Meta TV in Practice:

A study of the re-use of television texts within contemporary television programmes

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Abstract

This thesis considers how television reflects on its own output in the context of newly created television programmes which seek to reconsider, reframe and re-contextualise the content of television programmes that have already been broadcast. It does this by considering a range of programmes created between 2002 and 2009 as part of my work as a practice based researcher. These programmes cover some of the key genres in contemporary television and reflect the development of forms and themes within the medium.

The broad focus of this work is to seek to gain an understanding of what fresh meanings can be derived from re-using existing television content in new programmes that contextualise it with the provision of newly commissioned and created visual content. More specifically the work seeks to explore the role of the implied viewer and his or her proxies on screen and how this affects the construction and delivery of these new programmes.

The programmes under consideration include archive based retrospectives of television dramas, lifestyle programmes and property formats. These are viewed from the perspective of key ideas in television studies including fan studies, celebrity culture, intertextuality, hybridity and television history. Taken altogether, it is argued the work constitutes a meta-practice in television.

Introduction

Meta TV in Practice:

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> Reflective practice ... gives strategies to bring things out into the open and frame appropriate and searching questions never asked before. Gillie Bolton, *Reflective Practice, Writing and Professional Development*, (2010, 3).

This thesis is submitted along with a portfolio of 11 original television programmes for a PhD by Published Works. The thesis consists of an outline of my intended research area and rationale, an explanation of my methodology and theoretical framework, and a critical discussion of my research outputs, the programmes themselves. I am going to explore what new meanings and understandings can be provided for the audience when television reflects on its own output by making new television programmes about programmes that have already been broadcast. In particular, I am going to argue that an exploration of the role of the television viewer and his or her proxies on screen provides a framework through which to elicit the significance of this televisual reflexivity. This is a research question I have addressed as a media practitioner through the creation of my television portfolio, as submitted here, over the period from 2002 to 2009, and which I have reflected on through engaging with key aspects of critical theory within television studies.

Specifically the thesis will consider aspects of nostalgia, celebrity, intertextuality, formatting and hybridity in so far as they feed into our understanding of factual entertainment television programmes that both sit within and outside the reality television genre. My purpose is twofold: to

provide a new discourse on television through what I will term "metatelevisual"[1] programmes in an area of television studies that until now has received relatively little critical attention, and to critically understand my own professional practice in the industry. In the context of the latter I will consider my career as a reflexive practitioner, how reflecting on practice differs from the production of metatelevisual texts as a result of practice and what the role of authorship is on this work, given both the collaborative nature of programme production and the ideological impact of the media organisation in which the work takes place.

As a media practitioner I have been concerned with telling stories about people, places, beliefs, ideas and our society at large through a wide range of television programmes I made in over 15 years as a television producer and director on staff at the BBC and subsequently as a freelance producer and director for ITV. The vehicle for these stories has included award-winning investigative documentaries, high-profile studio discussion shows and prime-time reality television formats. Specifically, these are broadcast programmes associated with series such as the factual entertainment shows, *Dragons' Den* (BBC, 2005 -), *Honey We're Killing the Kids* (BBC, 2005 - 2007), *Live the Dream as Seen on Screen* (ITV, 2009), and *The Property List* (Channel 5, 2008); the religious and ethical debate series *Heart of the Matter* (BBC,1979 – 2000), and *Soul of Britain* (BBC, 2000); the international travel documentary strand *Secrets Of* .... (Discovery Travel Channel, 1999 – 2004); the regional documentary strand *Close Up North* (BBC, 1992 – 2002); plus individual programmes such as an obituary for Pope John Paul II, a political documentary about the leadership of new Labour; several popular culture, archive based shows about spy dramas and Christmas day television, and a series about prostitutes. A full teleography is provided at the end of this work.

[1] This is distinct from the earlier reference to Meta Television made by Scott Olson (1987).

Practitioner Background to the Research

Having trained as a journalist, my career in media production began in news and current affairs broadcasts and led to five years finding, researching and reporting stories, writing bulletins and producing news programmes in both radio and television before spending ten years in television production on both factual and factual entertainment programmes. I worked first as an Assistant Producer and then as a Producer/Director and sometimes as a Series Producer. This journalistic sensibility, with its focus on inquiry, story, impartiality and delivering new knowledge would inform all my subsequent work as a television producer and director whether making hard-hitting documentaries, light-hearted travel programmes, popular culture archive based shows or highly formatted factual entertainment formats. It is specifically evident in the approach I took to making programmes cited in this thesis, in which I sought to analyse, stretch and test the limits of, for example, established entertainment formats, in an attempt to deliver a more documentary like feel and a more critically aware viewing. A journalistic drive towards delivering new knowledge and a critical curiosity about the creative processes of television production has informed my career as both a media producer and reflexive practitioner. The relative successes and limitations of these reflexive endeavours are discussed in more detail later in this text.

As outlined above, my career as a media practitioner also involved moving repeatedly between contrasting programme types. This fluidity has been central to my practice based research. It ensured that my creative process was constantly being informed and interrogated by a wide range of programme styles. In addition, this diversity helped me to maintain a valuable critical distance on my own output and of the different televisual forms I was working in. I was able to develop more fully as a reflexive practitioner, repeatedly seeking and being enabled to re-frame and re-contextualise my own work and that of others as it was informed by the knowledge and experience of other types of television programme that I had worked on. For example, I would experiment with bringing an investigative edge to a formatted travel show or lifestyle programme and I would try out stylistic devices from an entertainment show on a political documentary or obituary programme. This

professional reflexivity and its results on screen, in terms of the programmes I created as a practitioner, are explored more fully in the text below.

Television as a reflexive form

Clip shows, end of season shows, montages and best bits, are all examples of reflexive moments. Amy Holdsworth, *Television Memory and Nostalgia*, (2001, 14)

As a media practitioner I have been concerned with telling stories through a wide range of television programmes. As a research practitioner I have been engaged with exploring what the impact is on audiences of the specific ways we choose to tell stories. One of the primary ways by which I carried out this research was through the creation of new television programmes which looked back at past ones. In other words, making reflexive television programmes which sought to offer the audience something new through a re-appraisal of the old and familiar, already-seen. My practice was thus a meta-level discourse on television forms and narratives and reflexivity is at the heart of my research as a practitioner.

Specifically, this research has taken the form of me creating new programmes for broadcast which revisit and celebrate popular television series that have been shown in the recent past or which follow up on the fortunes of people who have taken part in television programmes recently transmitted. These programmes are commonly known as archive based programmes or clip shows. Such programmes form part of a wider practice of reflexive television programmes which have developed in tandem with new broadcasts. Collectively these have helped to create a meta-discourse on the medium of television defined in Scott Olson's three stage analysis of meta television as a kind of popular postmodernism (Olson 1987).

As noted, there is an established and ongoing strand of reflexivity in television output. At a macro or channel level this ranges from the programme the BBC broadcast in August 1976 to celebrate four decades

of television called *What Do You Think of it so Far?* (BBC, 1976), to the series of retrospective anniversary programmes broadcast in April 2014 called *Fifty Years of BBC 2* (BBC, 2014). At a micro or programme level reflexivity encompasses everything from the celebration of the long-running BBC comedy series *Only Fools and Horses* (BBC,1981 - 2003), to the long-running ITV comedy critique series *Harry Hill's TV Burp* (ITV, 2001 – 2012). Indeed, Jason Jacobs has noted that the popular history of television has been a constant feature and subject since it started: "television itself has charted the history of the medium with typical narcissistic fascination with reruns, anniversary celebrations and special nostalgia programming" (2006, 108). Arguably this "narcissistic fascination" with its own production and content can be seen at an extreme in the large number of different types of television programme which take as their core content the content of other television programmes. A taxonomy of these includes genre histories, compilations or *Best Ofs*..., retrospectives and anniversaries, television review shows, tributes and profiles, production histories and behind-the-scenes (see Bonner 2003, Ellis 1992, Holdsworth 2011, Kompare 2005, O'Sullivan 1998).

Despite their history and ubiquity archive-based and clip show programmes have received relatively little critical attention. Indeed the lack of academic activity in this area has prompted one writer, James Leggott, to declare the clip show needs to be rescued from critical neglect because "the format, relatively invisible within television scholarship, raises critical questions around agency, authorship and value" (Leggott 2010, 15). The value to media institutions themselves of this kind of archive based/clip show programming has been seen by Amy Holdsworth as something of a corporate branding exercise, insofar as she finds that the self-promoting practices of the BBC create an institutional television nostalgia (Holdsworth 2011). Others, such as Frances Bonner, seek to frame the value of these programmes to the institution in economic terms as "cheap television" (Bonner 2003, 56). However, my particular practice-as-research interest has been in identifying the potential value to audiences of such

programmes -programmes that henceforth I shall term “metatelevisual” - in the way that they aspire to bring new meaning to familiar material by re-packaging it in a reflective context. More specifically I have sought to explore the positioning of the viewer, or what I consider his or her proxy, within the text itself via the interview contributions of the celebrity commentator, the programme expert, or the programme contributor within the archive/clip show itself. It is this practice-as-research that I present here, in the form of the television programmes I have made, and that I explore more fully in this accompanying critical text.

Intent and Iteration in reflexive practice

It may be useful here to clarify that a metatelevisual text that is the product of reflecting on a television programme is not necessarily an act of reflexivity by a reflective practitioner working in television. I would contend that a key difference between metatelevisual texts that are the result of practice and my reflexive work as practitioner, which seeks to reflect on television practice, is that of intent. As will be discussed in the text that follows, many metatelevisual programmes are made and broadcast because the channel commissioners perceive there is an audience for programmes which repeat parts of previously broadcast programmes that have been very popular, especially when these commissions offer new contextual information. As a producer/director whose work was known by Executive Producers I would sometimes be asked to deliver metatelevisual programmes. At other times, however, the stimulus for producing such metatelevisual programmes, or additional episodes of them, came from my suggestions to Executive Producers and here my own interest in reflecting on practice overlapped with an institutional desire to commission metatelevisual programmes that were the result of practice.

In addition, there were often more nuanced aspects of intent and iteration at work in the television programmes I made that are included in this text, in so far as I was also using these metatelevisual texts to explore specific aspects television practice as part of my own research as a reflexive practitioner. For

example, I wanted to investigate what roles the non-celebrity contributor, the presenter and the celebrity contributor play in an archive based clip show in providing an implied voice for the viewer within the text itself. I did this through making a series of similarly styled archive programmes celebrating popular spy dramas and Christmas TV over a period of two years. There was an iterative process at work here, since I used a series of different programme commissions to probe these personal areas of research interest and in the process was able to reflect on aspects of past success and failure and adapt these in the next programme I made. Similarly, as a reflexive practitioner I wanted to explore how far the factual entertainment programme format could be pushed towards the investigative domain of the documentary and did this through an iterative process on a series of six follow up programmes that I was commissioned to make about a high profile business entertainment format. Thus the iterative process is central to my work as a reflexive practitioner and the outputs that result from that.

Questions of method

My overall methodology is threefold. Firstly, I have identified the portfolio of programmes from my own BBC and ITV production practice, as a television producer and director, which have contributed to the research I have undertaken in investigating the potential of creating meta level meaning afforded by the re-contextualisation of television archive. Secondly, I have reflected on this practice by wider critical and theoretical reading which encompasses practice-as-research, reality television, television history, celebrity studies, aspects of fan and audience-orientated studies as well as broader media studies and theory. Finally, I have sought to combine the two areas of activity above in this extended critical essay in order to achieve a greater understanding of my own production practice, and to offer an original contribution to knowledge of contemporary television and media studies.

More specifically, the methodology for my practice-as-research into meta-television has been to create 11 different archive based/clip show programmes, each of which has explored an aspect of my central research question about how meaning is rendered within the reflexive narrative and each of which was broadcast either on the BBC or ITV between 2002 and 2009. I produced and directed the programmes by combining archive clips from high profile past television programmes with new material that I had both specifically commissioned, directed or shot—such as new interviews and new location sequences—and I used this material within new programme formats and scripts that I had specifically devised, written and edited. Each of the programmes has been considered and contextualised through an aspect of media theory and the insights gained combined to reflect upon each other and the research question as a whole.

Notes on Authorship and Collaboration

It is important to consider here the impact of programme authorship and collaboration in reflexive work. Television production is necessarily a collaborative process developed by a team of professionals with a range of specific skills. Catrin Prys (2006) in her case study of issues in television authorship identifies 40 key production roles. In my own experience as a practitioner as the producer and director of a television programme I would typically be leading teams of 3 or 4 key creatives – an assistant producer, camera operator and post-production editor - for several weeks or months in order to create an hour of broadcastable content. However, this number could swell to 40 for larger and longer productions such as the programme celebrating Christmas day television discussed in detail in the next chapter. The length of this particular programme meant two of us were working as both producers and directors on the show dividing the delivery of stories between us with final editorial control resting with my colleague.

Prys reveals that “despite the collaborative nature of television, critics have frequently prioritised one individual as being the “author” of a particular production” (2006, 22). In the case of a drama this might typically be the writer. However she finds it is the producer and the director that typically carry the greatest responsibility for a television production and who as a result are most often credited in academic circles as the author. My own practitioner experience confirmed the final creative vision more typically lies in the hands of the director and the overall responsibility for editorial content rests with the producer. In the field of factual and factual entertainment programmes these two roles are frequently combined into one. But whether separately or combined these roles work very closely and collaboratively in the production of the programme with a creative team that would include, at least, an assistant producer or researcher whose work on finding specific contributors or locations would be reflected on screen, an off-line editor whose creative input into the pace and narrative drive of the final film would be seen on screen along with that of graphics, colourists and audio post production experts too. The shots used would reflect the lighting and composition of the camera operator - either a dedicated professional or the assistant producer or myself working as a self shooting producer/director. In all of the portfolio of programmes submitted here I was credited on screen as either the producer and director of the work or as the producer of it, and so while these responsibilities would typically result in authorship being ascribed to me, as Prys indicates (2006,22), a collaborative team effort was essential to the creative process of programme production in each case.

A further issue to acknowledge in my research is the ideological impact of the organisation for whom I was working as a media practitioner – primarily the BBC and ITV. As an experienced television producer active across a range of programme genres and departments, I had considerable autonomy in which programmes I chose to make and how I chose to make them. Executive Producers would ask me to work on their programmes because they knew my eclectic programme history and explicitly reflective process would bring a fresh and different approach to their commissioned shows. Nonetheless the broadcast institutions had

an impact on what I produced – inevitably there were editorial guidelines to be followed and format expectations to be delivered, as well as programme brands and channel reputations to be maintained. Working within and pushing against the boundaries of these expectations is an important part of what I have sought to explore as a reflexive practitioner and is a significant part of what I consider in the work submitted here. For example, when the BBC wanted to carefully nurture a new high profile programme brand there was close scrutiny by the Executive Producers of how I was portraying its key contributors. The way I dealt with this and the impact it had on my specific reflexive outputs is discussed more fully in the body of this text.

Research Overview

The focus of my practice-based research has essentially been to offer a fresh reading of new television programmes made about old television programmes through an articulation and understanding of evolving practice and in particular the role of a proxy or intermediary figure on screen. In this aspect of my research as a practitioner I have been operating in the arena of televisual reflexivity, exploring the possibilities of a meta -level discourse through the production of programmes which reuse and re-contextualise existing content. These programmes fall into a significant body of popular, high-profile television commissions which, as previously noted, have nonetheless received little critical attention.

This may be due to a narrow perception that the primary function of such programmes is to provide cheap television as Ted Madger (2009), for example has argued in identifying an industry trend to recycle and copy successful shows. Or it could perhaps be attributed to a certain critical disdain for work that is not wholly original but instead takes the proven, creative successes of others as its starting point. In any event, these kind of programmes, be they a retrospective, a best of, a celebration or a behind the scenes account constitute a major contributor to how we understand television history and how we understand our contemporary selves.

In *Television, Memory and Nostalgia* Amy Holdsworth (2011) observes that "what is central to the textual re-encounter with past television is not the recovery of the original broadcast or viewing experience but its positioning within new frames and contexts that hold the past at a distance and reframe it in relation to the present" (2011, 98). This offers the possibility to create and explore new meanings through a process of what Holdsworth calls recontextualisation as "television produces nostalgia for itself through repetition with a difference" (2011, 112). It is this process that lies at the heart of my practice-based research—uncovering new ways of understanding the familiar by refracting it through new lenses. My programme portfolio has enabled me to explore and articulate critical questions about how new insights, understanding and value can be created for the audience of these programmes. I did this in three key ways. I started by considering the role of nostalgia in television culture and how it has the potential to create as well as reframe recollections that inform a mass audience perception of a shared past. I came back to the idea of television nostalgia at the end of my research to explore whether it could instead inform individual lifestyle choices. Second, I was then keen to probe the emerging role of the celebrity commentator within reflexive programming and how this role potentially took the part on screen of the viewer at home. This research necessarily also elicited questions about the evolving role of the fan both within the text and outside it. Lastly, my research then developed to

explore the role of both the contributor and the expert within reality television programmes, in particular, and how each of them may play a role in representing the audience concerns on screen. The importance of the programme format itself in relation to audience expectations was also an essential early element in this investigation.

This set of 11 reflective programmes form the public (published) practice research outputs in the consideration of Meta TV in practice. Details about each of them follows.

1. *24 Heaven,* broadcast 11 August 2002 on BBC 3

2. *I'm Dreaming of a TV Christmas,* broadcast 24 December 2002 on BBC 2

3. *Spooks: Access All Areas,* broadcast 13 December 2004 on BBC 3

4. *Honey We're Killing the Kids Revisited: The Swains,* broadcast 12 April 2005 on BBC 3

5. *Honey We're Killing the Kids Revisited: The Applebys,* broadcast 3 May 2005 on BBC 3

6. *Dragons' Den: Where Are They Now?* episode 1 of a two-part special, broadcast 28 September 2006 on BBC 2

7. *Dragons' Den Where Are They Now?* episode 2 of a two part special, broadcast on 8th October 2006 on BBC 2

8. *Dragons' Den: Where Are They Now?,* episode 2 of a four-part series, broadcast 25 July 2007 on BBC 2

9. *Dragons' Den: Where Are They Now?* episode 3 of a four-part series, broadcast 1 August 2007 on BBC 2

10. *Live the Dream: As Seen on Screen,* episode 1 of a six-part series, broadcast October 19 2009 on ITV 3

11. *Live the Dream: As Seen on Screen* episode 3 of a six-part series, broadcast November 2 2009 on ITV 3

Although the focus of my research has been the role of the audience in creating new meanings for reflective programmes the critical framework for the questions I am asking does not lie exclusively in that strand of television studies known as audience research. Significant elements of this theory are often characterised as a quantitative activity, Creeber (2006), Casey et al (2002), being based in a cultivation analysis paradigm, Shanahan and Morgan (1999). However, exploring the positioning of the audience within the television text, in what Robert Allen calls the "characterised viewer" (1992, 120) as an aspect of reader response theory, has provided a useful critical framework for my research. In this context too, it has been appropriate to draw on some aspects of fan discourse established by Fiske (1992) and Jenkins (1992), and built on by others such as Hills (2006) in the positioning of fans as an active audience engaged in creating meaning.

Inevitably, I am also drawing on aspects of textual analysis, in the reflective outputs I made which cover a diverse range of television series from espionage dramas to lifestyle reality formats. The role of genre theory, which Glen Creeber (2001) uses as an organising methodology within textual analysis and is at the same time an approach valued by television historians (Bignell 2013), has proved to be very helpful for me in drawing links between different aspects of my practice-as-research in metatelevision. But, it is more specifically the ideas around intertextuality that have emerged from genre studies by, among others, Feuer (1992) and Neale (2001) and - with a particular focus on drama - Nelson (2006), that are useful in considering the new meanings a tele-literate audience can bring to these reflexive programmes. Kilborn (2003) and Caldwell (2008) also argue drama, documentary and reality television genres have increasingly borrowed stylistic and format elements from one another in a self-conscious move towards hybridity and this development is also relevant in considering the later examples of my metatelevisual

programmes. In creating a meta-discourse my reflective programmes draw on interviews with past television producers, practitioners and performers and this invokes another strand of television studies identified by Creeber (2006) and Bignell (2013) as historical analysis. In considering the nostalgic retrospectives of themed evenings of past programmes about, for example, doctors or police officers on television, Jacobs finds that such broadcasts represent television's continuing interest in historicising itself "an attempt to invent what we might call television's traditions" (Jacobs 2006, 110).

While the examples of practical work I present here in support of my PhD – mirroring my practitioner career as a whole – comprise noticeably varied television programmes, collectively they form a coherent narrative of my career and research pre-occupations as they move between journalistic and entertainment forms that interrogate each other and grow in strength and complexity. Through a process of iteration these programmes enabled me to test and expose the limitations of the forms I was working in and to discover what new information the viewer could be offered that might enable them to experience a familiar programme from the past in a quite different way in the present.

I want now to turn to critical discussion of the key issues in my practice, in the context of looking at specific programmes. The issues are, in turn, nostalgia on television, creating a proxy viewer, the transformation agenda in lifestyle television, celebrity culture and subject expertise and hybridity in programming.

<u>Chapter 1</u>

Nostalgia in Television *- I'm Dreaming of a TV Christmas (BBC, 2002).*

This high-profile, two-hour, archive-based programme, celebrating Christmas television programmes from the last three decades, was the centrepiece of BBC 2's Christmas Eve programming in 2002. I was one of two Producer/Directors on this unusually long show and was responsible for originating, producing, directing and editing approximately half of the stories in the overall programme. The show was presented by comedian Phil Jupitus and featured archive clips from around 20 past Christmas programmes including *The Queen's Speech*, (BBC, 1952), *Top of the Pops*, (BBC 1964 -2006), *The Two Ronnies*, (BBC, 1971 - 1987), Christmas Specials of *Jim'll Fix It* (BBC 1975 -1994), and *The Generation Game*, (BBC, 1971 – 2002), and *Morecambe and Wise* (BBC, 1968 -1977, and ITV, 1978 – 1983). These were explored through newly commissioned, filmed and edited interviews with producers, technicians and stars of the shows as well as celebrity commentators in the role of "viewers" and location-based sequences and links with the presenter.

My first question was to ask what new meanings the audience could draw from the re-iteration of so many familiar festive programmes that would exist in addition to the straight forward entertainment value of a seasonal retrospective. Holdsworth has argued that "nostalgia emerges as the dominant framework through which television remembers and refers to itself" (2011, 18). And a nostalgia for the certainties of fixed Christmas television schedules emerged as a pre-occupation of both the producers and consumers of Christmas television that I interviewed for *I'm Dreaming of a TV Christmas* (referred to henceforth as *TV Xmas*). But why should this be? There is, of course, the economic argument referred to earlier that reworking past programmes is cheaper than creating whole new ones and that, in reproducing tried and trusted past formats, nostalgia offers broadcasters a safer economic bet.

There is also the idea of a self- serving memorialisation and promotional function when broadcasters choose to reproduce clips from past programmes. But Holdsworth also suggests there is an aesthetic imperative to nostalgia – a cocooning, conservative sense of safety in idealising the past while acknowledging "it can also be invoked to reaffirm a belief in the progress of the present" (2011, 103). Thus, a programme designed to look back at what role watching television played in the nation's most important family celebration of the year also provided a fantastic vehicle through which to explore the idea of nostalgia both as a cultural construct and an aesthetic prism and as a mechanism for delivering new meanings to the viewer.

Holdsworth (2011) asserts that nostalgia can operate as a mode of critique, comparing who we were then to who we are now, reflecting on patterns of change and continuity. This re-assessment of what might be deemed our televisual treasures (since Christmas television purports to be the best of the best), and their value for us now, is at the heart of *TV Xmas*. Did the fact that there were 21 million people sitting down to watch *Morecambe and Wise* on Christmas day make the jokes funnier? Are we confident enough of ourselves as a post-racist society, that we can now tut indulgently at the bigotry of Alf Garnet in his festive sitcom specials? What do the seasonal musical extravaganzas of *The Two Ronnies* say about how far our expectations of creativity, ambition, irony and ambiguity on television have grown or diminished? And did Kenny Everett's comic mocking of the Queen's annual Christmas day speech serve to reinforce or reduce its grip on the deferential nature of the national psyche and the timing of Christmas dinner around this broadcast? The inclusion of many new interviews with celebrity viewers, who were reminiscing about festive shows they used to watch, also catalysed my interest in trying to understand how the role of the audience in relation to a text can vary according to their positioning within it, either explicitly or implicitly. Allen (1992) refers to the variously defined roles of model reader, intended reader, implied reader, ideal reader and so on within reader-orientated theory. In audience-orientated theory, as it applies to television, Allen describes the on-screen characterised viewer as a narrative construct playing the role of the audience within a text in much the same way as a visible/audible studio audience does within a television game show, sitcom or chat show. But I wanted to explore and create a number of different versions of

this on-screen characterised viewer – or what I call the audience proxy – perceiving their role as central to the creation of meaning within televisual texts of a reflexive nature.

One of the key ways I did this was to invite celebrities to reflect on their recollections of Christmas day television. The decision to use celebrities rather than ordinary viewers was significant. The rationale was that they were frequently contributors to the shows under discussion as well as consumers of them and thus they could occupy different roles in my programme at different times, switching from informed expert and television insider, to familiar performing celebrity and again to a comedic Everyman – a viewer just like us but funnier. This multi-tasking in a single programme offered the viewer the opportunity to see a more three dimensional version of famous faces such as Tony Blackburn, Ronnie Corbett and Jo Brand and also an insight into the different types of reader that Allen suggests can be found within a text. But nostalgia, rather than simple recollection, was also something I tried explicitly to elicit even from contributors such as Konnie Huq who presented the BBC children's programme *Blue Peter* (BBC, 1958 -), from 1997- 2008 and Peter Purves who presented on *Blue Peter* between 1967-1978 - even though they may have been too young or too old to actually remember the details of the programmes they were being asked to talk about—unless they were prompted by the interviewer's questions or were shown clips from the shows before interviews started. In this sense I was inevitably creating as well as reflecting a national experience of nostalgia. I was probing the "central role of television in the construction of cultural memories, identities and histories" that Holdsworth (2011, 19) identifies. And I was using celebrities to create this collective experience. In his text on *Understanding Celebrity*, Graeme Turner argues that celebrity plays a key role in the way we develop our shared cultural identity claiming "we are using celebrity as a means of constructing a new dimension of community through the media" (2004, 6).The implication is that we may be creating, if not a false, then a fragile sense of community, through the shared media recollections of celebrities who happen to be willing or available to comment.

Holdsworth (2011) also voices concerns about the value of what is recollected in her critique of countdown shows that use similar production techniques to *TV Xmas* in what she deems to be a potentially haphazard selection of archive,

contextualised by the personal recollections and anecdotes of celebrities. My experience as a practitioner suggests she is right to question how the television canon is created. Behind the research-led editorial values of programme selection, I found, in creating *TV Xmas,* that the historicisation of television is also determined by expediencies of cost and availability. Some deserving archive clips simply cannot be found or licensed for re-use. The archive clips from some notable programmes, such as Christmas day films, or high profile dramas featuring multiple performers (who all need to be paid a repeat fee under licensing rules), may simply exceed the programme budget and so be omitted altogether or marginalised. Therefore, Holdsworth raises an important question when she asks whether

> "the repurposing of the television archive through these nostalgic forms means we are simply being marketed the same commercially viable memories, reproducing a narrow view of both television's own and wider social and cultural history" (2011, 101).

The impact of the timing of programmes during Christmas day and the **way** people watched as well as **what** they actually watched was another key theme I wanted to explore in relation to aspects of audience-orientated critical theory elaborated by Allen (1992). The expert producers as well as the celebrity commentators I interviewed would often choose to comment not just on programme content but also programme context – the physical experience of viewing at home with their families over Christmas. Holdsworth has also vividly described memories of how and where she watched television as a child and "the interplay between inside and outside worlds" (2011, 25). In this way my programme broached an aspect of ethnographic television studies, more fully explored by David Morley in his investigation of *Family Television* (1986). For example, contributors commenting on the thrill of ringing certain programmes in the Christmas edition of the Radio Times listing magazine, on the fights over the television remote control and how the scheduling of programmes signposted family activities such as when to eat, sleep play games or argue. What emerges is a surprising homogeneity of experience on this single special day that echoes some of the findings of Tim O'Sullivan's (1991) analysis of research conducted some three decades earlier into the rituals and symbolism of more quotidian viewing habits. These revealed memories of television as a dominant presence in the domestic space, often controlled by one family

member, capable of bringing the family together but also dividing it with arguments over what to watch, a source of excitement and guilty pleasure with the potential to create nostalgic recollection and shared memories for its viewers.

Chapter 2

The Proxy Viewer - *24 Heaven* (BBC, 2002) and *Spooks : Access All Areas* (BBC, 2004)

My desire to conduct research as a media practitioner into ways of reprising and reframing familiar programme content was first stimulated by the fan phenomenon around the American spy drama, *24* (Fox, 2001- 2010), starring Kiefer Sutherland. The show premiered in the United States and eventually ran to eight series, attracting a devoted worldwide audience, an average of 11 million viewers a week in the US and winning a clutch of industry awards for its producers and performers, including 17 Emmys. The drama *24* has also achieved academic kudos having been included as one of the 50 most significant television programmes of all time in the television anthology edited by Glen Creeber (2004), an accolade based, in part, on its slick stylistic and narrative devices. These devices include the innovative use of a split screen and a constantly ticking clock counting down real time action as Special Agent Jack Bauer, played by Kiefer Sutherland, is challenged to save his country from an array of international terrorist threats, in just 24 hours in each season. Series one of this drama was broadcast on the BBC in the UK in 2002 and rapidly garnered a large and vocal following (BBC News Online 2002).

The 60-minute archive based programme I produced and directed as a result, *24 Heaven*, was presented by one of the most popular and high profile personalities in television at that time, Jonathan Ross - himself an outspoken fan of *24* .It was simultaneously a celebration of key moments from the past series and a light-hearted exploration of how the drama was produced and its narrative pre-occupations. Clips from the original drama comprised around 50 percent of my programme while newly commissioned, filmed and edited interviews with its L.A. based producers, writers, performers and technicians, alongside specially shot interviews with celebrity and ordinary fans in the UK, made up the rest of the film. Following the success of this programme a series of live weekly after-show

discussions were created to run after each episode of the second series of *24* when it was shown on BBC Choice, later to be known as BBC 3. These subsequent studio based discussion shows, called *Pure 24* (BBC, 2002), featuring episode analysis and fan comment and guest appearances by cast and crew were a pioneering move in UK television at the time since there were no other similar television programmes which reflected on very recently broadcast television shows. *24 Heaven* also paved the way for a second celebration/behind the scenes show of *24* to be commissioned which was broadcast at the end of series two of the drama.

The contributions of those working on the original US drama provided valuable insights into the innovative real time narrative structure, split screen hypermediacy technique (Nelson 2007) and a range of production decisions. For example, my interview with the series creators Robert Cochran and Joel Surnow revealed that sometimes compelling plot events, such as a sinister phone call, were introduced with no clear plan for how they might later be resolved, but that the narrative twisted and turned abruptly as the writers deliberately painted themselves into a corner in order to have to paint themselves out again. In contrast, the director Stephen Hopkins revealed that the duplicity of one leading character was carefully plotted across 10 episodes in order to deliver maximum impact and credibility in the finale. These provided potential new and deeper understandings of the drama for the audience, and an opportunity to view clips of the drama framed by a new context of "insider", industry professional comment. This mirrors the process described by Holdsworth (2011) and referred to earlier in this text as a re-contextualisation, re-evaluation and rediscovery of meaning through a review of past television programmes in a new setting. The programme also contained many more trivial production insights, for example, into the nature and number of the leading ladies costume changes and the doubts about the credibility of actor Dennis Hopper's Serbian accent. Taken altogether these pre-occupations constituted a reappraisal of the original drama, which trod a deliberately entertaining and informative, but sometimes uneasy, line between celebration and send-up delivered by a large cast of contributors.

A desire to meet fan appetite for new programmes that represented and re-evaluated cherished original content was a key driver in the commissioning of another programme I made about a spy drama called *Spooks* (BBC, 2002 - 2011).

This UK produced spy drama was first broadcast on BBC 2 in 2002 and also achieved significant critical acclaim. It has been described by Felix Thomson (2010, 434), as “a slick prime time secret agent drama series based on the activities of MI5 in Britain ...[with] clear narrative goals and resolution”. *Spooks* followed a similar trajectory to *24* as a hugely popular spy drama that ran for 10 series, attracting between 6 and 7 million viewers each week and winning a number of awards including a BAFTA for Best Drama. Once again I created a 60 minute archive based show which, through the use of clips from the original series, celebrated the high points of the drama and investigated their production and was called *Spooks : Access all Areas*. This was broadcast on BBC 3 directly after the final episode of the third series had been transmitted. Again, through commissioning, filming and editing new interviews with producers, performers, writers and technicians it provided insights into how the drama was created, but the tone and content of this programme was significantly different from that of *24 Heaven*, as will be discussed in more detail later, and represented an important shift in the focus of my research concerns and how they were delivered.

In one sense both these programmes fulfilled much the same role as the DVD extra material did with film releases. But the demand for more contextualising content on a range of platforms, for more segmented replays available at a time of the viewer’s choosing, and for more critical ways for viewers to engage with popular programmes even when they are off air started to emerge as a significant audience function at this time. It has since grown into such an important aspect of television production and delivery that Bignell uses it to consider whether television as we now know it will cease to exist, concluding, however, that “while significant changes are taking place they seem to be evolutionary rather than revolutionary” (2013, 282). What started a decade earlier with the offer of a weekly televised chat show about *24* later developed more interactive content that was also placed online and play along content later being offered on mobile phones. In this sense the archive based celebration/behind the scenes programmes I was making were in the first wave of the now familiar phenomenon of providing fans with extra content around the original broadcast programme via other platforms, typically through second screens such as mobile phones or laptops. Elizabeth Evans (2011) has explored the provision of this

extra fan-oriented content in recent audience based research and as a result has framed both *24* and *Spooks* as pioneers of transmedia television.

The use of the celebrities and experts in my programmes as proxy fans and viewers has been an ongoing theme of my practice based research and has evolved in a number of different ways. In *24 Heaven*, we interviewed a broad range of celebrities who were fans of the show, as well as film critics and journalists. In contrast to *TV Xmas* the celebrity here was being asked to comment on one particular television series rather than on an era of (recent) history and through their enthusiastic endorsement of it serve as a kind of on-screen proxy for the dedicated fan, rather than just the broader viewing public. I also wanted to experiment with using ordinary, or non-celebrity fans to articulate the fervently held appeal of the programme and was able to include a number of them on screen despite the difficulty, in part, of determining which non-celebrity fan was more eligible than any other to represent a set of views by appearing on television. The question I faced became in essence, “what constitutes a fan?”, since as Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) have noted, more and more consumers of television at the end of the nineties were becoming fan-like in their engagements with texts and yet this does not encapsulate the close attention to a specific text that Hills (2006) sees as particular to a fan. This attempt to create a more nuanced role for the fan, pioneered by Henry Jenkins in *Textual Poachers* (1992), has enhanced a growing academic perception of the more prominent role fandom should play in audience studies “given that fandom is moving towards the cultural ‘mainstream’” (Hills 2006, 99). Indeed the nature, profile and demands of ordinary fans - particularly those associated with prime time television shows - that began to develop in the noughties, thanks to new enabling technologies such as the internet, and are still evolving rapidly today, through new forms of social and interconnected media, continue to provide new opportunities for academic scrutiny.

However, the inclusion of “celebrity fans” in *24 Heaven* was somewhat contentious and provided a fruitful area for my research in this part of the creative process. There were 17 “celebrity” commentators in my programme, ranging from the ardent fan of *24* such as Jonathan Ross and Jeremy Clarkson to less seasoned media performers such as Michael Lammy MP and a number of journalists and film critics. The selection of these contributors was based on a range of factors including

profile, diversity, comedic potential and expediency. The rationale and result of celebrity endorsement of any product – be it a garden rake or a television programme – have been widely explored by Turner (2004), Bonner (2003), Rojek (2001), and others. But this has been done largely from an economic perspective, resulting in what Turner calls the "celebrity-commodity "(2004, 7). Turner is unflinching in describing the celebrity as a commodity that is produced, traded and marketed by the media who has a specific economic function in that "celebrities are developed to make money ....television programmes feature guest appearances from celebrities to build audiences" (2004, 34). Valid as that perspective may be, my aim in *24 Heaven* was also to create an internalised fan discourse within the narrative of the programme and the inclusion of the celebrities was therefore more than a monetary matter. To what extent this was a successful strategy could perhaps be attributed to the variable celebrity status of those taking part. In categorising different types of celebrity Rojek (2001, 17), reserves the term "celetoid" for those whose status is both achieved and over quickly. *24 Heaven* included some celebrity commentators that Rojek might dub celetoids and whose credibility in the programme alongside more high profile, well informed fans, such as the presenter Jonathan Ross, might have been challenged as a result. Equally challenging was presenting non-celebrity "ordinary" fans in the same televisual way, with the same implied status within the programme, as the high profile names who had the cultural and commercial cache Turner (2004), Bonner (2003), Rojek (2001) describe. This served to confuse if not undermine the programme value of the bona fide celebrities while also failing to act as an effective proxy for the viewer, since the ordinary on-screen fans were neither able to compete with the crafted humour of their professional colleagues nor able to enthuse effectively simply as fans – so that their contributions tended to be straight and occasionally even petty. For example, the fans criticised the quality of Dennis Hopper's accent, or a continuity error in the shoes Jack Bauer's daughter wore in one scene. Another way of seeing this could be as an example of the close and sometimes unflinching critical attention to detail fans may pay to a text in what Jenkins (1992) identifies as an active production of meaning. But if the mix of celebrity and fan culture was bound to be problematic, Bignell (2013) further identifies a degree of potential competition between fans and television industry professionals for a claim on cultural capital. Using this range of celebrity and ordinary fans within *24 Heaven* was therefore not an unalloyed

success, falling as some of them did between high value celebrity-commodities and ordinary fan/celetoid. But the insights provided into the creation, conceptualisation and delivery of *24* by those who worked on it were nonetheless of high value and highly valued.

My creative strategy in the production of *Spooks : Access All Areas* changed as a result of my experience of this phase of my research into the potential of a reflexive, celebration-style, clip show. The first key development was to exclude all interviews with celebrity commentators and ordinary fans in favour of interviews with subject experts. This inevitably led to a change in the tone of the programme and a more directive role for the presenter. But it also meant the role of the viewer was not represented on screen by either a celebrity proxy or real life fan. Instead the viewer was positioned outside the text and became an implied presence who was addressed directly by the presenter in pieces to camera which ran "I know you're watching me ..." or "You might recognise this one ..." A further effect of specifically addressing an implied viewer outside the text was to increase the potential for the audience themselves to engage directly in what Olson (1987) calls the autodeconstruction of the text. This was facilitated by getting the presenter to make references to repeated stylistic devices within the original drama - such as the use of split screen action or setting scenes in a corridor with three protagonists power walking down them – and to recreate these knowingly and playfully within the *Spooks : Access All Areas* show. Viewers were thus outside the text but in on the joke.

But the light-hearted tone of both this programme and *24 Heaven* belied the serious geo-political narratives of the drama and the timelines in which they were created. The first series of *24* had been conceived before the 9/11 terrorist attacks in New York but was broadcast just after it. Hark (2004) reports that the producers said later series were inevitably influenced by the consequences of 9/11. In this context it is interesting to note the critical concern around the domestication of political events identified in both news reports of 9/11and the plot developments of *24*. While considering the realism of *24* Hark (2004) and Nelson (2007) point to the soap opera like human stories that drive these narratives to varying degrees with the result that Hark argues that just as US news coverage of the 9/11 disaster metamorphosed a political attack into a family melodrama, in the 24 narrative "everything that initially

seems political is actually personal" (Hark 2004, 123). The same agenda has been observed in the spy drama *Spooks* which was also conceived before 9/11 and premiered in the UK just one year after the terrorist attack. Thomson observes the first series initially dealt in stories of home-grown threats but that "later storylines use threats to family members as an index of the heroic sacrifice of the agents ....bringing it closer to *24* in which Jack Bauer finds the task of preventing the assassination of a black presidential candidate spills over into the need to rescue members of his own family" (2010, 436).

This merging of the public and private threat is a common theme in both the spy dramas I considered and is explored in a number of ways in *Spooks : Access All Areas,* offering the audience potential new understandings of the drama. For example, striking the narrative balance between domestic drama and moral debates about national security is explicitly referred to in the interview given by the Executive Producer of the programme Jane Featherstone. But it is also explored through the replay and recreation of scenes from the original show instigated by the presenter of my programme, Libby Potter, as she is taken on a tour of the *Spooks* set by one of its actors, David Oyelowo, who plays the MI5 spy Danny. Thomson observes of *Spooks* that "as the programme develops, relationships are increasingly moved in-house, heightening the intra-team world [of MI5] as a kind of surrogate family drama." (2010, 436). This can readily be seen in the ongoing and unrequited romance plotline between Danny and another spy on the team called Zoe, played by Keeley Hawes. My presenter , Libby Potter, explores this as she takes the role of Zoe as the programme seeks to intercut scenes from the original drama with the new footage featuring the presenter using the exact same framings, locations, lines and moves in an explicitly intertextual, (and hopefully comic) way. During this reconstruction the actor playing Danny, David Oyelowo, expresses a degree of levity, if not flippancy, in recalling the love scenes that came to dominate the spy drama story lines in which he was involved. Whereas the actor playing lead spy Adam, Rupert Penry-Jones, cautions more explicitly, in his interview for my programme, about striking the right balance between domestic and political storylines and the risks of turning a spy drama into a soap opera. As Nelson observes "both *24* and *Spooks* might be located in the genre of political thriller but both have familial dimensions reminiscent of soaps" (2007, 136).

A further development in this vein was to provide new contextual knowledge in the celebration clip show by investigating the “realism” of the spies, gadgets and political threats portrayed in the original series. In one sense this last strand of research might seem a contradictory avenue of exploration since writers on meta discourse such as Olson (1987) and Waugh (2003) point out that any meta analysis specifically undermines the illusion of realism because it draws attention to the very devices used to create the illusion. But, on the other hand, it acknowledges the active role of the audience in creating new meanings as this kind of meta television relies on the viewer to be sophisticated enough to recognize the foregrounding of artifice, Olson (1987, 284). Approximately 40 percent of *Spooks : Access All Areas* was made up of archive clips from the first two series but around these were wrapped newly commissioned, filmed and edited interviews with producers, performers, writers and technicians from the show. In addition, I chose to create more original interview material with subject specialists, for example, former MI5 spies. I also filmed more presenter led sequences in a range of real life locations such as surveillance equipment suppliers and experimental physics research laboratories, as well as carrying out more original investigative research by finding surveillance experts, physics experts and experts in international politics who could comment on specific plot lines in the original series. My aim was to enable the viewer to test the “realism” of stories in the drama against real world scenarios. In this sense I was going back to my professional practice roots as an investigative documentary maker and more importantly I was seeking to shift the focus of my research more explicitly towards the possibility of creating new meanings for the audience by providing new contextual information.

The form I was choosing to do this in was thus a further development from the celebration/behind the scenes format (in itself something of a hybrid), that I had used for *24 Heaven*. It was perhaps nominally a documentary but not in the most traditional sense of one. It contained archive from a drama series, documentary style interviews and voice over in combination with a playful, entertaining script delivered by an on-screen presenter who had an entertainment remit to become immersed in experiences such as buying spy gadgets or taking a tour of the *Spooks* set and to link explicitly stylised cut sequences (such as the *Spooks* corridor walk), that were parodies of the original drama. In some ways, therefore, the programme was

anticipating what John Corner controversially called the "postdocumentary" culture of television (2009) within which the legacy of documentary is still at work, albeit in a different form. Corner describes four types of documentary, civic, journalistic, radical and diversive - the latter being informed by the new hybrids of reality television, performative and playful elements and a lightness of touch but still consciously borrowing the "documentary look" (2009, 53). *Spooks : Access all Areas* certainly resonates with this description in the terms I have outlined above. But it had an expository realism at its heart in its investigation of just how true to life the depiction of the role of the secret service and the challenges it faces was. It did this by seeking out interviews with real life former MI5 operatives, and exploring the real world market in covert surveillance technology.

A further aspect of this quasi-documentary style was an investigation into the real world relevance of the plotlines of the original drama itself. Numerous producers, writers and performers noted in interviews for *Spooks : Access All Areas,* the uncanny parallels between their fictional stories and contemporary news stories - the *Spooks* episode about controversial interrogation techniques, for example, aired just a week before the real life Abu Ghraib interrogation scandal story broke. Indeed Nelson among others has noted the drama "engages with issues so contemporary that, on occasions, viewing almost feels like watching the news" (2007, 142). But this may have been more than just an extraordinary series of co-incidences. In her analysis of *24* Van Veeran (2009), has documented a rich intertextuality in the US spy drama with the result that for a range of reasons she believes popular culture and politics have become inseparable and that "whether intended or not, *24*, like many other popular cultural products cannot be politically neutral but plays an important role in reproducing political meaning" (2009, 363). Van Veeran cites numerous examples of intertextuality within *24* ranging from Hollywood movies to high level dinner party encounters and includes, also, the producers own avowed investment in realism extending to hiring consultants to the drama who were drawn from intelligence circles and government. A similar process took place with *Spooks* as former MI5 officers, including David Shaylor, were invited to act as programme consultants and the series writers admitted to having access to other intelligence sources. Van Veeran concludes that "the intertextuality that occurs between official

discourses and popular culture mean that with regard to terrorism it is impossible to distinguish between fact and fiction" (2009, 368).

While such a claim might invite some scepticism, it was borne out to some extent by my own experience as a practitioner making *Spooks : Access All Areas*. In the course of investigating the authenticity of a *Spooks* episode about an MI5 sting operation to catch a terrorist wanting to buy a potentially lethal substance called Red Mercury I interviewed a number of real world experts about whether such a substance really existed, including a nuclear physicist. Some months later I was contacted by counter terrorism officers wanting to question me about whom I had spoken to for my programme as they were investigating a real life sting set up by a national newspaper to catch potential terrorists wanting to buy Red Mercury! This was indeed a blurring of fact and fiction, rooted in a complex intertextuality of the kind to which Van Veeran (2009) refers.

Spooks : Access All Areas tried to explore the potential of a celebrity free, information rich, explicitly intertextual approach to this kind of reflexive programme, with an implied viewer, in contrast to the more light-hearted reflections and extensive use of celebrities to proxy the viewer on screen in *24 Heaven* . Even though one BBC Executive Producer lamented on watching *Spooks : Access All Areas* that it wasn't very funny, the programme rated well on first broadcast and has maintained its relevance to dedicated viewers of the show. It has been given a five star rating by viewers who came to it ten years via the online Spooks Forum (http://www.spooksforum.co.uk/thread-1927.htmlm) and is still being circulated and watched on line.

Chapter 3

Transformation Agendas in Television - *Honey We're Killing the Kids Revisited :The Swains* (BBC, 2005) *,The Appleby's (BBC, 2005)*

My practice-as-research thus far had explored how new meanings are created by and for audiences in the re-iteration of past programmes combined with new textual and contextual information and different incarnations of the implied/proxied viewer. A further staging post in my research process was an attempt to answer the same question in a different way by focussing instead on the perspective of the programme contributors rather than the viewers as a frame of reference. What transpired in the case of the two programmes I made in connection with the reality television series *Honey We're Killing the Kids (*BBC, 2004*)* was that it was the needs of the audience to have their expectations of a predetermined programme format fulfilled that primarily determined the perspective of the subsequent reflexive work I produced.

As a practitioner I was making new television programmes which followed up on the lives of families who had taken part in the original *Honey We're Killing the Kids, (*referred to henceforth as *Honey),* parenting series to see what lasting impact, if any, their involvement had had several months after filming and how the viewer should understand the meanings of the original programme as a result. I did this specifically for a high-profile television series on the BBC with what Bonner (2003), Hill (2005), Palmer (2008), Heller (2007), and more have identified as a transformative agenda: both the lifestyle parenting show *Honey* and the business investment show *Dragons' Den* (BBC, 2005 -). Such follow-up shows were not completely unknown on UK television in the mid noughties, although they were less ubiquitous than subsequently became the case. At the time, therefore, this kind of single episode reflexive format was a relatively new area to explore, particularly in

the depth that was sought by *Honey We're Killing the Kids : Revisited* which was a 30 minute film focussing exclusively on one family from the original series. Creating an appropriate format for this metatelevisual output was challenging and a fruitful area of research as a result. This was in part due to the powerful elements contained in the show. In considering the makeover programme format on television in general Tania Lewis (2009), observes that *Honey*, in particular, combines social observation elements and melodramatic spectacle with a strongly didactic approach. There were, therefore, a number of elements for me to pick from in order to re-examine and re-evaluate the success or otherwise of the original broadcast in a programme that revisited the recent past.

The original *Honey* series had attracted strong viewing figures and significant press coverage largely because of an innovative new graphic device which sought to progressively age the children in question by up to 40 years by morphing a giant photo of the children in front of their parents' eyes. The intention was that their parents could see what the expert prediction was for how the way they were raising their children at home would affect their health and well being as adults. A child psychologist, Kris Murrin, advised by child health experts, gauged the problems the children faced and provided a strict set of new rules for the families to follow each week to remedy the depressing and sometimes disturbing prognosis for their long-term health. The images were often deliberately shocking, as were the strictures of the expert Kris Murrin, as she told parents that the impact of their poor lifestyle choices on their children was "you're killing them". The aim and conclusion of each programme was to be able to generate a more positive graphic morphing of the child's image into adulthood if the expert's rules were obeyed after the duration of the television programme. While much of the advice centred on diet and exercise,

Gareth Palmer (2008) has argued the unspoken agenda, as in many other lifestyle programmes, was essentially about middle class aspiration. "Lifestyle depends for its emotional effects on our familiarity with class markers. It exploits our fear of seeming to belong to a lower class by promoting class mobility" (Palmer 2008, 4). Yet this is not a factor that is explicitly acknowledged in any of the *Honey* series, which focus on food choices, exercise regimes, less screen time and more family activities. Others writers have also asserted, in their analysis of the class agenda of lifestyle television, that "the politics of food is fused with the moral issues

that attend the politics of class” (Biressi and Nunn 2008, 22). While class and wealth should not be conflated, the two families I made follow up programmes about for *Honey* were miles apart, both physically and in terms of material comfort. The Swains lived in Essex in a large house with three cars. The Appleby’s lived outside Glasgow in a modest house on an estate with a single car. Both, however, were concerned enough about their parenting skills and family trajectory to engage with the advice of experts via a television programme suggesting they needed to transform their lifestyle choices.

The perception of a class agenda in lifestyle and makeover programmes is accompanied by a widely held critique of the form as framed by consumerist patterns of consumption. Redden (2009, 52) asserts “makeovers take consumer advice to a level where consumption is intimately associated with personal growth”. It has thus been dubbed “moral consumption”. Within this there are two strands of thought underlying the transformational agenda of the makeover format: a governmental theory which sees the format’s aim being to train a neoliberal citizenry to manage their own social welfare as described by Oullette and Hay (2009), or alternatively a reflexive modernisation where “transformation is achieved through a process of self-reflection enabled by interacting with those around them” (Redden 2009, 46). But in all cases it is the transformation narrative that is at the heart of the programme. This central narrative feature would define the follow up programmes I made and frame the review of the families’ progress.

My follow up programmes explored whether the rules were still being followed six months to a year later by mixing clips of the key moments from the original shows with new interviews and specially shot new sequences with the contributors in their family homes. I wanted to discover whether taking part in the original programme had a lasting transformational impact and was able to create a reality that survived outside the parameters of the show itself. The transformative format that defines this strand of lifestyle television has been contextualised by Bonner thus : “makeover programmes are the most overt signs of the way television perceives itself to be engaged in a project of advising its ordinary viewers about their transformation into happier, more satisfied, more up to date versions of themselves” (Bonner 2003, 136). I had suggested a number of formats for the follow up *Revisited* programmes but ultimately was given the brief to use the same format as for the

original series. Echoing Bonner (2003), Palmer also perceives a clear and consistent format driving lifestyle programmes within reality television "At the end of the operation/swap/diet the changed individual comes home to him or herself as well as a usually nuclear family. .....Formerly unattainable dreams and ideals have come to these families through the good graces of television and we are encouraged to share their tearful gratitude" (Palmer 2008, 11). In effect the follow up shows I made had to retain the same final uplift in their format as the original programmes had sought to do, while not distorting the reality of any post programme situation that I would find. In this they were reflecting the essential nature of the form: makeovers are inherently optimistic "they rely on a clear contrast between before and after, where after is always seen as better than what went before" (Redden 2009, 45).

The challenges of using the same format to reflect on the outcome of the programme as had been used to make it provided some valuable research insights that I was able to explore. In the case of the first family with whom I created a follow up film, the Swains, their ongoing compliance with the expert's original parenting rules made creating a positive final story straight forward. The mother, Tania, was keen to stress how much they'd all changed as a family since filming had taken place and how positive, as well as demanding, the process of taking part in the programme had been overall. In the interview she provided for *Honey We're Killing the Kids : Revisited* (referred to henceforth as *Revisited*), she says "the whole life experience has changed, the way we live and eat ...there's no going back". The step-father Paul also asserts the permanency of the before and after modes of their life which echoes Redden's (2009) description of the format when he concludes in *Revisited*, "why go back? It would be madness!".

While certain complexities in their family background emerged during filming there was no impetus to explore these within the follow up format, as the family seemed to have internalised Hill's view (2005) about the potentially prescriptive rules of engagement in this kind of programme, which Bonner has articulated in relation to the game show contestant as being "the opportunity for ordinary people to produce a television persona within the constraints of a programme's format" (Bonner 2003, 90). Moreover the Swains have apparently acceded to the goal of being a "good citizen" in makeover television that is described by Ouellette and Hay (2009), who call *Honey* " a form of citizenship training", in as

far as “it teaches personal responsibility, risk avoidance and choice” (2009, 39). The mother, Tania, accepts the premise and judgements of the *Honey* programme without question. So when Kris Murrin accuses her of killing her children by allowing them too much sugar and screen time Tania, tearfully, agrees. In the follow up programme I made she describes seeing the graphic projections of her children as the worst experience of her life but also accepts the judgement they pass on her saying “it was total shock, mixed with guilt, thinking that’s what I had done to them”.

It is clear that, in the *Revisited* programme, Tania Swain wanted her family to be seen as having undergone significant change as a result of taking part in the programme and in her interview she repeatedly described the families eating habits as being totally different and her children as very much happier. As a programme maker my responsibility was to assess how much progress the family had actually made and reflect it in new footage and interviews that I commissioned and shot for the follow up programme. But I was also mindful of addressing the concerns of a potentially sceptical audience and providing a new meaning to their viewing experience by presenting an accurate account of what had really changed as a result of the programme. Audience research, quoted by Annette Hill (2007), shows that reality television invites a critical viewing mode, because the audience tend to be distrustful of the authenticity of what they are seeing. She suggests that because many don’t see reality TV as fully truthful they watch it more actively as they are working out the boundaries associated with the genre. In particular, Hill finds there is a pre-occupation with the audience’s perceptions of how much ordinary people are performing or being authentic and this defines how real they think the programme is. “Audiences frequently discuss the difference between performed selves and true selves in reality programming” (2005, 68). Some of the research Hill quotes from ITC survey in 2000 showed 12% of people thought stories about people actually happened the way they were shown in the programme while 75% thought reality television stories were made up or exaggerated.

Wherever possible in the *Revisited* programme I chose to focus on facts that couldn’t be invented or inflated. For example, Tania thought her daughter’s concentration had improved as a result of the change in her diet. The evidence from school reports clearly showed that her daughter had gone up a grade in certain subjects in school since filming and while this couldn’t be proven to be as a result of

the changed lifestyle, the possibility of a causal link led us to shoot sequences of her studying in school and interviews with her teachers in class, (not all of which could be included in the final programme cut due to time constraints). Similarly, both children grew taller rapidly in the six months after the initial filming. The child health experts noted that Jessica had grown almost one inch in four months after a period of very little growth in the preceding two years. This again could be linked to their improved family diet, and while it was impossible to prove, the health experts did notice increased fitness levels as a result of the children being more active and spending less time in front of screens which we reflected on screen through sequences of them playing out with friends. The behaviour of the son Ryan had been shown in the original series to be problematic. His mother said in her follow up interview that it had changed dramatically: “changing the diet, and the routine and the TV has changed Ryan around” and he himself claimed to be much happier. Yet, while I was at their house filming the follow up programme, Ryan had a tantrum very similar to those in the *Honey* series. It felt important to include this in the *Revisited* programme to reflect the reality I found and so that viewers could see for themselves that not everything was perfect. Ironically, this flaw had the potential to reveal a certain authenticity in the contributors themselves, in the framework of sceptical viewer expectations that we have seen Hill (2005) outline above. Nonetheless, any version of a life shown on film is going to be a highly selective rendition of it and however much I tried to create new meanings for the audience by presenting a faithful recording of the family’s transformation story, audiences will, according to Hill, “judge the reality of reality television programmes according to a fact/fiction continuum” (2009, 56).

The second family I did a *Honey* follow-up programme with, the Applebys, were the inverse of the Swains. It emerged they had not enjoyed the filming process as much as they had anticipated. Nor did they agree with the graphic prognosis for their child. They didn’t agree with many of the expert’s rules and didn’t plan to follow them. This constituted a major threat to the transformation agenda and the format underpinning the *Revisited* programmes. Guy Redden (2009, 45) in setting out the before and after narrative formula for a makeover show states “there is a pedagogic rationale. People are represented as learning (whether or not they really do), from experts.....that enhance their ability to act in the world”. When it emerged that the

Applebys didn't seem to want to learn from the advice our expert had provided the whole programme format was under threat. The review of their time on *Honey* started badly with an uncompromising rejection of the graphic image showing how their children might age and indeed how the BBC had used this device in the show. In the *Revisited* programme Darren Appleby dismissed the images as ridiculous saying "I didn't want to look at that picture because that'll never be Amy. I wasn't happy about it". Wife Kate was upset about how her experience as a contributor "to walk in and be hit in the face like that - I wasn't happy about the photo images at all". For academics Biressi and Nunn the problem with the graphic forecasts is that "they are always shot through with class imagery and the symbolism of social difference" (2008, 18).

Nor were either of the Appleby parents ready to accept the specific television role ascribed to them within the transformative reality television format. Probing the reasons for this proved interesting and yet challenging for me as there was a complexity of motivations and circumstances which went beyond what the original programme format had been able to present. For example, one of the rules was for the Appleby's to "say no" to their daughter Amy more often. But Kate Appleby had no intention of taking this rule on board. In the *Revisited* programme she said "I will not let some-one tell me how to discipline my child". She stated how as a child herself she had spent several years in hospital and as a result she was now living her childhood back through Amy. If Amy was a "spoilt brat" Kate took full responsibility - but no blame - for making her that way. Clearly, there was a profound insight being touched upon here – a major life story that has shaped Kate as a person and as a parent and the lifestyle choices she makes - but something that a follow up programme such as this could not begin to explore within its tightly formatted structure. Biressi and Nunn (2008, 17) assert that much reality television is a "pseudo-scientific experiment which consequently represses random uncontrolled factors such as family history, income, social networks, education and so on from its narrative". It could be argued such a factor was at work here as a major psychological revelation was left unexplored and the superficial impression of the parents wilfully ignoring advice on how best to raise their child was left to stand. Despite the potential power and interest of this new information it had to be contained in way that fitted the programme format rather than being allowed to be

explored in its own right with the attendant risk that the format might be undermined. As Oullette and Hay (2009), point out, the format in such programs reduces social issues - such as access to affordable quality food, childcare options, and medical support - to questions of lifestyle choice. The same reductionism can be said to be at work regarding the psychological and emotional questions that may lie in the background of contributors to makeover shows.

The challenge with the Appleby's was therefore to deliver the format while nonetheless providing an honest account of their motivations. The audience come to such programmes with an expectation of a specific narrative journey that needs to be fulfilled in order to retain their trust in the series format. Palmer describes this as offering viewers "a sense of completion through restoration narratives" (2008, 9). Tania Lewis (2009, 2), has dissected this in more detail, clearly describing the before and after elements of the makeover format, with its emphasis on transformation and renewal, before an obligatory inclusion of expert advice and a final reveal. However, sticking to the format isn't just an aesthetic choice. It is also an economic imperative. The formats of reality and makeover shows are a hugely valuable commodity, traded in an international TV formats market worth more than a billion pounds globally, enabling a programme template to be bought, copied and adapted for a local market in countries all around the world and financing the original and future productions of the television company behind it. The scale and process of this valuable format trade has been set out clearly by Albert Moran (2009,27),[2] and Jonathan Bignell (2013, 86),[3] amongst others. It is an important element in understanding why the format in lifestyle programmes remains paramount. My interest in considering the case of the Appleby's in contrast to the Swains was how to deal with a real life story that necessarily meets audience expectations of a fixed format.

Specifically, I wanted to explore where the boundary lay between foregrounding format and foregrounding contributor authenticity and the implications for those who Biressi and Nunn (2008, 15), have termed "the bad (i.e. irresponsible) subject" because they are "unwilling or unable to fully take on board the mechanisms of self-improvement". Kate's refusal to say "no" to her daughter was just one example of this. Kate also dismissed the expert Kris Murrin's rule that children

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[2] Analysis of franchising and licensing deals seen to be driving the globalisation of the television industry

[3] UK format sales rose 25% in 2009 bringing £119 m into the British economy according to figures from PACT

should help around the house because she felt while it might be a good idea in theory, in practice she wanted to know the job had been done properly herself. In a household where both parents are working, doing unpredictable shift work and not fully in control of the hours they have to manage domestic chores, rejecting this rule makes some sense, but explaining the reasons why takes time that ultimately the format didn't allow. The Appleby's spending time together as a couple was another rule they weren't prepared to implement once the cameras had left them. But again domestic finances, shift work, personal histories and family traditions all contributed to this decision. What I was able to show in the follow up film was Kate choosing to go for her weekly ladies bingo night instead of a night out with her husband and a brief rationale of why this worked for the family better than the expert rules. There were times when it seemed so few expert rules had been followed I wondered whether the *Revisited* programme would be viable at all. Ultimately, the Appleby's rebellion was something I both reflected and negotiated in the follow up programme I made with them and the careful scripting around the mixed results of their taking part in the programme. And we did manage an upbeat ending of sorts.

But it seems the Appleby's defiance may not be an isolated example. Audience research conducted by Skeggs and Wood into 40 different viewer responses to make-over programmes found that some were sceptical of the advice provided by some programme experts to the extent that they were shouting at the television in a "direct challenge to their assessment and authority" (2009, 123). The researchers termed this rejection of the advice provided a "de-authorising of the experts" (2009 ibid). In so far as the Appleby's were deliberately challenging the credibility of *Honey* expert, Kris Murrin, this represented a problematic "de-authorising". Instinctively, as a programme maker, and being also mindful of the BBC's guidance regarding fair dealing with interviewees[4], I felt duty bound to reflect their concerns and did so through interview comments such as Darren saying he hadn't been keen to take part in the programme and Kate saying, of the ups and downs of the process, that the lows were very low indeed. But I also felt it important to contextualise it in a way that might deflect any potentially fatal damage to the format by including concluding comments from the expert Kris Murrin about how glad

[4] Editorial Guidelines issued to all producers insist final content should fairly and truly reflect the contributors

she was that they were at least trying to follow some of the rules even if they found it difficult.

Interestingly, Skeggs and Woods' research interpreted the approving comments that some viewers made about former *Big Brother* (C4, 2002) star Jade Goody and former glamour model Katie Price as demonstrating a "resistance to certain forms of middle class transformation that gives them value (2009, 127). This is a viewer perspective articulated quite rarely in the significant body of academic literature around the class politics of makeover shows such as *Honey*. Having the programme contributors themselves embody and express such a perspective is a rare sight on television! And yet my concerns that the Appleby's rejection of the transformational narrative might undermine the *Honey* format in general and my follow up programme with them in particular may have been unfounded, or at least premature. As Skeggs and Wood point out (2009), Annette Hill's research into reality television audiences found viewers especially value the moments of "breakthrough" when contributors show authentic emotions in contrast to the perceived inauthenticity in the rest of reality television. Paradoxically, therefore, the Appleby's failure to follow the rules and fit the format may have made their programme even more valuable to its viewers.

Chapter 4

Celebrity and Expertise on Television - *Dragons' Den: Where Are They Now?* episodes 1 and 2 (BBC, 2006) and *Dragons' Den : Where Are They Now ?* episodes 2 and 3 (BBC, 2007)

The next stage of my research was to explore further this question of how far the format determines the authenticity of the reflexive experience. I devised a format for following up the fortunes of contributors in another rather different reality series which nonetheless implicitly carried a transformational agenda, BBC 2's *Dragons' Den*. This was a business entertainment format which invited aspiring entrepreneurs to pitch their business ideas to a panel of multi-millionaire investors (the 'Dragons'), in the hope of winning an investment in their company to enable them to realise the potential they saw in their idea. This is a high-profile, multi-award-winning series which is still on air and has attracted industry and critical acclaim, very broad national recognition and spawned—in addition to numerous spoofs—a wide range of online and physical content ranging from board games to teaching materials in schools and universities.

The first of the series of follow up shows I created was called *Dragons' Den: Where Are They Now? (*referred to henceforth as *WATN).* It consisted of two 60-minute programmes which reprised condensed versions of selected entrepreneurs from series one and two pitching their business ideas in the Den and the multi-millionaire Dragon investors' responses. These clips were followed by specially commissioned, filmed and edited new interviews and sequences in which both the entrepreneurs and the Dragons reflected on their encounter in the Den and how things has turned out for them since filming.

Wanting to explore further the kind of challenges encountered in reflecting on *Honey Revisited*, I suggested that the content of the *Dragons' Den* follow up shows should explicitly include examples of failure as well as success stories. This would include deals that had been agreed in the Den but fell down afterwards for

various reasons, business opportunities which the Dragons had turned down and went on to regret and investment offers from the Dragons which the entrepreneurs had turned down and went on to be relieved they did. This was a reflective format which significantly stretched the credibility of the original show's format in reflecting errors of judgement by the experts but at the same time significantly increased the credibility of the reflective follow up show itself. For example, Stef Matheou in episode1 (2006), was a minicab driver who was offered £100,000 for an 40 percent share in his Rakastaka bottle stacking invention but turned it down as being too big a share to give away – to the evident disbelief of the Dragons. In his interview in my *WATN* follow up programme Stef said he didn't regret the decision. However, his choice of words, verbal delivery and body language meant the message wasn't wholly convincing, and the new sequences I shot showed him still driving a mini cab, still trying to get his idea off the ground. In the follow up interviews I did with the Dragons there was genuine sorrow for Stef at having turned down an offer that could have changed his life. This was a clear example of the kind of human drama that became the dominant feature of the *WATN* programmes I made that has been described by Boyle and Kelly (2013, 66) as " the importance of narrative and emotional identification" in seeking to humanise the business world.

In contrast Jay Cousins, the inventor of fold-up camping crockery, Orikaso Tableware in episode 2 (2006), was entirely convinced he'd made the right decision in turning down the Dragons investment offer. The follow up I film I made with him reflected this in the choice of defiant rock music as a backing sound track and the fast paced editing and convention breaking jump-cut sequences illustrating Jay busily running his business without the help of the Dragons. Dragon Doug Richards in his follow up interview candidly and a little ruefully admitted that "he was the one that got away". Danny Bamping in episode 1 (2006), was an example of an entrepreneur who, after the filming was over, decided not to pursue the investment offer the Dragons had made him in the Den. He found other financial sources to invest in his Bedlam Puzzle cube. He was extremely upbeat about his decision in the interview I filmed with him for the *WATN* programme as it coincided with the launch of his new puzzle in the largest toy store in the UK and a very significant overseas order for the product. The Dragons in their follow up interviews seemed somewhat annoyed that he had decided to call off the deal, which they had made in good faith,

although they wished him well and were not sure that his invention would have been lucrative for them.

These examples clearly showed the Dragons in a position where they were not the dominant force driving the narrative. It inverted the more usual relationship between expert and contributor that Powell and Prasaad (2007) describe as integral to the format of reality shows which seek to transform the lives of their contributors in some way. Powell and Prasaad's particular area of interest is the rise of the celebrity expert as lifestyle advisor. But their observations about the overtly critical positioning of the expert in relationship to the contributors within such programmes applies equally well to the confrontational business dynamic between investor and entrepreneur often seen in *Dragons' Den* : " Presenters, operating as a team, consistently re-enforce each other's judgements in opposition to the views of the participants involved" (2007, 58). Although the credibility of the Dragons as experts was challenged at certain points within my *WATN* programmes their credibility overall remained intact. This was in part because of the other investment stories in each of my *WATN* films which continued to re-enforce their correct judgement and authority. A careful mix of success/fail narratives was agreed with the Executive Producers in advance in order to accurately reflect the balance of story outcomes across the series as a whole.

Significantly, each of my follow up programmes followed the narrative format of the original shows by ending with a success story for both entrepreneurs and Dragons which showed the relationship and the business flourishing after the Den. In some cases this was not straightforward to achieve as the growth of the business wasn't significant just six months after the original deal in the Den had been filmed. In these cases - the circus performance enterprise The Generating Company featured in episode 2 (2006), being one of them - the scripting had to focus on the potential of the company, rather than hard figures in order to sustain the upbeat quality. Boyle and Kelly (2013), find the audience expectation of the format being delivered in programmes such as *Dragons' Den* is both powerful and knowing. Viewers are extremely media literate and "acutely aware of the limits and constraints of formatted television" (2013, 66). This echoes the findings of Hill (2007), discussed in the previous section. But the effect of being able to successfully challenge the expertise of the Dragons in my programme was to give the *WATN* films a real world -

even documentary like - objectivity. This, in part, reflects my own professional background as a documentary maker and, in part, the hybrid nature of these *WATN* films, which combined archive clips from a highly formatted original show with the more traditional interview and exposition elements of a documentary. But the benefit to the viewer can perhaps be found in the way that *WATN* allowed them to view the relationship between protagonist and antagonist established in the original series in a new way, sometimes including an inversion of the underdog/victor roles and the responses associated with them. In addition to this there is the different perception of the programme expert that *WATN* afforded viewers: fallible yet credible.

As part of the new follow up format I created I also included a section in which the Dragons had to guess the business fate of entrepreneurs who had pitched to them in the Den, before the film revealed the truth of what had actually happened to their ideas post filming. The effect of this was again to introduce something of a disruptive and – in retrospect - potentially compromising game show element to the *WATN* follow up programme, in which the authority and role of the Dragons as experts might be undermined. This had the effect of challenging the importance of the role of the antagonist in any reality format that Nigel Morris has described as central to the audience's fascination and is often personified as "a formidable and superior judge" (2007, 41). Not only did I ask the Dragons to guess what had happened to the entrepreneurs, I formatted this within my *WATN* programmes so that their predictions, however contrasting or contradictory were cut together in a montage with the effect that there was sometimes a sense of an inconsistent success rate in judging how successful the entrepreneurs might have become that undermined the Dragons ascribed wisdom as business gurus within the main television series. The voice over would then cut in with the "real answer" .This formatting altered the role of the Dragons in my programmes in that they moved from being experts to something more like contestants in a game show. While this offered viewers a potentially new way to see or understand the original programme it was subversive in that it undermined viewer expectations. As Bonner (2003, 86) observes "frequently experts are unable to be challenged by ordinary people, only by other experts, or very occasionally by an interviewer more characteristic of current affairs". The reference here to current affairs again points towards the reflexive programmes I was making drawing on the documentary strand of my practitioner experience.

Boyle and Kelly (2012), have studied the business entertainment formats of programme such as *Dragons' Den* and *The Apprentice* (BBC 2005 -), and found them to be tightly conceived and delivered. Although they describe some of these programmes as being like a "business game show" the random element of play they identified was typically located in the contestant not the expert. In the narrative thrust of reality television programmes that Morris explores (2007, 41), the role of the protagonist is essentially passive or reactive and it is the antagonist who drives the story along by "complicating the narrative, raising the stakes or postponing closure" and, in the new format role I assigned the Dragons in *WATN,* the narrative thrust was thus confused. Drawing on my experience of creating a proxy viewer out of the celebrity contributors taking part in my *Xmas TV* programme, my intention in these *Dragons' Den* follow up shows had been to make the Dragons function in a similar way, as an audience proxy, by voicing their curiosity and predictions about the entrepreneurs who had appeared in the Den just as viewers at home would be doing. Boyle and Kelly (2012) have noted the importance of emotional identification in business programmes which encourages viewers to ask themselves how they would feel or behave if placed in a similar situation. But it didn't quite work for the reasons related to narrative thrust outlined above. Interestingly, this was an insight achieved in retrospect for me as a programme maker. The Dragons "guesswork" element was something that I repeatedly cut shorter during the final editing process since I felt it wasn't working without at the time understanding why.

The focus in these two follow up shows was to reframe and relive the experience from the contributor perspective, but that was about to change my subsequent metatelevisual research. The next iteration of the *WATN* series I made one year later, with a new batch of entrepreneurs, followed largely the same programme structure, but I deliberately changed the format to avoid the Dragons having to guess how the entrepreneurs had got on as I wanted to remove this "game show" element. Instead, I wanted to experiment with altering the dominant perspective that framed the reflections on the original series from being that of the entrepreneurs to being that of the Dragons to see what new meanings for the audience this might yield. The stories about entrepreneurs who turned the Dragons down were still there, to provide a balanced and realistic selection, but the controversies tended to focus more on these being an opportunity missed by the

entrepreneur rather than the Dragon. For example, the ladies running the Yogabugs kids fitness business in episode 3 (2007), admitted some regret at not taking up the Dragons offer of expertise and investment in the follow up interview I did with them. And the story that followed up on the family craftsman of Heritage Tables in episode 2 (2007), highlighted how he had lost out on significant sales by not phoning back one of the Dragons who wanted to buy one of his tables for his own personal use .

I also chose to follow up on some fiery confrontations between entrepreneurs and Dragons and explored the lack of insight some entrepreneurs showed, even months later, in not realising how damaging their angry outbursts in the Den had been to their bid to gain cash for their business. For example, David Glashan, the man behind the ITSA beach towel featured in episode 2 (2007), who at one point threatened to sue Theo Paphitis during his bid for investment in the Den, still said in the follow up interview I did with him for *WATN* that he hadn't been unreasonable in how he behaved. The female builders in episode 3 (2007), who called the Dragons patronising and sexist during a heated exchange in the Den about the viability of their business, weren't ready to retract their words either. The effect of these stories was to provide an opportunity for viewers to reflect on the poor judgement of the entrepreneurs with the benefit of hindsight and to further enhance the Dragons wisdom and reputation. It also provided entertainment and in this sense could be seen as contributing to a growing strand in makeover television that Higgins, Montgomery et al (2012, 501) have called "belligerent broadcasting". Their analysis of *Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares* (Channel 4, 2004 -2014), another business television programme featuring an expert advising restaurant owners on how to improve, has interesting parallels with *Dragons' Den* in the display of "on screen confrontation between participants occupying asymmetrical positions of power and perceived expertise" (2012, 501). While the jury is still out on whether such elements usher in a new era of incivility in media, the explicit power of the experts is re-enforced by these exchanges and was the focus of my practitioner research at this stage.

In the previous metatelevisual programmes I made I chose to conduct the new interviews with the Dragons on the actual set of the original television series, the "Den", in order to explicitly both confine and enhance their role as experts within the

televisual world constructed for the main series. This also served the purpose of controlling and reinforcing the visual aspects of the programme brand for *Dragons' Den* that had been carefully established – brand identity being an increasingly important consideration in the multi-channel, world as Bignell (2003, 185) among others has noted. However, for this new set of *WATN* follow up programmes I released them from their confinement and shot a series of sequences with the Dragons outside the Den, going to meet the entrepreneurs in the real world and on the entrepreneurs' own turf. I wanted to explore how seeing things more explicitly from the Dragons' perspective – as they arrived at the entrepreneurs' bland business park or modest domestic production base - could bring new understandings to the audience about the transformation the Dragons were hoping to effect. In episode 3 (2007), for example, I filmed Duncan Bannatyne and Richard Farleigh arriving at the northern industrial estate headquarters of the Igloo frozen food distribution company they had invested in. Reflecting their status, as some of the UKs most wealthy and successful business entrepreneurs, I chose to film a sequence of the Dragons sweeping up to the industrial estate in upmarket chauffeur driven cars before greeting their new partners and giving them some down to earth business advice. The intention was to encapsulate both their subject expertise and their affluent personal profile. Exploring how this move might impact on demonstrating the Dragons' agency in the real world and how they would be perceived by the audience as a result proved a fruitful area for research. Bonner (2003, 86) defines celebrities as people with a high recognition index and experts as having specialised knowledge and the key difference between them being that celebrities need to be willing to reveal something of their private selves whereas experts do not. In taking the Dragons out of the Den and revealing their personal taste in their clothes, cars and interpersonal skills, would I be taking the first steps in the journey that would ultimately turn them into celebrities? Or would the effect be to enhance their role as antagonists, commanding respect both within the Den and outside it?

The public profile of the Dragons had in any event grown considerably through several series of television exposure on *Dragons' Den* and *WATN* and as a result their role already had the potential to be transformed into that of "celebrity expert" (Powell and Prasaad 2007) or "celebrity entrepreneur" (Bennett and Holmes 2010). On a meta level this afforded viewers of the *WATN* follow up films new

perceptions of the Dragons and their role both within and outside the confines of past *Dragons' Den* programmes. The Dragons' authority outside the Den was explicitly challenged in episode 2 (2007), by their attendance at a press launch at London Zoo for the iTeddy electronic cuddly toy, in which they had jointly invested. While the press conference showed them as statesman like in this formal setting, the off-screen friendship between Peter Jones and Theo Paphitis became clear in their banter during a series of subsequent publicity photos with a giant iTeddy cuddly toy. The pair then emerged dressed themselves in giant iTeddy outfits, to the delight of the assembled media cameras. The costumes were ridiculous. The disparity between 7ft Peter Jones and a much shorter Theo Paphitis heightened this. Seeing the normally aloof, often disdainful, and always powerful and wealthy Dragons emerge from under giant teddybear heads offered a major shock to viewers of *WATN*. To maintain their authority I had to contextualise the stunt with lots of script about the lengths these business giants would go to demonstrate commitment to their investments. But the risk they might simply be laughed at was huge and the number of comical shots was reduced in the editing process as a result. Here the Dragons were straying into the perilous territory of celebrity authenticity that Chris Rojek (2001, 17) has explored, which he believes arises when fans encounter celebrities "out of face" i.e. when their private self is more obvious than their public self. The Dragons revealing themselves from under teddy bear faces was a literal example of this. Rojek argues this can lead to three possible outcomes which include cognitive dissonance - as public expectations and experience are at odds, confirmation - where the celebrity resumes their public persona, or normalisation - where the effect is to enhance the celebrity in the public's esteem since they are seen as being "more like us". The positive newspaper reviews, viewing figures and repeated commissions of *WATN* indicate that the latter was the outcome in this case.

In fact, over subsequent years the "media capital" as Boyle and Kelly (2013) call it, as well as the celebrity profile of the Dragons has increased to such an extent that they now appear as individual panellists on quiz shows such as *Have I Got News for You*, (BBC 1990 -), debate programmes such as *Question Time* (BBC 1998 -), and charitythons such as *Children in Need* (BBC 1980 -). Reviewing the work of Boyle and Kelly, Dahlgren (2014, 277) highlights their important examination of how celebrity entrepreneurs "not only amass media capital through their

participation in these programmes but also manage to apply this accumulation to political and policy contexts". The authors raise the possibility that such media exposure opens political doors and provides celebrity entrepreneurs with opportunities to become policy shapers. While there is no evidence of the Dragons explicitly shaping national policy it is the case that since appearing on *Dragons' Den* and *WATN* both Peter Jones and Duncan Bannatyne have been invited to contribute to government initiatives in stimulating business entrepreneurship. The growing celebrity status of the Dragons - enhanced by the follow up programmes I made with them - had the potential to both further build the audience for the original *Dragons' Den* series and their own individual value in the creation of what Turner (2004, 34), calls the celebrity-commodity. Turner finds "the importance of the celebrity as a branding mechanism" is also very powerful and potentially lucrative for both the media product and the celebrity: "individuals can become brands with enormous commercial potential" (ibid). Maintaining the integrity of the *Dragons' Den* brand had been a key concern of the BBC in considering whether to allow the Dragons to be seen on television outside the Den. Ultimately, the benefits of doing so outweighed the risks. Nonetheless the imagined construct of the Den as presented to the viewer in the original series and the programme brand itself were not to be commented on by contributors of undermined in any way by my follow up films. This was, of course, in significant contrast to my metatelevisual output on, for example, the spy dramas *24* and *Spooks* which deliberately deconstructed production techniques. In this sense I was exploring the boundaries of meta-television in being able to provide new meanings for the audience that were flexible and consonant with the original programming they reflected on.

Chapter 5

Hybridity in programming—*Live the Dream as Seen on Screen: Views to Die For* (ITV, 2009) and *Live the Dream as Seen on Screen: By the Sea* (ITV, 2009)

These two programmes formed part of a new six-part series for ITV3 for which, as the lead producer and director, I helped to devise a series style and programme format. The series was based around the concept of a property show combined with an archive programme. This was an unusual hybrid of programme formats but was nonetheless typical of the hybridisation impulse in reality television at that time that Richard Kilborn has identified under the memorable heading "Let a thousand hybrids bloom" (2003, 61).

The archive content was relatively small-–less than ten percent of the overall programme running time—but its role was profoundly important. The clips from past television series and cinema releases were chosen for their distinctive location in a particular geographical area of the country. Their re-showing within this new genre of lifestyle programming aimed to both record and inspire in viewers a desire to go and live in that particular area and potentially live in a house of their dreams, based on a re-awakened appreciation of the programmes and films featured in the archive clips shown. Wrapped around the archive clips were newly commissioned, filmed and edited interviews and sequences which featured stories about people who were living in their dream home in that area already and why they had chosen to move there – with particular reference to its on screen fame. Each show was presented by two property experts with distinct areas of interest that aimed to enrich the programme content. Melissa Porter's particular expertise was in contemporary property development and building restoration. Nick Barrett's expertise was as a historian with a particular interest in the evolution of domestic architecture. Each programme also included a section about properties for sale in each of the

featured areas with the explicit inference that if the viewer were to move to this area they would in some way be sharing in the glamorous and fictional worlds of the television shows and films we featured.

In these programmes, while the role of memory and nostalgia was still a powerful rationale and driver, the archive based format had become subservient to the ongoing dominance of other formats at the time, specifically property and lifestyle shows within the reality television genres. Within this new framework, however, I was seeking to explore what value the recollections of past programmes could have in the viewer being able to define themselves within the present. Whereas, arguably, a programme like *TV Xmas* sought to create a national socio-cultural experience through a collective sense of nostalgia, *Live the Dream as Seen on Screen (*referred to henceforth as *LTD*), was an exploration of a viewer's individual aspiration and ideation based on a subject specific re-appraisal of past television programmes and films. This represented an interesting development in the role temporality has to play in new programmes which feature old programme content. There is inevitably a movement back and forth between present and past screen pre-occupations. But both inform each other. And I had the opportunity to explore this more fully in the making of the *LTD* programmes as they slipped between time zones, recalling the past, through an exploration in the present with an exhortation to let this determine the future (viewers being invited to move house). The multi-functionality of recollection and how it defines us is something Amy Holdsworth explores in detail " Nostalgia plays a role in the renegotiation of identities, communities and forms of historical connectivity; of how we were then, who we are now and where we want to be" (Holdsworth 2011,103).

This creation of identities and slipping through private and public eras is clearly played out in the section of the *LTD Views to Die For* programme I made about Yew Tree Farm in The Lake District. Yew Tree Farm is an immaculately preserved property near Coniston with a history dating back to the 17th century. It was bought and used by the children's author Beatrix Potter at one stage in its history. It was used as the location for a Hollywood movie about the writer in the film *Miss Potter*, (MGM, 2006) starring Renee Zellweger. It is now lived in by a farming family who chose it in order to live their dream of a good life in the Lake District and it is open to guests to share in their dream turned reality as B and B guests. All of

these elements are reflected in the film I made about it which in itself then serves as an inspiration in *LTD* to viewers who may want to emulate the current farm owners, with advice on what other similar properties are for sale nearby in which they too could start a new life and live their own dream. Past, present and future collide triggered by on-screen nostalgia. Holdsworth describes this "backwards and forwards movement, patterns of return and retreat and the 'ebb and flow' of television" (2011, 3), as central to her understanding of the medium. But *LTD* is also a fusion of televisual forms. A straightforward presenter led exploration of a piece of physical history and geography, in the vein of many similar high budget heritage programmes broadcast on terrestrial channels, gives way to a behind-the-scenes production history of a Hollywood movie, in a playful clip-based set of on-screen reconstructions, followed by a familiar property show format exploring interiors and exteriors through a presenter led tour and illustrative close up and wide panning camera shots. The reflexivity in *LTD* is therefore not just about the film content but also serves as a meta-analysis of the styles of television programme on display in this hybrid and the opportunity offered to the viewer is to understand all these familiar past forms from a new perspective.

Using a televisual past to throw forward into a potential future was a new aspect of my research. Its efficacy varied from film to film. Sometimes the past television programmes we featured in *LTD* related very specifically to a location we were exploring in the present, as was the case with Yew Tree Farm in Coniston and indeed the seaside town of Port Isaac in Cornwall that was the location for the ITV drama *Doc Martin* (ITV, 2004 - 2009), starring Martin Clunes that was explored in *LTD By the Sea*. At other times the link was implicit. The scenes from television adaptations of Robin Hood linked relatively loosely to the properties featured around Alnwick in Northumberland in the *LTD* programme *Views to Die for*. In all cases, however, the evocation of a screen past proved a powerful route into the present. Nostalgia may express a sense of loss of and need for return but according to Holdsworth (2011, 102), it is also a highly mediated process which is more about a desire to recall than recover, remember rather than re-experience. The archive clips used in *LTD* therefore can work in a nostalgic way to be suggestive and evocative rather than explicit or geographically accurate. The assumption, however, is that the viewer is aspirational, mobile and even affluent. Their interests are represented

implicitly on screen by the property expert presenters who address them directly with advice on “how you too can live the dream” in the context of deconstructing where and how famous screen events where created and the feel good, famous, ripple effect this can have on an area, as the presenters slip between fictional and real world screen locations.

This was not so much a deliberate blurring of real and fictional worlds – despite the frequent artful reconstructions which intercut the programme presenter in exactly the same locations as the actors of the featured archive clips - it was more of a reflection of the prevailing desire articulated in a wider range of television programmes for ordinary viewers to feel enabled to share in the spoils of television generated fame, kudos and celebrity. Chris Rojek sees this aspiration as a reflecting a culturally manipulated act of consumption within a capitalist system. Just as “celebrities are commodities in the sense that consumers desire to possess them” (2001,15), more broadly “celebrity culture ...is an essential tool of commodification since it embodies desire” (2001,187). Viewers of *LTD* in this reading were having past television programmes re-contextualised as representing a desirable lifestyle that could be consumed. This was perhaps most explicitly and poignantly evidenced in the film about Plockton in Scotland which drew visitors to it having featured in a popular television series called *Hamish Macbeth* (BBC, 1995 -1997). One family of visitors from Manchester were so won over by the scenery, the famous screen location and the possibility of living a grandiose dream of being lairds of a Scottish castle that they bought a ruined castle across the bay in Duncraig and set about restoring it - gradually drawing on more and more of their extended family and their dwindling capital reserves to do so. This was consumption on a grand scale and symptomatic of an idea that a property market could transform personal finances as well as psychological fortunes that has been promoted by a range of popular media, including television programmes, as well as estate agents. The drive towards consumption on television has been specifically noted by Guy Redden who argues that the “ life gets better” narratives of makeover programmes “constitute a moral vision of consumption” (2007, 152) that is not always borne out by real life experience. The Dobson’s family journey was, incidentally, captured by a fly on the wall television series called *The Dobsons of Duncraig* (BBC, 2004- 2005) that was also reprised in our *LTD* programme – in a further example of an aspect of nostalgia

Holdsworth (2011) has described in which different aspects of the past are repeated with a difference through re-contextualisation to produce a kind of metageneric structure of nostalgia in which the past can fuse with the present. Seen from another perspective this is an intensified televisual reflexivity in a palimpestic form. Sadly the Dobsons dream had turned out to be less rosy in reality. When we arrived to film them as embodiments of those who were living the property dream we found they were struggling with the costs of heating and lighting the castle and this had to be sensitively handled in the script in order not to destabilise the programme format while still accurately representing the situation we found. They put the castle up for sale at around the time our programme went to air and so paved the way for a new generation of television viewer to try to make their dreams - inspired by the construct of a television programme - come true.

While selling a three bed semi in Manchester to buy a castle is at the extreme end of the property ladder, Rosenberg (2009), Brunsdon (2003),and others have considered the rise in popularity of more regular property programmes on television. Brunsdon suggests they reflect “the consolidation and proliferation of everyday discourses of value and investment associated with the purchase of housing” (2003, 5). It is interesting to note that as the UK property market has risen, fallen and risen again the availability of television programmes about property has remained constant with the main variable being in the approach to the fascination with home ownership rather than the fact of it. Rosenberg sees property programmes not just as a function of cheap television but reflecting a national home ownership ideology “where home is central to national identity” (2009, 72). More specifically he suggests they may represent a turning inward in response to the pressures of a risk society. In this context we can consider that the representation of past programmes within the property format of *LTD* enables viewers both to join a national community of home owners pre-occupied with the value of their property but also to approach an act of conservative consumption in the name of the ultimate lifetime achievement.

Frances Bonner concludes that television shows people “how to manage their lifestyle to reflect the identity they would like to present” (Bonner 2003, 214). As the *Live the Dream as Seen on Screen* programme title asserts, the audience is exhorted to actively live the dream created by fictional screen worlds - not just

passively consume it as a viewer. The information section about properties for sale in that area becomes an implicit call to action. Thus, in this kind of reflexive construct, television is not simply for viewing, consuming, commenting on, learning from or taking part in. Television has apparently become a real and present world that the viewer can physically inhabit. (There is a hint here of being able to realise that childhood desire to actually crawl inside the television set). This goes beyond even "the ultimate aim of remodelling of reality" that Heller (2007, 3) ascribes to many television makeover formats. Here a programme hybrid is drawing on a past screen fiction to create a potential future dream that can be realised in a physical, present reality. The potential for and consequences of television nostalgia being able to catalyse individual aspiration and action has been a final key area of my research into metatelevisual programmes.

Conclusion

In this thesis I have sought to articulate and understand the role of the archive-based television programme as a vehicle for televisual reflexivity. I have considered a range of programmes that I made which cover some of the key genres in the medium and their evolution in the first decade of the millennium. On this basis, I have argued that taken together this body of work and the insights it yields constitute a form of meta-practice in television, and that there is an element of sustained achievement and originality in this portfolio.

My broad aim has been to interrogate the new meanings and understandings that can be found through the process of reviewing, reframing, reconsidering, and re-contextualising original television programme material within a new television programme which contains varying proportions of new content, specially-commissioned and created interviews and visual sequences. More specifically, I have tried to explore the role the implied viewer and his or her proxy can occupy within each of these differently formatted programmes, and how this impacts on the way they are constructed and delivered.

Key ideas within television studies that I have explored include culturally-constructed nostalgia and shared memory, fan studies, celebrity culture, authenticity in reality television, transformation in makeover programmes,intertextuality, hybridity, the aesthetic and economic imperatives of programme format and television history.

The trajectory of my own research describes a televisual arc in which archive-driven nostalgia programmes mark the start and end point of a sweep through contemporary forms and themes of the medium. Underpinning them all is a desire to create new value for viewers in re-contextualising aspects of old or familiar programmes. Some of these practice-based research attempts have been more successful than others for reasons that I have attempted to analyse. But the ultimate goal of articulating a meta-television in practice remains intact. Bonner has claimed that “nothing really interests television so much as television itself” (2003, 62). I hope that this work goes some way to explaining why for viewers that is very fortunately the case.

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