the films makes sense as a separate story in that there is either a single 'investigator' or two investigations

running in parallel. However, in the first two films, the ending is not 'satisfactory' (either for the investigator within the narrative or the sense we are able to make of it); it requires the third film in order to bring all the separate narrative threads together.

The title

A 'riding' was an old Viking word corrupted from 'thirding'. Yorkshire was traditionally divided into North, East and West Ridings. When the new counties, including 'West Yorkshire', emerged in 1974, the previous city police forces were combined in one new authority. This period of re-organisation (with its jealousies and feuds) is David Peace's setting. 'Red Riding' also refers to the brutal fairy-tale of Little Red Riding Hood (it's worth looking at the Wikipedia entry on this folk tale). The novels include references to a Wolf, a 'Hunter', a Badger and an Owl. There are also references to a Swan, another creature associated with folk tales. Although these references appear in the films, they are not as clearly referenced as in the novels.

The complexity of the narrative also extends to **genre identification**. As a novelist, Peace is celebrated for many aspects of his writing, notably the 'stream of consciousness' style of first-person narration, the violence of the language and the authenticity of the historical detail. His writing has been described as mixing James Ellroy with Stan Barstow – two very different writers, one a contemporary LA crime writer (though often writing about the 1940s/50s), the other a Northern 'realist' novelist from Peace's home town of Ossett, whose most well-known work was in the early 1960s. When Peace's work is transposed to the screen it becomes what some critics have termed **Yorkshire *noir***. This is very 'dark' fiction – both in visual style and in the moral behaviour of the characters. UK crime fiction on television has rarely attempted this kind of mixture before. The ITV series ***Jericho*** with Robert Lindsay also had a highly stylised presentation of the past (1950s London) and series like ***Waking the Dead*** and ***Wire in the Blood*** have explored similar dark themes, but not with the realist detail of ***Red Riding*** or with its use of *film noir* narrative conventions such as flashbacks.

TV crime fiction in the UK usually deploys one of **two generic narrative structures** (and sometimes combines them). Either the focus is on a **single pairing** of detective/investigator plus sidekick, or on the 'procedural work' of a **large squad**. The emphasis is then on either a character study of the investigators or the detail of the investigation, played against a central plot of solving a crime or crimes. Although ***Red Riding*** does include both investigators and procedures it does not present either in an expected way and it **withholds identification of the 'real story'** until quite late in the narrative.

Representation

The three films are very rich texts, **mixing fact and fiction**. This feature of Peace's work is particularly interesting since television can use documentary material and mix it almost seamlessly with dramatic constructions of fiction – as in the pre-credit sequence for 1980 depicting the hunt for the Ripper. The technique was deployed by James Marsh whose big film success was the 'documentary reconstruction', ***Man on Wire*** (2008). The frisson of 'reality' adds to the constructed idea of the 'hell' that was West Yorkshire in the 1970s and 1980s. Alongside the documentary footage in 1980, Marsh offers us the bleak view of rain and windswept moors that face the 'clean cop' from Lancashire who must attempt to uncover the corruption. This matches the similarly doomed journalist-investigator of ***1974*** who arrives in a similar way, coming 'home' from the South.

In each of the films, there is a tension between the **authenticity** of location and the **performances of star actors** who are mostly playing characters whose cultural worlds they understand (and who benefited from the ensemble playing) and the highly **stylised presentation** of many scenes. This stylisation is partly a response to a constraint imposed by the locations themselves. For instance, Leeds has changed dramatically since 1974 and so only certain locations could be used to preserve a sense of time and place.

Technology, style and authenticity

But the stylisation is also a film-maker's response to the puzzle as to how to represent Peace's extremely dark vision (Julian Jarrold, director of ***1974***, refers to this as '**psychogeography**' in the Press Pack). The result is that each of the three films has a different format, meaning that the image on the screen has a different shape and texture in each case. ***1974*** was shot on Super 16mm film and 'printed' to a 16:9 aspect ratio for modern widescreen TV sets. The filmstock matched the way television drama started to be made in the mid 1970s. ***1980*** was made as a feature film on **35mm filmstock** and printed to a **CinemaScope ratio, 2.39:1**. The stock was essential for Marsh as it was 'more forgiving when shooting in low light', but because it cost more, it put pressure on the rest of the budget. When broadcast, the 'Scope image' (reduced by Channel 4 to 2.28:1) might cause problems for some viewers, requiring it to be **letterboxed** for correct viewing or being distorted by viewers who want to 'fill the screen'. The third film was shot using the **'Red One' digital** camera, a High Definition camera slowly moving into both cinema and television production. This too, was broadcast at around

2.28:1. Although the formats differed, it is also the case that the three directors, Jarrold, Marsh and Anand Tucker, had their own distinctive ideas about the 'look' of their own film. Unusually perhaps, Channel 4 was prepared to screen three films which in formal terms looked and felt quite different. This may partly explain why viewers had significantly different reactions to each film.

Gender, race, class and misogyny

In any representation analysis we might expect to discuss **gender as well as social class, ethnicity** etc. ***Red Riding*** presents an **unremittingly masculine fictional world**. Each story has a central male character (actually two characters in 1977 and 1983). All the female characters are wives in the backgrounds, lovers/casual partners of the central character, prostitutes or other women who are the victims of male violence. Even the two women who do actually work for a living, other than selling their bodies, are defined more by their relationship with the male protagonist than by their professional work. The majority of the characters in the stories are **racist and misogynistic in their use of language**. West Yorkshire is a place of almost unremitting gloom in a moral sense and going into that hell, the male protagonist, a vulnerable and corrupted man, compromised often by his relationships with women, finds enough vestiges of decency or moral fibre to redeem himself in some way and help to make the world a marginally better place. All these men appear to be lower middle-class, grammar school boys in the days before mass university entrance. They have jobs that are not (yet) affected by the industrial decline beginning to take place in the region. They are policemen, journalists, solicitors. Their strengths and weaknesses are associated with **sex, violence and alcohol** – a stereotypical mix of the **qualities of masculinity in the North of England**. And for these men to succeed, many women have to be sacrificed.

This isn't the kind of 'playful' and ironic sexism that pervades a series like ***Ashes to Ashes***. It's signified as **realism**. Again, this makes the trilogy challenging for audiences. An interesting example of the challenge comes with the casting and performance of **Paddy Considine** as the 'clean' (but still compromised) investigator in ***1980***. His is one of two male characters who have to be sacrificed in their attempt to uncover the truth (the other is the reporter in ***1974***). They are the two who are in some ways more 'feminised' – less brutal – in their behaviour and who return to Yorkshire from 'outside', 'tainted' by their experience of living in the South or (nearly as bad) in Lancashire. Paddy Considine developed a form of 'star image' after his roles in two **Shane Meadows' films**, ***A Room for Romeo Brass*** (1999) and ***Dead Man's Shoes*** (2004) and also in ***Last Resort*** (1999) and ***My Summer of Love*** (2004) for Pawel Pawlikowski. In all these films, Considine is at times charming but then disturbing and sometimes violent. What happens to him in the role of Peter Hunter confounds expectations – and in particular, the expectations of younger males in the audience for whom he has become something of a cult figure.

Audience

The broadcast of ***Red Riding*** was an ambitious ploy by Channel 4. The first film attracted **3 million viewers** which then fell to **1.9 million for *1980*** and back up to **2.03 million** for ***1983***. These figures may seem quite low, but ***1974*** was No 4 in Channel 4's Top Ten. It is also worth commenting that if released into cinemas these three films would have been likely to attract only a few hundred thousand paying customers – a figure likely to be surpassed via DVD sales and on Channel 4's video-on-demand service. It's getting difficult to measure audiences for shows like this, but at the same time internet forums provide more evidence of what individual viewers actually think of programmes like ***Red Riding***. A Google search will throw up plenty of examples of the anticipation of the programme – and both the excitement and disappointment it generated. It's only been possible here to scratch the surface of the wealth of interesting discussions generated by ***Red Riding***. What's needed now is some sustained digging.

Roy Stafford is a freelance trainer and critic. He is co-author of *The Media Students' Book* and editor of *PoV* magazine.

References and resources

The website for the programme (**redriding.channel4.com**) has plenty of background material, including downloadable PDFs.

The material in this paper is expanded (with links) on a series of blog entries at: **itpworld.wordpress.com/tag/red-riding**

Media platforms

the impact of technology

Media Products are now accessed through a network of platforms and sources. **Steph Hendry** explains how new technologies have changed the ways we consume and study media texts.

Conventionally, media texts have been considered as standalone products. This approach has become less valid in the past few years as media producers and media audiences have taken advantage of new technologies to help promote media products (producers) or extend their uses and gratifications of a text (audiences). This change in approach to media texts has been developing slowly over several decades and the rise in **multi-platform access** to media texts is an important aspect of our studies.

At the heart of multi-platform media are **changes and developments in technology.** As technologies change they offer different ways for audiences to access texts; and so institutions change the way they make and promote their products.

Consider the cinematic film. At one point, the only way to see a film was to go to the cinema. Films were released and shown in cinemas until the audience numbers declined and from that point on, it was virtually impossible to access the film again. As television became a more widespread technology, deals were made whereby films could be shown on TV. There was usually a long wait for films to make it to television and with particularly popular films this move from one platform to another was often a very big event. During the 1970s and into the 1980s, the BBC and ITV would compete to show the biggest and most popular film on Christmas day. This was often the first opportunity for some audiences to view 'blockbuster' films, if they had been too young at the time of cinema release or had simply missed the film at the cinema.

In the 1980s two technologies changed audiences' ability to access films: video and satellite television.

Video

- Video allowed audiences to rent feature films to watch whenever was convenient and VCRs provided an opportunity to tape and keep films shown on TV (and TV programmes too).
- At first film companies were concerned video would have a negative impact on their business, reducing cinema attendance; so initially only old, low budget or minority interest films were released on this format. This led to a glut of cheap horrors and a moral panic about 'video nasties' as video was, at first, outside any certification or legislation.
- As the technology became more widespread Hollywood realised its financial potential. Blockbuster films were made available to rent and, later, to buy – often with additional footage such as a 'making of' documentary to encourage people to purchase the film rather than wait and tape it from the TV.
- Video made television fiction marketable.
- From the mid-90s, some TV companies realised that cult programmes (such as ***Star Trek*** and ***The X-Files***) had an audience that would be prepared to pay to own their favourite series and video box sets were introduced.

Satellite (and later, cable) television

- Satellite television charged viewers a fee and thus could negotiate deals with film companies which allowed them to show feature films sooner than on terrestrial TV and so films moved from cinema to TV more quickly.
- As there is more 'space' on non-terrestrial television, so more channels could be made available – some of which are dedicated solely to broadcasting films.

More recent developments

DVD

- DVD technology again broadened the market for home purchases. Again, in order to compete with video, DVDs offered a host of 'extras' – behind the scenes footage, commentaries,

documentaries and alternative edits/endings – all attempting to make audiences see the cost of the product as worthwhile.

- TV companies too saw the potential in DVD and more mainstream television products were made available for rental or purchase rather than just cult programming.
- The rise in the popularity of DVD has had a major impact on the entertainment industry:
  – films can make more money on DVD release than in cinemas; the format is quickly becoming very important.
  – TV programmes released on DVD make vast profits for TV companies, so much so that the format is now seen to influence **the type of programmes made** and the way they are made. For example, a series such as ***Lost*** or ***24*** is particularly suited to DVD as their complex, ongoing narratives can be difficult to keep up with on a regular weekly basis. DVD on the other hand allows audiences to watch several episodes at once and view a whole series relatively quickly.

24 was seen as a failure after its first season as it did not attract a large enough audience on TV to justify its enormous production costs. Fox decided not to renew it for a second season and in an attempt to cash in on its cult audience, released the box set on DVD within a few months of the season finishing on TV (before this, there was a very long gap between broadcast and DVD release to allow for the sale of repeats). The DVDs sold far more than Fox expected and made enough money for them to agree to a second season (season 7 is due to air early 09 and a feature film of ***24*** is currently in production).

- As with video, the technology has developed so audiences are able to record DVDs at home and new formats are currently being launched (Blu-Ray and HD DVD). Home 'taping' is also being supplemented by Hard Drive Recorders and services such as Sky+.

The internet

- The rise in mainstream access to the internet and changes in e-technology is dramatically altering the media landscape.

One of the first films to use internet technology to promote itself before its cinema release was ***The Blair Witch Project*** (1999). **Internet-chatter** was encouraged through the creation of websites and email marketing which implied the film was not fictional at all and word-of-mouth communication spread quickly on the web generating an interest in the film (**viral marketing**). As an independent production, ***Blair Witch*** had a very limited promotions budget and using the internet kept costs down. This culminated in the film being one of the most profitable films in film history – it cost only $60,000 to make but made $30m in its opening weekend in the States alone.

- Films and television programmes are promoted on the internet in increasingly elaborate ways. **Viral marketing** is now a crucial aspect of

Media platforms

the impact of technology

film and television marketing and adds new dimensions to audience activity and behaviour.

Cult TV programmes had early web presences – often generated by fans rather than the production companies. These sites provided a communication medium between the audience and producers that had not been available before and in some cases have proved to be very influential. Producers could gauge audience reception of plot/character developments immediately and often use this information in further production developments. Web audiences can also be influential as they can **mobilise** large groups and several TV series have been re-commissioned following protests from fans after programmes have been cancelled. ***Family Guy*** has been saved several times in this way. The TV series ***Firefly*** was cancelled mid-way through its first season but on the strength of the fan community (and their dedication to DVD purchasing) Fox invested in a film version of the TV series called ***Serenity***). Interestingly, box office takings were not as important for this product as DVD sales, making the film an advert for the DVD itself.

- A product's media presence provides a longer shelf life for a media text as it can be available to audiences before and after the broadcast or cinema release dates.
- **E-media** can provide additional narrative information, wider audience pleasures, reach a broader audience base and be a platform for marketing other related products.
  - Television broadcasters allow programmes to be watched **on demand** online giving wider access to programmes and freeing the audience from the broadcasting schedules.
  - Film producers release a range of trailers on the web from initial teaser trailers (often released whilst the film is still in production) to full cinematic trailers which were previously only available in cinemas.
  - **Secondary texts** are created to provide a broader fictional universe, each of which contains background and/or additional information to that found in the media product.
  - E-media often promotes **interactive audience activities** such as games, competitions and forums creating a more **active** rather than **passive** audience.
  - E-media texts offer **rewards** and create **elite groups** who have access to more information and are part of a community.

So – when considering any media text it is not enough to only look at the **primary medium**.

When studying any text, you will need to analyse **the primary text**, but will also need to look closely at the related media that has been created to support it. Some texts are created by the audience and so **social networking sites**, **blogs and fan-sites** are all aspects of media texts. Media producers also use what are usually seen as **user-generated content** sites (e.g. **YouTube**) to connect with audiences.

This is applicable to all media forms – not just film and TV fiction. For example:

- **Advertising** now uses a range of platforms to reach its audience(s) – conventional advertising is becoming less effective whereas the use of internet and mobile phone technology makes it easier to reach specific target audiences.
- **Newspapers and magazines** offer online content which provides different gratifications to the audience.
- **Music websites** are as important to artists and record companies as radio play and MTV. The ability to download music has changed the way music is marketed and accessed by the audience.
- **Reality TV** relies on newspaper and magazine coverage as well as its broadcast programmes to generate audience interest. Websites offer further audience engagement with the text.

Steph Hendry lectures in Media Studies at Runshaw College, Lancashire. She is a Senior Examiner.

SPIN OFF AND TAKE OFF

air babylon from book to screen

Screenwriter **Ian Pike** talks us through the process of adapting a 'lid-lifting exposé' novel for screen as a spin-off for the BBC's *Hotel Babylon*. Only this time, it's set in an airport...

Ladies and Gentlemen: Fasten your seatbelts it's going to get bumpy.

Buying the ticket

2007. Myself and writing partner **Marc Starbuck** are developing a new teen drama with production company **Carnival** for the BBC. Sadly a Canadian import gets there before us. Damn that bilingual, ice-hockey loving race. Isn't it enough that they should have both maple syrup and their own international comedy festival? To keep us busy, Carnival hand over Imogen Edwards-Jones' book ***Air Babylon***. Can we find a way to adapt it into a BBC 3 spin-off to their hugely successful series ***Hotel Babylon***?

Packing

Adapting a book? That's got to be easier than starting from scratch hasn't it? There are already characters and stories to draw upon and there's the added bonus that all the ***Babylon*** books are lid-lifting exposés, so plenty of inside knowledge to be gleaned. Incidentally that's the last time I ever even *think* about being rude to check-in staff. It seems it's no coincidence that you end up sitting between a very fat, sweaty businessman and a baby with diarrhoea if you've had the cheek to ask for an upgrade.

Starting points there may be from the book, but there is also the dawning realisation that the readers will have serious pre-conceived expectations that need to be met. Maybe this holiday won't be the relaxing 'by the pool fortnight in the sun' promised by the advert.

Remember to Sky+ The Wire

And if the readers of the book require a bit of hand-holding then it follows that the viewers of ***Hotel*** will have needs too. Whose idea was this? We haven't even left the house yet and are already stressed – especially after watching the last series of ***Hotel Babylon***. This is, after all, a massive prime-time drama, with huge viewing figures. We can't just write '***Hotel*** in an airport'; but surely there has to be a link of some sort? The news that the powers that be are now thinking of this as a BBC 1 series does not help. It's obviously great in some ways as the budget goes up and we can now have a plane and… well… an airport. But it also means there is even greater pressure to get this right.

Don't forget the sun block

And talking of sets just reminds us of the enormous scale of what we are undertaking. Our precinct is not a hardware store or a flat but a small global town with thousands of people passing through every day. How the heck can we replicate that without either spending a fortune or, conversely, making it look like the set-builders of ***Eldorado*** have been given the contract? It's time to visit an actual airport and study it with fresh eyes.

What d'you mean we haven't got a visa!

The next stumbling block is that no airport seems to want us anywhere near them, although it's easy to work out why. The book does threaten to tell the warts and all story of what really goes on when you are flying. Not that anyone will admit to that being the reason. They all just mutter something about terror alerts before saying if we come anywhere near them they'll set the dogs on us. Finally some good news comes through. One of the airports is not only happy for us to look around but would be willing to let us actually film there if needed.

Have you booked a taxi?

The airport is an eye opener. We realise how often you can visit something without ever really looking at it. Every time you fly you are actually so busy thinking about getting there on time, remembering your passport, panicking about missing the flight and worrying about

your luggage that you never stop and look around. This we do for a whole day, kitted out in fluorescent bibs that means every third passenger asks us where they get the see-through-plastic-bags for their toiletries and where Ryanair's check-in desks are. After a while we even start to know the answers and begin to feel like we are getting to know who is who. That's when the key to unlocking the series becomes clear. Forget planes, customs and security for a minute. This really is a village. Everyone who works here knows each other. It's about gossip, affairs, difficult bosses, money worries, annoying colleagues and irritating neighbours. Of course there just happens to be the constant threat of a bomb going off at any minute or a stray jumbo landing on the roof, so this really could work as a drama.

Flicking through the guide book

And so to actually story-lining and within minutes the excitement of wearing a backstage pass at an airport is fading. While it may not be too often that a writer gets to go on a day trip and wear bright yellow tabards, the visit has revealed that although an airport is a very, very exciting place with many hidden dangers, it's drastically different from writing something set in a building. In a hotel, guests arrive with a story of their own to be met by characters who work there, all dealing with their own traumas and the marriage of the two thereafter produces both comedy and drama. The same happens in a hospital or police station. In an airport people arrive, check in, then go through security to a whole new area. Then they get on the plane. How to find stories that take the characters across all these different areas is going to be the biggest problem.

Pass me the brochure I've changed my mind about Alicante

It's really just down to sheer logistics. In a hotel a guest might wander in, talk to the concierge, head up to his room, visit the bar, have a meal in the restaurant then go to bed. A patient in ***Casualty*** will run in bleeding, hang about the waiting room, go through to triage before finally ending up under a knife or defibrillator. Everything is minutes away. A passenger's story from start to finish can involve thousands of miles and vast numbers of extras to walk past.

And the list of expectations is getting longer. Not only are there readers of the book and viewers of the original drama to satisfy, but now we are even more aware that both airline workers and anyone who has ever flown will have to be catered for. And in the case of the latter, and since the advent of budget travel, that means every single person in the country. So what are they all expecting? Stories about stolen luggage? Lost boarding cards? Delayed planes? Or something much bigger? Terrorists? Drug smuggling? A combination of the two?

The truth is that through their wide knowledge of an airport, based on both their own experience and the media, audiences will be expecting it all. In much the same way that, despite its ever-changing occupancy, a hotel room becomes your home after two nights of sleeping in it, your local airport becomes a familiar world that you somehow have a share in after many visits. And, through endless re-runs of fly-on-the-wall documentaries like ***Airport*** and ***Airline***, the stories become part of everyone's day to day lives. The key is going to be finding a way to give the audience what they want but not in the way that they are expecting.

Who d'you think we'll meet while we are away?

Or: who are our characters going to be? The book throws up all kinds of interesting people and from the documentaries we know there will be certain stock roles that have to be filled. Check-in staff, a pilot or two, baggage handlers, emergency services, shop workers, bar staff, flight crew… The list goes on. The worry is that there are stereotypes to avoid; and where will our surprises come from? The visit offers up even more scope for characters. The airport chaplain, now there's a man with stories to tell and what about the resident paparazzi on ***Airport***?

There will no doubt be expectations for our lead man to step into the boots of **Max Beesley** in ***Hotel Babylon*** when it comes to casting. But what we are fundamentally looking to create here is a gang of mates. A group of co-workers who will stick together, come what may.

And that also means that if they are a united band they will need an antagonist to unite against. Well that's easy. The series is looking to speak to everyone who has ever worked; who knows what it's like to get a job just to pay the bills; who can clock in at 9am and watch the seconds tick by until it's time to go to the pub; to dream of the summer when a couple of weeks off will provide an oasis amongst the year's hard graft. But who, along the way, has found respite from the tedium and stress by winding up a colleague, laughing at an in-joke until tears run down their cheeks, placed bets and undertaken dares – be they in an office, a shop or a factory. What unites them all is often the hatred of a nasty boss or dislikeable supervisor. These are our characters; and while their backdrop may be 747's, businessmen and holidaying families, they have to be able to reach out to anyone and everyone.

Warning: under the terms and conditions of carriage, flight plans are subject to change without warning!

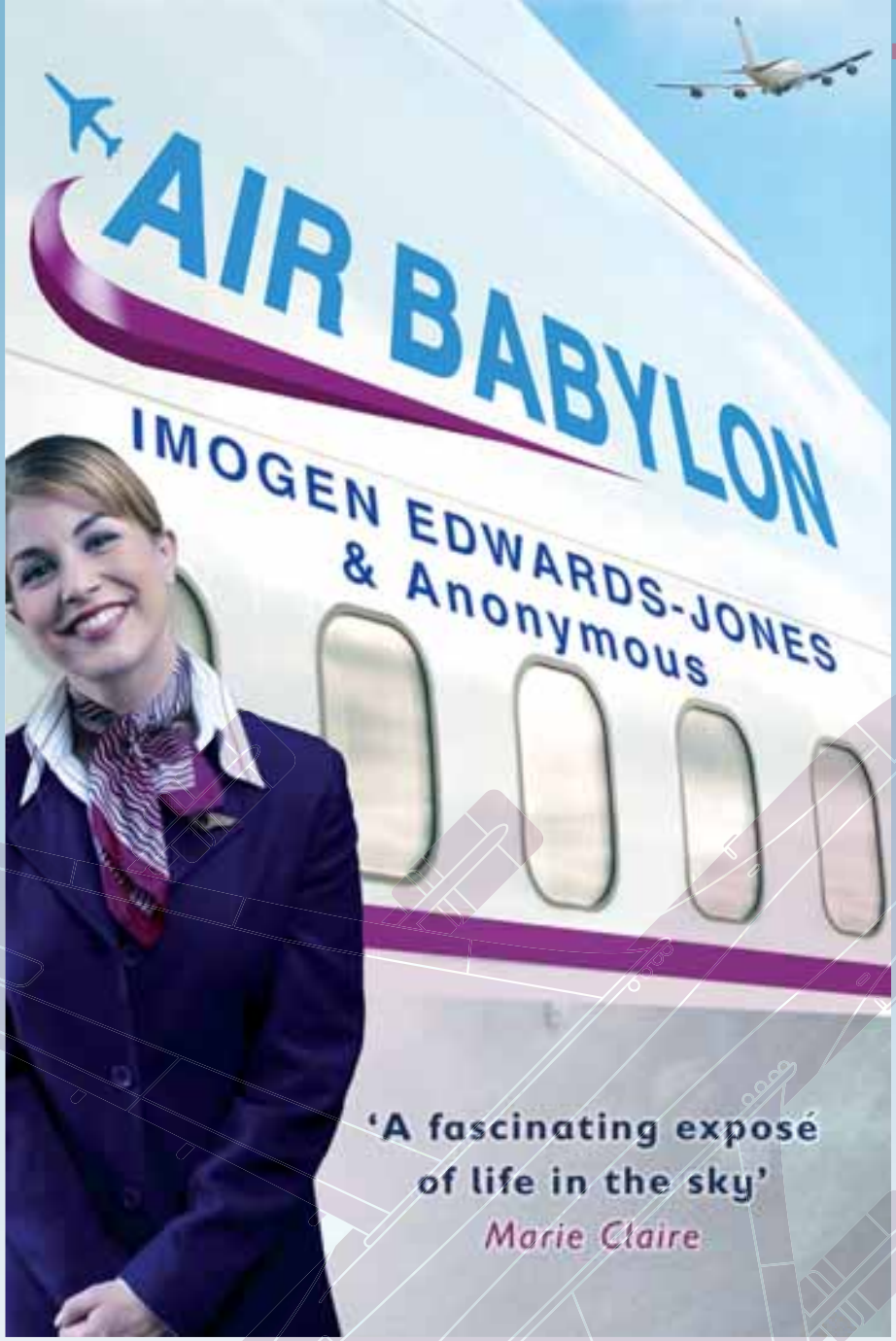
So we come up with a story. Create characters and work out who they are and what has happened in their lives; what is currently weighing on their minds as they head to work. So we have negotiated the minefield that has been passed onto us by the sheer enormity of

the setting. Is it time to relax? Time to try and blag our way into the first-class lounge and take advantage of the extensive cocktail and beverage menu? Sadly not. For the airport is an ever-evolving and changing beast, always cropping up on the news to remind us that it is a character in its own right. Just as we think we have nailed down who she is… along comes a new side to her that we have never seen before. Is she a she? Well, let's say she is, on the basis that cars and boats are always female. That does give rise to the question – what sex are trains and planes? Usually members of the aristocracy as I seem to remember. But I digress – back to the airport as an ever-changing, reinventing, multifaceted beast. One minute fixed in the mind and then along comes Heathrow Terminal Five and suddenly everything has to go in the bin. Or a new terror threat at Glasgow. Or the eco protestors of Plane Crazy find a fresh way to make their mark. Maybe we should have read another book. Why was there no 'Cornershop Babylon'?

Ladies and gentleman your flight is now ready for boarding

And so we finally arrive at the airport, ready to write the first script. After two years of planning it's ready for take-off. Only air travel is never that simple, is it? Just as you think you've got everything packed and ready to go, Granny discovers her passport expired several years ago. Or in our case we discover that our carefully thought-through stories don't actually sit side-by-side because one character has actually ended up both on the tarmac and at the front check-in desk at the same time. Plus there is the sudden realisation that this is the pilot (forgive me) episode of a prime-time BBC 1 show: grabbing an audience and hook them in straightaway is paramount. A lost luggage story is just not big enough.

So what's next? What can we look forward to on this trip? Of course there are no guarantees that the plane will even take off. A TV series, like a flight, is open to all kinds of unexpected developments and even once it has been written something unexpected might come along to ground it. Will it be an exciting journey? Well, like anything problematic and fraught with danger, there might be cold sweats ahead but hopefully only followed by everyone clapping as the plane finally lands. Who knows? That's the beauty of air travel – you never know what's ahead.



Cabin crew doors to manual and cross check!

Ian Pike has been a writer for over fifteen years working in animation, comedy and drama. He wrote over 50 episodes of *Hollyoaks*, the spin off series *Hollyoaks Let Loose* and had the novelisation *Fame Game* published by Penguin. In addition to the *Babylon* spin-off, he has been developing several new projects including a brand new sitcom for ITV productions. He is also a lecturer in screenwriting at undergraduate and postgraduate level.

daisy does drama at the BBC

What's it like working inside TV drama? **Daisy Monahan** knows better than most, having worked in research and script editing, before moving on to produce *Holby City*, *The Bill, Waking the Dead* and one-off BBC 4 dramas. Read on for the inside story.

Daisy Monahan has had a long association with television drama. Her career to date has included a researcher stint on ***Holby City*** and then a script-editing role on ***The Bill*** which were both the focus of ***MM*** interviews in the past. In the five-year gap since our last contact, **Daisy's** highlights have included script-editing episodes of ***Holby*** and the opening series of the cops and robbers offshoot, ***Holby Blue***. She was then promoted to producer on ***Holby*** taking the reins not only of scripts but also overseeing everything else including the filming of specific episodes. In 2008 she became assistant producer on the BBC 1 flagship show ***Waking The Dead***.

***MM*: The drama producer's life is clearly not a dull one. You have just moved jobs again – is that correct?**

Daisy: Yes – I am now involved in script development and production within the drama department of the BBC based in West London. It is important to move around in search of new experience. I can't say there has been a great game-plan but most shifts have been motivated by the desire for a new challenge or new responsibility, for example, taking on the first series of ***Holby Blue***, where there was a lot of pressure to hit the ground running.

***MM*: How does your current role differ from your previous ones at the BBC?**

Daisy: Well, instead of being attached to a single show, I am now responsible for multiple projects destined for different channels within the BBC stable. These include a dramatised biography for BBC 4; an adaptation of a popular 1950s novel (sorry I cannot be more specific than that) – which is the closest I've come to date to working on a full costume drama; and a detective series with an 'edge' which is shrouded in even greater secrecy and which I won't be able to discuss in this interview.

***MM*: This sounds complicated. It would be helpful if you could spell out the job of a drama producer.**

Daisy: In the simplest terms, a drama producer's job is essentially project-managing; making sure that when it comes to filming, the script is in the best possible shape it can be, both in terms of accuracy and drama, but also within the budget it has been allocated. It would be hopeless for a script to call for all sorts of grandiose effects or locations or crowd scenes if the money to pay for them is not there and, let's be frank, the likely viewing figures do not justify it. Managing the ever-dwindling budget is a big part of the job.

Then you have a big part to play in **choosing the cast** and **assembling the production team** – the director, production designers, camera-people and lighting and sound specialists. It is a hugely responsible job really, because in many ways you are the one person with the overall 'big picture' in mind while everyone else has their specific job to do. It is a big job but also a very rewarding one. It is great standing on a set

watching months of planning and negotiation coming together.

***MM*: What do you feel are the main differences between your current role and that you used to fulfil working on a single show like *Holby*?**

Daisy: Well there have definitely been improvements in my quality of life. TV is always pressurised but there is nothing quite like the pressure of working on a show like ***Holby*** that goes out every week for the entire year and which requires producers to be holding numbers of scripts at different stages of development while at the same time overseeing the actual filming of an episode. It is quite a production line. Of course, there is the potential for just that kind of log-jam in my current role but usually there is the space in this job to put projects on hold a bit when one or other drama comes into actual production and needs my full attention. In some ways it has been hard to adjust to having less control over things. Occasionally I still get to go out on location-finding missions and that sort of thing, but on ***Holby*** you really had to be active in all areas: even running through lines with actors on the set and making oneself available at all times during filming should something go wrong – which it inevitably did.

***MM*: Which drama in your 'portfolio' is currently occupying you the most?**

Daisy: The drama is called ***Breaking the Mould*** and is based on a book by **Eric Lax** called ***The Mould in Dr Florey's Coat.*** It is a dramatisation of a lesser-known part of the penicillin story. While most people tend to associate the drug's development with **Alexander Fleming**, the reality is he was actually forced to abandon his research, having initially discovered the all-important mould in the early 1930s from which penicillin was derived, because he lacked the necessary biochemical knowledge to take it to the next stage. A significant hiatus followed – a ten-year gap in which work on the drug more-or-less ceased. Then a group of brilliant young Oxford scientists picked up from where Fleming had left off during the Second World War.

***MM*: It's an interesting title – why that choice?**

Daisy: Well, I suppose it is a bit like ***Breaking the Code***, which in a Second World War context is what another group of brilliant young university graduates were doing at Bletchley Park trying to penetrate the secrets of the Nazi's military encrypted communications. The penicillin scientists were involved in something just as vital to the war effort and humankind when the need for a drug capable of fighting infection could not have been more urgent. It is hard to imagine a world without penicillin when a scratch could become infected and so life-threatening.

***MM*: In what ways has your previous experiences stood you in good stead for this project?**

Daisy: I'd love to think my ***Holby*** experience was pertinent to my getting this job, but my ending up on this project was a complete fluke. Then again, my medical knowledge did come in useful when researching the scientific/medical side of the drama (which proved rather complicated) but beyond that, the process of adapting a true story presented me with challenges that were entirely new. For example, we had to track down the relatives of people portrayed in the drama and run the script past them. Compliance with the BBC code meant that we had to try to ensure there was nothing in there that might cause offence.

***MM*: You're responsible for pulling the team together for projects. What sort of team have you assembled for this drama and what have the challenges been?**

Daisy: Getting the right director is crucial. Luckily, in **Peter Hoar** we have someone who knows what it is like to work for the BBC and is very sanguine – meaning he is used to the kinds of pressures and constraints of working for a big organisation with sometimes complicated decision-making processes and also tight budgets.

With this project big pressures have fallen on the design team within our Art Department because this is a period drama and so things must be correct. But also because it was wartime and resources were scarce, the Oxford scientists had to 'make do and mend' and some of the contraptions they came up with were very bizarre-looking. The name Heath Robinson has been mentioned a lot on this production – he was the artist who used to draw pictures of wacky machines – and that's exactly what some of the equipment we had to recreate looked like.

The costume department has also had a big role to play, as you can imagine. They have had some headaches on this show because we only cast the drama quite late in the day.

***MM*: You are not in overall control of the budget but you do need to bear it in mind. Can you identify something that illustrates this aspect of making TV drama?**

Daisy: There is the story of the rose! The budget for this project has been very tight and every opportunity we have had to reduce the expenditure has had to be taken. This has affected one part of the film particularly – the part that deals with one of the first times penicillin was used to treat someone with septicaemia (blood-poisoning). The case involved a man who had caught himself on a rose thorn and the wound had become infected and he was dying. He received one of the first batches of penicillin which was then incredibly hard to synthesize and so in very short supply. He began to recover and so the decision was taken to stop treating him partly because of the drug's scarcity but also because the doctors did not fully understand the nature of infection and the need to keep someone on a full course of penicillin lasting until after the immediate symptoms have seemingly ceased.

Unfortunately, as soon as the drug was withdrawn, the infection returned and the man quickly deteriorated and eventually died. An early version of the script called for a funeral scene, but that rang budgetary alarm bells because a graveside scene would have necessitated some expensive props and set design – not least a specially made gravestone. So that idea was jettisoned. Then we went to the other extreme of having a moment in which the man's wife is seen leaving a rose on the hospital bed where he is lying dead. Big close-up on the rose – big pathos!

Actually, it would have been rather clumsy and melodramatic and so in the end we went for the cheapest possible option which was to have the man's death mentioned in passing during

a conversation between our scientist heroes. 'Alexander died,' says someone. And that's one way you save several thousand pounds when making a low-budget drama.

***MM*: When is it due to be screened?**

Daisy: Sometime in August, but if ***MM's*** readers miss it, then there's a good chance it will be screened at other times on BBC 4.

***MM*: You have now entered perhaps the most critical phase – filming. Could you give us a flavour of what your job entails at this point in a programme's life-cycle by describing a recent day-in-your life doing this job?**

Daisy: I tend to get into the office early – at about 8am or 8.30am. There will usually be amendments to get out. These are changes to the script which have to be issued as 'new' pages. This part of the job can be very time-consuming and complicated. To help make the process smoother on ***Breaking the Mould***, I sometimes travel to the set in Hornsey where I work with the production co-ordinator and issue them there. This speeds up their distribution no end and (in theory) narrows the margin for error.

I might then watch some filming, which is always rewarding and useful, giving one insights into the dialogue and the performances. It is good to see which things work and which don't. Often during the day random queries will crop up – a pronunciation query or question about some aspect of the science or historic period, and I would have to hot-foot it to our chief adviser on the programme who was always very useful. In parallel with all this I am keeping an eye on the next day's scenes and running through any changes that have cropped up. And all of this is interspersed with checking emails, keeping up to date on my work on the other dramas I am nursing, often having to travel back to TV Centre to participate in meetings about them. It can be hard disengaging from one project in order to take up another.

***MM*: What about the broader drama output of the BBC as a whole? Where do the scripts come from?**

Daisy: It depends. On the whole the department likes experienced writers with great track records to come to us with ideas. If the initial idea is strong, they will be asked to write a treatment which will be presented to our creative directors and head of department, who then have the power to decide whether or not to proceed. A script will then be commissioned which will then go to Ben Stephenson – who has the final say whether or not a project gets the green light.

***MM*: Could you tell us a bit about the drama landscape at the BBC? What shows are each of the channels looking out for?**

Daisy: It is a good time to ask that question as the BBC has just appointed a new Controller of Drama, **Richard Klein** and we are in a period of review and reappraisal in which the priorities of each channel are being evaluated and tweaked. Interestingly, I recently attended a briefing at which this very topic was discussed.

To start with, there is a big emphasis on our working with writers who have an **existing track**

record. In tough economic times there is a need to have people involved in projects who can be trusted to come up with good material and not have to have their scripts substantially massaged by the script editors and producers during the production process. That is a time-consuming business and leads to lots of knock-on delays and potential expense. We also need people who can be trusted to deliver **longer series**.

When it comes to BBC 1 we were told there is definitely room for **more crime shows**. That may be surprising given the large numbers of such shows there are already but crime is one TV's most popular genres. The secret is finding something that gives the genre a shove in an interesting direction. The one I am developing has an interesting quirk and then there was the recent ***Moses Jones*** which had a black detective and which was very successful.

We were also told that BBC 1 is in need of what are called **authored serials** – series that are based on an existing novel or short story and which have a distinct 'voice' in place already. This makes them much easier to sell to audiences. So look out for another adaptation of Jane Austen's ***Emma*** in the autumn and the John Wyndham sci-fi classic ***The Day of the Triffids***. The Austen is interesting because it is a bit of a legacy from a previous regime at the BBC. At the moment the emphasis is much more on more modern drama than the traditional crinoline shows that previously catered to the BBC's 'heartland audience'.

On top of this we were told to look out for **family sagas and stories 'about contemporary lives'**. This may sound rather vast and baggy but I suppose a good example of that might be the recent ***Boy A*** – which focused on the experiences of one of the boys found guilty in the James Bulger murder case in the early 1990s.

The other big BBC 1 focus is on the kinds of glitzy and glamorous series like ***Hotel Babylon*** or ***Hustle***. Quite apart from the sexy subject matter and attractive casts, the value of these kinds of series is their 'story of the week' format. Yes, they may have running themes and long-term character arcs going on, but each programme is self-contained and you don't need a vast amount of back-knowledge to grasp what is going on. These kinds of shows are also popular because they are easy to sell to other countries – always a major consideration with costly shows such as these.

***MM*: What about BBC 2?**

Daisy: The emphasis here is for interesting contemporary adaptations and original 'chunky' series. BBC 2 can afford to be a bit less mainstream and a bit more demanding of its audience. It is interesting that the entire five series of ***The Wire*** is being screened on BBC 2. Although that is an import from the USA, it is an indicator of the kind of audience the station has in mind – one that needs less spoon-feeding perhaps.

***MM*: BBC 3?**

Daisy: Tone is important on BBC 3. Its demographic is young and in order to cater to the age group, we have been told to look out for drama that has humour and irreverence. It is here that you can expect a lot of **science fiction** and **horror**. In recent months the great BBC 3 success was ***Being Human*** (see page 39). Not only did it have a young and attractive cast but also took a really original direction, managing to achieve one of the holy grails of TV drama – to develop a **significant online interactive life**. So, for example, people were able to get extra clues online about characters via fictional blogs and even download extra scenes showing the back-stories of some of the characters. It drew lots of traffic to BBC iPlayer. Finding web-based off-shoots for drama is a huge and developing area. There is a lot of emphasis at the BBC on finding ways to push drama into new formats, to make them available via different platforms. There is also a lot of interest in **turning drama into interactive games**.

***MM*: And finally BBC 4?**

Daisy: Well, the buzz is that there may be a pulling back on biopics like my ***Mould*** drama. Instead, we have been told, to look out for 'contemporary three-parters'.

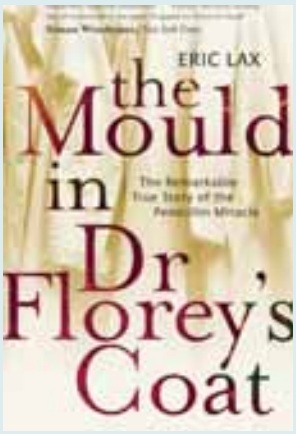
***MM*: Three-parters?**

Daisy: Yes – there seems to be a special magic about three-part series. They seem to be just about the right length to capture audience interest and loyalty. Anything more prolonged, and people are going to find it hard to sustain the interest. I suppose an interesting example of this was Channel 4's ***Red Riding***. The quartet of novels was boiled down into just three dramas – a decision that I felt meant the story became a bit incoherent. But the films were fantastically well done in terms of the performances and production design and values.

***MM*: Times are very hard for TV drama at the moment, given the economic woes. There has been a lot of concern about the near-collapse in ITV's drama output as a result of its financial difficulties. Have you felt the impact of the credit crunch in your work in the BBC?**

Daisy: Yes – in that people are extremely keen to hold onto their jobs and there is definitely much less money around. Budgets for programme-making have diminished significantly. The BBC are in a fortunate position of getting the revenues from the license fee, so unlike commercial stations we don't have to rely on advertising revenues, but there is always talk of freezing the license fee or even making the BBC share it, so the situation is volatile. I wonder if I will still be involved in TV drama in four years time when my next ***MM*** interview is due?

Jerome Monahan is a freelance writer and trainer. He is frequent contributor to the *Guardian*, the *TES* and *MediaMagazine*.



Waking the Dead: image.net and BBC; *Casualty*: BBC

LOST

conclusion, closure, enigma or ending?

All good things must come to an end sooner or later – but *Lost* is a special case: a philosophical conclusion which defies resolution. **David Bell** explores how the enigma of *Lost* challenges its audiences.

I watched my first episode of ***Lost*** sometime mid-2005 and, when it was over, I watched five more. The sense of return it offered me – to a world of escapades in the form of countless hours of my youth spent scouring woodland and welcoming exploration of any kind – gave me a real sense of what **Blumler and Katz** really meant when they came up with escapism or 'diversion' as one of their Uses and Gratifications.

One of the most talked about TV dramas of the noughties, ***Lost*** meets its maker in 2010 with its sixth and final season. ABC's Entertainment President Stephen McPherson promises '**a highly anticipated and shocking finale**', adding that 'We felt that this was the only way to give ***Lost*** a proper creative conclusion.'

4 8 15 16 23 42

Sheryl Lee in *Twin Peaks* (990-91) Credit: Lynch/Frost/Spelling/The Kobal Collection
Lost: image.net

Do we really want a conclusion?

Though I would rather it didn't have to end – ever – like many audience die-hards I am eager to see how ABC lives up to its promise. But if I'm being honest, I'm hooked on the surge of **enigma** ***Lost*** has given me over the last five years: smoke monsters, Jacob, whispers, healing powers, and by far my favourite – time travel. This got me thinking: do I really want answers? What will we talk about when all is said and done, and the intrigue is no more? What might this mean for the future of the show, after it's all over?

For audiences of ***Lost***, a world of adventure and the unknown provides them with **escapism** in its truest sense, a return to the fantastical period of exploration and quest experienced throughout childhood, in the face of **the unknown**. Audiences are active by 'diverting' the daily rut, by yearning for a similar experience of their own. However, because ***Lost*** is heavily encoded with messages whose meanings can't

been confirmed, the decoding process offers **multiple readings** – endless possibilities that have generated theory after theory attempting to explain the philosophical significance of the enigma codes that viewers have picked up. As audiences are constantly **negotiating and challenging the preferred readings of textual meanings**, wouldn't it be more enjoyable never to have answers, to keep speculating, and therefore keep the memory of the show alive?

The **Uses and Gratifications theory** assists us here, with its emphasis on the cognitive and emotional abilities of the audience that are used to think, rethink, and reinterpret ***Lost*** and its wider contextual significance. **Characters named after history's most celebrated thinkers** – John **Locke,** Danielle **Rousseau**, Eloise **Hawking**, Daniel **Faraday**, Desmond **Hume** – are carefully constructed to get the blogs brimming with speculation, creating an online world of pseudo spoilers.

Shades of Twin Peaks

In 2005, a work colleague (who also happened to have recommended ***Lost***, so disloyal was I in the beginning!), still under the influence (unknowingly) of **Katz and Lazarfield's Two-Step Flow theory**, was ranting and raving about a series that 'everyone with a taste for mystery and suspense' should have seen: **David Lynch's 1990 TV drama *Twin Peaks***, also broadcast by ABC. Two series and a cliffhanger later, audiences were left in the lurch, mulling over the Black Lodge, Bob, and what happened to Agent Cooper.

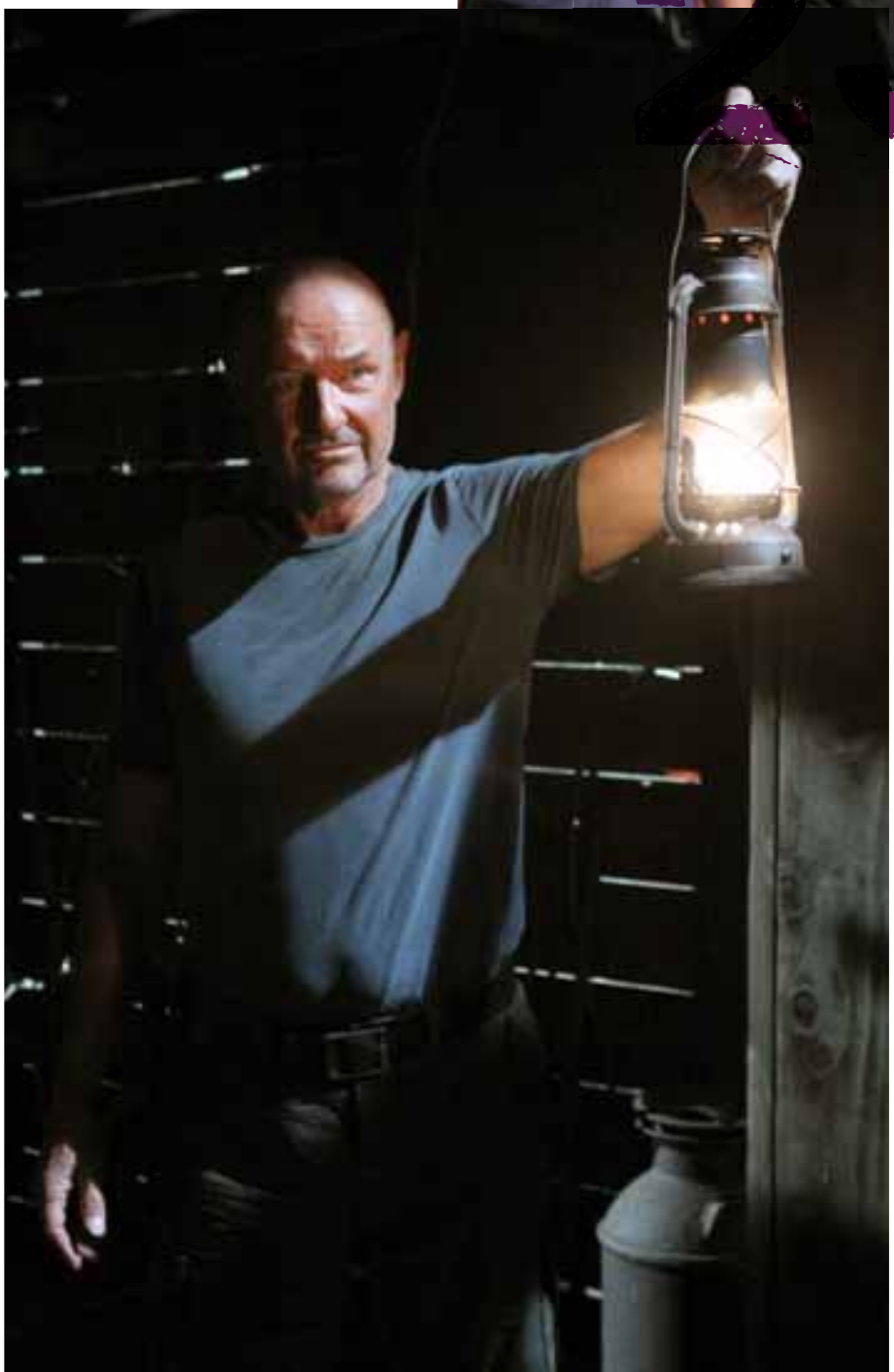
The show's two-hour pilot attracted new viewers because of what ABC researcher Alan Wurtzel called '**the water cooler syndrome**', where audience members discuss the series the next day at work. My own experience of this syndrome meant that ***Twin Peaks*** was still attracting new viewers – fifteen years later. The second stage of the 'Two Step Flow' was still working its magic, and the 'Water Cooler' effect claimed its rightful place in the land of Media and Cultural Studies.

It is this **lack of closure**, this mystery without trace, that I argue gives such series a continued lease of life. Unanswered questions that still circulate in the subconscious resurface and encourage a two-step recommendation in the hope of a 'let's see what they think' response. The more **postmodern** – unfathomable, eccentric, and surreal – the enigmas are, the more potent the enthusiasm for discussion and reflection will be.

Lost has already been described by the ***New York Times*** as 'the show with perhaps the most compelling continuing story line in television history', and although the introductory episodes of Season 3 were criticised for being loaded with mystery and lacking explanation, viewing figures for Season 5 continued to rise, with **over eight million 18-49-year-olds** watching episodes fourteen and fifteen.

What does the future hold for ***Lost***, post-Season 6? In short: much. The show is, in many ways, a prime example of one whose audiences are caught up in a **'battle for meaning that is consensual and ongoing'**, to use **Stuart Hall's model of encoding and decoding**. Audiences may conform to one or more of the following responses:

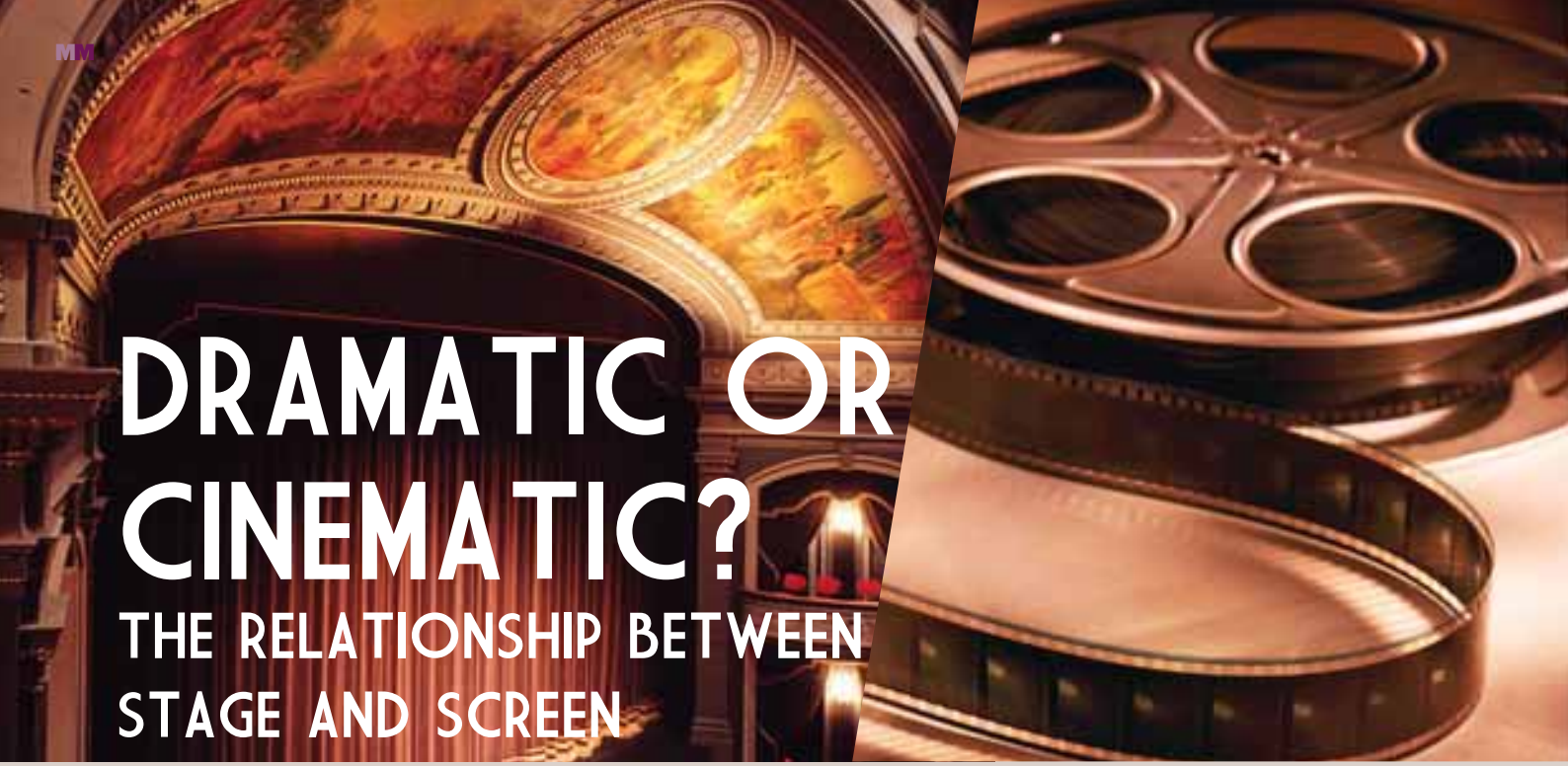
- **Dominant** – viewers accept that the island has extraordinary scientific properties, and that they are entirely natural in their origin; they therefore accept the **preferred meaning**, in that there have been no hints in the show that the island might be the centre of alien experimentation, for example.



- **Negotiated** – viewers accept that the island is 'special', yet prefer to believe that there has to be some metaphysical, otherworldly involvement; readings are therefore adapted to incorporate personal ideologies, perhaps 'cultivated' as the season continues.
- **Oppositional** – viewers refuse to accept that there is a simple and straightforward explanation for the island's existence, and that the creators' reasoning should be challenged in every way, shape or form.

I am certainly guilty of dabbling in all three approaches, and I believe that is why the show's ability to anchor my curiosity might eventually lead me to an all encompassing theoretical perspective. But I'd rather it didn't. Should Abrams et al provide us with resolution and closure in this next season, with answers to questions that left many audience members so angry and frustrated that they lost the will to live (no pun intended), then perhaps they will deprive us of this creativity rather than allow our guesswork to evolve. I hope not, because in fifteen years' time, when the blogs have all gone quiet, I'd rather not be denied my water cooler conversation – history's chance to repeat itself the way the island would want it to.

David Bell is a teacher of English & Media Studies at Morley High School in Leeds.



DRAMATIC OR CINEMATIC?

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STAGE AND SCREEN

The most damning phrase a critic can level at a film-maker is: 'It's too theatrical – it's just not cinematic enough!'. **Mark Ramey** explores this critique by clarifying the distinctions between the cinematic and theatrical arts. It's a particularly useful read for AS Film students about to embark on their first micro-analyses.

The theatre is a very old art form dating back to at least the Ancient Greeks (c2500 BC). Cinema by contrast originated as a medium for mass entertainment in the last decade of the 19th century. So what links these two art forms and what differentiates them? And why, in particular, is it a problem for a film to appear theatrical?

Focussing on the similarities of modern cinema and theatre **in their most basic forms** will help start our discussion. So:

a. both use actors

b. both are directed and produced

c. both use 'mise-en-scène': scenery, props and lighting

d. both play to paying audiences seated in ranks.

Now let's dig deeper.

Both use actors

Yes, but in very different ways. A theatrical play makes huge demands on an actor's ability to remember long speeches; consistently communicate their character to a large audience throughout a lengthy performance and use limited space and props. A theatre actor will only get one chance to hit their cues and marks. On stage there is no 'Take two'. The show must go on.

The screen actor will have considerably fewer lines to learn at any one time as each take may only last a few minutes, but perhaps take a day or more to shoot. A film-maker therefore has the luxury of re-taking scenes until the right one is produced and then, in post-production, assembling, reordering and even discarding the shots. The screen actor is thus distanced from his or her work. Unlike the theatrical artist who witnesses the audience response directly; the screen actor must wait for the hoped-for adulation depending on the release schedule for their film, which can often be a year after their performance.

Acting styles or the 'performance' also differ. The stage requires a keen awareness of the audience and an ability to project voice and mannerisms across a large space. The screen actor has to be very aware of only one point – the camera. They also have to be aware that the camera can film them for a close-up which, when projected, may produce a 10-metre high image. For this reason film actors need to have the ability to represent authentic emotion under intense scrutiny.

The relationship between the two art forms has been very close but it still took time for actors to realise the worth of film: for some time they 'slummed it' in film, begging not to be credited. However as Hollywood went into overdrive in World War 1, a new reverence for the film star emerged, culminating in the first global cinema icon, **Charlie Chaplin**. **Chaplin** is typical of the hordes of European music hall (vaudeville in the USA) talent who travelled West in search of riches. **Stan Laurel** of **Laurel and Hardy** was a UK music hall entertainer and American vaudeville stars like **The Marx Brothers** also made the transition to screen. Their brand of rapidly delivered humour relied heavily, however, on a new film micro-element which arrived in 1927: **sound**.

'The change over to sound' is brilliantly depicted in ***Singin' in the Rain*** (USA, Donen, 1952) where we see how the new sound recording equipment turned the free flowing character of silent film into a stilted affair. Broad foreign or regional accents became unacceptable. On-screen movement or camera movement was limited by the range and sensitivity of the microphones. Lines needed to be written and then learnt meticulously. The coming of sound opened doors for English-born actors like David Niven and Cary Grant, who, with their theatrical training and sophisticated delivery, were perfect recruits for the gaps left by the less vocally fortunate Hollywood stars.

Many film stars now also work on stage. Film is where the money lies but theatre has the credibility and prestige. Hollywood stars may 'walk the boards' to revive a career (Christian Slater in the play ***One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest***); avoid typecasting (Daniel Radcliffe in the play ***Equus***) or out of sheer love for the art form (Kevin Spacey – who is Director of the Old Vic in London).

The West End and Broadway have proved fertile breeding grounds for emerging film talent and the interplay between the two has become most notable recently in the huge theatrical spin-off success of the film ***Mama Mia***. This phenomenon isn't new though as the films and shows of ***Ben Hur***, ***Casablanca*** and ***The Rocky Horror Picture Show*** will testify.

Both are directed and produced

This is true, but the sums of money involved are vastly different. Aside from the few mega-budget shows like ***Lord of The Rings***, theatre is considerably cheaper to produce than cinema. The film industry requires numerous personnel, studios, post-production facilities and cinemas; a play needs some personnel and a stage.

Some UK film directors like **Mike Leigh**, **Sam Mendes** or the late **Anthony Minghella** come from theatre and regard actors highly, in Leigh's case nurturing their talent for improvisation. Conversely, a non-theatre trained technician of the cinematic stature of Alfred Hitchcock once said of actors that they were no better than cattle. Hollywood doesn't think so: British theatre-trained character actors are still in much demand, often for the disreputable nuance they bring to villainous roles.

There is even the sub-genre of **the Stage Film**, based on putting on a show: such texts can range in tone from frothy musicals like ***High School Musical 3*** (USA, Ortega, 2008) to comedic dramas like ***A Bunch of Amateurs*** (UK, Cardiff, 2008).

Both use mise-en-scène: scenery, props and lighting

Both arts use the term 'mise-en-scène' (another film micro-element) but the filmic manifestation is infinitely more complex precisely because the mise-en-scène is multiplied by the varied camera angles, scenes and characters employed. The advent of CGI technology has solved some of these challenges but created more. The digital revolution now means that **High Definition images** of actors can be unflattering. As for **green screen technology**, screen actors now perform in a 'mise-en-scène void' which is filled in around them in post-production. Nothing could be further from theatre's immediacy.

Both are played to paying audiences who are seated in ranks

Theatres and early cinema shared space in the late 19th century. Vaudeville and music hall promotional bills would often include a silent film programme. Eventually the new medium of films was able to generate enough interest to merit the development of purpose-built Picture Palaces – not dissimilar to the theatre design of the time and indeed aiming to ape the credibility and prestige of theatre. These days multiplex cinemas offer numerous screens

with hugely powerful sound systems, digital projection and 3D; but seating arrangements remain the same as ever – the invisible fourth wall between performer and audience still stands. However, some kind of immersive cinema in the near future may be plausible given the current popularity of IMAX and 3D formats.

There is clearly then a strong relationship between the cinematic and theatrical arts. So why the derogatory statement: 'It's too theatrical. It's just not cinematic enough.'?

Perhaps we can now start to see. Film is the upstart commercial art form for the masses. Theatre still has the status and the intellectual kudos. Film stars may look great but can they act? Some screenplays are well written, but they will never be Shakespeare. Given such views, film critics have needed to place distance between the film record and the live dramatised event. The similarities are there; but it is the differences that define the art of film making.

A photographic medium

Firstly, we need to remember that film is a photographic medium. As such we can over-expose images, focus on certain areas, add light filters, use different kinds of lens, reverse or distort images, use certain film stock with certain colours and grain, play images backwards, slow them down and freeze-frame them. **Cinematography** is therefore **an essential micro-element** in any film's construction. Other aspects of the cinematographer's art (aside from lighting which is clearly also theatrical) are framing, angle and camera movement.

In theatre, the audience experience a fixed perspective; but cinema is not beholden to the laws of physics in this way. Thus there is the use of '**camera framing**'. Film has a full variety of shots to play with ranging from extreme close-ups to extreme long-shots, low level to eye level, high angles and low angles as well as weird canted angles such as the Dutch shot. Then there is '**camera movement**' (pan, tilt, track, crane) which manoeuvres us in screen space in a way that the theatre audience can never experience. Camera movement (real, lens-originated, or both – the dolly zoom) allows us literally to enter into a place and time. A film that does not fully utilise the cinematographer by fully exploring screen space may therefore be criticised for being too theatrical. Conversely, a film that is all camera tricks and little else is often described as 'preferring style to substance'. What cinema and theatre do largely share is their interest in **narrative**; they are both story-telling media and, as such, the craft of cinema or theatre to tell the story as completely and pleasurably as possible. A play or a film which fixates on technical style over narrative substance may well ultimately fail, not necessarily in terms of box office, but in critical terms.

The key role of editing

Another key micro feature of the cinematic art is **editing**. We have already touched on this in the idea of the 'take'. Films are constructed like jigsaws and so editing is fundamental. A film that avoids editing merely by using 'long takes' needs to have a very good reason. Hitchcock's ***Rope*** (USA, 1948) is essentially 10 long takes put together; but the very lack of editing (by a master of the cut) merely cranks up the tension of this eerie crime drama. Conversely, the use of too many long takes by an inexperienced artist could be seen by a critic as being too theatrical.

We can now answer our question: a cinematic film is one which uses cinematography and editing and other micro elements (sound, mise-en-scène, performance and lighting) differently from recordings which aim to reconstruct live theatre. A film needs to have access to shots situating us in a narrative space which is more expansive than the fixed dramatic space of the stage. A key maxim for film-makers is therefore: **'Don't tell – show!'**. Show the audience a cinematic story; don't just film a play.

Mark Ramey teaches at Collyer's College, Horsham.

Gene Kelly, Jean Hagen, Douglas Fowley and Kathleen Freeman in *Singin' in the Rain*, dir Kelly, Gene / Donen, Stanley (1952)
Credit: Mgm/The Kobal Collection
High School Musical: image.net

STATE OF PLAY

televison drama vs cinema, a fair fight?

Drawing on a case study of *State of Play* on the box and at the movies, **Nick Lacey** considers the relationship between big and small screen, and suggests that they offer different but complementary pleasures.

For many years academics viewed television as inferior to film. By the 1980s, Film Studies was established in British universities; but the ephemeral nature of TV – like newspapers, 'here today-gone tomorrow' – meant it was difficult to study. Before 1982 there were only three channels, and television drama was aimed at a mass audience so, with its 'lowest common denominator' address, it couldn't offer the range of sophisticated drama we now enjoy. On the other hand, **arthouse** cinema, often based upon **the appeal of the auteur** ('director as artist'), could make interesting statements about the contemporary world. There were exceptions in television, particularly the **BBC's Wednesday Play** (1964-70), which later became **Play for Today** (1970-84), but these were primarily lauded for their writers, such as **Dennis Potter and Stephen Poliakoff**, rather than for their visual style. This wasn't surprising; the relatively poor quality of the television image, in monochrome until the late 1960s, meant it couldn't compete visually with cinema. TV drama seemed to belong to a theatrical, rather than audio-visual, tradition.

In his influential book ***Visible Fictions*** (1982), John Ellis defined television and cinema as being in opposition; and when he revised the book, 10 years later, the definitions hadn't changed – see table 1, based on Ellis: ***Visible Fictions*** (1992, 2nd edition, pp. 127-38).

Table 1

	TV		CINEMA
1.	image poor quality	1.	image high quality
2.	small image	2.	massive image
3.	image is 'stripped down' and so lacks detail	3.	image (excessively) detailed, lush
4.	viewer larger than image	4.	viewer smaller than image
5.	viewer looks down on image	5.	viewer smaller than image
6.	engages look as a glance	6.	engages look as a gaze
7.	spectator concentration not necessary	7	spectator concentrates
8.	close-ups (CUs) used to approximate normal size	8.	CUs massive, used to mark emotional climaxes
9.	image illustrates soundtrack	9.	soundtrack illustrates image
10.	sound anchors image	10.	image anchors sound
11.	sound main carrier of information	11.	image main carrier of information
12.	normal light conditions	12	darkened conditions
13.	domestic surroundings – not anonymous	13.	theatrical surroundings – anonymous crowd
14.	can be 'in background'	14.	chosen as a 'special event'
15.	often chosen as a 'last resort'	15.	always in foreground
16.	multiple cameras used in studios	16.	single camera set up
17.	fragmentation of events structured by continuity of performance	17.	fragmentation of events structured by continuity of editing
18.	information held on screen just long enough to be assimilated	18.	information on screen maybe secondary to aesthetic affect
19.	aesthetic emphasises CUs and fast editing	19.	aesthetic emphasises movement and image
20.	events shown in real time from multiple viewpoints	20.	events shown in narrative time, usually from singular viewpoint
21.	image has immediacy (often live)	21.	image never live
22.	image transmitted and received at same moment	22.	image fixed in past
23.	is perpetually present – soaps mimic real time	23.	image is in past tense
24.	uses direct address (though not for 'ordinary people')	24.	third person address (occasional voiceover
25.	sets up a distance between viewer and viewed	25.	attempts to overwhelm the viewer

Whilst it's an exaggeration to say that, based on these categories, cinema is superior to television in every way, there's no doubt that it appears to have the edge. Although recent advances in technology mean that the picture quality of HD television is not 'poor', it still can't compete with cinema. Similarly, although sound quality has improved greatly (it wasn't even stereo when Ellis wrote the first edition of ***Visible Fictions***), it is still not as good as most cinemas.

Many of the points Ellis makes are to do with **the aesthetics of television** which, for the most part, are determined by institutional factors such as **limited budgets** necessitating **multi-camera studio shooting** (which emphasises **simple editing patterns**, such as shot-reverse-shot) and functional set design that contributes to a relatively **uninteresting mise-en-scène**. However in recent years it is clear that TV drama has become far more sophisticated. So can it now compete with cinema?

Ellis published another book on television in 2002 where he outlined how, before the advent of cable and satellite TV, we lived in the 'age of scarcity' (Ellis, 2002 p. 2) – but that the medium was now in an 'age of availability'. **Robin Nelson** describes this new era as **TV3** (there's not space here to elaborate why he splits TV into three eras); and argues that **'quality' TV drama is now comparable, aesthetically, with cinema**:

> **the impetus to reconceive TV as film comes from the industry, particularly HBO with its tag line promoting its output as Home Box Office, in which the engagement is on an economic basis like that of the movie theatre, requiring payment directly for a singular 'cinematic' experience ('it's not TV; it's HBO') [… And] enhanced visual means of story-telling in place of the dialogue-led television play with its theatrical, rather than filmic, heritage […] High budgets also afford highly paid star performers, external and occasionally exotic locations and many extras to flesh out the mise-en-scène. (Nelson, 2007, p. 11)**

Jonathan Bignell makes a similar point:

> **While made for television, the emphasis on mise-en-scène associated with the greater depth of colour, contrastive lighting and more elaborate camera movement [...] production on film is responsible for much of the stylistic interest attributed to [quality] programmes. (Bignell, 2009, p. 9)**

The HBO effect

Nelson demonstrates that companies like **HBO (owned by Time Warner)** can afford to make more sophisticated, or film-like, television drama because it is a subscription channel; and, as it isn't regulated like Network Television in America, its content can be more adult. As HBO's president (programming group and West Coast operations), Michael Lombardo said:

> **We're fortunate to be a subscriber service […] so we're not selling eyeballs to advertisers. So if I satisfy 20 per cent or 10 per cent of my audience with 10 different programmes […] that's fine. I'm not looking for shows that will attract the broadest widest array of viewers […] (Armstrong, 2009)**

Many of HBO's programmes receive rave reviews and are quintessential **'quality TV'**: for example, ***The Sopranos*** (1999-2007), ***Six Feet Under*** (2001-5) and ***Entourage*** (2004-). This means niche programmes, like ***The Wire*** (2002-8) shown on BBC 2 this year, can run for five series, whereas only programmes with mass audiences survive on Network television. In addition, DVD box set sales help create a worldwide fan base, bringing in more revenue. The DVD has also led to an immense amount of television drama gaining a second life in box sets; and this, in turn, stimulated demand for more sophisticated narratives that would reward multiple viewings, as well as enabling TV to be studied more readily.

Whilst 'quality TV' isn't simply a result of TV3 niche channels (***Hill Street Blues***, 1981-7) is certainly a precursor), there certainly is, in Nelson's terms, more **cinematic drama** produced by TV companies than ever before. And it's not limited to HBO – ***Mad Men*** (2007-) is broadcast on AMC's subscription channel – or even American television: Robin Nelson (2007) features Channel 4's ***Shameless*** (2004-) and ***Queer as Folk*** (1999-2000) as well as the BBC's ***Spooks*** (2002-) and ***State of Play*** (2003).

State of Play: from small screen to big screen

State of Play was a six-part political thriller, written by **Paul Abbott** (creator of ***Shameless***), which focused on investigative journalists unravelling a narrative about political corruption and oil company lobbying. A film remake was released this year; its **$60m budget** necessitated success at the North American box office, so the setting was transposed from London to Washington DC, and the leads, **John Simm** and **David Morrissey**, were replaced with **Russell Crowe** and **Ben Affleck**. Both versions were critically well received and it is interesting to consider the differences between the texts.

Despite only being released six years after the original, the advent of Web 2.0, particularly in the form of the blogosphere, allows the film to comment upon **the impending demise of**

newspapers and the increasing role of blogs in reportage. In addition, the big business lobbying has switched from **oil to private security**. The invasion of Iraq has seen an explosion in **privatised armies**, taking over the role of the established military without the latter's accountability (a theme also taken up by the TV serial ***The State Within***, BBC, 2006); the film's condemnation of this policy is revealed in a centrepiece speech given by the politician.

The main difference, however, is running time: 342 minutes trimmed to 127 minutes. Much of the plot must therefore be pruned or compressed: the romance between the protagonist (John Simm) and the politician's wife, and the reporter (James McEvoy) who's the editor's son, are omitted; the detective work by the reporters is less painstaking; the family of the murder victim who's killed at the start of versions is used in the TV version to comment upon the plight on urban, working-class black people in Britain. Even though much of the increased budget would have been spent on the stars, there would also be the expectation that the visual style would be more sophisticated.

The remake, directed by **Kevin MacDonald,** opens with a thrilling chase scene. However, I feel the suspense sequence in an underground car park, like the finale, is poorly directed. Of course, that's a comment upon McDonald and not upon the medium of cinema. **Peter Yates**, who directed the TV original, did a superb job. Although it could be argued that visuals in television drama are invariably at the service of the plot, this doesn't mean they can't be exciting or complex. Nonetheless, it remains true that television drama lacks the visual flourishes possible in the hands of talented directors in cinema. This is linked to **budget**; the money involved in 'quality TV' still cannot rival that of Hollywood productions. On the other hand, the more money invested, the greater the pressure there is to attract a large audience which can lead to the 'lowest common denominator' effect noted by Kemp in his review, where he argues that the film version pushes the action 'just a few degrees towards visual and conceptual cliché' (Kemp, 2009. p. 76a) and that the characters 'are all pushed just a notch or two closer to stereotype' (ibid, p, 76b).

In addition, TV drama has the possibility of **extended narratives**. Even series, in which the narrative is resolved at the end of each episode, have arcs that can develop over numerous seasons. The narratives of serials can run for six months; each season of ***24*** (2001-) lasts over 1000 minutes. This means narratives can be **much more detailed, and potentially more complex** than the standard 120-minute movie. It is this that most sharply differentiates TV drama from cinema.

On the other hand, in a survey of police series, Jonathan Bignell argues that writing in television is over-valued, and that equal attention should be given to direction, cinematography and the relationship between writer-producers. He demonstrates how **visual style** is integral to the success of the series under consideration. For

example, the use of **jump cuts**:

> **shows that *Homicide* [1993-9] is interested in people, rather than forensic investigation, physical pursuit of the detail of police procedure. (Bignell, 2009, p. 38)**

Of course it is impossible to draw conclusions from one pair of texts. Maybe it's time we stopped comparing television and film, and instead consider them simply as different media with their own aesthetics. For example:

> **Television [...] uses one kind of establishing shot in a way that [...] is almost never used in film. Between scenes, or before and after commercial breaks, many television programmes use a repeated visual motif (the outside of a building, a bar, cityscape) before cutting directly to the interior for the next shot). (Lury, 2005, p. 27)**

This may suggest TV is inferior as it is in thrall to commercial pressures. However, as noted above, the film version of ***State of Play*** was simplified to appeal to a mass audience whilst niche programming on television can offer dense, sophisticated narratives. It's likely that media, cinema and television will increasingly influence one another, whilst remaining aesthetically distinct. Just as the producer of ***Homicide***, **Barry Levinson**, consciously drew upon the visual style of French 'new wave' cinema, Hollywood turned to the creator of ***Alias*** (2001-6) and ***Lost*** (2004), **JJ Abrams**, to produce and direct ***Star Trek*** (2009). Cinema will remain the visual medium par excellence; whilst television, with its extended and multiple plots, will host narrative complexity.

Nick Lacey is Head of Media and Film Studies at Benton Park School Technology College, Leeds.

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representations in TV drama:

british social history

In two linked articles, **Stephen Hill** explores the back story of the long tradition of British TV drama and its representations and argues that the roots of contemporary TV drama can be found in the social history that underpins it.

Introduction

When studying TV Drama for the new OCR unit, there is tendency to focus on very contemporary case studies: ***Life on Mars*** (2006), ***Torchwood*** (2008), ***Spooks*** (2002 to present), ***State of Play*** (2003) and so on. And, of course, that reflects both the content of the exam

and the need to explore examples that utilise contemporary techniques in terms of both filming and post-production. The danger of this, however, is not that we neglect issues of **representation** (which are very central to the mark scheme) but that we **ignore the historical complexity of those issues**.

The aim of this article is to provide a background to some key social issues and to explore the way in which drama, both on stage and on the small screen, has reflected and shaped society's attitudes and values. Stereotyping is, of course, a key issue and what British drama does best is play with the expectations an audience has of itself and the way contemporary society is depicted. From Oscar Wilde's ***The Importance of Being Earnest*** (1895) to Matthew Graham and Ashley Pharoah's ***Ashes to Ashes*** (2009), British drama both mirrors and informs society's ideas about itself and its shared history.

Social class

Social class is a logical place to start our investigation because, in an age before television, drama in the theatre was dominated by **'drawing-room' comedies.** Unlike the Shakespearian stage, the plays of Terrence Rattigan and Noel Coward appealed principally to upper-middle-class audiences with the income and leisure time to enjoy an evening at the theatre.

That Britain was a more class-conscious society is evident in the work of Bernard Shaw: ***Pygmalion*** (1913), for example, is an exploration of the humorous endeavours of an upper-class phonetician, Henry Sweet, as he attempts to turn a working-class flower girl into refined Society lady. Shaw's work drew upon Greek mythology and in its turn influenced both Alan Jay Lerner's West End musical ***My Fair Lady*** (1956) and Willy Russell's ***Educating Rita*** (1980).

Of course the theme of social aspiration and middle-class snobbery is a favourite theme of television writers like David Nobbs whose ITV series ***A Bit of a Do*** (1989) explored the etiquette that underpins a series of social gatherings ('dos') in a provincial Yorkshire town. **Sitcom**, for example, is riddled with characters whose social pretension is the source of the comedy: just imagine ***The Good Life*** (1975) without Margot or ***Keeping up Appearances*** (1990-1995) without Hyacinth.

However, in mainstream theatre, the late 1950s saw a radical shift with a generation of playwrights who became known as the **Angry Young Men**. Largely a product of the 1944 Education Act which increased working and lower-middle class access to grammar schools, writers like John Osborne, Arnold Wesker and Shelagh Delaney wrote plays about their own experiences of working-class culture. These plays were, of course, well suited to television, in part because their subject matter had wide appeal but also because their **'kitchen sink' locations** were easy to reproduce in a studio. Osborne's ***Look Back in Anger*** (1956), which explores the complex relationship between the working-class Jimmy Porter and his socially superior wife, is the defining play of the genre.

Regional identity

One of the key legacies of the Angry Young Men was not only the repositioning of social class within mainstream drama but also the **representation of regional identity.** While the BBC had traditionally broadcast in the clipped tones of Received Pronunciation, the launch of ITV in 1955 and the success of ***Coronation Street*** (1960) brought regional identity to the forefront of the public consciousness.

Produced in the ITV Northwest region's Granada Studios, ***Coronation Street*** brought the everyday lives of the working-class residents of a terraced backstreet in Weatherfield (a fictional town in Greater Manchester) to the attention of a national audience. When the first episode was broadcast on 9th December 1960 the script featured colloquial expressions such as 'chuck', 'nowt' and introduced audiences to working-class matriarchs like Elsie Tanner and Ena Sharples. The relationship between regional identity and soap is of course a close one. Just watching the title sequence to ***Brookside*** or ***EastEnders*** leaves the viewer in no doubt as to the regional identity of the programme. Even a show like ***Hollyoaks***, the most middle-class and suburban of TV soaps, is synonymous with the social aspiration and pretension of Cheshire's county town.

Indeed, it would be a mistake to assume that the representation of regional identity is synonymous with working-class identity and urban grit. Gerard Glaister's ***Howards' Way*** (1985 to 1990) was a BBC drama series inspired by glamorous American TV shows like ***Dallas*** (1978 to 1991) and ***Dynasty*** (1981 to 1989). Mirroring the polarity of wealth in Britain during the second half of Margaret Thatcher's tenure as Prime Minister, the production celebrated the material aspirations of the well-heeled yachting fraternity in the fictional Hampshire town of Tarrant. Likewise, the exotic mise-en-scène of ***Bergerac*** (1981 to 1991), a detective series set on the Channel Island of Jersey, encouraged viewers to adopt a tourist-like gaze.

Race and ethnicity

When considering **the representation of race** in British drama it is important to remember the legacy of the British Empire. Though by the end of the 19th century the dominance of America and Germany had eroded Britain's economic power, in both First and Second World Wars Britain depended heavily on the Colonies. Indeed, it was not until 1947 that India was declared an independent country. These final days of the British Raj are the subject matter of ITV series ***The Jewel in the Crown*** (1984), starring Charles Dance, Art Malik and Peggy Ashcroft. The series, which ran for 14 episodes, was one of a number of productions in the 1980s to explore the legacy of Empire.

One of the most significant events in the history of Black Britain is the arrival of the passenger ship Empire Windrush in 1948, which brought the first wave of Caribbean immigrants to Britain after the end of the Second World War. Though immigration from the Caribbean and later India was concurrent with the proliferation of television in the UK, it was a long time before representations of Black British identity on the small screen matched the lived experience of those people who had grown up in Trinidad and Jamaica.

Typical of television dramas up until the 1980s that dealt with issues of race was the Thames' Television sitcom ***Love Thy Neighbour*** (1972 to 1977) which starred Rudolph Walker, an actor who came to Britain in 1960 from Trinidad. The series ran on ITV and explored the comedic interaction between two working-class couples who live next door to each other: the Booths (who are White) and the Reynolds (who are Black). Though Walker is proud to have been one of the first Black actors to be seen regularly on British television, the series courted criticism for its racist humour. Although the show's producers claimed that the laughs were at the expense of both Black and White characters, for many the stereotyped representation of Black British identity was unrealistic and offensive.

The tide began to turn in the 1980s with the launch of Channel 4 in 1982 and creation of programmes like ***No Problem!*** (1983 to 1985) and, subsequently, ***Desmond's*** (1989 to 1994). While both shows courted a fairly mainstream audience they had the distinction of being created by Black British producers. As a consequence, while the drama explores issues of Black British identity, the narrative structure is not focused on 'otherness' and cultural difference, unlike ***Love Thy Neighbour***.

Disability/ability

Representations of disability on screen continue to be a taboo subject in British drama. The kind of ground-breaking work performed by The Mickee Faust Club in America (a performing ensemble composed of physically disabled actors) has yet to permeate television screens in the UK. The Faustketeers, as they are known, write and perform their own black comedy, which confronts the preconceptions of an able-bodied audience. Central to this is the right to take risks: one of the key philosophies of the group is that people with disabilities do not need protecting from themselves.

While some sitcoms, like BBC 3's ***Nighty Night*** (2004) have featured actors in wheelchairs, as Lynne Roper of the Stirling Media Research Institute points out, often these actors are not actually physically disabled themselves. Groundbreaking in this sense was the series ***All About Me*** (2002 to 2004), which starred the comedian Jasper Carrott as the father of a teenage boy with cerebral palsy played by Jamil Dhillon.

Perhaps the most significant work of contemporary British drama exploring issues of ability and disability is **Dennis Potter's** semi-autobiographical masterpiece ***The Singing Detective*** (1986). Unlike clichéd depictions of able-bodied actors strapped into wheelchairs, Potter's drama explores the inner world of Philip E. Marlow a bedridden detective writer during a stay in hospital. Effectively a prisoner in his own body, Marlow is suffering from a severe bout of psoriatic arthropathy (a chronic skin and joint disease), which Potter also endured for much of his adult life.

Potter's work is groundbreaking on a number of levels: not least for the way in which it blurs the distinction between the real and the simulated, as the drama shifts between the mundane life on the ward and the seedy underworld of wartime London. Likewise, it is an extremely stylised production that utilises ambitious camerawork and meticulous mise-en-scène detail. However, it is the way in which we begin to value Marlow's perspective from the bed that is most transforming in terms of the representation of disability: Marlow is not someone peripheral to the action but is its creator; his removedness offers a unique vantage point, what Potter himself viewed as a compensatory *ability*.

Gender and sex

From Lady Macbeth to Lady Bracknell the history of British drama is littered with powerful female characters. However, more often than not, these women are notable because they are the exception rather than the rule. In the representation of gender and sex on television the 1970s was a time of transformation. The rise of Feminism meant that representations of female characters were not restricted to the kitchen sink matriarchs of the generation that preceded them.

representations in TV drama

One of the most memorable characters from this period is, of course, Beverley in Mike Leigh's ***Abigail's Party*** (1978) – see page 36. Originally broadcast as part of the BBC's **Play for Today** series, the drama starred Alison Steadman as the overbearing host of a suburban cocktail party. In keeping with Leigh's other work, the play was put together in rehearsal through the improvisations of the cast. Though Steadman's character relies upon her husband to pay for the mortgage and the shopping, socially she is more emancipated and assertive: ridiculing his class pretensions and undermining his masculinity with her sexually provocative flirtations with her friend's husband.

Drama is a product of its time and it is interesting to note that a dominant theme in drama from the 1980s is the role of women in the work place. Kate O'Mara's role as Katherine Laker in the ill-fated BBC drama ***Triangle*** (1981 to 1983) (set aboard a North Sea car ferry) explores the tension created by the appointment of women to a position of power. Perhaps, the most explicit parody of Margaret Thatcher, however, was the character of Jan Howard in the BBC's ***Howards' Way***. Following the demise of her marriage, Jan embarks upon a business career in the fashion world aided no doubt by the power suits and big hair for which the UK's first female PM was also famous.

If the 1970s and 80s were about women, the television of the 90s was more plural in its representation of gender and sex. Though ***This Life*** (1996), a drama series focused on the exploits of a group of 20-something law graduates was revered at the time for its groundbreaking camerawork and editing, in retrospect it seems like a watershed moment in the representation of gender. Watching ***This Life*** at the time, it was the characters of Warren and Anna that seemed most controversial. The mild-mannered Warren's life as an openly gay London professional challenged the stereotyped representations of homosexuality of a previous generation. Likewise, the character of Anna shocked audiences with her upfront attitude towards sex. However, it was perhaps the character of Egg (played by Andrew Lincoln) that was most interesting.

Uncommitted to a career in the law, Egg drifts through much of the first series, supposedly writing a ***Fever-Pitch*-esque** novel about football. Taking financial support from girlfriend Millie, Lincoln's character challenges the representation of men as the breadwinner. Likewise a storyline that revolves around Egg's loss of sex-drive reverses stereotypes about gender and libido. ***This Life*** aired in the decade that gave us 'Lad Mags' like ***Loaded*** and ***FHM***. Watching ***This Life*** it seemed that the success of those titles was a symbolic of a more widespread crisis in modern masculinity.

Moving into the 21st century, a more balanced representation of modern masculinity has emerged. The actor John Simm, for example, has come to specialise in characters that embody a more subdued masculine code. The tension between this and his 1970s forebears is, of course, a central device in ***Life on Mars***: the tension between the modern masculinity of Sam Taylor and misogynist attitudes of Gene Hunt propels much of the drama in the sixteen episodes of Series 1.

Age

In the depiction of older people, it is perhaps the work of Alan Bennett that has done most to challenge stereotypes. ***Talking Heads*** (1987), a series of six 30 to 40-minute monologue broadcasts featured a roll call of famous names and is widely regarded as Bennett's masterpiece. Among representations of older people that challenge expectations is that of Irene (played by Patricia Routledge): a spinster in her late 50s who exchanges sexual favours for money with an ageing chiropodist. Likewise, Thora Hird's depiction of Doris, a woman of 75 who fears moving into a care home explores the demeaning way in which society treats the elderly.

Other works by Bennett that explore the complexities of growing older include ***Forty Years On*** (1968) and ***The History Boys*** (2004). The latter of course was made into a successful film in 2006, focusing upon the sexual chemistry and intellectual exchange between a group of grammar school boys preparing for Oxbridge exams and their much older schoolmasters. In the past decade it has been the depiction of homosexuality that has caused most controversy in the representation of young people. This reflects the lowering of the age of consent for gay men between 1997 and 2000 from 21 to 16.

Typical of this was ***Queer as Folk*** (1999), a Channel 4 drama produced by Russell T. Davies (***Doctor Who***) that aired for two series at the turn of the Millennium. The show caused controversy for its depiction of the relationship between 15-year-old Nathan and the much older Stuart. Another production that explored similar themes was the television film ***Clapham Junction*** (2007) written by Kevin Elyot to commemorate 40 years since the decriminalisation of homosexuality. Likewise, Julie Burchill's ***Sugar Rush*** (2006) focused on the life of 15-year-old lesbian Kim Daniels, reprising themes explored twenty years earlier (albeit less explicitly) in the BBC's adaptation of Jeanette Winterson's novel ***Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit*** (1985).

However, in recent years, the drama that has done most to challenge the depiction of young people is E4's ***Skins*** (2007 to present). Produced by Chris Cloud and set in Bristol, the series pulls no punches in its depiction of the lives of teenagers exploring issues such as under-age sex, homosexuality, alcoholism and drugs. Indeed the title has itself become a by word for teenage excess, with many unofficial '***Skins*** parties' being promoted on social networking sites like **Facebook** and **Bebo**.

Conclusion

Studying TV Drama is extremely challenging as the subject matter is so diverse. While the OCR specification may dictate that the extract used in the exam will be from a British drama series or one-off production (excluding sitcom but including soap), to restrict your study of the genre to the technical terms used for analysis is to curb your understanding of the way in which representations are a product of social history. Moreover, the history of TV drama is not discrete. Even allowing for soap and sitcom, the evolution of the genre cannot be considered in isolation from developments in film, theatre and literary fiction. Beyond this, in so far as TV Drama both shapes and reflects British society, the most significant moments in its history are intimately connected with the way in which we think about ourselves and our collective identity.

Stephen Hill is Head of Media at the Burgate School and Sixth Form Centre.

REVISITING THE DRAWING-ROOM COMEDY

Abigail's Party and representations of the New Middle Class

In his second article **Stephen Hill** homes in on a classic BBC drama which focuses on social class: *Abigail's Party.* Through textual analysis and historical context, he shows both what has changed and what remains constant over time.

Over thirty years after its debut, **Mike Leigh's *Abigail's Party*** (1978) remains a landmark piece of television drama. Ranked 11th in the British Film Institute's all-time top television programmes, the script, like all Leigh's work, was born out of improvisation. The piece is synonymous with the role of Beverley (played by Alison Steadman) and we never actually meet Abigail, whose party next door lends the plays its title. Rather, it is the informal gathering of neighbours to which Abigail's mother Sue has been invited that is the focus of all the drama.

Unlike landmark productions of the 1960s, such as Ken Loach's ***Cathy Come Home*** (1966), ***Abigail's Party*** is essentially a comedy of manners. And, in this sense, it has more in common with the drawing-room comedies of Oscar Wilde and Noel Coward than the gritty social realism of John Osborne or Arnold Wesker. Indeed, Leigh's play reflects the rise of the new middle class in the 1970s. While contemporary depictions of the era tend to dwell upon unemployment, social unrest and political instability, the 1970s were also a time of great social mobility.

In part the rise of the middle class in the 1970s can be attributed to the post-war grammar school system, which saw many children from working-class homes enter professions. It can also be viewed as a product of the rise of consumer credit: Barclaycard was the first credit card outside the US when it launched in the UK in 1966. Though the script does not explicitly refer to credit, it is implied by the 'newness' of

the furnishing, and Beverley's insistence that Lawrence is 'very good with the money' at the beginning of Act 2. Indeed, the emphasis on consumer lifestyle is invoked many times, through references to foreign travel, frozen food, cosmetics and the purchase of a car.

The extract I have chosen for the textual analysis is taken from towards the end of Act 1, just at the point when the cracks in the veneer of congenial suburban living first start to show. It directly precedes the departure of Sue to be sick in the toilet, after which the atmosphere is more that of a hostage crisis than a cocktail party. The scene is also notable for the sexual chemistry that starts to develop between the characters of Beverley and Tony.

Camerawork

The scene begins with a close-up of Beverley. Though this typically would be used to give insight, perhaps into the **inner thoughts** of a character, here it is used to reinforce **status**. This immediately cuts to a medium shot of Lawrence scuttling back and forth to Beverley's instructions. Though he is standing, his subordinate position is connoted by the control his wife has of his actions. As the camera pans to track his movement, the character Sue moves into the frame, her stony face connoting discomfort at the domestic rift between the evening's hosts.

This **camera movement** is typical of the way characters are tracked as they move about the confines of the suburban sitting room. For the audience this creates the illusion that they are in the room too, reinforced by the gentle zooming in and out on different characters as they speak, and the way in which the focus shifts.

Specific camera-angles are used throughout the scene to reinforce aspects of status and class. Both Beverley and Tony, for example, are persistently shot from **low-angles** which reinforce their alpha position in the group. This, however, runs counter to the class hierarchy: Sue represents the old-guard middle class, but is usually shot in ways that make her seem superfluous to the scene. This can be interpreted in two ways. On the one hand, it reinforces the idea that the **aspirational values** of the new middle-class have ousted the more traditional attitudes that Sue represents. On the other hand, it also implies that for all their posture and swagger, class interlopers like Beverley and Lawrence, will never be considered equal to their more understated forebears.

One of the most interesting aspects of the camerawork is the way in which the use of **medium long shots emphasises the mise-en-scène**. From a contemporary perspective this is perhaps part of the pleasure: the leather sofa, glass topped dining suite and elaborate G-Plan sideboard (complete with built in drinks cabinet) seem to epitomise all that seems kitsch about 1970s interior design. Indeed, revivals of the stage play always revisit this period set. However, at the time of its original broadcast, Lawrence and Beverley's home would have epitomised good taste and style amongst the aspirational lower middle class: a forerunner of today's obsession with IKEA.

Editing

The editing and post-production in ***Abigail's Party*** is fairly minimal by today's standards, and, of course, this reflects the drama's origins as a **stage play** as well as the production values of the BBC's **Play for Today** series. The use of straight cuts, for example, connotes the fact that the play takes place in real time. Though each of the characters has a back-story, to which the script alludes, Leigh's narrative does not use flashbacks.

One of the most interesting aspects of the editing in ***Abigail's Party*** is the way in which **the moving image is cut to the speed of the dialogue**. This reinforces the primacy of the script in this kind of drama. As with Wilde and Coward, Leigh's play is all about the **nuance and wit of the dialogue**. It is not a very physical play, and to the uninitiated, it would seem that very little happens during the whole 100 minutes, until the death of Lawrence at the very end.

Throughout the production, sound is generally synchronous to image, with the exception of the occasional jump-cut that allows us to view the facial expression of characters implicated in the dialogue. This effectively reinforces the **point-of-view perspective** and the audience's sense of **identification** with Beverley's trapped guests, particularly Sue. The positioning of the audience in support of the most middle-class character is an interesting device. On the one hand, we sympathise with Sue and much of the humour is based on recognising the pretentiousness of the other characters. On the other hand, ***Abigail's Party*** is also aimed at, and enjoyed by, just the kind of aspirational middle-class audience it mocks and much of the humour is based upon the recognition of our own bad behaviour in that of Beverley and her guests.

Sound

Unsurprisingly, for a piece of TV drama that started life on the stage, **the use of sound** in ***Abigail's Party*** is central to the construction of meaning. In particular, although the script has its origins in improvisation, there is an arch, mannered quality to the delivery that challenges realism. In particular, the strained musicality with which Beverly refers to Lawrence as 'darling' betrays the insincerity of the sentiment. Though much of the humour in ***Abigail's Party*** is derived from the acute social observation, this scene does feature an uncharacteristic one-liner from Sue. In response to Angela's incessant questioning about her estranged husband's beard (and the circumstance that led to its removal) Sue declares 'he just sort of grew out of it'. This ambiguous response, which implies that facial hair connotes both a lack of maturity and sophistication closes the subject for Angela, whose husband sports his own rather ostentatious beard.

Accent is another central motif of class belonging in ***Abigail's Party***. The thinly disguised estuary tones of Beverley, Angela and Tony, for example, betray their working-class origins. Counterpoised with this is the more 'Received Pronunciation' of Sue, which singles her out as the only genuinely middle-class member of the group. Somewhere in between is Lawrence, whose accent shifts according to who he is speaking to: for example, when addressing Sue his speech is much slower and more deliberate, while, when addressing Tony, he is less guarded.

Interestingly, in this section of the play, it is in fact the soundtrack that is central to the conflict between Lawrence and Beverley. At the beginning of the scene tension mounts as the only ambient sound is that of glasses chinking and the incidental sound of the characters moving around the set. In an attempt to lift the mood Lawrence wants the group to listen to James Galway, an artist whom he describes as 'a very up and coming young flautist'. However, Beverley vetoes this on the grounds that she does not want to listen to what she terms 'classical music'. Instead, Beverly's preference is for the popular Greek star Demis Roussos. On the surface her preference for the sentimental and middlebrow suggests the limitations of her own social aspirations. However, Lawrence's taste for 'light classical' condemns him also, as both pretentious and untutored in what constitutes real classical music – as reinforced by Sue's unfamiliarity with Galway.

For some people the trivial and repetitious nature of the dialogue in ***Abigail's Party*** is irritating. And, of course, this was very much Mike Leigh's intention: the play is, in effect, an exploration of what happens when the same stock phrases and worn out idioms are repeated beyond the point of comfort. Typical of this is Tony and Beverley's conversation about holidaying in Majorca – at that time a relatively new venue for package holidays:

Beverley: It's a fantastic drink, Bacardi, isn't it?
Tony: Yeah
Beverley: Yeah
Tony: I first started drinking it when I went to Majorca
Beverley: You've been to Majorca?
Tony: Yeah
Beverley: Ah, great. Where d'you go?
Tony: Palma
Beverley: Not Palma Nova
Tony: That's right yeah?
Beverley: Oh fantastic, isn't it beautiful there?
Tony: Yeah
Beverley: They drink it very long there don't they, with lots of ice and Coke and all that, yeah. It's my dream, actually, just lying on the beach sipping Bacardi-and-Coke.

On the surface this exchange is banal and does little to move the drama forward. However, in the disclosure of information concerning both foreign tourism and premium brand alcoholic drinks, it is loaded with narratives of class. Moreover, in establishing this common vocabulary of consumer aspiration Beverley and Tony are sewing the seeds of their subsequent romantic flirtations.

Mise-en-scène

The problem with viewing a television drama some thirty years after it was first broadcast is that inevitably the mise-en-scène looks somewhat dated. As a consequence some of the nuance in the complex visual grammar is lost, with the danger that we view the set and costumes as just 'retro' and 'kitsch'. However, this

ignores the complex and subtle way choices of clothing and furniture reveal clues as to the individual characters' sense of class identity.

In the first instance, dealing with the house, it is worth observing that Lawrence, an estate agent, is fully conversant with the way in which the choice of home betrays wider systems of belief. This is something he tries to draw Sue upon, when he asks for her thoughts on the sort of people who have moved into the newer houses in the area:

Susan: Well … there are the new houses on the other side of Ravensway
Lawrence: Ah, yes, the houses! But what about the people?
Susan: What about them?
Lawrence: The class of people, now don't you think that's changed?

At no point in the play are we told of the age of Beverley and Lawrence's house, but judging by the open-plan layout we can assume that it is substantially newer than Sue's 1936 built property. This preference for the very new is reinforced by the décor and furniture, all of which is fixed in the 1970s. This is very significant to the identity of the new middle class: there is, for example, no antique furniture or family heirloom augmenting a more modern style as would be found in a more traditional middle-class home.

This preference for the more showy and ostentatious is reinforced by the clothing codes. Beverley, for example, is over-dressed for an evening in her own home, wearing a low cut full-length evening dress in garish orange. Likewise, Ange sports a rather hideous parody of this, in pastel blue. For Beverley this reinforces her status as an emancipated woman: she is carnal and predatory. In the case of Ange, the dress serves to highlight her ungainly manner and lack of feminine charm. Likewise, the men are formally attired: Lawrence in a suit and waistcoat, more suited for business and Tony in a more relaxed lounge suit. Though this is perhaps a reflection of the more formal clothing conventions of the period, it is also very indicative of the social aspirations of the new middle class. Tellingly, Sue is the only character who has not dressed up for the occasion. Once again this reinforces the idea that she is socialising with her inferiors, as she clearly does not view the occasion as worthy of special effort.

Conclusion

Revisiting a classic television drama like ***Abigail's Party*** demonstrates how far television production has come in terms of the technical construction of a moving-image text. By modern standards of camerawork, editing and post-production the **Play for Today** values seems somewhat rudimentary and low-tech. Similarly, in view of the more gritty social realism that preceded it, it is tempting to discount ***Abigail's Party*** as a 'period piece', to be viewed ironically, like the ***Rocky Horror Show*** or ***Grease***. However, that would be to deny the subtle and complex way in which Leigh's production explores issues of social class at a key moment of transition in the 1970s. Moreover, for a TV audience familiar with the routine use of CGI and high-definition cinematography, the primitive quality of the **Play for Today** format serves only to reinforce the strength of the original script. Indeed, it is hard to imagine contemporary television producers being allowed to create a 100-minute production set only in one room. However, what ***Abigail's Party*** is crying out for is a sensitive and subtle remake (perhaps by Leigh himself) that updates the original script for a contemporary audience and moves the play away from the camp comedy zone into which so much popular culture of the 1970s seems already to have been deposited.

Stephen Hill is Head of Media at the Burgate School and Sixth Form Centre.

Image credit: BBC for *Abigail's Party*

Being Human

In the first of our double-whammy on creatures of the night, we ask: what does it mean to be human? Can **James Rose** find out with the help of a vampire, a werewolf and a ghost?

Origins

Being Human began its life as a pilot commissioned by Koei Karpe, Controller of BBC 3, as part of the channel's rebranding. First broadcast on 18th February 2008, the pilot received overwhelmingly strong viewing figures (peaking at nearly 450,000 viewers) and positive reviews, particularly by Narin Bahar, a journalist for the ***Reading Chronicle***. Bahar was so taken by the show he set up an online petition lobbying BBC 3 to commission a series. ***Being Human*** creator/writer Toby Whitehouse said of this response:

> **It was nothing short of amazing. I was getting emails from people I'd never met saying how much they enjoyed it! And then I heard that there was an online petition, fan groups and forums all going crazy about the pilot. I couldn't believe it! I kept looking at the petition and the number of signatures was getting bigger and bigger and bigger. I will always feel an enormous amount of debt of gratitude to everyone who supported the show.**

With such support, a first series was commissioned by **Jane Tranter, Controller, BBC Fiction and Danny Cohen, Controller, BBC 3.** Viewing figures for the first series shifted between 1,092,000 for Episode One to 1,086,000 for the final episode. With such viewing figures and sustained positive critical response to the series, the BBC recently announced they had commissioned a second series.

Being Human?

The basic premise of ***Being Human*** is, as the title indicates, an exploration and questioning of what it actually is to be 'human' – what qualities and actions are necessary within individuals (***Being Human***/Human Being) to define them as 'normal'? To try and answer this question, the narrative cleverly makes its protagonists the very opposite of what it intends to explore. Instead of being regular drama characters with normal jobs and normal lives, the three central characters of ***Being Human*** have normal jobs but are far from normal themselves; one of them, **Mitchell** (Aidan Turner) is a **vampire**, **George** (Russell Tovey) is a **werewolf** and the other, **Annie** (Lenora Crichlow) is a **ghost**. Actor Russell Tovey comments:

> **A lot of people in life struggle with this [desire to be 'normal'] if they're somehow different. They just want to be the norm but the point is what is the norm?**

The presence of the supernatural creates a two-fold sense of drama: each of the three protagonists is struggling not only to become 'normal' but trying desperately to reconcile their own supernatural differences. As a consequence, the series successfully fuses the concerns of the twenty-something drama (love, relationships, friends, and work) with the internal struggles of each character. Mitchell feels immense guilt for those he has killed or turned into vampires, feelings that run so deep that he no longer drinks blood. George is in denial about his condition as a werewolf, seeing it as a curse or a disease which renders him unable to have a normal life, a normal job and a normal relationship, whilst Annie, a confused spectre, struggles to come to terms not only with her own death but with the bereavement felt by her family and the fact that her fiancé, Owen, has quickly moved on with his life. As **Julie Gardner (Head of Drama Commissioning for BBC Wales)** has stated, the series is 'an extraordinary journey' in which Mitchell, George and Annie all

> **battle their inner demons and the outside world and struggle to find out what it really means to be human.**

Being family?

Inevitably, **by sharing a house together the three protagonists form a family unit**: with Mitchell being the eldest (he claims to be at least 118 years old) and the most experienced, he naturally fulfils **the role of the father** whilst the bond between George and Annie grows into one that suggests they behave **more like brother and sister** than friends. Given this relationship between George and Annie, Mitchell can also be read as **the older brother**, the one who has already experienced what the two younger characters are going through. In this respect, he embodies the supernatural experiences that both

Touchpaper and RDF Media for *Being Human*

George and Annie have found themselves involved in: as a vampire, Mitchell has died and returned back to life, not unlike a ghost, whilst his vampiric condition has changed him into something that isn't human and that has a predatory blood lust, a quality that is no different to that of the werewolf. **With these multiple roles and experiences, the series positions Mitchell at the centre of the narrative**: it is his desire and belief that they can all lead normal lives that propels the story forward, particularly as, throughout the episodes, he encourages George to interact with women and work colleagues, and supports Annie's bereavement by taking her out to meet other ghosts and to find out why she is in limbo. Of this relationship, actress Crichlow has said of Mitchell:

> **He's kind of in charge and Annie looks up to him to make sure everything's OK. He gives her a lot of reassurance and she feels safe in his presence. He's so old, he's been there, done it all, he seems to be a bit more knowing. He's there for Annie, he's her rock.**

This sense of support is also reflected in Mitchell and George's relationship, a quality established when the first two meet: working as a chef in a small restaurant, George is savagely assaulted by a group of vampires when they realise he is a werewolf. Before they kill him, the attack is stopped by Mitchell and so begins their relationship. **Central to this partnership is the very difference between the two men**: as indicated by the vampires' attack on George, vampires have a strong dislike for werewolves, yet Mitchell sees the potential George has and recognises in him the same urge to want to be human once more.

Through their difference then comes similarity and unity. Although friends, a fundamental sense of 'human' difference is maintained throughout the episodes as Mitchell is calm and collected whereas George is stressed and often panics. Whereas Mitchell is comfortable with women, George is clumsy and self-conscious and whereas Mitchell believes they can both lead normal human lives, George is not so sure. Perhaps the most telling difference between them is that Mitchell has accepted he is a vampire but George cannot accept that, through no fault of his own, he is now a werewolf. As actor Russell Tovey says of this relationship:

> **[George] loves Mitchell to pieces but he has a problem with him in the fact that Mitchell seems to be so sorted and cool and calm and collected, whereas George is this neurotic Jewish, at times slightly camp guy! They have a kind of odd couple relationship.**

Being happy?

By the end of Series 1, both George and Annie have finally come to terms with who and what they are: instead of being afraid and ashamed of his condition as a werewolf, George accepts this as a fundamental part of himself in the penultimate episode. With this new found sense of self, he realises he can not only engage in emotional relationships with 'normal' people (which he does, with Nina, a Senior Staff Nurse at the hospital where he works) but it also allows him to save Mitchell from his confrontation with Herrick, the homicidal leader of the vampires: meeting together in the hospital basement, George transforms before Herrick and, without hesitation, attacks him and appears to decapitate him. This violent attack is a cathartic moment for George, as he not only successfully vanquishes the threat posed to his friend, but also gains vengeance for the severe beating he took from three vampires when he met Mitchell.

There is also a further sense of cathartic release in this moment for, as George begins his transformation, Nina appears and, to her horror, witnesses the painful change take place. The morning after, George sits with Nina and they talk about his condition, concluding with Nina accepting that it is a fundamental part of George's character. In these scenes, Nina's acceptance seems a little quick, a little predictable, although the closing images of the scene reveal the reason for her easy acceptance: when Nina asks George how he became a werewolf, he describes how his body was badly scratched during an attack upon him by a wild animal. After his first transformation, he realised he had been attacked by a werewolf and somehow, through the scratches,

he became 'infected' with the werewolf 'virus'. When George leaves the room to make them a cup of tea, Nina pauses before following him; she rolls up her shirt sleeve and reveals deep but healing scratches, injuries inflicted upon her by George when she tried to intervene in his transformation. She is, this concluding scene implies, now a werewolf herself.

Like George's cathartic act of acceptance and subsequent protection of Mitchell, Annie's narrative conclusion follows a similar tangent: realising that she was murdered by her fiancé, Owen, Annie reaps her revenge first by haunting him and then, in a final destructive act, whispering something in his ear. This 'something' is not heard by the viewer, but its consequences are seen as Owen very quickly slips into insanity, convinced that 'they are out to get him'. Having made right the wrong of her death, Annie is given the opportunity to pass over into the afterlife; but just as she is about to, Mitchell is attacked and mortally injured. Realising she cannot leave him to die, Annie helps to get Mitchell to the hospital, a selfless act that traps her in limbo forever.

The conclusions of these two characters' narrative arcs suggest that to be human, to be 'normal', we must both accept who we fundamentally are and that some friendships are so strong and so valuable that one is willing to sacrifice their life (or their afterlife in Annie's case) in order to help, save and protect them. In the end, then, the monsters of this series are far from the traditional concept of the monstrous: Mitchell, George and Annie may well be supernatural but their actions and emotional responses to the world around them and, more importantly, to each other, is most definitely and most admirably human.

James Rose is a freelance writer in Film and Media Studies, specialising in Horror, Fantasy and Science Fiction.

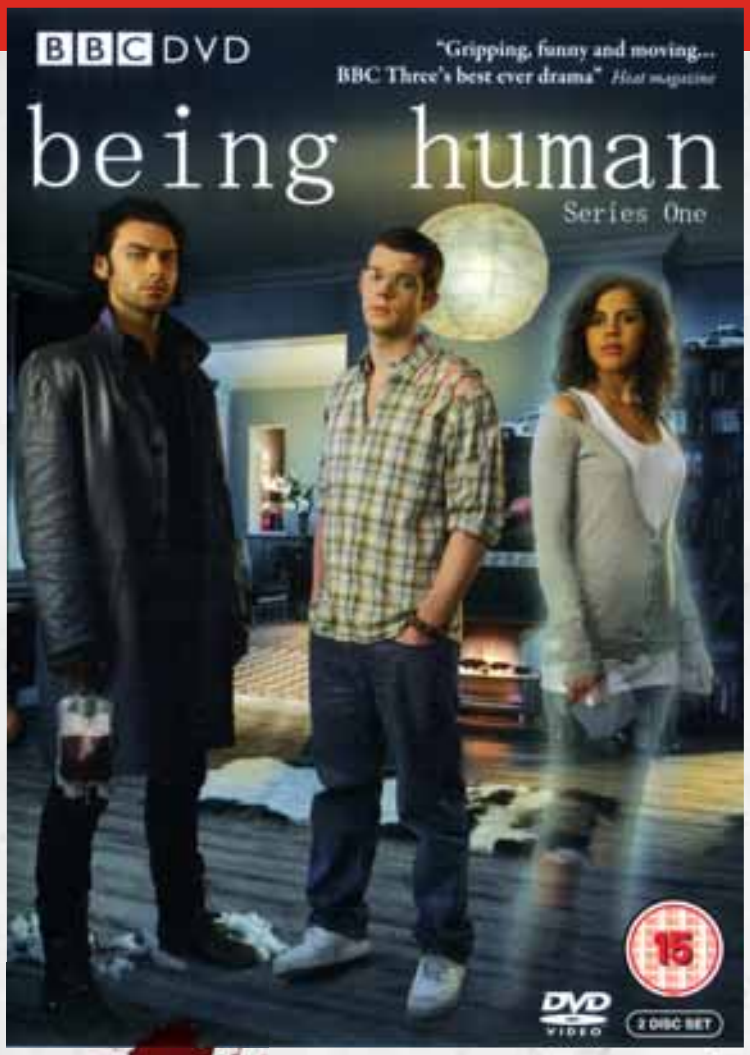
Follow it up

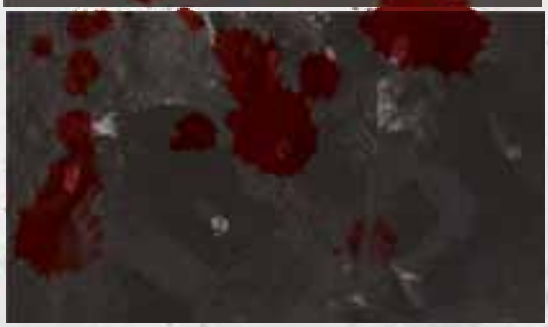
Being Human – Official BBC Website: http://www.bbc.co.uk/beinghuman/

Being Human – Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Being_Human_(TV_series)

'More Humanity', *The Reading Chronicle:* http://www.readingchronicle.co.uk/articles/6/690

All quotations are taken from the Press Pack.





DVD cover: image analysis

The official ***Being Human*** microsite offers a gallery of images, all of which are available for the audience to download freely as desktop wallpapers. One of these has been used as the cover for the recently released Region 2 DVD of the series. The cover appears to be a standard promotional image of the three protagonists standing in their living room but a closer observation reveals it to be coded with an **immense array of character, supernatural and cultural references**: the most obvious of these are Mitchell holding a blood transfusion bag, George's shirt ripped open by what appear to be claw marks and Annie leg's fading away whilst more subtle elements include the large white light shade positioned just behind and above George's head (this is clearly a representation of the full moon) and the shredded cow toy at his feet. In relation to Mitchell, **Dracula's** cape is hung on the coat stand (there is also a jacket hung next to it which is exactly the same as the one **Michael Jackson wears in the music promo for *Thriller***, in which he turns onto a werewolf) and the shadow of a coffin falls near his feet. A string of garlic hangs from the mantelpiece and a small ornate coffin is stood up on the shelf. Finally, objects that connect to Annie include a toy version of the car from ***Ghostbusters,*** a Ouija Board in the coal scuttle and a vase full of funereal lilies can be seen through the door way into the next room.

Representations, genre and wider contexts:

the vampire as metaphor in Let the Right One In and Twilight

Duncan Yeates explores how the dark world of the vampire can help students of AQA's MEST 3 unpick concepts of representation, and their symbolic and political meanings.

The upcoming academic year will see the introduction of the new A2 Media Studies specification by AQA. Its first module, MEST 3, focuses on Critical Perspectives – a topic featuring two areas for investigation and exploration: **representations in the media** and **the impact of new digital media**. Students are encouraged to use these topic areas as a jumping off point to conduct their own research as opposed to relying on a teacher-led approach on one subject. So, what should a case study look like?.

To begin with, a close examination of the new specification makes the expectations of MEST 3 clear.

> **Candidates will be given two pre-set topics for study during the year, which they will explore across one or more of the three media platforms [...] Each of the topic areas will allow candidates to explore media issues and debates, theory and wider contexts [...] Each individual candidate should produce a case study of their own choice for each pre-set topic selected.**

In this article, I will be looking at the **representations** of vampires **in the media**. I have decided to focus on two very current texts to enable a more lively and relevant discussion of context. My case study focuses on the following:

- **an analysis** of how vampires are constructed in the media
- **the political/social context** surrounding representations of vampires and the effects they have on audiences
- **cross-cultural contextual factors** in the representation of vampires in the media.

My hypothesis is that **vampires serve as metaphors for exploring social taboos and making political statements** – in Freudian terms they can be used to embody the idea of the id – pure animalistic urge and desire unrestrained by the civilising ego or super ego. This lack of refinement and bestial status enables writers and film-makers to explore more controversial ideas than they could with human characters.

***Let the Right One In* (dir. Tomas Alfredson)** is a Swedish vampire film adapted into a screenplay by John Ajvide Lindqvist from his original novel.

An interesting anecdote about the production of the film is when the project was started the producer John Nordling was selected by Lindqvist as producer even though by his own admission, he was '48th on the list' of the desired producers. The reason? A shared vision with Lindqvist of how the movie should be made.

The vampire stereotype

Consider the stereotypical representation of vampires and there are a few broad codes and generic conventions. These include pale skin, dark clothing, fangs, blood, and an inability to withstand sunlight or to enter a house unless invited. However, ***Let the Right One In*** makes it harder than your average vampire movie to identify who fits this stereotypical representation: Eli has pale skin, a mysterious manner and black hair, but it is her servant or protector, Hakan, who stalks and kills local residents, hanging them upside down to drain their blood. Later on in the film, we see Eli engage in some much more typical Vampiric behaviour such as licking up Oskar's spilt blood and attacking two unsuspecting citizens. Even so, the number of killings perpetrated by Eli is low compared with many other conventional 'vampire' movies. In effect, Eli spends less screen time being a vampire than she does being a friend and protector to the subliminally aggressive Oskar. Therefore, it could be suggested that the representation of vampires in ***Let the Right One In*** is deliberately subtle to **discourage a dominant 'horror flick' reading** and direct the audience to its much more salient **points about Swedish society.**

The dominant representation of Sweden in the media is as a liberal country with a low crime rate and excellent public health service. However, other oppositional readings suggest it suffers from problems with gang culture and violence, as well as an increase in mental problems amongst its young people. According to the publication, *Nursing Science & Research in the Nordic Countries*

published on 22nd December 2006:

In Sweden, mental disorders or ill health is one of the major public health problems in children and young people. Government studies have shown that at least 5-10% of all young people have some sort of mental problem [...] Mental problems can involve internal problems (e.g., anxiety, depression and somatic complaints), they can constitute external problems (e.g., aggressiveness and lack of self-control) and they can involve difficulties in concentration.

http://www.accessmylibrary.com/coms2/summary_0286-32164193_ITM

Vampires and violence

Oskar and Eli's relationship and their behaviour could be considered an on-screen embodiment of some of these issues. Although Oskar is bullied he represses his aggression, lacking the confidence to act upon his violent urges. Earlier on in the film he is shown attacking a telephone mast with a knife, fantasising that it is one of his bullies. Additionally, towards the end of the film when Eli rescues him from the bullies he fears, his relief, pleasure and ambivalence are palpable even though one child is shown to be brutally decapitated. Oskar is not a vampire and his behaviour is disturbing to say the least.

This then leads us to the crux of our argument that one of the institutional values and ideologies behind this film is **social and political commentary**. Eli's fairly understated representation as a vampire enables the film to address its Swedish audience and make some social comments about the behaviour of its young people. To consider the issue of increasing mental disturbance amongst young people offers the viewer the **Blumler and Katz use and gratification of surveillance**. Eli's status as a non-human character enables a more graphic and serious exploration of what is in stark fact a pre-pubescent murderer and her accomplice. Thus Eli serves as a metaphor and a way of exploring these issues that is much more palatable to an audience than a 'real child murderer'.

To wrap up the film's more universal relevance, with some consideration of cross-cultural context, the Hammer Films have an English version planned for 2010. Could there be an equally relevant message here for the 'alienated' youth of Britain?

Twilight

Stephenie Meyer's novel ***Twilight*** has also received the film adaptation treatment (dir. Catherine Hardwicke) and, interestingly, despite a larger cast of vampire characters it does not really surpass ***Let the Right One In*** in its use of blood-sucking codes and conventions. Fundamentally, the representations here are more homogenised and inoffensive; the film is marketed as a romance to increase its mainstream appeal. If we compare the main vampire character, Edward Cullen, with Eli he is somewhat neutered. Unlike Eli he is able to go out in the daylight, he is conventionally attractive – something which is often a key feature of vampire lore. Pale and possessing a pair of fangs, he fails to use them due to his abstinence from human blood-taking. He evinces a much stronger ability to control himself than Eli whose desperation is relayed throughout ***Let the Right One In***. Equally, his presence in the mise-en-scène of a country home with a nuclear family contrasts starkly with Eli's secluded and transient existence. In short, if the representation of Eli in ***Let the Right One In*** is subtle, the representation of Cullen in ***Twilight*** is practically subversive using the barest minimum of the codes and conventions of the horror genre to signify his vampire status. Why he is represented in this way?

Twilight is a mainstream movie with a big production company behind it. Initially, the film was in production for three years at Paramount before being put into pre-production by Summit Entertainment. When released it grossed over £70

million in the US and Canada alone. How does a 'vampire' film make this kind of money?

Horror and vampire movies are often associated with a Goth or sub-cultural audience demographic – something likely to alienate many people who consider themselves part of mainstream society. Therefore, much like ***Let the Right One In***, the codes and conventions of the horror genre in ***Twilight*** are blunted and represented in a more generic way to avoid disengaging a mass audience, while the codes and conventions of romance are promoted to attract them. This also has the effect of making the film's ideological messages more far-reaching.

Sexuality and abstinence

Ideologically, Edward Cullen's passion for blood is **a metaphor for the sexual urge**. America has a huge problem with teenage pregnancy and has the highest birth rate amongst teenagers in the developed world. According to figures from UNICEF, 55.6 of every 1000 American teenagers between the ages of 15-19 fall pregnant each year. (UNICEF, July 2001; http://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/repcard3e.pdf). The consequence of this problem is that many American teenagers from Evangelical Christian backgrounds have taken the Virginity Pledge – a promise to remain sexually abstinent until they are married. Can it be a coincidence that Meyer herself is a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints?

Therefore, it could be argued that by sticking closely to the plot and authorial messages of the original book, the institutions behind the film version of ***Twilight*** have infused it with an ideology of sexual abstinence where the central vampire character serves as a metaphor for the male sexual urge.

Regarding cross-cultural contexts, ***Twilight*** has also been a great success in Britain, a country that is similarly concerned with its teenage pregnancy rates. Interestingly, Robert Pattinson has been touted as a sex symbol by gossip and celebrity magazines – publications that are often aimed at a young female target audience demographic. This leaves us with one final question connected to ***Twilight***'s cross cultural appeal and mass success – is Pattinson a poster boy for sexual abstinence?

It is interesting to speculate what the future holds for the codes and conventions of the on-screen vampire as it becomes progressively more homogenised. Could removing the real fangs from two of its most mainstream representations in recent years result in less bitingly dangerous social commentary from the powerfully symbolic figure of the vampire?

Duncan Yeates teaches Media and is a Deputy Head of English at Mounts Bay School in Penzance, Cornwall.

MoreMediaMag

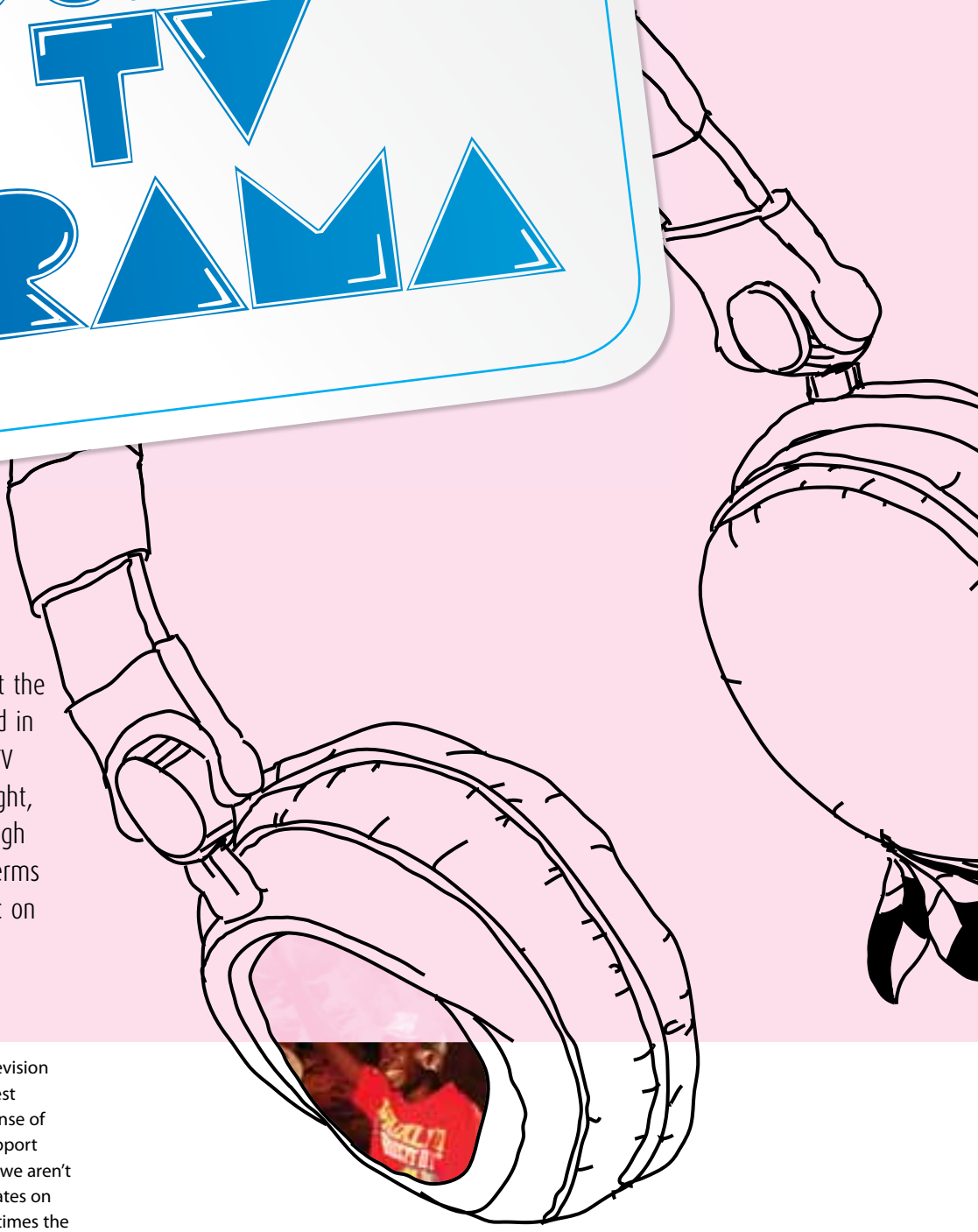
Let the Right One In seems to have captured everyone's imagination since its release. To see some recent responses, visit **MoreMediaMag** and read a selection of reviews from AQA AS students at Wreake Valley Community College, Leicester. And watch out for our Fantasy issue in February, when Eli and Oskar might just make another appearance...

The Blair Witch Project, Dir: Myrick, Daniel/Sanchez, E (1999)Credit: Artisan Pics/The Kobal Collection

Lina Leandersson in *Lat Den Rätte Komma In*, Dir: Alfredson, Thomas (2008) Credit: Fido Film Ab/The Kobal Collection

Twilight: image.net

MUSIC IN TV DRAMA



Examiners often comment that the use of music is under-analysed in students' textual analyses of TV drama. To put the record straight, **Chris Budd** guides you through some of the key issues and terms you'll need in analysing music on screen.

One feature shared by most good television dramas is a creative use of music. The best dramas use music not just to create a sense of location and time period, but also to support and drive along their storytelling. Often we aren't even aware the music is there as it operates on an almost subconscious level, but sometimes the music is designed to be noticed as an integral part of the drama.

So what are the different ways music can work in television drama?

MUSIC IN TV DRAMA

Representing time and place

Importantly, music can be used to represent **a location or a time**. Think of how music is often used in 'period' drama to represent Tudor or Victorian times, or the future, or how it might be used very generically to represent the Far East, for example. Because music exists that really comes from those places and times (except for the future of course – although a number of composers have tried to imagine it), influences from them can be woven into the music of the drama to a greater or lesser degree as the producers require. Sometimes the music can be historically very accurate; sometimes it's more of a modern Western interpretation. Often it's a fusion of the two that is the most successful: think of the music for HBO's ***Rome*** which uses a careful balance of historical and ethnic instruments with more contemporary arrangements.

Sometimes the music has come to represent a certain place or time simply through **repeated association**. It's hard to imagine a World War 2 drama, for example, without the Nazis being accompanied by the kind of Wagner-esque music that has been used so much over the years.

Creating emotion

More subtly, the music can also work on a **purely emotional level**. We certainly recognise when music is happy or sad, ponderous or exciting, and so that type of 'mood' scoring is often very useful for reinforcing the emotional content of the drama. It is interesting to note that some shows, such as ***Mad Men***, create **a sense of moral uncertainly by deliberately *not* using music** for this purpose, leaving us to decide what's morally and dramatically good and bad in the story. This can be a curiously unsettling viewing experience.

Leitmotifs

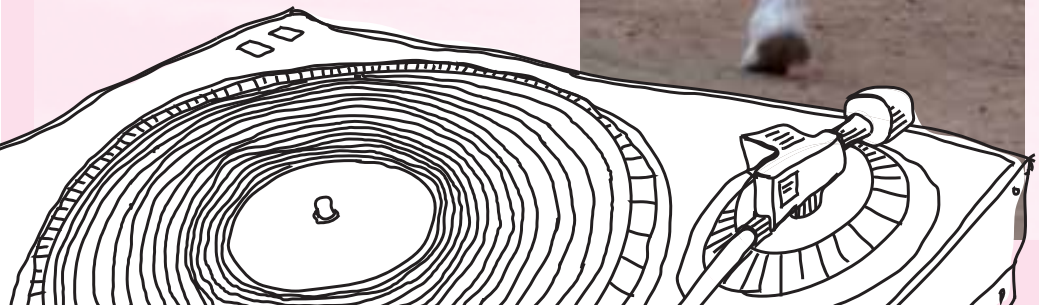
A person or object in the drama may have its own theme (or **leitmotif**), usually just a short melody, and by using that theme in different variations, or even when the person or thing is not present, the music can bring them or it to mind, and influence how we feel about them.

Of course, the best music in drama is often doing several of these things at once. In ***Heroes***, for example, the serial killer Sylar is often accompanied by his particular theme, an ominous, methodical, brooding piece of music, containing the sounds of ticking clocks and bells. This works to remind us of his past as a watchmaker, and of his power to understand the inner workings of things. It shows the killer's methodical nature by reflecting his slow, deliberate movements, and through its unwavering tempo and sustained low notes it both reflects the character's unemotional approach to his calling, while setting us up to be scared!

Music as structure

In addition to its storytelling or 'narrative' functions, music can help to structure the drama, linking it all together as a whole. There is a variety of different pieces of music that a standard drama will use, each fulfilling a slightly different function.

- **Theme music**: very important, as it dictates the tone and feel of the show, and will be the same from week to week. Increasingly American dramas use a **Cold Open** where the show starts immediately, and is punctuated with a very short piece of theme music. This is becoming more popular in the UK too.
- The **underscore**: all the 'atmospheric' music in the drama. This is often the music's most basic function: by use of **tempo, dynamics and instrumentation** a composer can keep the drama rolling along, but all too often this type of scoring is overused and unnecessary. This term usually includes **'action' and 'tension' sequences**, however, which often do need careful use of music to be effective.
- **Structural cues**: TV drama is still usually broken into **three acts**. There will usually be small musical cues that **punctuate** these and help us move in and out of the act (perhaps to adverts). One of these will eventually close the programme and lead in to the end credits, so it must be composed specifically for that task.
- **Bridge** or **link**: a piece of music designed to cover **a cut from one place or time to another**, usually with a change of tone or mood. There will usually be several of these in an act.



Composing for TV

Music for television drama is usually written and recorded by a single composer commissioned specifically for the job. Composers will be selected based on their previous work (which may take the form of a showreel or 'best of…') and sometimes will be asked to **pitch**. This will usually mean composing and recording a piece of music very quickly (sometimes in just a few hours) based on just a very short description or **brief** of what's needed. This could be very general or very specific, there are no hard and fast rules, but sometimes the producers will have a number of songs or pieces of music to give the composer an idea of the kind of thing they want. Sometimes they may have even put some of these against the pictures in the form of a **temp track** to give the producer even more of an idea what's required.

The lucky composer who gets the job will be paid a fee, sometimes called the **synchronisation fee or sync fee** and they will also get payments from the **Performing Rights Society** every time the work is broadcast. Over years of repeats on various channels these royalty payments can often work out to be much higher than the initial fee, which may be nominal.

The composer usually has **a very short deadline to work to** and will work closely with the producer to make sure the music matches his or her vision – which may mean many revisions and some last-minute overnight changes. In film work, it is the director who works most closely with the composer, but in television producers are much more closely, and more consistently connected with the project. The composer is **responsible for paying any musicians they use (at Musician's Union rates) out of his or her fee**, so the advent of good-quality samples and software instruments has been a blessing to this part of the industry.

The organisation **PCAM (The Producers and Composers of Applied Music)** exists to guide composers on all these issues and help protect their rights.

Diegetic music

One very important type of music in drama we haven't yet touched upon is **source music** or **diegetic music**. By this we mean any music that really exists in the fictional world of the drama, and that the characters in the drama can hear, for example on a radio or at a club or gig. This music will usually be carefully chosen to comment on, and reflect, the narrative of the show.

The music chosen can create an obvious sense of time and place, as in the BBC drama ***Ashes to Ashes***. In creating a realistic vision of 1980s Britain, the producers use a lot of relevant source music. In a recent interview with ***SFX*** magazine Matthew Graham, the show's executive producer explained how the music is chosen even at script stage

All the writers are encouraged to cherrypick their ideal soundtrack. Sometimes you can't get it, obviously, for rights issues, or

other times the director or the editor puts in something else that works better [...] I definitely tell all the writers to put music in the script, because it's part of the character of the show. You've got to get your music right.

The music from the second series of the show has been made available, via the 'red button', immediately after the show, and the BBC have also released two compilation CDs from the show. Additionally, the BBC website lists every song used and provides some music videos. The BBC has clearly gone to lengths to cross-promote the music of the show which provides a revenue stream for the copyright holders of the music, but also gives ***Ashes to Ashes*** its period feel.

The Channel 4 drama ***Skins*** also uses a great deal of source music very effectively, and has actually **created a new industry model** by actively pushing very new music as part of the soundtrack. In an interview with ***The Observer*** earlier this year **Alex Hancock, *Skins'* Head of Music**, was described as being 'the youngest, most obstreperous, most knowledgeable music fan' the producers could find. He was hired for his deep knowledge of and love for unsigned bands and still selects much of the music for the show via blogs, live gigs and DJ sets, and in some cases via mailed demo tapes.

Being featured as part of the soundtrack to ***Skins'*** first two series was what broke the bands Gossip and MGMT. For the series' third season, the producers invited unsigned acts to send music in to the show, the best of which was used. Since the brand (as it now is) has grown to encompass compilation album releases and the ***Skins* Live** tour, the potential benefit for musicians getting their music on the soundtrack are huge – but the show also benefits by gaining a reputation as the champion of new music and thus having a genuine cutting-edge credibility.

Copyright and licenses

An important factor alluded to in Matthew Graham's quote above is one of **rights**. On other drama shows that use a lot of source music, the person charged with finding it and clearing it for use is usually called the **Music Supervisor**. They have the job of licensing each track they use and this can be a complex legal business – in fact many organisations exist just to license works for use on TV and in films. The costs can be vast though, and different rules apply to different types of media – for example, the lovingly-chosen music of ***Skins*** is often not on the DVD releases of the show – as it would be too costly to license tracks for DVD. On DVD it is replaced by cheaper music.

As you can see, music for drama is a collaborative effort, requiring input from producers, music supervisors and composers. There are a number of different models that can be employed, from traditionally-scored drama to soundtracks consisting entirely of pre-existing recorded music, and everything in between. It's important to remember that every moment of music has its place and its purpose and has been meticulously composed or chosen for the sole purpose of enhancing the drama.

Chris Budd is a freelance writer, lecturer and musician.

Skins: Channel 4 Press site extra.net; *Hustle*: image.net; *Ashes to Ashes*: BBC

MUSIC IN TV DRAMA


HOLLYWOOD
film techniques revealed...
by Goom
THE SEVEN STEPS TO CREATING DRAMA*
*INSPIRED BY THE WRITINGS OF SYD FIELD AND ROBERT McKEE
DRAMA EQUALS TENSION...
...A CONFLICT THAT MUST BE RESOLVED...
WILL SHE SAVE THE DAY?
DO THEY WIN THEIR BATTLE?
HAS HE CAUGHT THE VIRUS?
STEP 1:
CREATE A DRAMATIC STRUCTURE:
EXPOSITION
COMPLICATION
RESOLUTION
FILMS ONLY WORK IF THEY ENGAGE OUR EMOTIONS
WE NEED TO BELIEVE IN AND CARE ABOUT THE PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS
STEP 2:
CREATE CHARACTERS WITH DEPTH AND PURPOSE
I'M WORRIED THAT I'M TWO-DIMENSIONAL...
SHH! SOMEONE'S WATCHING US!
IT'S OKAY, THEY'RE ALREADY LOOKING AT THE NEXT PANEL
CHARACTERS IMPRESS AUDIENCES WHEN THEY DRIVE THE NARRATIVE...
STEP 3:
ENSURE YOUR 'HERO/HEROINE' ACTIVELY INFLUENCES WHAT HAPPENS IN THE STORY, RATHER THAN PASSIVELY REACTING TO OTHER PEOPLE OR EVENTS
THE BEST FILMS HAVE UNPREDICTABLE PLOTS. WATCH CHINATOWN FOR A CLASSIC EXAMPLE:
THERE'S SOMETHING YOU REALLY OUGHT TO KNOW ABOUT MY FATHER...
© 2009 WWW.GOOMCARTOONS.CO.UK
STEP 4:
CREATE DYNAMIC PIVOTS IN YOUR STORY - NEW EVENTS, ARRIVALS OR INSIGHTS TO KEEP CHANGING THE DIRECTION OF THE NARRATIVE
IT'S MORE DRAMATIC IF YOU TELL YOUR STORY VISUALLY, RATHER THAN VERBALLY.
STEP 5:
NOTICE THAT SINCE THE SILENT ERA, IT'S THE WORD 'MOVIES' THAT STUCK, NOT 'TALKIES'.
ENSURE YOUR SCRIPT USES VISUAL CUES TO PROGRESS THE STORY.
REMEMBER THAT TREMBLING DRINK IN JURASSIC PARK!
IN A TRULY GRIPPING FILM, EVERY SHOT REVEALS VITAL INFORMATION TO PROGRESS THE STORY
STEP 6:
EDIT YOUR SCRIPT RUTHLESSLY!
PAINT DRYING SCENE, TAKE ONE!
YOU'LL NEED A FILM CREW AND SOME ACTORS TO COMPLETE YOUR DRAMATIC FILM, BUT WITHOUT A DRAMATIC SCRIPT, YOU WON'T MAKE ONE...
STEP 7:
COVER STEPS 1-6 BEFORE SHOUTING 'ACTION!'
CHILL OUT MY BLOOD
SAFE MY GANGSTA

drama in THE News!

Some of the most riveting and powerful dramas of all time have been generated by real live news stories – think 9/11, Obama's victory or the air disaster of June 2009. And if there's one place to create drama out of a crisis, it's *The Sun*. **Sara Mills** tracks a few front page stories which have made recent history, and explains how they work.

Truth becomes a casualty of the desire to make the most dramatic and unambiguous story possible out of events.

News hasn't traditionally been thought of as the location for drama – yet what could be more dramatic than planes crashing into rivers, terrorism and bombs, the body parts murder, the life and death of Jade Goody. Films and broadcast drama could be seen as just tidied up or compressed versions of real life. Focussing on newspapers, particularly on the tabloid press, which will be the focus for next year's AQA GCSE controlled conditions test, offers an opportunity to look at drama in newspapers, particularly how the tabloid press achieve drama in their selection and presentation of the news.

Looking at some of ***The Sun's*** most famous front pages can provide a good insight.

The Sun has been running since 1964 and is Britain's best-selling newspaper, rated as the **eighth most popular newspaper in the world**. If any newspaper is giving readers what they want, it's ***The Sun***.

The headlines can be assessed in terms of their **news values** – the underlying factors that make one thing more newsworthy than another. There have been many lists compiled of news values, most famously by **Galtung and Ruge,** and their list has been much added to and amended since, partly to reflect the growth of new media, and partly to try to avoid a Western bias in the values applied to news.

Over the years ***The Sun*** has had some famous, and some infamous front pages, and the headlines have often created memorable phrases that have become part of the English language.

GOTCHA

This was the headline on 4th May 1982. Britain was in the middle of the Falklands War, Margaret Thatcher was Prime Minister, and patriotism was at fever pitch. This headline was a response to British submarine torpedoing an Argentinean ship, The Belgrano. The ship sank, with 1000 men on board and 368 of them died. ***The Sun's*** headline of **GOTCHA – Our lads sink gunboat and hole cruiser** sums up the patriotism among sections of the British public. Here ***The Sun*** is selecting this story for its **unexpectedness** – it is a dramatic event which could not have been foreseen. This story also has the value of **conflict** – what can be more dramatic in terms of embodying conflict, than a war? It also scores highly for reference to **elite nations**. The fact that the British are involved makes it more newsworthy, not only in our own country but across Europe and the Americas as well.

These factors could apply to almost any

reporting of this story. What is interesting is how ***The Sun*** has strongly appealed to other factors in their presentation of this item. Firstly is **familiarity** – those involved are characterised as 'our lads' giving us a sense of closeness to them, and making them seem more like one of us. Calling them 'lads' also makes them seem friendlier, braver and more admirable. That 'lads' rather than soldiers have done this, appeals to the underdog mentality and the ***Dad's Army*** view of the war, where amateurish yet brave lads outsmart the enemy.

A second aspect that is emphasised is **unambiguity**. News is easier to report when there are simple, straightforward heroes and villains, positives and negatives. The stronger the binary oppositions are, the more clearly the story can be reported. Here, there is no sense of dismay about the loss of life, no hint that the torpedoing may have been excessive (The Belgrano was sailing away from the war zone at the time). GOTCHA quite clearly makes it a successful and worthwhile victory. It also seems to minimise and reduce the severity of the attack and its consequences to something of a game. Referring to the British troops as 'our lads' further distances the enemy, allowing us to regard them as people who can be killed with little conscience. It would be interesting to see whether ***The Sun*** has moderated this view in the more recent conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq. Is the 'enemy' still distanced from us in this way? Are victories still gloated over?

FREDDIE STARR ATE MY HAMSTER

This was a classic headline that ran on 13th March 1986, about Freddie Starr, an exuberant and somewhat extreme comedian. ***The Sun*** later admitted that the story was entirely made-up, but defended it on the basis that it was a good story and that it actually resurrected Starr's flagging career. Here the drama and the appeal is in the shock value, the **unexpectedness** as well as the **negativity**. While it is undoubtedly a negative story, that the 'victim' was a hamster made it funny and less serious for some people.

The focus on celebrity culture is not new. Even in the 1980s second and third-rate minor celebrities were central to much news and reporting. This suggests the news value of **reference to elite persons**, although who a newspaper judges to be an elite person is another matter! Today, the focus on minor celebrities has developed even further, and reality TV supplies an endless stream of celebs for the newspapers and magazines to follow.

Personalisation is important too. The story is that Starr ate *my* hamster, not *a* hamster. This gives it the first-person appeal, and the headline suggests that a first-person account of events will follow. Being able to relate the news to individuals gives it added human interest and drama.

That Freddie Starr already had a reputation as something of a 'wild man' made the FREDDIE STARR ATE MY HAMSTER story all the more believable. This links to **consonance** where a story which fits with established views and beliefs may be more readily reported than one that doesn't. Who would ***The Sun*** focus on today as a 'wild person' likely to do anything? Russell Brand or Amy Winehouse perhaps?

IT'S THE SUN WOT WON IT

In 1992, ***The Sun*** claimed a central role in the politics of the country. It ran a very anti-Labour campaign. On Election Day their headline was: **If Kinnock** [then Labour leader] **wins today, will the last person to leave Britain please turn out the lights.** The Conservatives won, and ***The Sun*** declared: **It's *The Sun* Wot Won It.**

That newspapers report the outcome of general elections is no surprise – such news fulfils most news values (**conflict, meaningfulness, continuity, familiarity, unambiguity, reference to elite nations and people**). What makes this headline a classic is its certainty of its own power over the nation. Of course, ***The Sun*** is purchased largely by those who adhere to its politics. After a long anti-Labour, pro-Conservative campaign, it would be unusual if the readers *weren't* Conservative supporters. In this case, ***The Sun's*** readers could identify with the newspaper – 'their' ***Sun*** won the election. They can feel proud. It is the **unambiguity** which is emphasised, as well as the **consonance**, with ***The Sun's*** and its readers' existing beliefs. And, on a less serious note, a rhyme always helps a headline be more memorable! Today, some newspapers still have power in politics. ***The Sun*** now *supports* Labour. A Radio 4 documentary (2nd May 2007) reported:


THE Sun

QE2 IS SET TO SAIL FOR WAR

We told you first

GOTCHA

Our lads sink gunboat and hole cruiser

SUNK

CRIPPLED

UNION BOYCOTTS WAR

BATTLE FOR THE ISLANDS

£50,000 BINGO! Today's lucky numbers are on Page 20


THE Sun

£50,000 BINGO Lucky numbers are on Page 16

FREDDIE STARR ATE MY HAMSTER

Comic put a live pet in sandwich, says beauty

SELLERS GIRL IS

CHARGED IN DRUGS CASE

JEWEL IN MY CROWN

Vicar praises rape daughter

that:

Blair, realising the influence the paper could have over its readers' political thinking, had 'courted' it for some time by granting exclusive interviews and writing columns. In exchange for Rupert Murdoch's support, Blair agreed not to join the European Exchange Rate Mechanism.

This implies that ***The Sun*** has a great deal of impact on the politics of the country, and that the support of ***The Sun*** was seen as important enough to change economic policy for.

HARRY THE NAZI

In January 2005, ***The Sun*** scored another memorable front page with their story on Prince Harry and his ill-advised choice of fancy-dress costume. ***The Sun*** has always shown a great interest in reporting the royals. They certainly fulfil the **elite persons** news value admirably. They are also often a focus for ideas of tradition, patriotism and notions of Britishness, appealing to the core values of ***The Sun***. In the 1990s, coverage of the royals changed somewhat with the life and death of Princess Diana. Her openness with the press and the personal, even scandalous, details of her life that were made public changed ***The Sun's*** respectful approach to one more like the scandal-hungry reporting on other celebrities. ***The Sun***, and other newspapers, became more openly critical of some aspects of the royals' lives. Prince Harry has provided plenty of opportunities for ***The Sun*** to continue this criticism. The **HARRY THE NAZI** headline was accompanied by a picture of Harry in Nazi uniform with a swastika on his arm and a drink in his hand. Such a picture is gift to a newspaper. These days, the **visual imperative** is more and more critical, and some say that stories which don't have interesting or dramatic pictures to go alongside them are much less likely to be high on the news agenda. Another news value, then, is **visual impact**, and this story and picture is the perfect example. The picture tells the story: without the picture it would be far less dramatic, and unlikely to make the front page.

PORNOCCHIO

A final classic is from the reporting of the divorce of Paul McCartney and Heather Mills. In this headline, ***The Sun*** is reporting on Heather Mills' apparent lies (**Pinocchio**) about her glamour modelling past (**Porn**). This **neologism** 'Pornocchio' is so amusing and appealing that it becomes an unforgettable comment on Heather Mills.

Again, the reporting of this divorce saga fulfilled the news value of **unambiguity** Paul was clearly cast as the hero, and Heather as the villain. In this way, with the goody and the baddie clearly defined, reporting could concentrate on demolishing Heather Mills. Our obsession with celebrity comes out of a need for drama and spectacle. One of the most dramatic stories, or **metanarratives**, which can be created is the **rags to riches** story where a poor boy or girl makes good, and likewise the **riches to rags** story where a successful celebrity throws it all away due to alcohol, drugs, crime, or violence and so on. Heather Mills went from fairy-tale princess to pantomime villain in a few short years. The issue here is whether newspapers create a version of the truth which has **consonance**, which fits in with their established point of view. If a couple is to divorce, someone must be in the wrong. Paul McCartney, as rags to riches star and national treasure is beyond criticism, therefore Heather Mills has to fulfil the villain role. Truth becomes a casualty of the desire to make the most dramatic and unambiguous story possible out of events.

News values don't just underlie the news, they also dictate what news is, and how high up the news agenda a story comes. In addition, news values help to decide how a story is presented and what version of the many possible truths the audience is presented with.

Sara Mills teaches Media at Helston Community College, Cornwall, and is an AQA examiner. Her teaching resource on TV Quiz Shows is available at www.deseducation.org

the webisode story

The word is that online, web or mobile phone mini-dramas are the way to go – and they're doing great business in the US. But here they're only just beginning to take off. So what are they, and why are they seen as the holy grail of advertisers and sponsors? **Jerome Monahan** investigates.

I am suffering from MNSS – multiple narrative suspense syndrome. It's a condition that besets anyone delving into the world of web-based episodic drama or webisodes; research that demands you abandon storyline after storyline just as they are getting interesting. Will Carter get away with strangling one of his engagement party guests on the doorstep of his fashionable loft apartment – the ongoing source of suspense in ***Horrible People***? What are Al's chances of escaping from the attic and what is his doppelganger planning, having taken over our hero's apartment and life in ***Take Me Back***? Will Donnie Hoyle, the clearly psychotic host of ***You Suck At Photoshop***, manage to suppress his rage at wife, society and inept users of design software? And will Gaetor's raptor overcome its technical problems to make the hyper-leap back to Battlestar Galactica before the oxygen supply runs dry in the offshoot mini-series ***The Face of The Enemy***? All these questions and more will just have to remain unanswered until this article is submitted.

This is a period of transition and upheaval in the media industries and nothing reflects this more than the state of screen drama as it shifts online and searches for new formats and audiences. It would be premature to announce the death of mainstream TV drama; one-off and multiple-part programmes are still being commissioned but the current economic woes facing ITV combined with the continuing pressure on the BBC to cope with diminishing license fee funding is taking its toll. UK Broadcasters are increasingly looking across the Atlantic at the sudden burgeoning of web-based **short-form entertainment** going on there in the hope of dreaming up something homegrown, capable of generating and, crucially, maintaining a significant audience, but with a price tag per episode suited to these straitened times.

There is nothing that new about webisode entertainment. Among the earliest uses of the term can be found in 1998/99 describing a web animation series created by Stan Lee Media called ***The 7th Portal***. Further examples followed only to vanish in the dot.com crash in 2000. The next crucial milestone occurred in the summer of 2006 and featured the

online confessions of a supposed 16-year-old called Bree. ***Lonelygirl15*** became the sensation of YouTube, attracting a major following as Bree's story became more and more bizarre. By the time her involvement with a shadowy secret organisation called **The Order**, their pursuit of 'trait positive girls' for use in their experiments and the disappearance of Bree's parents were dropped into the narrative mix, there were plenty of people smelling a rat. In the end the episodes were revealed to be a work of fiction and Bree 'outed' as a New Zealand actress called Jessica Rose. The show would run for two years, ending in August 2008. It accumulated over **110 million views** but by the time it reached its final instalments, to quote Brian Stelter writing recently in ***The New York Times***, 'nobody noticed' the story's end. Web audiences are fickle, quick to move on to the next big thing and ***Lonelygirl15's*** duration was a long one compared to other web-dramas. Not that ***Lonelygirl15's*** creators were that fussed as the series had already underpinned the creation of **LG15 Studios**, a number of spin-off web-dramas further exploring **The Order's** nefarious activities, and helped attract venture capital finance.

The next wave, and one that is still going strong, was generated by the Writers' Guild of America strike between November 2007 and February 2008. In the hiatus when penning things for the big TV studios was off-limits, writers and producers began to create content for the web. Not only did this medium represent a legitimate outlet for their talents, it also promised to free them from the men in suits associated with conventional TV – the corporate executives with the power to pull the carpet from beneath shows and dramas as soon as they showed the slightest softness in terms of audience share.

Now the net is increasingly populated with webisode dramas, from several sources. First, there are the production companies such as **LG15 Studios** or **My Damn Channel** (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/My_Damn_Channel) dedicated to developing web-based entertainment content. Then there are more established studios developing content in parallel with more conventional production. Into this category one could place the newly resurrected **Hammer Studios** with ***Beyond The Rave*** – a 20-part online series about a soldier's quest to rescue his girlfriend from the clutches of a group of clubbing vampires (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V3y1cpsQbrQ). Finally, there are the big TV studios such as **NBC** and **CBS** eager to keep our interest high in existing terrestrial and cable shows even during their downtimes between series. Catering to this market are the online mini-series such as ***Ugly Betty***; ***Heroes***; the US version of ***The Office***, and that ***Battlestar Galactica*** ten-parter alluded to earlier called ***The Face of the Enemy*** (http://www.scifi.com/battlestar/webisodes/).

Of course, it is important to acknowledge the mass of **user-generated content** populating YouTube and other social networks. Without this material it is impossible to understand the form of the more professional output under discussion here. The prominence of **intimate or irreverent diary-like admissions to webcam** directly informed the production values and setting of the ***Lonelygirl15*** episodes and helped establish their initial credibility. Survey today's webisode catalogue and many of them have stuck to the **female first-person confessional form**. One of its most recent manifestations is also associated with possibly the most prestigious web-dramas to date, ***Gemini Division*** (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gemini_Division). Its 50 five- and seven-minute instalments star the first genuine Hollywood star to be associated with the format – **Rosario Dawson** (***Kids***; ***Sin City***, etc). She plays Ana Diaz a detective on the trail of SiMS, beings manufactured by the mysterious and malign organisation of the series' title. And in keeping with our theme, each webisode features Diaz conducting video message conversations with us, the viewers.

What is a web-drama?

What then is a web-drama? At this early stage of its development have any discernable common shapes or tones emerged? Well, most obvious of all is the typical webisode's length. Varying from between **three and five minutes**, a webisode has been compared to a single scene in a typical sitcom. Such an association is significant since the form does lend itself to comedy. It has also spawned a number of sci-fi and horror series but, as some critics have pointed out, **the form does not allow for much in the way of scene setting or character development**, so short-order dramas linked to these 'straighter' genres can be pretty clichéd and crudely action and technology-driven.

Unknown cast

A second key characteristic is that (until Rosario Dawson signed up) they tend not **to feature well-known faces**. In fact this has been intrinsic to the medium, with both unknown writers and actors participating in such ventures in the hope the exposure will give their careers the desired boost. On the whole, the **casts of these shows are pretty minimal**. Among the most pared down on this score must be ***You Suck At Photoshop*** in which the 'hero' Donny Hoyle and other characters are only heard in voiceover during a series of Donny's hilarious mock tutorials demonstrating Photoshop applications. Each exercise becomes a fantastic psychodrama with Donny putting software effects to use in ways that expose his imploding relationships and overall misanthropy. Watch, for example, as he imports a copy of his marriage certificate into an image of the camper van in which he knows his wife has conducted a series of extra-marital liaisons, demonstrating how to place it in reverse on the windscreen so that those inside might be reminded of the vows of life-long fidelity they are betraying. The devil really is in the detail in this show, with Donny's screensaver being a picture of Satan while his personal image library carries a worrying array of guns and other murderous implements.

Chasing the formula, audience and advertisers

Just as murderous are **the economic fundamentals** underlying all web-entertainment content, web-drama included. The fact is that no one has hit upon a winning formula that 'locks in' audiences sufficiently to attract big buck advertising. The best way to distribute these shows is also uncertain with the court decidedly out about whether its best to let them rise above the dross on social network sites like Bebo and YouTube, or be located on their own distinct websites – the model preferred by **My Damn Channel**, the producers of a whole slew of recent award-winning short-form shows including ***You Suck at Photoshop***, ***Wainy Days***, and ***Horrible People***. Further complicating matters is the current uncertainty surrounding **the measurement of site**

traffic with commentators making the obvious point that without such data big advertisers are clearly going to be wary of leaping in with the kind of deals webisode makers dream of. There is also the small matter of **hard-to-please-quick-to-click-away web audiences** who have the potential to leave sponsors and advertisers high and dry by abandoning a seeming hit online drama in favour of the next big viral thing.

Product placement

The other income-generating mechanism open to such shows is **product placement** or what is called **brand integration** in the States. There are big rewards but also significant dangers to this approach, with the programme makers having to find clever ways of integrating real products and services within the shows in ways that viewers will forgive or, at best, applaud. Annoy them, alternatively, with too clunky a product placement and there's the risk of that mass migration we have already highlighted. The **Gemini Division** is clearly pursuing this business model, with big deals negotiated with **Cisco** – thanks to the frequent use of their surveillance equipment, digital billboards and tele-presence – the latest generation of video conferencing kit. Other brand placement arrangements exist with **Intel, Microsoft** and **UPS**.

This is the conventional approach to product placement – the sort of thing that has been underwriting James Bond movies for years. A less typical approach is to have your heroine actually work for the desired brand as in ***Easy to Assemble*** (http://www.easytoassemble.tv/). In this show each webisode follows the adventures of actress Illeana Douglas – playing herself – as she tries to escape Hollywood nonsense by working in the local branch of IKEA. Each episode pokes fun at the company's Swedish-ness and the cheerful can-do attitude that employees are expected to exude in epilogue-like mock staff-training films. It's a formula that fans have not yet grown tired of.

Interactivity and digital participation

Producers are looking for ways of using a variety of online interactive mechanisms – blogs and opportunities to influence content and narrative development through social network sites – to tie in audiences even more tightly. This latter dimension looms large in such series as ***Kate Modern*** and ***LG15*** – ***The Resistance*** which are both filmed in low-quality DV, enabling the kind of quick turnaround that writers need if they are to incorporate viewer suggestions.

New formats, narratives, genres

In the UK, the production of short-form dramas is still in its infancy. But emails extolling the virtues of many of the shows we have featured here are winding their way around the drama departments of mainstream TV broadcasters with producers being exhorted to pitch ideas, always bearing in mind how important it is to dream up concepts that deserve a life online rather than as a more conventional TV programme. One internal memo advises:

So think about fractured narratives, broken timeframes, points of view and structural shapes – things that wouldn't really work as a linear TV piece. And, as for genres again, it's all up for grabs. Would a suspense/thriller concept work best [...] or could it be some kind of dramatic love story with a twist?

To quote Hollywood scriptwriter William Goldman:

Nobody knows anything.

It's as appropriate to the world of short-form drama as it ever was to Hollywood big screen success and failure. What is true is that you, dear reader, are living at the moment of transition, witnesses to the migration of TV to the net. Who knows how drama will evolve?

Jerome Monahan is a freelance writer and trainer. He is a frequent contributor to the *Guardian*, the *TES* and *MediaMagazine*.

8 web dramas to check out:

Kate Modern
Lonelygirl15's universe shifts to London: http://www.lg15.com/katemodern/?p=378

LG15
The Resistance – Lonelygirl15 saga continues with more rock music: http://www.lg15.com/theresistance

Harpers Globe
A spin-off from a forthcoming murder mystery called Harpers Island: http://www.eqal.coharpers-globe/

Prom Queen
An eighty episode extravaganza awaits you: http://www.promqueen.tv/

Sorority Forever
Spooky happenings overtake the sexy members of a US college crew. It features Jessica Rose – the original Lonelygirl15 and short-form drama's first home-grown star: http://www.thewb.com/non-us.html

Life After Lisa
What has happened to Lisa and will the girl now in her room (Jessie Beaumont) survive the process of delving for the truth? http://www.filmfest.com/

Take Me Back
Why is a man in a silver mask shadowing our hero and what is the mystery gizmo brought into Simmy's Fix It store? http://www.tmbtheseries.com/index.php?m=1

Wainy Days
Follow the adventures of David Wain and his disastrous attempts to find love. Compensation comes in the form of the companionship he enjoys from his co-workers in a New York sweatshop. http://www.mydamnchannel.com/Wainy_Days/Season

Useful reading

Hollywood Has Finally Figured How To Make Web Video Pay – Frank Rose (*Wired Magazine* 21 July 2008) http://www.wired.com/entertainment/theweb/magazine/16-08/ff_gemini

New Season Of Web Series Is the Most Mature Yet http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/webscout/2008/09/new-season-of-w.html

For Web TV – a Handful of Hits But No Formula for Success by Brian Stelter (*New York Times* – August 31, 2008) http://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/01/business/media/01webisodes.html?_r=1&em=&pagewanted=all

Webisodes Cure The Mid-Season Blues http://www.buddytv.com/articles/heroes/webisodes-cure-midseason-blues-25422.aspx

why I love... s4c

Neil Paddison takes a closer look at Channel 4 Wales.

Holidaying in Wales recently, I had the chance to watch a bit of TV. And gradually I found myself choosing S4C as my terrestrial default channel. Why? At first it was curiosity, but it was the surprisingly consistent quality of the programming which made me tune in repeatedly, then wonder, is **S4C** the best kept secret in terrestrial UK broadcasting?

S4C is nothing new to Welsh viewers. In fact, the station launched the day before Channel 4 went live across the rest of the UK in November 1982. But unless you live in Wales (or close to its signal borders) you can be forgiven for not having chanced across the channel as you surf; S4C is not available as an analogue signal or on Freeview outside of Wales. With the digital switchover underway, S4C has already been replaced by S4C digidol in Swansea, South West Wales and parts of South and Central Wales. By the end of March 2010, the whole of Wales will have switched.

But what is S4C exactly? **Sianel Pedwar Cymru**, or **Channel Four Wales**, is a Welsh TV station whose remit is to provide peak-time Welsh-language programmes. Rather than making its own programmes, it commissions them from a range of companies and organisations including the BBC, ITV and C4.

Where BBC and C4 come together

The BBC provides ***Newiddion*** (***News***) to S4C free of charge as part of its commitment to public service broadcasting in Wales, and it also makes ***Pobol y Cwm*** (meaning 'The Valley People'), a long-running soap opera broadcast in Welsh with English subtitles. (As a BBC product, ***Pobol y Cwm*** can also be viewed using BBC iPlayer.) S4C also re-broadcasts programmes shown on Channel 4 in non-peak slots, with Welsh subtitles available. This explains why you'll see BBC ***News*** alongside Channel 4 programmes such as ***Come Dine With Me*** on S4C.

However, it wasn't the news or Channel 4 repeats that grabbed my attention on S4C, but the contemporary drama. I watched an episode of ***Teulu***, 'a family saga set in the picturesque harbour town of Aberaeron in West Wales'. In its second series, the main focus is the wealthy Morgan family. At the head of the family are Richard and his wife Margaret. We find out that Margaret had an affair with local GP 'Dr John' many years ago and that the eldest of her two sons, Hywel (also a doctor), is Doctor John's. The younger son Llyr is a free-wheeling character in total contrast to tight-collared Hywel. But poor Llyr's world is shattered when he learns that his brother is having an affair with his new wife, Manon. Hywel's wife Catrin finds out that Hywel and Manon are 'proper shagging' as Llyr puts it, so she kicks Hywel out and her and Llyr grow closer until… revenge for Llyr!

There's a lot more to ***Teulu*** than this, but you can tell I got hooked on its soap-style storyline! The production values in the series are high and the acting is fantastic, not what you might expect from what must be a relatively low-budget region-specific production.

To put this in perspective, S4C as a channel has a budget of approximately **£95 million per year, compared to the BBC's £3.5 billion**. However, the BBC supplies, at a cost of around £25 million, 'at least 520 hours a year of licence-fee funded Welsh language television programmes … under Section 58 of the Broadcasting Act 1990.'

When I got home from Wales, I was able to watch the next episode of Teulu by visiting S4C's website and using **Clic** (very similar to BBC iPlayer). Whole episodes, with ad breaks removed and (optional) subtitles added! Like iPlayer, viewing is time-limited and so only recent broadcasts are available, but it's effective nonetheless.

And ***Teulu*** isn't a one-off for S4C. I watched the last five episodes of Series 3 of ***Caerdydd*** (***Cardiff***), a hard-hitting drama nominated for this year's Welsh BAFTAs. Set in Cardiff, it follows the lives of a group of friends and has been compared favourably with ***Queer As Folk***. A dead body in the garden, a secret love child, a jealous brother, and a coke-snorting politician – just some of the series' highlights!

Regular C4 viewers will recognise **Siwan Morris** (Angie in ***Skins***, Series 1) and **Gareth Pierce** (Noah in ***Hollyoaks***) in ***Caerdydd***.

Caerdydd made headlines when officials at the Welsh Assembly realised the production company had filmed a sex scene on location in one of the Senedd's toilets rather than in a studio. But what's really remarkable about ***Caerdydd*** is the direction, editing and acting. It's simple, consistent, confident and effective. Unpretentious and without gimmickry, it's TV that doesn't give you a headache to watch, but that's gripping all the same. You can catch the closing five minutes from Series 3 of ***Caerdydd*** on YouTube, and look out for series 4 and 5 on S4C in the coming months.

Are you studying examples of contemporary

British TV drama for OCR's AS Media Studies Unit G322? If you are, it's worth watching a few episodes of ***Pobol Y Cwm***, which started life as a BBC programme in 1974. It might not match ***Coronation Street*** for laughs, or ***EastEnders*** for sheer misery, but it's a finely balanced soap with some strong characters set in a believable world. Don't be put off by the quirky signature tune (sounds like ***Emmerdale's*** played backwards) and the simple title credits, because beyond them is a textbook example of a successful TV soap opera. And for non-Welsh-speakers, watching without the English subtitles (available on iPlayer) enables you to focus on camerawork, editing and mise-en-scène as you follow the drama visually.

S4C's factual programming

Alongside an impressive range of drama, there's a refreshing approach to non-fiction programme-making on S4C. Astonishingly, as in the drama series I watched, the content is allowed to speak for itself. A good example I saw was a profile of **Shân Cothi**, an award-winning Welsh operatic singer and actress. The format was simple – Shân and the presenter tour the area where she grew up, by the River Cothi from which she took her stage name, visiting a chapel then taking a horse ride through the nearby hills.

It was a slow-paced programme, but all the better for it. The focus was on Cothi, with the tranquil setting matching the ethereal singing and providing a backdrop to the story of her successful career. Such unpretentious and confident programme-making is striking in comparison with most other British TV, which has become very stylised over the years – typically eye-blisteringly fast-paced visually, with heavily dramatic presentation of superficial dialogue (think Davina McCall, Jeremy Clarkson, Gordon Ramsay, and so on).

S4C also excels at other popular TV formats. ***Wedi 7*** is a magazine-style news and current affairs programme which could be compared with ***The One Show.*** There are original comedy programmes, many of which involve **Anglesey's finest comedian, Tudor Owen**. I also watched a lively quiz show, hosted by ***Blue Peter's*** **Gethin Jones**. He must have done a good job, as Sky 1 has since signed him up to present their new quiz show ***Sell Me the Answer***. And there's some surprisingly good children's TV. Considering how many hours of airtime S4C has to fill with original content, it represents a triumph of scheduling. Basically, I'd swap ITV 1 for S4C, any day.

Online investigations

There are lots of other examples of S4C magic, but the best way to really see what S4C is about is to tune in (if you have Sky, it's on **Channel 134** outside Wales) or visit **www.S4C.co.uk/clic/** and pick a programme. You can even view live broadcasts using Clic (just note that a still image appears during ad-breaks).

S4C's informative website makes for a quick case study of a terrestrial or digital TV station. And if you're interested in a career in television, you can pick up a wealth of relevant terminology concerning production as well as getting a sense of the legal aspects with information on compliance, for example.

If you're studying **representation**, try looking at S4C's schedules and considering how S4C represents Wales. **Does S4C present a stereotypical picture of Wales?** There does seem to be a lot of emphasis on rugby, singing and religious belief, but then I have tuned in particularly during holiday weeks coinciding with major points in the Christian calendar and with the Six Nations Rugby tournament.

Finally, regular ***MediaMag*** readers may remember my suggestion back in 2008 to throw away your TV sets. If S4C could get me all square-eyed again, maybe it really is worth a proper look…

Neil Paddison is a Media teacher and freelance cartoonist.

S4C for Caerdydd, Wedi 7 and Teulu

BOND & BEYOND

what Sean Connery did next

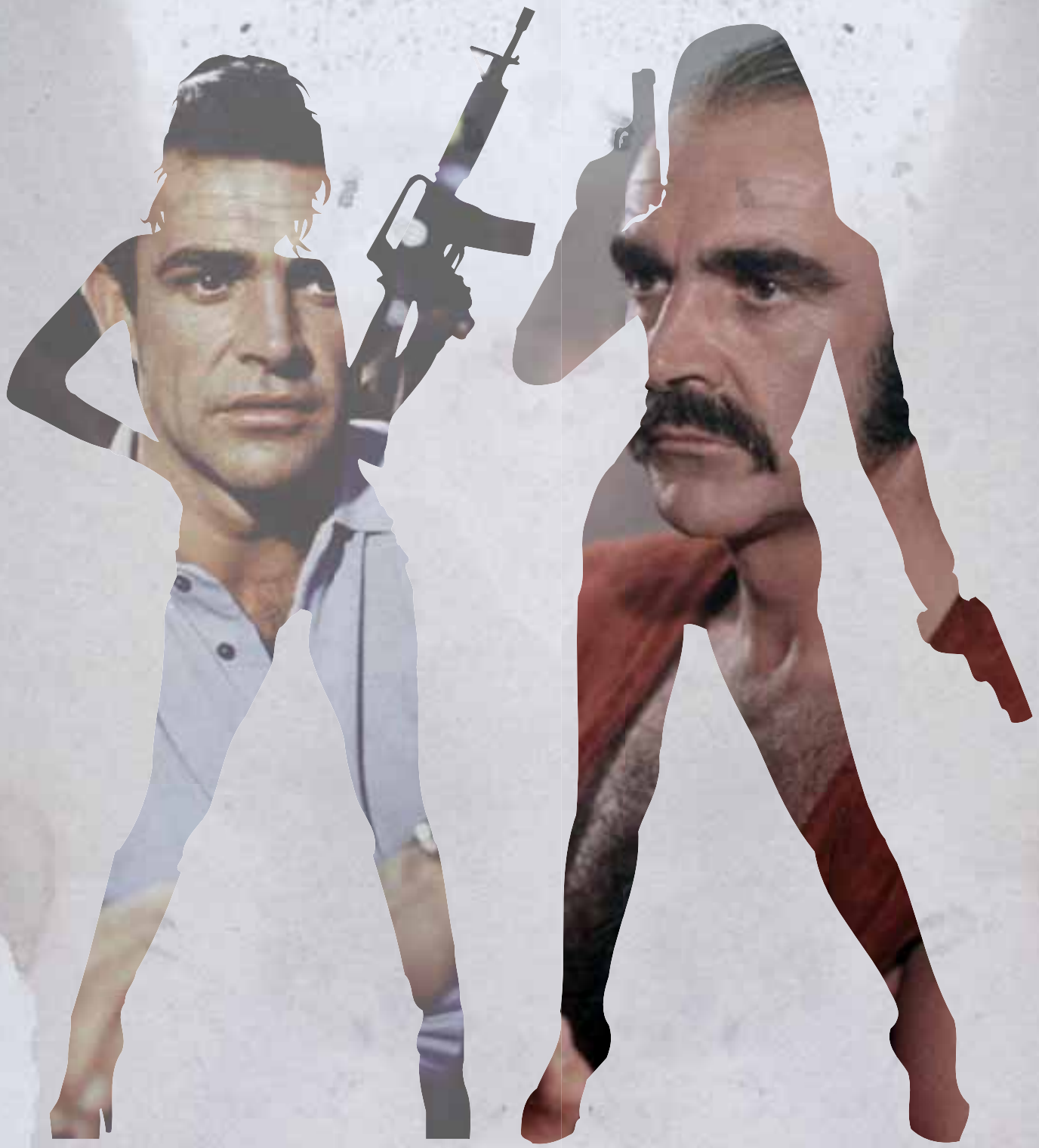
Sean Connery *is* James Bond; or rather he was. **Sean Kaye-Smith** examines Connery's earliest attempts to give the infamous spy the slip.

'You've suddenly become tiresome Mr. Bond'.
CHARLES GRAY AS BLOFELD IN DIAMONDS ARE FOREVER (1971)

'Can you unknow what you know now about me?'
SEAN CONNERY IN ZARDOZ (1974)

When asked about his acting skills, the American film star Robert Mitchum was willing to reveal that his technique was based around three 'looks': 'to the right, to the left and straight ahead.' This remark was typical of Mitchum's frequent dismissal of his craft which he said 'beat working for a living'. Neither was he in awe of others on the set claiming, in a documentary about RKO Studios, that it made 'no difference' who the director of a film was; although moving photographs of him listening intently to the director Charles Laughton on the set of ***The Night of the Hunter*** in 1955 would suggest that he made exceptions. But perhaps the key word so far is **star**; Mitchum was one in every sense. Books have been written about the concept of stardom – such as **Richard Dyer's *Stars*** and ***Heavenly Bodies: Film Stars and Society***, both of which touch on the relationship of acting with stardom, and conclusions are inevitably varied. Mitchum was probably more serious about his work than he claimed to be and, conversely, some so-called stars probably do survive on qualities other than their acting abilities.

To speculate as to what those qualities are is fascinating, as Dyer has shown. Such definitions as: **a star is someone who can 'carry' a film,** or the person you find yourself looking at regardless



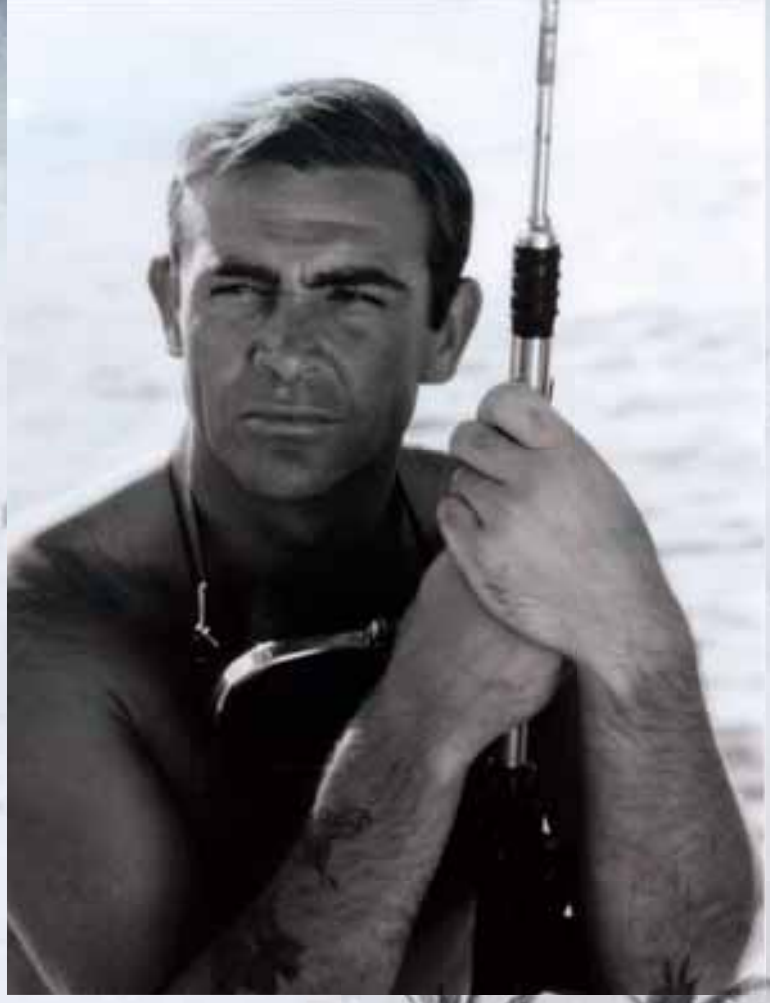
The Offence, Dir: Lumet, Sidney (1973) Credit: United Artists/The Kobal Collection; *Diamonds Are Forever*, 1971 Credit: Danjac/Eon/The Kobal Collection

of who else is on the screen, can be compelling, suggesting that there is some indefinable quality at work beyond acting, good looks or stature which puts a particular name regularly above the title. The expression 'the camera likes them' does not seem entirely fanciful. And it is equally interesting how some very successful and highly regarded actors have consciously avoided stardom: for example it is hard to convince children that **Fiona Shaw,** who plays the relatively minor character of Aunt Petunia in the ***Harry Potter*** films, is regarded by many as the finest actor of her generation.

Due to the global dominance of Hollywood films, the concept of film stardom does in some ways seem like a primarily American concept. With this in mind, 2008 was a bad year, with the passing of both Charlton Heston and Paul Newman from that coterie of classic post-war male American stars which includes Mitchum, Burt Lancaster, Lee Marvin, Robert Redford, and so on, who rank as icons of modern cinema. But Britain has produced one or two figures of comparable stature in the last few decades and the Scottish actor Sean Connery is arguably the UK's biggest star of the modern era; his career is a fascinating one by any standards, particularly in the early 1970s, as this article will explore.

Sean Connery is James Bond

Or so the publicity ran in the early 1960s. Many bigger names had been suggested for the role of Ian Fleming's glamorous spy but it was Connery's comparative newcomer status which went a long



way to securing him the role. This was not David Niven or Cary Grant or even Roger Moore – who was considered from the very beginning – *as* James Bond; it *was* James Bond. The fact that Connery was already by that time an experienced stage and screen actor was very useful, but not as useful as his comparative lack of star baggage, which allowed him to spring into international recognition as the character. What followed, from **1962's *Doctor No*** onwards is the most successful, documented and analysed film franchise in cinema history, but what is equally well-known is that Connery quickly became disillusioned with the role. Despite having a similar moody, tough guy image to Mitchum, Edinburgh-born Connery was interested in far more than three 'looks' and soon found that James Bond provided him with insufficient challenges as an actor. Not only did he find the producers of the Bond series 'greedy', he found that the role restricted his choices and also deflected attention from other more rewarding work that he was doing in other genres. After ***You Only Live Twice*** in 1968 Connery quit the role of James Bond for good – or so he thought. But this proved not to be the case. His replacement, Australian male model George Lazenby ticked all the boxes for the role except the vital one labelled 'acting' and so, to recover from the 'disaster' that was ***On Her Majesty's Secret Service*** (1970), MGM offered Connery a contract to return for one more film. That contract meant that the actor could donate £1,000,000 – his fee for the film – to the Scottish International Educational Trust, which he had founded to create opportunities for young people from poor backgrounds like himself, and it also meant that MGM would fund two more films of Connery's choice. The result of all this, and the star's desire to get well away from Bond for the second time, was that Connery's filmography from 1971 to 1974 contains a sequence of three films so varied in content and style that it would be hard to imagine such variation existing anywhere else. That sequence is ***Diamonds Are Forever*** (1971), ***The Offence*** (1972) and ***Zardoz*** (1974) and it is an exceptionally rich trio with which to explore notions of genre, audience, stardom and production.

Back to Bond with diamonds

Diamonds Are Forever (1971) is the 'triumphant' return to Bond that MGM and the public were expecting from Connery, and it remains many people's favourite Bond film. The producers took no chances, both bringing back the explosive Welsh songstress Shirley Bassey to sing the theme song, and ensuring extra helpings of all the most-loved Bond ingredients. All the popular supporting characters are there and the glamour is provided by the experienced American actress Jill St. John who was already over thirty when the film was made. ***Diamonds Are Forever*** is also the funniest Bond film. The humour of the series is primarily attributable to Connery and the director of three of the first four films, **Terence Young**, who realised that the seriousness and sadism of Ian Fleming's novels could significantly damage the popularity of the films. And the humour of ***Diamonds Are Forever*** suggests that Connery was, to some extent, 'demob-happy' as he strolls through the film firing witty one-liners in a variety of desperate situations. At times the film hovers dangerously close to farce:

TIFFANY CASE (Jill St. John aboard Blofeld's potentially Earth-destroying rig): I did it; I switched the tape in the machine.
BOND: You stupid twit! You put the real one back in.

But by the end of ***Diamonds Are Forever*** everyone could be happy; MGM had a huge hit movie, they had bought more time to consider Connery's long-term replacement; Shirley Bassey was back in the charts; and Connery could again focus on *not* being James Bond. His next project, the first of the two personal projects MGM promised him, was the perfect vehicle for the latter plan.

The Offence

John Hopkins was a major figure in television drama, having scripted, amongst other things, many episodes of the hugely successful, groundbreaking police series ***Z Cars***. He had also co-scripted the 1965 Bond movie ***Thunderball*** (a fact which ultimately led to Connery reprising the role in the controversial production ***Never Say Never Again*** in 1983). In 1968 his play ***This Story of Yours*** was a big hit at London's Royal Court Theatre and Connery was impressed. Hopkins reworked the script into a screenplay called ***The Offence*** and Connery flew his favourite director **Sidney Lumet** over from America to take charge; the film was shot in and around Bracknell in Berkshire in time for a May 1972 release. The results are stunning. In a role as far from James Bond as conceivable, Connery plays the part of a disturbed police sergeant who beats

a man to death in an interrogation following a series of child abductions. Lumet, who had specialised in hard-hitting crime dramas, pushes his outstanding cast – which included **Trevor Howard, Vivien Merchant and Ian Bannen** – to their limits, and the result is a powerful ensemble piece which includes what Connery considers to be his best screen performance. **Gerry Fisher, Director of Photography**, skilfully drains out any James Bond style bright colours and gloss from the film so that what we get is a bleak and brutal depiction of early 70s Britain and the stark reality of policing it. Fans of the hit BBC show ***Life On Mars*** will recognise the clothes, the hairstyles and the cars, but they may be surprised by the level of violence and despair. [For a further comparison, check out our feature on ***Red Riding*** on page 6.]

One of the reasons that the film works so well is that Hopkins was allowed to adapt his own material, thus preserving his themes and style; it is common knowledge that in the cinema writers are seldom afforded this privilege, particularly when star power is at work, but Connery and Lumet wanted to lose nothing, and arguably the film even eclipses the stage play in its visceral power. ***The Offence*** is a stark study of masculinity and bullying, and it is groundbreaking in its searching examination of what policing might do to police officers. Connery's character, Sergeant Johnson, begins as an arrogant bully, but gradually his character is onion-peeled to reveal the unhappy, frightened man underneath, a man who, in the end, has nothing left but his fists. After two long riveting scenes in which we see Johnson first with his wife and then with the investigating chief inspector, the final unbroken flashback in which we see Johnson and the man he kills in the interrogation – played by Ian Bannen, who had worked with Connery and Lumet before in ***The Hill*** (1965) – ranks as British socio-realist cinema at its very best, albeit ironically of course because of the American director. Perhaps the key moment is when Bannen's character, Kenneth Baxter, who is suspected of child abduction and rape, having already suffered from Johnson's brutal aggression says:

Don't beat me for the thoughts in your head. Things you want to do. I don't have to tell you anything. You know exactly what it's like. Nothing I can say you haven't imagined.

And this inevitably throws up innumerable questions about the bully and the bullied, where power really resides, and whether our law enforcers can avoid being damaged by what they see and do. In this light, a key change from stage to screen is the development of the character of Sergeant Frank Jessard, Johnson's sidekick, played by the stalwart British supporting actor Derek Newark. Jessard is a reasonable man, his judgements are sound and he makes careful, considered remarks which act as a sobering contrast to Johnson's increasingly frantic and threatening behaviour.

Sean Connery talks of ***The Offence*** as a **B success**, that is a film which was very successful in the making but which, unlike the 'A successes' of the Bond movies, failed to find a large audience or make much money at the box office. The public were perhaps not ready to accept their favourite James Bond as a snivelling bully; and perhaps they never will in large numbers. Even now the film is seriously undervalued and has only received a half-hearted DVD release; but it is a very rich text which will reward repeated viewings and exploration.

And so, again, what did Sean Connery do next? Answer: he flew to Ireland and made a film which is as about as far from both ***Diamonds Are Forever*** and ***The Offence*** as possible, namely John Boorman's ***Zardoz***.

From Bond to bent bobbies to British SF: Zardoz

There can be few films which have received such a varied critical response as ***Zardoz***. Shot in Ireland in 1973 it has often turned up in features about the worst movies of all time and yet there are websites devoted to it as the very summit of cinematic achievement. Of course it is neither the best nor the worst movie ever made – nothing is – but certainly ***Zardoz*** seems to provoke extreme reactions. Written and directed by the British director **John Boorman**, it was made when he was on a critical high. His powerful post-noir ***Point Blank*** (1967) was steadily growing in reputation, he had won the directors' prize at Cannes for his bizarre comedy ***Leo the Last*** (1970), and his adaptation of James Dickey's violent backwoods novel ***Deliverance*** (1972) had deconstructed the American 'buddies' movie and earned Oscar nominations. Finally abandoning his plans to film J.R.R. Tolkien's ***The Lord of the Rings*** he instead explored science-fiction and fantasy with his own script, set in the year 2293. When Burt Reynolds – who had starred in ***Deliverance*** – pulled out of the film due to ill health, Connery saw ***Zardoz*** as his chance to step into another very un-James Bond type role. Filmed in Ireland's Wicklow Mountains and at Bray Studios the film is a bizarre one-off in British science-fiction cinema, to say the least. Boorman cleverly spent some of his small budget on the outstanding cinematographer Geoffrey Unworthy, who had shot Stanley Kubrick's ***2001: A Space Odyssey*** and had won an Oscar in the early 1970s for the hugely popular musical ***Cabaret***. As a result of this, and also due to Boorman's exceptional

powers of visualisation, the film looks incredible. At a ***Guardian*** lecture in 1981 Boorman said that he thought that film directors were variously either storytellers, musicians – in terms of rhythms and pace – or painters. He felt that he was a painter first and foremost and a storyteller last, and in many ways ***Zardoz*** bears out these remarks in that the visuals and the visual density clearly predominate over the narrative, which does have some very awkward moments.

Connery plays Zed, an exterminator in the outlands of a future Earth whose job is to cull the 'brutals' who are the destitute common folk who roam the land. He is answerable to a giant flying William Blake-like godhead called Zardoz – surely one of the most bizarre spaceships ever seen on the screen – which is a secret link with the eternal beings who benefit from this social system; they live in peaceful luxury in an oasis called the Vortex. Inevitably Zed breaks into the Vortex and all Hell breaks lose. ***Zardoz*** explores the familiar science-fiction theme of **technology versus nature**, but little else about it is familiar. Connery spends most of the film charging about in a bright red loincloth – with and without a horse – and bullet straps, initially performing acts of wilful violence. Later in the film he renounces

his exterminator role and founds a new, hopefully peaceful, age on Earth. And being Connery he is utterly convincing in the role, so much so that it is difficult to imagine the film working without him, despite the extraordinary mise-en-scène. At one point he says to one of the eternal beings, 'Can you unknow what you know now about me?' and he almost seems to be pleading with her, and the public, to forget that he was James Bond and to see him as someone who will do almost anything else, such as ***Zardoz***. The influential American film critic Pauline Kael could not contain her bewilderment: 'What is the man who gave up the Pathe riches of James Bond doing in *this*?!' No doubt Connery could have offered her a detailed explanation.

After ***The Offence*** and ***Zardoz*** Connery moved more towards the mainstream with films like ***Murder On the Orient Express*** (1974) and ***A Bridge Too Far*** (1977). But his sequence of three films in the early 1970s shows what a big name movie star can do with a genuine desire to entertain the public, to support quality drama and with a devotion to risky imaginative projects.

At the time of writing Sidney Lumet and John Boorman continue to make films, although Boorman has in recent years has probably been eclipsed in the fame stakes, quite happily no doubt, by his motorcycling son Charlie. Sean Connery is most likely playing golf somewhere.

Sean Kaye-Smith teaches Media and English at Ashton Park School in Bristol.

learning to tweet

Josie Scobling on the rise and rise of Twitter.

> **One could change the world with one hundred and forty characters**
>
> **Jack Dorsey, Founder of Twitter, 2:57am, 9th February 2007**

At the end of last year a little bird told me about a new kid on the block, technologically speaking. Twitter, as it's known, can be used to tweet, attract followers and is all the rage amongst both political figures and celebrities. Despite the sound of it, it's not a new-fangled version of the Tamagotchi, nor is it a cult – although some may argue that point.

In recent years we have seen an explosion of social networking worldwide. With the help of mobile technology including the Apple iPhone and the BlackBerry, this phenomenon has spread quicker than you can cook beans on toast (don't quote me on that).

Twitter burst onto the scene in the UK in

late 2008 as the latest in a long line of social networking sites hoping to attract users. It had made a name for itself in America over a year earlier, following the same pattern as MySpace, Facebook and Bebo. News that the soon-to-be President, Barack Obama, was a user, added fuel to Twitter's domination, starting out in August 2008 in America and reaching the UK when the race to the White House heated up later in the year.

The concept is relatively easy to follow: **Twitter is a social networking and micro-blogging site** which allows users to update their profiles using **140 characters or less**. Updates are shown instantly and followers of that user can receive them via instant messaging, SMS, RSS, email or other applications.

In short, presuming that you are a Facebooker, it is exactly like **updating your Facebook status** without having to contend with the endless mountain of information on each profile. Links to photos, videos, news articles and other websites can be included in the **tweet** (the Twitter name for an update) as well as replies (known as @ replies) to other users (known as **followers** or collectively, **twitterati**).

The birth of Twitter

Twitter was first established back in 2006 by **Jack Dorsey**, an American software developer, working at the time for a podcasting company called **Odeo.** The company wasn't doing too well in the business stakes at the time so was looking for a way to reinvent itself. After a day of brainstorming, the most promising idea came from Dorsey, who had a vision of using SMS to tell small groups what you are doing. The idea took the form of a dispatch service which, instead of sending a text message to a specific group of people, would target whoever was interested in what you have to say at the touch of a button. Following the creation of the first web-based version in March 2006, originally known as 'twttr', the project entered its trial stages by inviting friends and family of the company's employees to join. Problems were highlighted and fixed, elements were added and so on.

It was initially thought that updates would usually be made by SMS, or text message as we more commonly know it, hence the decision to make the maximum amount of characters used 140. The standard length of a text message is 160 characters; any more and a second message would be created automatically. By setting the limit at 140, there would be room for the twitterer's username to be entered at the start of the tweet.

The site went live to the public mid-2006 and started receiving national acclaim after its showcase at Texas's South by Southwest festival for new media technologies in March 2007. Shortly afterwards, Twitter was mentioned on renowned music channel MTV, and then at Apple's Worldwide Developers' Conference. Cue its arrival in the news. The rest, as the saying goes, is history.

Twitter hits the headlines

When Twitter started hitting the headlines in the UK it soon became a part of everyday conversation. Esther Addley, Senior Reporter at ***The Guardian***, noted that, in November 2008, 40 articles about Twitter were published, by December 85 had appeared and by January 2009 it was 206. In January this year the first pictures of the Hudson River plane crash appeared from keen citizen journalists via TwitPic, Twitter's photo-sharing client. By April, celebrities Demi Moore and her actor husband Ashton Kutcher added to Susan Boyle's rise to fame when they tweeted about her extraordinary ***Britain's Got Talent*** appearance, which, in the space of a few days, led to millions of YouTube views of the clip of her ***Les Miserables*** song.

Although social networking should be for everybody, it certainly seems **that different sites attract different user demographics**. Whilst Facebook was originally set up for university students in 2004 (you had to have a university email address to register) it soon spread to high school students before being universally accessible. Now it is used by those aged 13 (the lower age limit) to 103. The latter is no exaggeration; in 2008 the ***Daily Mail*** reported that the oldest Facebooker is 102-year-old (at the time) Ivy Bean, who currently lives in a nursing home in Leeds.

Twitter has yet to show its popularity amongst younger users; it tends to be more of a **communication and publicity tool** for professionals, which includes well-known politicians and celebrities. Organisations use the site to promote upcoming events or share news. Many universities and colleges are also jumping on the bandwagon to pass on information to students or use the site as a way to share current news.

Twitter and me

As Press Officer at Cornwall College, one of my regular tasks everyday is to update Twitter. At the start of this year the College's PR Manager asked me to investigate whether Twitter would be good to use as a communication tool. At this point I was already having enough problems dealing with Facebook's ever changing facia, so I did wonder how long I could get away with ignoring the request before succumbing to yet another social networking site. As it turned out, not too long!

I set up a personal account for test purposes under the pseudonym 'JosieBear' (later changed to 'JosieScobling' for age-association reasons!) on January 16th 2009 and, at 10.55pm, I entered my first tweet: 'Wondering how I only heard about Twitter 2 weeks ago! Am I the only one?' Quite understandably I didn't receive any responses to this question, given my lack of followers at the time, but it was to be the start of a beautiful relationship with Twitter (cue emotional music).

Now, as well as tweeting regularly on my own profile, I have Twitter permanently on Cornwall College's profile on my desktop in the office to tweet news as and when it happens. We set the page up in February and two months down the line we had already attracted 400 followers. Telling you how many followers we have now would be giving the game away, so you'll have to do your own research and visit Twitter.com/cornwallcollege to find that out yourself!

Twitteration

With the constant development of social networking and micro-blogging sites the possibilities for its uses are ever evolving. A number of applications have already been launched for Twitter, just like Facebook has an endless amount of applications associated with it. For twitterers on the move, TwitterBerry for the BlackBerry exists, as does Tweetie for the iPhone. Desktop clients include TweetDeck and Tweetie. Applications developed specifically for use with Twitter include Twitpic, for uploading pictures, Twellow, a Twitter directory sorted by occupation, and Twitrank, a list of the top 150 twitterers.

If you think about it, Twitter's a bit like a diary. Granted, it's fully viewable to the world unless you set your profile to private, but it is a great record of your life. Six months or six years down the line you may wonder what you were doing on a particular day. Access Twitter, scroll through your countless tweets and there you'll find your answer. I, for one, certainly think that it's worth a look.

@MediaMag readers: Happy tweeting!

Josie Scobling works (and twitters) in the PR and Marketing Department at Cornwall College.

Follow it up

http://Twitter.com

To view examples of Twitter in action follow Josie at **twitter.com/josiescobling** or Cornwall College at Twitter.com/cornwallcollege

How Twitter Was Born, as told by Dom Sagolla, who was involved in the project at the start http://www.140characters.com

Twictionary

Twitter: a social networking and micro-blogging service that permits its users to send text-based updates which are up to 140 characters in length. The updates are shown on the user's profile page and the followers receive those updates via instant messaging, SMS, RSS, email or other applications.

Follower: a user subscribed to your Twitter profile.

Twitterati: the collective name for your followers.

Tweet: a post made on your Twitter profile.

@replies: a way to target your update at a specific user, for example @CornwallCollege – great story in the ***Guardian*** on Tuesday (be warned – everybody can see these posts even if it is directed at one person).

Twitterupdate

Since this article was written, the profile of Twitter has risen dramatically in breaking news, and as the source of choice for celebrity news stories, from Michael Jackson's death to Jordan and Peter Andre's split (see front page below left). It's also developed a rapidly increasing political presence, as shown in Sarah Brown's acclaimed Tweeting of news from the July G8 summit.

Twitter now has more than 30 million users worldwide, and has already turned down a range of offers from other companies, including an approach from Facebook valued at $500m. At an annual conference of media moguls at Sun Valley in mid-July, speculation was rife that Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation might make an offer Twitter couldn't refuse …

A day on the set of Waterloo Road

Have you ever wondered where TV dramas get their crowds from – or what it's like to be an extra? Media teacher **Caroline Birks** got her students onto the set of the hugely popular *Waterloo Road* for a taste of life both behind and in front of the cameras.

Being the teacher in charge of organising the trip to ***Waterloo Road*** is pretty stressful. It's the day before we're due to go and Nina from Crowd Casting has called me about five times to change our call time and warn me that she might have to cancel if there's rain. She jokes that I think she's a stalker.

Cut to the next day. It's 9am, we're on a coach and on our way to Rochdale to the set of ***Waterloo Road***. For those that haven't seen it, ***Waterloo Road*** is a BBC TV drama set in a failing comprehensive school in Manchester. It was first aired in 2006 and was filming its 5th series during our visit. It's a good programme to study for those students doing OCR's G322 Key Media Concepts.

The set of ***Waterloo Road*** is a disused, slightly scruffy, primary school on a council estate. As we arrive, we can see other extras already in uniform rehearsing a scene. We've arrived late, so the assistant director rushes us through to costume where the group are given school ties, sweaters, blazers and cardigans. Each student wears their uniform slightly differently and I am struck by the attention to detail.

We are taken to the school hall where all the extras are now gathered. As the students line up in height order (some of them will play Year 7 students!) the make-up team apply powder and give out hair clips and other accessories. We are told a little about our scene; someone has been selling alcohol and the teachers want to find out who has it. There has been a fire alarm and now everyone is gathered outside, whilst the teachers confiscate the harmful bottles of liquid. So after a short wait, it's outside to line up in rows. Except the director has decided that he doesn't need to shoot our students yet. So we spend the next hour watching what happens on set as they film the principal actors. There are so many people involved, I'm not sure what they all do but they're very busy organising extras, checking make-up, talking to other people on the radio and shouting 'Quiet on set please'. It seems that everyone has a very specific job with specific responsibilities and that the roles are very varied from highly technical jobs to making sure everyone looks good on camera.

We're lucky because the sun is shining and we have a brilliant view of the filming. I'm struck by how big the equipment looks. The tripods are seriously heavy and when fully extended would clearly be much taller than me. The tripod plates are enormous and give an indication of the size and weight of the cameras they must hold. I've seen studio lights before but the size of them always puts our portable redheads into

perspective and the thing I'm most interested in is the camera used for the tracking shots. It is operated by three men – one to pull the camera across the tracks, one to feed the cables through and another to actually operate the camera. It looks pretty labour intensive for the man pulling the camera, but he looks like he's been doing it for years.

Eventually we break for lunch. Our students still haven't done anything but just watching what's been going on has been enough to keep everyone interested and excited about the rest of the day. We have our lunch in a trailer outside the school hall. The food is good and some of the boys are really pleased to get a free lunch! The whole canteen experience is just like something out of ***Extras*** – except the stars are kept completely separate from us (and we've been told already that we're not allowed to take photos of them)

It's back to work again at 2.15pm which involves more waiting and more watching until finally the set is turned around and they're ready to film the scene from a different angle. Our students are placed behind the others and told what to do by another assistant director (I never realised there were so many). Some of them are given props to produce at a specific time – it's getting very exciting! There are several rehearsals, then filming starts…and stops, and starts and stops and starts and stops. I lose count of how many takes they do. By the time they've finished, they've been standing in lines for almost three hours.

They have a short break, in which time I look at some of the school corridors and once again I notice the attention to detail. There are pictures of school sports teams, posters for Waterloo Road Art Club and photographs of the choir that played a major part in the storylines of Series 4. There's artwork all over the walls and each piece is labelled with a student's name and what year they're in. The place would look very realistic if it wasn't for the huge cables everywhere reminding you that this is the set for a TV drama.

After a quick sandwich, it's back to work and this time they're filming a slightly different scene. It's the end of the fire drill and everyone is returning back inside when two of the teachers (played by Denise Welch and Eva Pope) rush outside with a child who has drunk some of the poisonous alcohol. This scene involves more action for all of the extras but our students are right at the front of the crowd and when we look through the monitor, we can see the faces of our students staring back at us! It's very exciting – our students are going to be on TV! That's if they make the final cut of course!

The new scene takes another two hours to film. The weather has turned colder and I can see some of the girls without sweaters shivering. Although the scene is more exciting, it still involves a lot of standing around. This time though, the principal actors are in amongst the extras, and some of the students get a chance to talk to **Tom Chambers** who plays strict Executive Head Teacher Max Tyler. For some of the girls, this is the highlight of the day.

Filming finishes at 7pm and although our day started at 9am, for the others it started at 7am. It's been a long and tiring day for everyone involved and only a tiny part of one episode has been shot. This doesn't detract from the whole experience though, and after returning our costumes, we go away tired but happy at the end of an exciting day.

On the coach back, I ask the students for feedback:

'Everything is much less attractive in real life – not Tom Chambers though.' (Ariadne Kidson)

'Filming can be very tedious, it takes a long time to get the shot right.' (Josh Cartwright)

'I gained a much greater appreciation for TV production and the amount of time and effort that goes into it. I learned how a set works and had a great time.' (Matt Carter)

Caroline Birks teaches at Ludlow College.