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'Broadcast Drama and the Problem of Television Aesthetics:

Home, Nation, Universe'

BY

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A couple of rather questionable aphorisms are presently enjoying covert recirculation in the discourses that surround television: one, that nothing resonates as 'universally' as the existential crisis of a white, male American; and another, that television is never more 'valuable' than when it most resembles a pre-existing art form. For those who must ever have had scant regard for broadcast drama, the TV medium has lately redeemed itself through association with a succession of internationally available, 'cinematic' and complex texts, chief amongst equals being *The Sopranos*, *Mad Men*, and of course, *Breaking Bad*, each of which having been celebrated by various parties as the 'best television' ever. The similarities between these shows is not incidental, as a (British) *Radio Times* critic noted when describing *True Detective* as 'the latest in a long line of operatic American dramas to dig remorselessly into the filthy souls of confused, self-destructive white men.'¹ The authorial ambition to explore modern 'humanity' having been further used to underpin claims of the immense cultural significance of these series, not least by journalists and commentators such as Brett Martin, whose recent book celebrates 'how TV has emerged from the shadow of film to become a truly significant and influential part of our culture'.² It is revealing, however, that the very

same series should have made their name internationally by being successfully marketed as *exceptions* to the daily flow of broadcast or network television, the antithesis of its mixed generic menus and routine sociability, and of its 'feminised', populist and everyday output.

This paper is, in part, a response to those who would separate judgement of what is good in television from an understanding of the medium's general social, cultural, affective and cognitive possibilities, and to those who would detach drama from the daily flow of ideas, meanings, images and discourse that are esteemed (or derided) in national broadcasting services. In the first instance I shall unravel some of the conflicting recommendations for 'television aesthetics' that are presently in circulation, with reference to the increasingly fallacious bifurcation of debate on the matter and the specific interventions of scholars such as Jason Jacobs and Matt Hills. Secondly, I propose to contrast the conveniently globalising abstraction of 'the aesthetic' with the situated expectations of culture that is of, and about, 'home', particularly as it intersects with the shared experience of nation, for example in the series *Happy Valley* (BBC, 2014). The argument that I shall develop embraces a tradition of broadcast television drama which is historically, industrially and qualitatively different (in both form and purpose) to cinematic film, and I will also consider some of its desirable particularity and social responsibility within a specifically European public broadcasting ecology. There is no denying that television has for some years now been in the grip of wholesale transformation and the simple logic of public service broadcasting that sustained its 'age of availability' can no longer be assumed as the dominant norm. However, radical privatisation and technical evolution does not mean the end of public expectations of cultural responsibility, accessibility, regulation, plurality, diversity, public funding, and

accountability. I will conclude by suggesting a different direction for future debate in the hope that such issues might ultimately be reconnected to a 'television aesthetics' and that value criteria might themselves be made the subject of principled discussion.

It is partly thanks to the widespread and often modish approbation of the American series cited above that the proximity of television to film is now often taken to correlate directly to its own inflated worth, although the assumption that television drama is improved by a closer resemblance to film assumes an aesthetic hierarchy that can be at odds with viewing pleasures and expectations. Presumptions of cinematic superiority are peddled casually, even by academics,³ although the most overt examples might be found in the promotional activities of commercial providers, including a declaration by Stuart Murphy, Director of Entertainment at Sky TV, that the channel's new drama slate 'had more in common with film than TV' and therefore, promised 'big, bold creative risks':

We subscribe to the HBO, AMC, FX view of the world – we would rather have one person's favourite drama than five people's fifth favourite drama. We believe in focusing our resources on a few key shows. We are not about churning out high volume, low value TV.⁴

Rhetoric aside, a quest for (only) the best is a rather curious ambition for the television industry, and by extension, for any field of criticism that endeavours to engage with television for what it is. Streaming services such as Netflix operate a rather different business model (arguably a supplementary one, given their dependence on supplying ready-made, previously-screened content), but for all the major European broadcasters

the future very much remains about hours to be filled with (ideally new) programming, weekly or seasonal rhythms to be observed, and audiences to be sated and sustained. Notwithstanding moves towards post-linearity, routine is still important wherever (as in the UK) channel performance is measured by audience reach, market share, aggregate viewing hours and brand loyalty. In the service of such criteria, expenditure on drama has always been relatively high. A corporation such as British Sky Broadcasting which sells channel subscription packages (largely on the back of exclusive sporting rights and other services such as broadband) is somewhat buffered from the immediate implications of poor overnight ratings, although has still been a tardy entrant to British drama production – a field which was sustained almost exclusively in the meantime by the consistent patronage of the BBC, ITV, and Channel 4. Being the purveyor of the all-time favourite of the few must be at best an incidental ambition for any of these institutions, especially the public service broadcasters who are either obliged to reach almost all of the people at least some of the time, or to appeal specifically to the very groups that are otherwise under-served. High-end, international, premium product will not necessarily meet either of these objectives, suggesting that Murphy's bravado is not so much 'the best of television' as something, by inference and cultural association, which is '*better than* television'. No broadcaster would be forgiven a failure to maintain a regular supply on the strength of an association with a once favourite programme, suggesting that it is only by disavowing the very notion of broadcasting as an on-going *service* that a singular claim to 'the best' can be staked, a rhetorical strategy that applies equally to academic television aesthetics.

In spite of some fairly strident demands for an invigorated field of television aesthetics, it is apparent that there is presently little agreement as to what an 'aesthetic judgement' might actually be or on what basis it should be made. In fact, there are at least three essentially quite distinct possibilities of aesthetic project currently being mooted for television studies, and I shall deal briefly with each. Firstly, it has often been suggested that scholars should simply 'pay more attention' to television style – a request which may seem reasonable enough were it not implicitly dismissive of the considerable and growing body of work that already either addresses television style and form or uses close textual analysis as a methodology.⁵ Of course, scholarship can become outdated, objectives vary, and a shift in approach may always be advocated, but Jason Jacobs and Steven Peacock's ready and generalising disregard of other work in this territory is remarkably insensitive to its achievements.⁶ That earlier work on style should have attempted to do analytical justice to the breadth of television output, and to the coded significance of its tropes, hybridity, contexts and presentational frameworks, would seem very much to its credit. As Jeremy Butler observes, 'a program does not need geniuses or flourishes in order to possess style [...] *all television texts contain style.*'⁷ Nevertheless, it is the 'stylish' turn of particular modes of high end television drama that has been cited as requiring a different form of critical practice. Jacobs' recommendation is that this should be *evaluative* as well as analytical, and more influenced by Film Studies, thus presupposing a scholarly 'lack' to mirror the perceived visual 'lack' in television hitherto.⁸ By such logic, the recommendation to 'attend' to style is a rhetorical Trojan horse to justify the *valorisation* of style, further conflating the broader possibility of artistic value with a particular model of it, and assuming the superiority of sophisticated visual aesthetics over, say, literary, realist, or other paradigms.

Typically, in television studies past, calls for *evaluative* criticism were more cautious. Earlier debates about value were usually couched somewhat equivocally as an address to 'quality' or, more crudely, as the difference between 'good' and 'bad' television, notions which lend themselves to value judgements that could include both aesthetic and non-aesthetic criteria. This infers a second, and extremely broad, category of project that may be mooted in the name of 'television aesthetics', which could include any *contingent* judgements that, in Kantian terms, represent the 'union of taste with reason' as they are dependent on the 'internal end' or necessary purpose of the object.⁹ To borrow a non-television example from Umberto Eco, this could be a judgement such as 'a beautiful funeral'¹⁰ – the aesthetic dimensions of the funeral being significant and valuable, but as the purpose of the event is not exclusively, nor even primarily, aesthetic, it would be inappropriate to judge it as an autonomous work of art. Implicit, perhaps, in the hesitancy of previous calls for the right to make value judgements is a sense that the creative products of television also always have internal ends. This is not to patronise television as 'serviceable' where other creative industries are not, indeed as Ryle and Soper concede in their defence of the sublime, all culture must be accountable 'not just to criteria proper to artistic works, but also to the social totality towards which representation always gestures.'¹¹ However, broadcasting has traditionally assumed (and been afforded) civic and social responsibilities that exceed the merely gestural, and its products may appear diminished if uncoupled from such functions.

It is a similarly qualified ideal of aesthetic value that is inferred by Christine Geraghty in a much-cited article which opens up the possibility making of aesthetic judgments

within categories, and which cites melodrama and realism as modes that require particular categorical attention.¹² The circle Geraghty is evidently trying to square involves the valorisation of different types of cultural text *for what they are*, at the same time as trying to implement clear standards and criteria. Her motive, she suggests, is pedagogic, for she recognises the lack of explicit guidance in television studies for students wishing to deploy aesthetic criteria in the making of evaluative judgements. What this presupposes in turn is that 'aesthetic value' is greater (and more important) than the subjective aesthetic *pleasure* which a given text may provoke in these students, something she appears to dismiss as a facet of the 'consumer choice [that] is driving programme production'.¹³ However, the categories to which Geraghty suggests attention should be paid ('performance', 'writing', and so on) can be really no more than a list of critical pointers as part of a call for further work. Categories do not in themselves take us beyond the judgements of subjective aesthetic pleasure routinely made by audiences ('interesting', 'satisfying') that she later argues should, after all, also be accommodated. The ultimate recommendation of 'an approach that emphasizes analytic description and evaluative discussion across a range of programmes'¹⁴ may be commendable, but none of the foregoing brings the student any closer to being able to discriminate between, say, a 'good' example of melodramatic writing and one that is inferior. What the move towards a categorical or socially relative schema affirms, however, is a clear need for the judgement of television artefacts to include 'reason'. Perhaps, in this sense (if no other) television may be likened to pornography which, as Angela Carter once observed 'can never be art for art's sake. [...] it is always art with work to do'.¹⁵

Nevertheless, and running counter to the idea of television drama as otherwise relative or functional, is a strain of argument evident in the scholarship of both Jason Jacobs and Sarah Cardwell, each of whom work through the logic of aesthetic ideology for television and arrive at a third, somewhat 'purer' possibility for the project. The case for a less adulterated concept of the aesthetic is introduced by Jacobs when regretting the exclusion of 'aesthetic excellence' from the criteria used by Glen Creeber to edit the book *Fifty Key Television Programmes*:

What is at issue then, is not the problem of canon formation *per se*, but canon formation of a particular kind – that which sees creative and artistic achievement as primary.¹⁶

The apparent caution he attributes to Creeber is then related to a wider crisis of confidence in critical authority. On this matter, Jacobs' article has since been usefully critiqued by Matt Hills, expressly for the 'pre-Structuralist' assumption that 'inherent textual value [is] assumed to be simply *there*.'¹⁷ However, Hills' ultimate, alternative recommendations (to which I will later return) make it clear that he is more concerned to displace the authority of the traditional scholar than to obviate the ideology of the aesthetic. Contrarily, I shall suggest that aesthetic judgement may be problematic not simply because professional criticism is an act of cultural power, but because any judgement (by whomsoever it is made), will lack ethical authority unless underpinned by consensual ideals. Art may be confrontational or affirmative, challenging or traditional, decorative, consoling or shocking, but to declare something as artistically worthy assumes and requires an implicit understanding of what 'art' is, and of what has been (or is now) demanded of it in a broader cultural context. The judgement of television as 'art' would therefore require an appeal to ideals that have been debated as

appropriate for television. In the absence of such consensus, there can be nothing to substantiate a claim of 'artistic achievement' other, perhaps, than the historical ideology of 'the Aesthetic' itself.

Terry Eagleton describes 'the Aesthetic' as having been born out of an intellectual desire to bring the subjective 'world of feelings and sensations [...] within the majestic scope of reason...'¹⁸ What it so quickly and enduringly became, at least in Eagleton's interpretation, is an 'ideological reading' of art that denies art's former connections to function, life and morality and offers it instead as 'an image of self-referentiality' and a 'form of value grounded entirely in itself'.¹⁹ However, in carving out a space for art as innately valuable, the paradox of the aesthetic (as articulated by Immanuel Kant) is that the value of the artistic object is contingent on the sensations it provokes in the subject (who must be able to recognise and identify aesthetic value on behalf of all). As Eagleton notes, Kant's pursuit of the aesthetic thus neatly mirrors the growth of bourgeois society from the very point when the latter was 'newly defining itself as a universal subject'. The aesthetic seemed to present itself 'as a dream of reconciliation – of individuals woven into intimate unity with no detriment to their specificity...'²⁰ Although, for Kant, aesthetic feeling is indeed subjectively experienced, in order that an aesthetic judgement might have intellectual validity the person making it has to somehow attain a universal vantage from which he/she may expect the judgement they make to be shared by all:

The aesthetic is in no way cognitive, but it has about it something of the form and structure of the rational; it thus unites us with all the authority of a law, but at a more affective, intuitive level. What brings us together as subjects is not

knowledge but an ineffable reciprocity of feeling. And this is certainly one major reason why the aesthetic has figured so centrally in bourgeois thought.²¹

Reciprocity is not inevitable because everyone coincidentally *thinks* in the same way for, as Mehmet Atalay shows in his interpretation of Kant's 'universal subjectivity', the person making the judgement must isolate herself, 'regarding her judgment, from all kinds of subjective elements'. She may indeed rely 'on only her own feeling, but, when this feeling is the sole element of her judgment, she places herself at a point such that she has a universal point of view'²² Aesthetic judgement is rather 'a necessary condition', an 'ideal norm',²³ but it does not necessarily reflect a widely-held view or a common response. Indeed, it is precisely for this reason that Eagleton compares the aesthetic unfavourably to *collectivising* aspirations for art, such as those vested in Marxist 'anti-aesthetics'. Kant's 'universal' ideal is far from egalitarian, it simply hopes for inter-subjectivity amongst the cultivated and like-minded: 'a community of feeling subjects linked by a quick sense of our shared capacities.'²⁴

Unsurprisingly, given its convolutions, subjectivity is the Achilles heel of post-Kantian aesthetic judgement. For example, in otherwise quite different discussions, both Cardwell and Jacobs are logically obliged to rehabilitate for TV aesthetics the authority of universal subjectivity by focussing less on the work of art itself than on what Cardwell calls an '(appropriate) aesthetic attitude',²⁵ the exact nature of which she nevertheless leaves open to debate. Inspired by those he admires in film scholarship, Jacobs also locates his argument in aesthetic aptitude by arguing for a form of critical *practice* that seeks to feel its way through the text with a 'richness of descriptive accuracy' and 'persuasive illumination'.²⁶ The emphasis on critical skill in both scholars'

work implies that, in uncultivated hands, artistic achievement may not otherwise be properly recognised. Given that Jacobs' argument is also framed as an attack on a branch of television studies described elsewhere as 'entrenched in theoretical frameworks',²⁷ the retreat from a clear methodology is evidently deliberate. Kantian logic militates against method, for it suggests that only those with the right innate capacity for aesthetic appreciation will be able to articulate (if not 'feel') a judgement, although they may rightly expect their feelings to be shared once they put it into words. Aptly (for television) Kant observed that a 'pure' taste judgement may be wilfully imposed on an aesthetic object which has an 'internal end' if it abstracts the object from its function, although this would always be open to challenge as 'false taste' by another.²⁸ Given that the field of television production is so patently *not* the 'art world' as few, if any, of its products will have been designed or intended for consumption exclusively as 'works of art', the willingness of the critic to discount function may be all that designates a televisual aesthetic object as such. Perhaps for this reason, Cardwell makes it clear that it is the responsibility of those making judgements to be selective, to 'seek texts rich in aesthetic potential',²⁹ implying a direction for television aesthetics that is far removed from the analysis or appreciation of 'style' more generally. From Cardwell's perspective, worthy texts will indeed be 'rare exceptions' to television's more common output of 'entertainment' and 'amusement art' (which of course, she notes, is 'not art at all').³⁰

More so even than Cardwell, Jacobs seems reluctant to tackle the problem of defining a potential work of television art, perhaps because this may necessarily involve recourse to theory. He begins one article by likening his exploration of the danger facing

television aesthetics (that 'of ossifying into a web of doctrines') to Lenin's famous attack on the 'doctrinal insistence' of European 'Left-wing' communism.³¹ However, the similarity seems rather token: Jacobs' various attacks on other scholars suggests he may have more in common with E.M. Forster and the contempt the latter once expressed for the 'pseudo-scholar' motivated by economic necessity.³² The pseudo-scholar, so Forster argued in 1927, is at his most 'pernicious' when he deigns to meddle in criticism 'because he follows the method of a true scholar without having his equipment'.³³ Like the virtuoso film critics Jacobs admires, the 'true scholars' of Forster's esteem are rare (indeed, with mock humility he excluded even himself from the category). The critical parallel here between Forster and Jacobs is that both rest their arguments on an estimation of artistic genius that is unknowable through philistinism, methodology, or doctrine. Furthermore, those of us who are pseudo scholars must at the very least, Forster argues, reject the confusion of a literary tradition with the vulgar chronology of history. Art is *not* contingent, we should not attempt to order genius. Instead, he insists, literary criticism should seat its giants 'in one room, and force them, by our very ignorance, from the limitations of date and place.'³⁴

It is a similar, and hopelessly anachronistic proposition that Jacobs comes up with when finally compelled to speak the virtues of the television works that he takes as worthy of erudite criticism, and the examples given are precisely those long form, high volume, 'high end', extremely high budget, American 'quality' serials cited at the outset of this paper. Picking over an article written by Charlotte Brunson in 1990 as evidence, Jacobs suggests that British television studies is unable to recognise the value of US series because it has been too bound up with national praxis and national discourses of

quality.³⁵ Much like Forster and his literary giants, Jacobs here explicitly attributes the greatness of 'US television' to its 'universal resonance', to the 'deep introspection' that gives it 'a life beyond the time and place of its making'. This, he insists is 'the essence of cultural value'.³⁶ Such an outright rejection of what S. Elizabeth Bird calls the '*unarguable* understanding that cultural distinctions are historically and socially constructed'³⁷ is presumably intended to provoke, but is in fact a perfectly logical extension of aesthetic ideology. The early Kantian principle of universal subjectivity makes it difficult, if not impossible, to reconcile the aesthetic (certainly the pure aesthetic) with the culturally-specific, meaning that Jacobs is more or less obliged to treat cultural specificity as a scholarly and conceptual *obstacle*, a limitation to be overcome.

Here, and elsewhere, Jacobs makes the point that because television is changing, so too must scholarship, although given that the most rapid changes undergone by television have been technological, political and economic, the linkage might seem fallacious. Why should the growing international, commercial circulation of television product require the 'universalising opportunities' of the aesthetic by way of endorsement? Certainly, the Kantian logic of the aesthetic brings the concept firstly, into conflict with the specificities of indigenous culture, local production and national address, and thus secondly, makes it conveniently complicit with the globalising project of an international television trade that encourages trans-cultural identification with social character 'types' irrespective of local difference. Both of these I would have thought to suggest arguments against, rather than for, the resurrection of aesthetic ideology, as the criteria work only when applied to a favoured object (that already perceived to be a

work of art). For example, one might equally note the ‘universalising’ tendency of traded fiction and reality television formats (such as the MTV series *Jersey Shore* and *Geordie Shore*), which rely less on actual local culture than on an appeal to trans-cultural familiarity with commonly represented class stereotypes.³⁸ Seen in this context it is clear that ‘universality’ is not an aspiration but an ideological conceit, a rationalisation of experience that underpins the authority of a certain mode of critical judgement.

Although Jacobs professes himself ‘surprised by the insistence [...] on the industrial provenance of “quality drama”’³⁹, production factors are far from irrelevant to either its cultural standing or the continuing viability of broadcast drama production. Much of the present aggrandisement of American quality TV resembles the more optimistic accounts of Hollywood cinema, as critiqued by Miller et al as unchallenging narratives of how ‘[i]n responding to market pleasures it lost its national qualities and became a benignly universal product, amenable to all audiences and now available to all producers.’⁴⁰ Moreover, as the authors note, the idea of Hollywood’s universally winning formula is complicit with the film industry’s myth of the sovereign consumer and preferred view of itself, so belying the extent to which technical developments, the deregulation of national broadcasting, and the wider economic move ‘towards a neoliberal, multinational investment climate’ have, since the mid-1990s, worked to strengthen ‘global Hollywood’s strategic power’.⁴¹ Today, as Ward and O’Regan demonstrate, ‘international’ television productions may be filmed and serviced in a range of locations outside the US, but they are nevertheless managed by, and ‘conceptually located in Hollywood’.⁴² The examples given of international production centres in Australia and Canada confirm the near impossibility of developing indigenous

industry from production expertise alone. The Hollywood industrial model has been further cited as having a negative impact on European trade union and production practices, putting the so-called 'creative industries' in what Miller et al call 'the vanguard of newly exploited and casualised labour'⁴³, and which may well have long-term consequences for domestic levels of skill and expertise. It is thus hugely problematic to try to separate the look of a film from its provenance, particularly for those European drama producers who can but dream of global/American quality-sized budgets, whilst their own on-screen spend must be cut to suit the patronage of domestic broadcasters and a limited pool of co-production or secondary rights investment.

At the time of writing the European independent sector, once the preserve of lone producers fulfilling one-off commissions, was in the grip of what industry commentators were calling a 'frenzy of consolidation'⁴⁴ leading to the emergence of 'super-indies' with enormous might, capital resources, and industry leverage, often thanks to 'multinational' parent companies. Recent mergers between such heavyweights as Endemol, Shine Group and Core Media (controlled in turn by 21st Century Fox and Apollo Global Management), reflect business expectations of an entirely different future, in which 'television' is no longer produced to the requirements of traditional broadcasters invested in the specific needs of national audiences. What will be overlooked of course, as Bardoel and d'Haenens note in defence of European public service broadcasting, are those: 'basic functions, such as a low-cost and universally available reliable provision of information and culture, and the catering for minority tastes and interests, [that] can not or will not be sufficiently served by the commercial market.'⁴⁵

Choice, partly brought about by the intensive efforts of media multinationals to 'grow' the market in their favour, has indeed impacted on the reach of European public service channels. Nevertheless, even in this so-called 'post-broadcast' era of television, the supply of non-broadcast content is a long way from displacing national delivery systems, institutional structures, licence-fee finance and collective 'live' audiences. Looking more specifically at the British market, BARB data confirms that in the 18 month period from January 2014 to Jun 2015, BBC television channels alone achieved a combined average share of approximately 32.5% of all UK viewing – put simply, almost a third of all those watching television in the UK will have been watching 'the BBC' at any given time.⁴⁶ Moreover, around 50% of UK viewing is still of the five main, formerly terrestrial channels – a relative continuity that contradicts the more wildly over-estimated predictions of change made in both academic and journalistic discourse. Ironically, in the year 2000, the independent producer Peter Bazalgette gave a speech predicting that within a decade, TV channels would have become irrelevant and 'scheduling will be dead',⁴⁷ an apocalyptic vision that has proved to be somewhat wide of the mark given the extent to which channels (particularly pre-existing ones) are still dominant and crucial to viewer navigation. Furthermore, although online streaming and viewing by other devices is manifestly growing,⁴⁸ some data suggests that 98.5% of viewing is still via a conventional TV set, and in 2014 almost 88% of British viewing was actually of 'live' broadcast programmes.⁴⁹ Most non-linear viewing was of, or related to national broadcast output, and most recorded programmes were watched within the week.⁵⁰ Industry analysis of subscribers to Netflix and Amazon suggest not only that their viewers are of a less than representative demographic, but also that: 'rather than

being disruptive to current deliveries, perhaps OTT VOD services are complimentary to the traditional linear broadcast and platforms, simply filling a void that 'Blockbusters' or 'HMV' box sets have done in the past.⁵¹ Whereas public service providers may be bearing up better in the UK than elsewhere, the survival of traditional services and mixed menu channels is still evident in many other European countries, even in the face of aggressively competitive tactics, not the least of which being legal action brought by commercial opponents in an attempt to limit the platforms available to public broadcasters for the provision of free programming.⁵²

Deregulation, privatisation and digitalisation have complicated and sometimes obscured the relationship between television and nation over the past two decades, but the greatest changes have been to the relationship between public service broadcaster and the state rather than between broadcaster and audience. The limited data cited above would seem to confirm Graeme Turner's suggestion that

The "everydayness" of broadcast television, the embedding of the schedule in to patterns of everyday life (notwithstanding some sections of the audience embracing alternatives to this), as well as the perception of a broader co-presence, the national audiences, as we watch remain distinctive and powerful attractions to the broadcast model.⁵³

The past few years have indeed seen many developments in distribution, including multiplatform content delivery devices such as dongles, apps, and smart technologies by which television services may be personalised and integrated with other home electronics such as security systems: all appearing to promise a 'TV centric connected home era'⁵⁴. Nevertheless, take-up of new supplementary television gadgets rarely

mirrors the giddy, early rises achieved for wholly new services (television, broadband) and necessary equipment (television receivers, video cassette recorders, DVD players, mobile smart phones), so casting doubt on the extent and speed of the rollout of future innovations unless acquisition is driven by legislation, as with digital switchover in the UK. Of course, change can be incremental as well as rapid, and a tipping point can be reached without fanfare. Karen Lury, for one, has written eloquently of her disenchantment with contemporary television, regretting the loss of the contingent in the digital image and the 'common culture of empathy' to which television once aspired.⁵⁵ However, I am not convinced the transformation is by any means as absolute and complete as this supposes, nor have audience expectations shifted to the point that academics might consider certain values obsolete. Turner notes many enduring national differences in the viewer/user experience of digital television services and concludes with a critical qualification: whereas the old paradigm of mass communication⁵⁶ has yet to be displaced in its entirety, particularly in countries such as the UK, the erosion of its 'massness' has made the media, in his phrasing, 'radically conjunctural'.⁵⁷ The latter term suggests fragility as well as volatility, both of which infer an unease that is echoed, on the one hand, by OFCOM's contingency plans for 'market failure' in British television,⁵⁸ and on the other, by a common sense that collective viewing is itself precarious. Here in the UK, broadcasting has not ceased to address, gather or even define the 'nation' but its relationship with this particular collective is more reflexive than ever before, as manifest in audience behaviour - not least in the self-conscious celebration of collective viewing (often via social media) - and in institutional strategies such as the BBC's insistent branding of its 'Great British' output.⁵⁹

It is within this broader context of fragile collective belonging and a volatile, convergent national broadcasting structure that I think we need to address the 'cultural value' associated with the indigenous television text, rather than locating the debate within the field (or in Baudrillard's terms, the '*Conspiracy*'⁶⁰) of art. The traditional relationship between broadcasting and home is arguably still critical, for as Silverstone argued, "the box in the corner" is, in our dependence on it, a crucial link to a shared or shareable world of community and nation'.⁶¹ Television drama may foster a sense of communal responsibility, suffering, or belonging in a multitude of ways, not least by invoking shared ways of doing things, and by positing an ordinary world, recognisable as 'our' own. Within nations more generally, a sense of 'home' may also be assumed by broad cultural value emphases, described by Shalom Schwartz as expressions of 'shared conceptions of what is good and desirable in the culture', and which 'shape and justify individual and group beliefs, actions, and goals.'⁶² In his visual mapping of countries according to their emphases, Schwartz reveals surprising, often sharp differences between many countries that are often conflated in popular discourse, especially 'the West', 'Continental Europe', or 'the English-speaking world'. This suggests that linguistic similarity, physical proximity, and the global circulation of cultural representations may disguise the profound, underlying ethical and ideological differences that distinguish nations from one another, notwithstanding their internal tensions and diverse populations.

For good or bad, actual or imagined, the notion of 'home' remains fundamental to the common experience and expectation of all television genres, making it an important corrective to the trans-historical and trans-national possibilities with which the idea of

'artistic worth' is now being (re)invested. As Andy Medhurst notes wryly in *A National Joke*:

[i]n the transnational imaginary', there is no place to call home – except perhaps the airport departure lounge that leads to the lecture theatres of the international academic conference circuit – and as should be clear by now, I think home matters.⁶³

Medhurst's work makes an express case for 'reclaiming the national' as part of the 'array of identifications, allegiances, baggages and belongings' that inform the identities which shape critical practice.⁶⁴ As his emphasis on plurality ('Englands', 'Englishnesses') infers, even a shared value community will never be homogenous, and it might also be acknowledged that there are a great many British residents for whom 'home', whether real or imagined, will always be elsewhere. Such disaffiliations are often for reasons of racial identity, but they can also be felt by anyone who, for whatever reason, feels excluded by the normative assumptions and traditionally institutional address of British broadcasting, and for whom, as David Morley observed over a decade ago, 'satellite television has come to symbolize (despite its economic costs) a desirable form of "freedom" of viewing'.⁶⁵ Thus, although in general terms one might suppose indigenous television production to be desirable, there is rarely a simple and uncontested relationship between a populace and 'its' arts output or entertainment culture.

In his work on 'belonging', Morley also outlines various regressive tendencies in identity formation as responses to globalisation and uncertainty, and to the destabilisation of the 'privileged link of habit and habitat'.⁶⁶ By way of examples, he suggests that UK

television viewers may search for safety in representations of supposedly identifiable communities that actually pertain to a different place or time, such as the predominantly white suburbs of the American mid-West in the 1950s, or the ethnically homogeneous community that featured in the Australian series *Neighbours*. Contemporary migrant populations may therefore go unrecognised 'at home' because they are excluded from these and many other, some non-fictional, representations of ordinary life. This suggests both reasons for, and caveats to, broadcasting's national address, for as Morley concludes, '[w]hat is needed here is the rejection of any conception of 'imagined community' which depends on the extrusion of alterity, in order to bask in the warm glow of self-confirming homogeneity.'⁶⁷ Like other political value axes, this is difficult to apply to the valorisation of an individual 'work of art' as it relates to the sum output of a broadcaster or service, precisely because the burden of social recognition cannot be borne by a single text. Taken as a generality, however, one might begin to make some cautious observations on recent tendencies in the drama output of British public service broadcasting, and I would now like to consider the possibility that national address has become increasingly and valuably invested in habitat as a means of circumventing the politics of social recognition at the same time as working to construct a more inclusive 'imagined community' around the shared daily experience of national life.

Differences notwithstanding, local and national communities comprise peoples who co-exist, obliged to share living space and experience in a very immediate and practical sense. Broadcasting's construction of home is institutional, temporal, and spatial: three dimensions that circumscribe the parameters of a governed geographical collective.

Shared routines, public space, and a reliance on public institutions may fill the gap that is the absence of shared traditions and belief systems, making it no accident that television's historically popular, mainstream forms exploit the narrative ensemble possibilities of these three inescapable dimensions of national life. For example, two consistently popular series genres are police/crime and hospital/medical fiction, both of which routinely and repeatedly work through issues of shared space, social behaviour/difference, and state service provision. In Britain at least, public faith in the police and the health service are frequently linked to estimations of the 'state of the nation' more broadly, as the former Conservative Chancellor, Nigel Lawson, acknowledged when he famously described the NHS as the 'the closest thing the English have to a religion'.⁶⁸ Of course, both police and hospital drama series are now 'global' drama genres, and the very fact that they are both produced and broadcast in many diverse nations suggests other implicit attractions that are not culturally specific. However, thematic preoccupations of individual programmes may be highly, and nationally, singular,⁶⁹ and they will include opportunities for spatial 'identifications' that are not bound to particular characters but to ensemble experience.

Michael Skey insists: '[t]he concept of territory is fundamental to the national imagination',⁷⁰ and in the UK high definition digital technologies have facilitated the incidence of what Helen Wheatley describes as 'slow television': contemplative, spectacular 'landscape programming' such as *Coast* (BBC, 2005-).⁷¹ However, almost all domestically produced drama (not least, police/crime fiction) also feeds the national territorial imagination. It may also do so through the inclusion of landscape spectacle, as in the case of *Vera* (ITV, 2011) or *Luther* (BBC, 2010) in which once interchangeable

backdrops are often now positioned, to borrow Andrew Higson's previous phrase, as 'the spectacular object of a diegetic and spectatorial gaze – something precisely 'to-be-looked-at''.⁷² However, at the other extreme, routine broadcast crime fiction may rely exclusively on tight framing or cut-in locations which reproduce a taken-for-granted generically British but banal iconography made up of common signifiers (including telephone boxes, pub signs, pillar boxes and road signs) the serial reproduction of which is cited by Tim Edensor as psychologically crucial to national identity.⁷³ In returning series and serials, the significance of space and place produces a cumulative partial topography that may be fully realised by the imagination. Arguably, the use of generic space allows viewers to fashion local meanings from settings that may be some distance away but are still demonstrably 'home' in so far as they are in this, and not another, country. For realist crime genres, the representation of territory may also tap directly into anxieties around place, and indeed, research by Girling et al has shown that crime and space are closely connected in the public imagination.⁷⁴ Unsurprisingly perhaps, the interviews documented by these authors tend to identify, as the 'common places of crime', very similar locations to the generic precincts, patches of woodland, subways, high-rise blocks and council estates that feature interchangeably in British TV crime drama.

The aforesaid and interchangeably generic, urban and suburban locations make heavy use of widely recognisable, undifferentiated public spaces as part of a mundane topography and a general privileging of dialogue, looks, and performance over image. Good examples here might be early series of *A Touch of Frost* (Yorkshire/ITV, 1992 – 2010) set in the drab, unremarkable, fictional middle-English town of Denton, or more

recently, *Line of Duty* (BBC 2012 -), a tightly framed series with scarcely a glimpse of empty space or a visual reference to its West Midlands location. The national imaginary fed by television fiction is thus of a rather different order to that of the civic national audience which is called into being around the *idea* of nation (perhaps conjured by the commentary of broadcast ceremonial and sporting events) as what series drama often posits is the local writ large, a sense of the country as a generalised hotch-potch of 'towns like this'. Recently there have been a number of examples of genre series which blend the two extremes of spectacle and banality, juxtaposing the ordinary with the breath-taking to signal an interestingly reflexive sense of local/national space and place. One such series is the ironically titled *Happy Valley* (BBC, 2014), set in a West Yorkshire market town, surrounded by verdant hills and awash with heroin and crack cocaine. Whether or not this drama is perceived as 'rich in aesthetic potential', it might be considered an example of 'good' television' in a number other registers, and may therefore prove salient to the foregoing discussion of television aesthetics. Written by Sally Wainwright for Red Productions, *Happy Valley* was part of the regular output of BBC1 - a typical 'series of six', playing midweek at 9pm. For the BBC it was a success on several levels, with viewing figures on a par with its other recent broadcast hits such as *Last Tango in Halifax* (BBC, 2012 -) and *Sherlock* (BBC, 2010 -), and it opened and closed with an audience of over 6.2million, 60% of which was reportedly female.⁷⁵ The ratings data would seem to confirm Wainwright's sense that '[i]t seemed to be a genuine word-of-mouth hit',⁷⁶ supported by a rash of positive press reviews.

The plot of *Happy Valley* interweaves a set of parallel storylines around a central police officer, Catherine Cawood (Sarah Lancashire), refreshingly not a detective but a female

uniformed sergeant with responsibility for the day to day policing of a particular geographical community. Events take an extraordinary turn when Kevin Weatherill (Steve Pemberton), an accountant aggrieved at having been marginalised in a business his father helped to build, and refused a requested pay rise, dreams up the idea of kidnapping the daughter of his boss, Nevison Gallagher. Weatherill's involvement extends little beyond suggesting and leaving the execution of the crime to a local caravan site owner, Ashley Cowgill, a key player in the supply of drugs to the area, and to his horror, the kidnapping sets loose a chain of related crimes, including the murder of a young policewoman in Catherine's team. Catherine is progressively drawn in to these events, her involvement personal as well as professional, for the parents of the abducted girl are known to her sister, and one of Cowgill's hired kidnapers is Tommy Lee Royce, the father of her young grandson, and a rapist she blames for her own daughter's suicide. This mix of personal/public roles is of course a generic trope of police characters in television fiction, but a significant one, as the investigator figure often performs a symbolic role by providing fantasy solutions to fictional disruptions that have real-life, local, social equivalents.

Discourses around *Happy Valley* tended to relate its aesthetic pleasures to its breadth of characterisation and the breathless, 'nail-biting' sequence of events and inter-connecting narrative threads that built to a climax in the final episode, 'trailing a night-hysterical social media reaction in its wake'.⁷⁷ Nevertheless, the articulation of this pleasure and the popular exchanges of the series' meanings implicitly and explicitly embed it as part of a wider national discourse about contemporary post-industrial society for exposing 'the dark side of a picturesque Yorkshire market town'.⁷⁸ Hebden

Bridge is clearly shown but not referred to by name in the drama (other than as the destination of a bus in episodes five and six), allowing it to take on an 'everytown' quality, riddled with the type of social problems by which few British communities can be unaffected. Catherine's ambiguous emotional relationship with her grandson is interwoven with her feelings for, and professional role within, the broader community and its difficulties, suggesting a complex affective dimension to this series that is also both public/national and private/individual in its implications.⁷⁹ Events repeatedly demonstrate how local heroics are powerless against the vested interests of corrupt local politicians and organised crime, and as the visibly wearied Cawood admits to the Gallaghers:

You've got to understand how these people work. They're organised seriously. The reason he [Cowgill] was let out on bail was because, apparently, he'd given information to the police [...] They're untouchable. Every day we have to deal with kids, off their heads on whatever they can find to inject themselves with, and it never stops. Just never stops.

Only Catherine's pursuit of Royce (an acknowledged displacement of the greater social problem) is ultimately successful, this storyline reaching its denouement in the confines of a narrow boat, when she dramatically and brutally apprehends the man responsible for at least three murders, now in custody of her grandson. The tension and compression of this resolution contrasts with a later, closing sequence in which shots of Catherine, looking back at the ascent of a rugged hill overlooking the town, are intercut with flashbacks of recent events (Fig. 1 and 2). The montage is an affective representation of her working through of the trauma, and concludes with a mid-shot in which she looks demonstrably purged of the memories (Fig. 3). The scene offers a

chance to share this rare gulp of fresh air and glimpse of the horizon and although highly personal, it simultaneously reinforces one of the series' central oppositions by contrasting the beautiful landscape with the social disintegration of the drug-addled town in centre frame, an image from which she is seen to walk away (Fig. 4). In spite of the great vista, the alignment with Catherine's insider view of the town offers a native rather than tourist view of a very British *and* specifically Yorkshire, landscape.

< insert Figure 1>

<insert Figure 2>

<insert Figure 3>

<insert Figure 4>

This is but a nominal and, I fear, too brief example of how an indigenous broadcast drama-entertainment series may be inflected to address local and national anxieties, specifically through the use of the generic and the spectacular in relation to space/place, and through the dramatisation of a national institution (the police) - the corruption, danger, frustration and poor image of which are shrugged through as part and parcel of Catherine's daily life. Such strategies have been the bread and butter of British social realism for decades, although *Happy Valley* avoids the bleak nihilism of an earlier generation that deployed comparable landscapes, such as Pawel Pawlikowski's short drama-documentary *Twoickers* (BBC, 1998), and similar themes, as with the series *Looking After Jo Jo* (BBC, 1998) set in a newly drug-ravaged estate in Edinburgh. As such readily available examples might suggest, locally and nationally-reflexive dimensions of a great many dramas, past and present, are likely to be crucial to a

contextualised reading or estimation of their particular use value, no matter how internationally accessible they may be, and no matter how widely exchanged. Further dramas evidencing the thematic significance of 'home' might include the work of British realist writers such as Jed Mercurio⁸⁰ in exposing institutional corruption, or Jimmy McGovern, who has consistently taken on the establishment with such polemics as *Hillsborough* (Granada/ITV, 1996) and more recently raised concerns around legal justice in single dramas such as *Common* (BBC 2014) or the anthology series *Accused* (BBC 2010-). Nevertheless, what I commend here is not social realism itself so much as a strategy by which the local is made metonymic of the national, the latter being defined by shared space and social experience rather than linked to the repressive and impossible ideal of a homogeneous culture. In this context, neither the local nor the national should be regarded as limitations to be somehow 'got over', for they do not constrain aesthetic appreciation so much as constitute its very possibility.

Of course, I could have emphasised a rather different set of narrative and thematic qualities of *Happy Valley*, drawing attention to what might be perceived as an essential humanism and/or to those qualities of characterisation that might enable it to transcend cultural borders. Like some of the reviewers, I may have praised Sarah Lancashire's remarkable performance as Catherine Cawood, whose emotional journey is an inspiration for she remains burdened, vengeful, morally compromised by circumstances, yet witty, courageous, principled and tenacious. I could also have cited Wainwright's conversational warmth, her ability to write together the profound with the profane, the trivial with the sensational. *Happy Valley* is an emotionally engaging, entertaining yarn, but we need also to recognise that there are hermeneutic levels at

which, I would argue, many of its meanings and pleasures are contingent. Far from transcending British Isles and contemporary times this series, like most crime drama, is rooted in the here and now. Cawood only comes from one place: she is part and parcel of the provincial municipality in which she both lives and works. The sequence in which she looks back from the moor is the closest she comes to leaving (still less giving up on) the town. Likewise, the serial is enriched by its specificity, its local/national resonance, and its example might seem to justify the continuation of what Jason Jacobs has disparaged as the 'socially and nationally embedded everydayness' of British television studies.⁸¹

The logic of Jacobs' dismissal I have already entertained as a reasoned outcome of his need to preserve the old idea of aesthetic value as something that transcends time and space. An alternative position here might take the 'embedded everydayness' of local and national experience as a possible *source* of cultural value, as one might imagine it to be of psychological benefit for members of a society to feel some sense of cultural ownership, or at least to believe that dominant forms of popular culture are at least relevant to them. Recognising such value (or its absence) does not make it exclusive, does not mean that we are unable to enjoy dramas that come from anywhere else, or share in their value to others, it simply respects the fact that viewers, like programmes, tend to come from *somewhere* and, like critics, form judgements that are always situated in *their* everyday even if the texts they watch are not. Just as viewers tend to interpret historical dramas as either analogous or contradictory to their experience of the present, they are likely to engage with international texts according to their own spatial and cultural co-ordinates. Thus, as Robin Nelson has argued '(t)he pleasures of

American culture as mediated through its high-end, cinematic TV dramas would need to be analysed from a range of viewpoints in the various countries that buy in the series',⁸² rather than assuming either significance or esteem to be 'universal'.

Jacobs argues that to pay 'scholarly attention to a genre and a form that is already privileged does not necessarily mean that others will be neglected or deprived of attention',⁸³ but the interest of British publishers in the significantly larger American retail market is perhaps inevitable in a currently rather desperate business. The intention, as expressed by Jason Mittell, that critics may 'open a conversation' about aesthetics by articulating their own appreciation of 'the best', is at best naïve given the gatekeeping and lead times for both journals and books.⁸⁴ In any event, the problem is not that Mittell's propositions regarding *Mad Men* need necessarily to be contested, but that his evaluative propositions about an American quality series contribute to a critical aesthetic agenda for European drama series that are themselves rarely written about at all, unless they too develop the sort of cool international profile with which critics and publishers want to become associated.⁸⁵ Inconveniently for some, just as broadcast viewing continues to outstrip the non-linear alternatives, it is clear that in countries where there is sufficient investment and critical mass to make them available, 'home grown' dramas still consistently outperform foreign acquisitions. Both of which tendencies might test the possibilities of a democratic debate about value when the terms of reference are so selective as to exclude the routine, the local, the national, and the populist from consideration.

In turn, such observations raise further questions about the pedagogic responsibilities of scholars of a medium that has such enormous national reach, community potential, and (possibly unmet) responsibilities of social recognition. Good criticism should illuminate, certainly, but I think that, like Karen Lury, we should resist ‘the championing of ‘good-ness’ as the primary ambition of television criticism’⁸⁶ and leave the sorting of the better from the best (or the worst) to the many fan-sites that appear to be dedicated to that very purpose. It may be objected that I am conflating popularity with value but it seems legitimate to question how it is that an American series such as *Mad Men* (the seventh and most recent series of which garnered a mere 0.2% audience share in the UK, ‘a meagre’ 28,500 viewers⁸⁷) can justify quite so much establishment interest from British academic critics, whilst the ‘greatest drama hits’ of Britain’s most watched channels gather domestic audiences that are immense by comparison, and yet attract virtually none at all.⁸⁸ None of these ignored programmes strike me as unworthy of aesthetic interest but their aesthetic accomplishments do not necessarily survive extrapolation from the context of viewing. They are, to put it simply, as much about ‘home’ as they are about style. If they are not written about then their creative qualities can not be used to challenge the aesthetic criteria that scholars do articulate, often to justify their personal tastes. If one ambition is to imagine forms of television that are not presently available, then should critics not still have to do as broadcasters do, and find ways of engaging with, rather than dismissing, popular taste and its associated values? Scholarship, I would argue, has a responsibility to take popular pleasure seriously, and not simply so that it may be pathologised as ideological, but so that it might actively inform a rather more catholic understanding of what ‘aesthetic value’ could, but may not yet, include. Cinematic, Hollywood serial dramas are presently riding high in a certain register of journalistic critical esteem, but partly because they

evidence qualities that fit with ideals of 'the best' already arrived at or associated with another medium. It is telling, I suspect, that at least one critic recently felt compelled to admit: 'I really didn't expect to be writing this, but I think I actually prefer *Happy Valley* to *Fargo*. At least it's first hand.'⁸⁹

The need to negotiate the popular makes Matt Hill's suggestion of a 'popular aesthetics' a promising and attractively titled prospect, although in the way he defines it the problem of 'the aesthetic' still remains. For example, he recommends 'ascertaining what criteria are drawn on to make value judgements outside the academy' but does not suggest that those criteria be subject to further popular or theoretical debate.⁹⁰ In fact, Hills' most abiding suggestion is for a model of celebratory aesthetics in which authority is simply displaced from the critic to the scholar-fan. The project is thus misnamed, for fandoms and 'popular' are of course not the same thing at all, and for the former to be the custodians of aesthetic criteria is no more palatable than the retreat to the 'universal'. As an exemplar Hills cites the valuable contribution of S. Elizabeth Bird with fans of *Dr Quinn, Medicine Woman* (CBS, 1993-1998), although something these fans appear to demonstrate is a readiness to call upon long-ago learnt literary and aesthetic criteria in order to explain and justify the value judgements they wish to make.⁹¹ Clearly, such a process does not necessarily involve subjecting the criteria themselves to interrogation. Indeed, however informative, one has to question the general principle of trawling of online message boards for evidence of values, especially given the spleen and bigotry that is also regularly vented on such sites, sometimes turning even long-term fans against participatory discourse. Demonstrating that fans are capable of

making aesthetic judgements does not mean that the judgements they make are democratic, nor that the criteria they cite are necessarily fit for purpose.

A potentially more productive way forward for television aesthetics is suggested by Janet Wolff's work on beauty, framed as an attempt to rehabilitate the idea for a post-modern, post-colonial, feminist polity.⁹² Noting the impasse of 'post-critical aesthetics', Wolff points to the example provided by 'the parallel "value" fields of ethics and political philosophy, in which scholars have argued for 'principled positions' on the basis of an acknowledged epistemological uncertainty.'⁹³ The challenge, she notes, is to reintroduce 'the aesthetic without falling back on discredited notions of timeless beauty and universal values' and to remain mindful of the 'very clearly extra-aesthetic principles and practices at work in excluding the work of women, minority and non-Western artists from the canon.'⁹⁴ The professional involvement of cultural mediators such as curators and publishers may, for pragmatic reasons, call on relative ideals of 'well-madeness' but Wolff's recommendation for criticism is to proceed through an ethical, democratic, principled politics that is actively 'premised on uncertainty' and for which dialogue is the pre-requisite. Interesting, and salient for my purposes here, are the examples she cites that 'insist on the centrality of shared – and democratically achieved – vocabularies of political and ethical values'⁹⁵, and on 'the emergence and development of shared discourses of value in the context of community.'⁹⁶ These emphatically reinforce the sheer impossibility of separating text from context, creative from political, aesthetic from extra-aesthetic. Above all, Wolff's emphasis on principled positions is apposite for it is only through the open declaration and debate of principled criteria and the move towards a consensus of the same that a television aesthetics might

be rescued from its own narcissistic presumptions, and thus distanced from displays of critical prowess which offers their own eloquence as evidence of an otherwise 'groundless' critical authority.

¹ Jack Seale, 'True Detective', *Radio Times*, 29 March 2014, p. 59.

² Book cover publicity for Brett Martin, *Difficult Men: From The Sopranos and The Wire to Mad Men and Breaking Bad*, (Faber & Faber, 2013).

³ To give a couple of recent examples, one might cite the symposium entitled 'TV is the new cinema' at the University of Liverpool, 22 May 2014, or the marketing blurbs accompanying new publications, expressing with evident approval that, 'television drama has come to rival cinema in its sophisticated narrative form and high production values', see Christina Kallas, *Inside the Writer's Room: Conversations with American TV Writers*, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

⁴ Cited by John Plunkett, 'Bodies creator pens real-time medical drama for Sky 1', *The Guardian* (online), 17 September 2013. <http://www.theguardian.com/media/2013/sep/17/bodies-creator-medical-drama-critical-sky>, accessed 6 May 2014.

⁵ Typically, in early works, 'the television aesthetic' was positioned as something that simply needed to be better understood, see Horace Newcomb, *TV – the most popular art* (Doubleday, 1974) and Raymond Williams, *Television Technology and Cultural Form*, (London: Fontana, 1974/Routledge, 2003). More recent analytical or exploratory accounts that engage with questions of style and form might include: John T. Caldwell, *Televisuality: Style, Crisis and Authority in American Television* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1995); John Caughie, *Television Drama – Realism, Modernism, and British Culture* (Oxford University Press, 2000); Karen Lury, *Interpreting Television* (London: Hodder Arnold, 2005); Jeremy G. Butler, *Television Style*, (New York & Abingdon: Routledge, 2009); Lez Cooke, *Style In British Television Drama*, (Basingstoke & New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); and Glen Creeber, *Small Screen Aesthetics – From TV to the Internet* (London: BFI/Palgrave, 2013) which develops a contextualising methodological framework for textual and medium analysis whilst actively rejecting the significance of a given text as 'art', p. 8.

⁶ See the introduction to Jason Jacobs & Steven Peacock eds., *Television Aesthetics and Style* (New York & London: Bloomsbury), 2013, p.p. 1-20. The authors' critique appears to be based on the approach adopted by particular contributions the *Reading Contemporary Television* series published by I B Tauris and to the BFI's *TV Classics*, but it is developed into a generalisation of television studies *per se*.

⁷ Butler, *Television Style*, p. 15.

⁸ Jason Jacobs, 'The medium in crisis: Caughie, Brunson and the problem of US television', *Screen* vol. 52, no. 4, (Winter 2011), pp. 503-511

⁹ Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Judgement – Part One*, trans. James Creed Meredith (Stilwell, KS: Digireads, 2005), p. 43.

¹⁰ Umberto Eco, 'Innovation and repetition: between modern and post-modern aesthetics', *Daedalus* no. 114 (Fall 1985), p. 178.

¹¹ Martin Ryle and Kate Soper, *To Relish the Sublime? – Culture and Self-realization in Postmodern Times* (London & New York: Verso) 2002, p. 208.

¹² Christine Geraghty, 'Aesthetics and Quality in Popular Television Drama', *International Journal of Cultural Studies* vol. 6, no. 1 (2003), pp. 25 – 45.

¹³ *Ibid.* p. 37.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* p. 41/42.

¹⁵ Angela Carter, 'Pornography in the service of women', cited by Jane Juffer, in M. Bérubé (ed), *The Aesthetics of Cultural Studies* (Malden MA & Oxford UK: Blackwell, 2005) p. 58.

¹⁶ Jason Jacobs, 'Television Aesthetics: an Infantile Disorder', *Journal of British Cinema and Television*, vol. 3, no. 1 (2006), p. 27.

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- ¹⁷ Matt Hills, 'Television Aesthetics: A Pre-structuralist Danger?', *Journal of British Cinema and Television*, vol. 8 no. 1 (2011), p. 109
- ¹⁸ Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), p. 15.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.* p. 65.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.* p. 25.
- ²¹ *Ibid.* p. 75
- ²² Mehmet Atalay, 'Kant's Aesthetic Theory: Subjectivity vs. Universal Validity', *Percipi* no. 1 (2007), p. 48
- ²³ *Ibid.*
- ²⁴ Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic*, p. 75.
- ²⁵ the exact nature of which she leaves open to debate, see Sarah Cardwell, 'Television aesthetics: stylistic analysis and beyond', in Jacobs & Peacock eds., *Television Aesthetics and Style*, p. 34.
- ²⁶ Jacobs, 'The medium in crisis', p. 510.
- ²⁷ Introduction to Jacobs and Peacock eds., *Television Aesthetics and Style*, p. 2.
- ²⁸ 'Kant, *The Critique of Judgement*, p. 44.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.* p. 40.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.* p. 30.
- ³¹ Jacobs, 'Television Aesthetics: an Infantile Disorder', p. 19.
- ³² 'Most of us must get a job before thirty, or sponge on our relatives, and many jobs can only be got by passing an exam', 'The Clark Lectures - Introductory', published in E. M. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1980), p. 28.
- ³³ *Ibid.* p.29.
- ³⁴ *Ibid.* p. 38.
- ³⁵ Jacobs, 'The medium in crisis', p. 506. The article he scrutinises is Charlotte Brunsdon, 'Problems with Quality', *Screen* vol. 31, no. 1 (Spring 1990), pp. 67-90.
- ³⁶ Jacobs, 'The medium in crisis', p. 509.
- ³⁷ S. Elizabeth Bird, *The Audience in Everyday Life – Living in a Media World*, (London & New York: Routledge, 2003), p. 119.
- ³⁸ I would like to acknowledge here, with thanks, observations made by Julia Drucker-Allister, whose postgraduate dissertation on 'constructed reality' I supervised during 2014.
- ³⁹ Jacobs, 'The medium in crisis', p. 508.
- ⁴⁰ Toby Miller, Nitin Govil, John McMurria, Richard Maxwell and Ting Wang, *Global Hollywood 2* (London: BFI, 2005), p. 5.
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.* p. 9.
- ⁴² Susan Ward and Tom O'Regan, 'Servicing 'the other Hollywood': The vicissitudes of an international television production location', *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, vol. 10, no. 2 (2007), pp. 167-185.
- ⁴³ Miller et al, *Global Hollywood 2*, p. 119.
- ⁴⁴ Chris Curtis, 'Small can still be beautiful', *Broadcast*, 23 May 2014, p. 2.
- ⁴⁵ Johannes Bardoel and Leen d'Haenens, 'Reinventing public service broadcasting in Europe: prospects, promises and problems', *Media Culture Society*, vol. 30, no. 3 (2008), p. 343.
- ⁴⁶ This figure is the average of the sum of monthly viewing data for BBC1, BBC2, BBC3, BBC4, BBC News, CBBC, and CBeebies, Source: BARB. Monthly data available at: [http://www.barb.co.uk/whats-new/monthly-viewing-summary?period\[\]=20140601&button_submit=View+figures](http://www.barb.co.uk/whats-new/monthly-viewing-summary?period[]=20140601&button_submit=View+figures), last accessed 10 January 2015.
- ⁴⁷ Speech to Broadcast Content Management 2000, cited by David Fox, 'Big Brother Defends Rights of Small Creators', available at: <http://www.urbanfox.tv/production/p1bazinterview.htm>, accessed 30 April 2014.
- ⁴⁸ Alex Farber, 'i-player traffic hits 25%', *Broadcast* [online], 30 September 2013, available at: <http://www.broadcastnow.co.uk/news/multiplatform/iplayer-tablet-traffic-hits-25/5060974.article>, accessed 30 April 2014.
- ⁴⁹ see Alex Farber, 'Thinkbox: linear TV viewing remains strong', *Broadcast* [online], 17 February 2014, available at: <http://www.broadcastnow.co.uk/news/broadcasters/thinkbox-linear-tv-viewing-holds-up/5067801.article?blocktitle=LATEST-NEWS-HEADLINES&contentID=1354> OR Adam Sherwin, 'The television set defies the growth of the tablet', *The Independent* [online], 16 February 2014, available at: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/media/tv-radio/the-television-set-defies-the-growth-of-the-tablet-9132158.html>, both accessed 30 April 2014.
- ⁵⁰ Source: BARB, all individuals, all time, consolidated data, weeks 36 – 45 2006 – 2013. Nevertheless, more recent data suggests a radical growth of time-shifting in Sky households, largely due to the launch of Sky on Demand, see <http://www.barb.co.uk/trendspotting/analysis/catch-up-viewing?s=4> accessed 6 January 2016.

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- ⁵¹ Joe Lewis, 'Netflix – Friend or Foe?', BARB, 21 July 2014, <http://www.barb.co.uk/whats-new/329>, accessed 4 September 2014.
- ⁵² Bardoel and d'Haenens, 'Reinventing public service broadcasting in Europe', p. 342.
- ⁵³ Graeme Turner, 'Television and the nation: does this matter any more?', in *Television Studies After TV*, (Abingdon & New York: Routledge, 2009) p. 62
- ⁵⁴ Nigel Walley, 'TV set for home innovation', *Broadcast*, 30 May 2014, p. 16.
- ⁵⁵ Karen Lury, "'The basis for mutual contempt" – The Loss of the Contingent in Digital Television' in James Bennett and Niki Strange (eds), *Television As Digital Media* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2011) pp. 181-203.
- ⁵⁶ Graeme Turner, 'Convergence and Divergence – the International Experience of Digital Television', in Bennett and Strange (eds), *Television As Digital Media*, p. 48.
- ⁵⁷ Ibid.
- ⁵⁸ See for example, *Ofcom's Second Public Service Broadcasting Review, Annex 11: Market Failure in Broadcasting*, 10 April 2008. Available at: http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/consultations/psb2_1/ accessed 22 August 2014.
- ⁵⁹ I am referring here to the proliferation of popular leisure series with titles such as *The Great British Bake Off* (BBC, 2010-), the final of which was the UK's single most watched programme in 2015), *The Great British Menu* (BBC 2006-), *The Great British Sewing Bee* (BBC, 2013-), and so on.
- ⁶⁰ Jean Baudrillard, *The Conspiracy of Art* (New York & Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2005).
- ⁶¹ Roger Silverstone, *Television and Everyday Life* (London & New York: Routledge, 1994) p. 29.
- ⁶² Shalom H. Schwartz, 'A Theory of Cultural Value Orientations: Explication and Applications', *Comparative Sociology*, vol. 5, no. 2/3 (2006), p. 139
- ⁶³ Andy Medhurst, *A National Joke – Popular Comedy and English Cultural Identities* (London & New York: Routledge, 2007) p. 30.
- ⁶⁴ Ibid. p. 61.
- ⁶⁵ David Morley, 'Belongings: Place, space and identity in a mediated world', *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, vol. 4, no. 4 (2001), p. 438.
- ⁶⁶ Ibid. p. 439.
- ⁶⁷ Ibid. p. 441.
- ⁶⁸ Nigel Lawson, *The view from No 11: memoirs of a Tory radical*, (London: Bantam Press, 1992).
- ⁶⁹ See, for example, Robin Nelson's discussion of national differences between US/UK drama, in which he invites the reader 'to think *ER* then think *Casualty*' in order to demonstrate his point. Robin Nelson, *State of Play, - Contemporary "high-end" TV drama* (Manchester & New York: Manchester University Press, 2007) p. 133.
- ⁷⁰ Michael Skey, *National Belonging and Everyday Life – The Significance of Nationhood in an Uncertain World*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 11.
- ⁷¹ Helen Wheatley, 'Beautiful images in spectacular clarity: spectacular television, landscape programming and the question of (tele)visual pleasure', *Screen*, vol. 52, no. 2 (2011), pp. 233-248.
- ⁷² Higson was describing the image of the 'town on the hill' in social realist films of the 1960s, see Andrew Higson, 'Space, Place, Spectacle', *Screen* vol. 25, no. 4/5, (1984) p. 16.
- ⁷³ Edensor, Tim, *National Identity, Popular Culture and Everyday Life* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2002), p. 53.
- ⁷⁴ This research, conducted with residents of various communities in Macclesfield (an 'unremarkable' town), leads the authors to observe that: 'Crime-talk' and 'place-talk' are unlikely to prove to be clearly separable and both are likely to bear in some way on the experiences of change [...] that confront[s] people both in the immediate circumstances of their daily routines and through the larger relays of media and political culture.' See Evi Girling, Ian Loader, and Richard Sparks, *Crime and Social Change in Middle England – Questions of Order in an English Town* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 9.
- ⁷⁵ Alex Farber, 'Happy Valley Ends Well', *Broadcast*, 4 June 2014 [online], <http://www.broadcastnow.co.uk/ratings/happy-valley-ends-well/5072754.article> accessed 16 September 2014.
- ⁷⁶ Cited by Michael Hogan, '8 million people are currently wishing me dead', *The Telegraph* [online], 3 June 2014, available at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/tvandradio/10872830> (accessed 8 July 2014).
- ⁷⁷ Caroline Westbrook, 'Is Happy Valley the new Broadchurch? BBC hints at second series as finale spawns Twitter hysteria', *Metro*, 4 June 2014, available at: <http://metro.co.uk/2014/06/04/is-happy-valley-the-new-broadchurch-bbc-hints-at-second-series-as-finale-spawns-twitter-hysteria-4749318/> (accessed 14 July 2014).

⁷⁸ Sarah Freeman, 'Happy Valley: The dark side of Hebden Bridge', Yorkshire Post [online], 2 May 2014, Available at: <http://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/yorkshire-living/arts/theatre-and-tv/happy-valley-the-dark-side-of-hebden-bridge-1-6592462> (accessed 14 July 2014).

⁷⁹ Limited space here does not permit a thorough analysis of the role of affect in *Happy Valley*, nor of the growing body of scholarship which explores the 'writing in' of emotion to TV drama. See for example, Gorton's discussion and interview with Kay Mellor in Kristyn Gorton, *Media Audiences – Television, Meaning and Emotion*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009).

⁸⁰ Writer of both medical and police series, such as *Cardiac Arrest* (BBC1, 1994-96), *Bodies* (BBC3, 2004-06), *Line of Duty* (BBC2, 2012-).

⁸¹ Jacobs, 'The medium in crisis', p. 509.

⁸² Robin Nelson, 'Quality TV Drama: Estimations and Influences Through Time and Space', in Janet McCabe & Kim Akass eds. *Quality TV – Contemporary American Television and Beyond* (London & New York: I. B. Tauris, 2007), p. 51

⁸³ Jacobs, 'The medium in crisis', p. 508.

⁸⁴ Jason Mittell, 'The Qualities of Complexity', in Jacobs and Peacock eds. *Television Aesthetics and Style*, p. 55.

⁸⁵ *The Killing*, *Sherlock*, *Doctor Who*, and *The Bridge* all spring to mind for such a list.

⁸⁶ Karen Lury, 'A Response to John Corner', *Screen* vol. 48, no. 3, (Autumn, 2007), pp. 371-376.

⁸⁷ Jake Kanter, 'Mad Men Fails to Sell Sky Atlantic', *Broadcast*, 17 April 2014 [online], <http://www.broadcastnow.co.uk/ratings/mad-men-fails-to-sell-sky-atlantic/5070807.article> accessed 16 September 2014.

⁸⁸ For example, according to BARB data published in *Broadcast* magazine from time to time, series as varied as *Broadchurch* (ITV 2013 -) and *Call the Midwife* (BBC1, 2012 -) have sustained series average audiences of over 8 and 11 million respectively, equivalent to shares of well over 30%. Although it is tricky to consider ratings data out of context, it worth noting that some fairly challenging and, again critically neglected, home-grown shows on smaller channels received audiences well in excess of even the highest rated imports: episodes of series such as *Line of Duty* (BBC2 2012 -), *The Shadow Line* (BBC2 2011), and *Top Boy* (Channel 4, 2011 -) gathered audiences of 3.3, 3.03, and 1.6 million respectively. To give examples which are not in a social realist tradition: in 2015 *Poldark* (BBC1) launched with over 8 million viewers, whilst *Wolf Hall* averaged over 4.4m on BBC2 and *Humans* over 4m on Channel 4. The big budget (£25m), lavishly-promoted Sky Atlantic series *Fortitude* was described as the channel's 'most successful original commission to date' and averaged just under ½ m (a 2.2% share).

⁸⁹ Gerard Gilbert, 'Happy Valley, BBC1 – TV Review', *The Independent*, 30 April 2014 [online] <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/tv/reviews/happy-valley-bbc1--tv-review-homegrown-yorkshireset-drama-is-better-than-fargo-9303078.html>, accessed 16 September 2014.

⁹⁰ Hills, 'Television Aesthetics: A Pre-structuralist Danger?', p. 114.

⁹¹ Bird, *The Audience in Everyday Life*.

⁹² Janet Wolff, 'Groundless beauty – Feminism and the aesthetics of uncertainty', *Feminist Theory*, vol. 7, no. 2 (2006), pp. 143-158.

⁹³ *Ibid.* p. 144.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.* p. 148.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.* p. 150. The examples given are from the collected essays published as J. Squires (ed), *Principled Positions: Postmodernism and the Rediscovery of Value* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1993).

⁹⁶ *Ibid.* p. 151.