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Nostalgia and Post-2005 British Time Travel Dramas: A Semiotic Analysis of a Television Genre Cycle

Abstract

This thesis contributes to existing debates concerning television, nostalgia and genre. Drawing upon social constructionist approaches, the thesis theorises nostalgia as a discourse that is constructed through specific social, historical, cultural and, relating to television, institutional contexts. The thesis extends Paul Grainge's (2000a, 2002) work on nostalgic modes and combines it with Catherine Johnson's (2005) analysis of television series' textual strategies to propose an analytical framework examining individual case studies that locate constructions of nostalgia within specific production context(s). This involves considering how such factors as individual channel remit (e.g. public service or commercial), imagined target audiences and scheduling concerns impact upon nostalgic discourses articulated through a programme's narrative and generic strategies. These ideas are examined through employing textual analysis and extending Richard Nowell's (2011) industrially-focused conceptualisation of genre cycles' historical development to television, focusing upon post-2005 British time travel dramas and providing in-depth case studies of *Doctor Who*, *Life on Mars* and *Ashes to Ashes*, *Lost in Austen*.

Through adopting a textualist focus, this thesis re-engages debates concerning structured polysemy (Morley 1992, 1996) and, by demonstrating the multiple preferred reading positions that post-2005 British time travel dramas construct, proposes the concept of layered polysemy. Layered polysemy suggests that constructions of nostalgia are readable through multiple imagined audience discourses as a result of their articulation in 'coalition' programmes designed to simultaneously attract multiple distinct and divergent audience niches arising from their position on mainstream broadcast channels in UK (BBC1 and ITV1). Layered polysemy constitutes a midpoint between textual determinism and arguments demonstrating myriad audience readings, sitting alongside arguments concerning television series' 'aesthetics of multiplicity' (Ross 2008, Johnson 2012) but rejects the latter's focus upon material and/or cultural sites external to the programmes themselves. Layered polysemy therefore complements wider arguments arising from this thesis regarding the retention of broadcast culture discourses within contemporary Television Studies.

**IN LOVING MEMORY OF PHILIP ANTHONY GARNER
1949-2010**

Nostalgia and Post-2005 British Time Travel Dramas: A Semiotic Analysis of a Television Genre Cycle

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Goodbye, Claudia Brown!

The final episode of *Primeval*'s (ITV/Impossible Pictures 2007-) first series ends on a cliff-hanger that repositions the programme's emotional exploration of time travel. After having been ambiguously introduced across previous instalments, the plot first reveals time-travelling scientist Helen Cutter's (Juliet Aubery) true intentions. Having led her estranged husband, Professor Nick Cutter (played with aplomb by Douglas Henshall), and an accompanying team of military types through a temporal anomaly to the Permian era, Professor Cutter's team realise that the skeletal remains and savaged uniforms they found on their first trip through the anomaly are theirs. Following weeks of negotiating his residual love for Helen with doubts about her 'present' trustworthiness, Nick learns that she has brought him to his pre-destined death. However, despite escaping his destiny (the unnamed military types are, predictably, less lucky) at the hands of a tracking 'future predator', this is not the end to Nick Cutter's torment. Upon returning to the 'present', a consequence of his survival becomes apparent: his love interest, Claudia Brown (Lucy Brown), has never existed in this altered reality. Cue more anguished acting from Henshall as the credits role.

This example confirms how, on the one hand, "[f]ans love to pick out and dwell on textual moments" (Hills 2008: 31) by constructing a dispersed text comprised of personally- and emotionally-significant scenes. The sequence could also be analysed for its interlinking of memory, loss and emotion, though. Whilst "[n]ostalgia is diversely understood and interpreted" (Radstone 2007: 112) within academia due to the migration of its meanings across various disciplines since its initial status as a medical illness (see Davis 1979: 1-7, Boym 2001: 3-18 and Sprengler 2011: 11-37 on historical developments), nostalgia characterises *Primeval*'s emotional crux here. Krystine Irene Batcho (2007: 361) states that "the object of nostalgia is something no longer present" whilst Jason P. Leboe and Tamara L. Ansons (2006: 606) similarly argue that nostalgia "is often accompanied by an idealised sense of times past and a sense of longing to return to those earlier days". Professor Cutter's construction overlaps with these definitions: whether in relation to the loss of his ex-wife, or would-be lover, the character connotes a sense of loss arising from (literal) temporal movement.

Extrapolating from this example, this thesis develops knowledge in three areas. Firstly, the research contributes to academic work discussing nostalgia. Studies of memory (see Keightley and Pickering 2006, Radstone 2007, Keightley 2010, Garde-Hansen 2011, Keightley 2011), nostalgia (see Boym 2001, Pickering and Keightley 2006, Meyers 2009, Sprengler 2011) or nostalgia, memory and television (see Holdsworth 2008, de Groot 2009, Messenger Davies 2010, Scannell 2010, Holdsworth 2011, Piper 2011, Booth 2012) have increased in recent years¹. This thesis supports the ongoing process of “recuperating nostalgia for critical analytic projects to better understand” (Sprengler 2011: 33) the concept by moving beyond the widespread dismissal of nostalgia across disciplines. With specific attention to media forms, these attacks derive from Fredric Jameson’s (1981, 1982, 1991, 1998) writings on the ‘nostalgia film’ and/or Andreas Huyssen’s (2003: 17) more negotiated position regarding the media’s contribution(s) to the “contemporary memory culture of amnesia, anaesthesia, or numbing” (see also Huyssen 1995). My research rejects such dismissals by using social constructionist theories (see Gergen 1999, Crossley 2000, Edley 2001) to theorise nostalgia as a discursive form and applies this to the study of television programmes. This approach foregrounds social, historical and cultural context(s), and develops Paul Grainge’s (2000a, 2002) distinction between nostalgic ‘moods’ linked to a perceived socio-historical *zeitgeist* and nostalgic ‘modes’ constructed within differing media production contexts². Nostalgic ‘moods’ are rooted in sociological explanations, as Fred Davis’ (1979: x) argument that “nostalgia ...must be understood in terms of its close relationship to the era of social upheaval that preceded it” demonstrates (see also Tannock 1995: 456, Sprengler 2011: 46-48). Instead, I consider discourses of nostalgia constructed in a cycle of television programmes as “[t]extual strategies” (Johnson 2005: 7) that can be analysed as “[p]roduction strategies” (Ibid: 6) through institutional discourses.

This thesis also engages with the study of television and genre - specifically television science fiction. I study a cycle of post-2005 British time travel dramas and, building upon Grainge’s research (1999a, 1999b, 2000a, 2000b), provide case studies that consider the impact of production contexts upon *Primeval*, *Doctor Who* (BBC 2005-), *Life on Mars* (BBC/Kudos 2006-7) and its spin-off *Ashes to Ashes* (BBC/Kudos/Monastic Productions

¹ Griffiths (2007), Fischer (2008) and Bromley (2010) provide non-academic examples.

² See also Grainge (2008: 1-2) on nostalgia and branding Hollywood.

2008-10), and *Lost in Austen* (ITV/Mammoth Screen 2008). Suggested overlaps between time travel's (sub)generic conventions and 'nostalgia' have been alluded to in previous scholarly work on television, such as Lynn Spigel's (2010: 63) suggestion that when conducting archival research "[t]he telepresent recorded on ...tapes includes a time paradox more akin to the genre of science fiction than to that of history". Similarly, relating to programmes analysed in the following chapters, Amy Holdsworth (2011: 113) states:

Recent years have seen the return of a variety of earlier television drama and comedy successes as remakes, re-imaginings, prequels, sequels and spin-offs populate the schedules. Alongside *Life on Mars* and its spin-off *Ashes to Ashes* have been the regeneration of *Doctor Who...* and the re-imagining of *The Prisoner*.

I will directly address how the genre conventions of post-2005 British time travel dramas articulate myriad nostalgic discourses and how these are shaped by institutional concerns, subsequently developing academic knowledge on television science fiction and mediated nostalgia. The research continues the methodological tendency to explore TVSF in nationally-specific contexts (see Cook and Wright 2006, Johnson-Smith 2005; see Johnson 2005 for a challenge to this approach) but moves beyond focusing upon specific programmes (see, for example, Hills 2010a, Britton 2011, Booy 2012) or auteurs (see Bignell and O'Day 2004). Instead, by adapting Richard Nowell's (2011) model of film genre cycles to British television, continuities and differences regarding how programmes construct nostalgic discourses are identified and discussed.

Analysing constructions of nostalgia within national production contexts also adds to debates concerning the structured polysemy of media texts (see Morley 1992). As Chapter Four discusses, each series analysed hereafter exemplifies what Robin Nelson (2007a: 175) names "quality popular drama". 'Quality popular' drama is a category drawn from industrial discourses within British television (Ibid) that describes programmes transmitted on 'mainstream' UK broadcast channels (e.g. BBC One and ITV1) and covers established genres such as "hospital, police procedural ...[and] detective" (Ibid: 176) programmes. Science fiction/time travel programmes can also be included in this category due to their long-running presence on British television. One feature of 'quality popular' drama is its ability to "negotiate, and make sense of, the world beyond the living room" (Ibid: 175) by offering audiences ideological reassurance through narrative resolution and installing a 'dominant' preferred reading position (Hall 2003; see Thomas 2002: 95 for an example in audience

discussion). I seek to challenge Nelson's definition of 'quality popular TV' by demonstrating that uniting 'quality' and 'popular' audience tastes into a singular preferred reading position is impossible since the imagined tastes of both audience groups are contradictory; where 'quality' audiences value 'deep' characterisations and ambiguity, 'popular' audience tastes favour generic pleasures and recognisable character types (see Chapter Four). Instead, I argue that post-2005 British time travel dramas display *layered polysemy* through constructing multiple overlapping, and contradictory, preferred reading positions for audiences. Layered polysemy represents a mid-point between Morley's (1992, 1995) concept of structured polysemy, where a singular preferred reading becomes encoded into the televisual text, and recent post-structuralist arguments highlighting 'open' media texts and myriad readings across diverse audience subcultures (see McKee 2003, Sandvoss 2005: 123-152).

Conceptually, layered polysemy sits alongside recent TV Studies work by Sharon Marie Ross (2008) and Catherine Johnson (2012: 164-165) concerning contemporary television series' 'aesthetics of multiplicity' where multiple points of identification are offered for different viewing niches. Layered polysemy extends these arguments, however, by retaining a textualist focus and foregrounds how specific (national and channel) production requirements are readable through constructions of nostalgia. As such, I consider post-2005 British time travel dramas as examples of 'coalition' television (see Johnson 2005: 131-141 on *Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)* (BBC/Working Title Productions/Ghost Productions 2000-1)): programmes broadcast on 'mainstream' UK channels which exhibit layered polysemy to attract a wide range of audience segments.

One of this thesis' recurrent arguments concerns locating television case studies within national production contexts. However, a widely circulated discourse within TV Studies argues that "any discussion of television today needs to take account of the social and political significance of how trans-national and national cultures of broadcasting work in relation to each other" (Bignell 2004: 62; see also Hartley 2006, Gray 2008: 96-99). The next section addresses this critique by offering a ranging of arguments that stress the national context as important to analysing television, nostalgia and genre.

Foregrounding National Contexts

Robin Nelson (2007a: 57) highlights the importance of trans-national concerns to the production of contemporary TV drama, stating that:

Though national borders have not been entirely eroded ...it makes little sense in the context of a global market-place to consider the political economy of any specific nation in isolation. Today's production and distribution is vertically and horizontally integrated within the "culture industries" on a global scale.

Nelson cites the BBC as exemplary of this internationalised television industry and uses the Corporation's ongoing co-productions, such as *Rome* (2005-7) with HBO (see Ibid: 56), and "its commercial dimensions ...[such as] BBC Worldwide and BBC Enterprises" (Ibid: 68) as supporting evidence (see also Smith and Steemers 2007: 48, Steemers 2010, Johnson 2012: 101-103 and 146). Nevertheless, it is arguable that television scholars should not completely negate the national context in favour of the international. Graeme Turner (2009: 55) argues that "the conditions under which television operates around the globe are still more comprehensively over-determined by national factors than by the influence of trans-national media industries". Surveying the literature in key areas of debate within Television Studies reaffirms the importance of studying national contexts. Contemporary studies of 'cult' television (see Johnson 2010a), public service broadcasting (see Debrett 2009), archiving (see Pajala 2010) and branding (see Johnson 2012) all demonstrate that different national television contexts produce alternative inflections of these issues. Similarly, Jonathan Gray (2008: 11) argues that within this globalised production (and reception) context, "we must never assume that one person's or nation's experience [of television – RPG] can be generalised". Responding to these calls, I analyse post-2005 British time travel dramas within national production contexts.

Foregrounding national specificities within a globalised production culture has also been suggested in work on mediatised memory. Christine Sprengler (2011: 1) makes this point with regard to nostalgia, albeit in relation to cinematic constructions, by recognising that "[w]hat nostalgia means in Japanese culture may be quite different than what it means in American culture". Holdsworth (2011: 5) echoes this argument in relation to television, utilising Derek Kompare's (2005) work on TV reruns to demonstrate how the centrality of this practice within American television differs from the UK. However, Holdsworth's (2011: 5, original emphasis) argument that "[t]he revelations of Kompare's study necessitate an examination of *what* is called upon and *when*; to consider the historical and national specificity of television memory and nostalgia" is problematic. By positing that "we might read the proliferation of television memory and nostalgia as symptomatic of the current state

of television and a response to changes in the medium” (Ibid), Holdsworth instates a sociological understanding of nostalgia. Televisual nostalgia is here positioned as a ‘mood’ that reflects an identifiable and uniform industrial-historical *zeitgeist* of crisis regarding television’s future within a period of increasing consumer choice and narrowcasting (see pages 45-49 for further examples of this discourse in Television Studies). Chapters Two and Three develop a sustained critique of this position by highlighting how different production contexts produce different forms and encodings of nostalgia. Thus, where *zeitgeist* explanations suggest that all forms of nostalgia are accountable to the perceived social climate, I instead demonstrate that varying constructions of nostalgia arise from differing production contexts. Nevertheless, both Sprengler (2011) and Holdsworth’s (2011) studies highlight the need to maintain a national focus when studying nostalgia’s televisual discourses.

Arguments favouring retaining national production contexts can also be identified in existing work on programmes that this thesis discusses and/or the wider generic discourse (see Mittell 2004a and 2004b) of ‘tefantasy’ (Johnson 2005). Nelson (2012: 19) argues that for *Life on Mars*:

the final production team’s focus was on finding success in a UK context, and local resonances of Britain in the seventies increasingly informed the details of the realisation of the script. Format sales to America were only an afterthought.

Moreover, Johnson’s (2005: 141) analysis of the BBC’s re-make of *Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)* – which Chapter Five identifies as a precursor to *Doctor Who* – observes that “[d]espite the emphasis ...placed on the international marketin the UK, it is in relation to public service broadcasting that ...the success of the series” was evaluated. When combined with recognition that “[t]hough many people enjoy overseas imports ...audiences worldwide are known to want some programming with local resonances” (Nelson 2012: 19; see also Nelson 2007a: 66, Turner 2009: 62), the need to prioritise national production contexts over international concerns is again justified. Thus, whilst acknowledgements of the impact of international markets upon production are employed where necessary (see Chapter Six), my research uses national institutional contexts as its primary interpretative framework for analysing constructions of nostalgia.

Employing a national-institutional framework also allows recent work on genre cycles to be critically engaged with. Richard Nowell (2011: 5) examines the history of the first ‘teen slasher’ cycle within American cinema from an industrial perspective and:

proposes a groundbreaking model of film cycle development, which promises to be transferable to other types of film, other historical periods, and the films of other nations. By treating cycles as a series of chronologically distinct phases of activity so as to illuminate the ways in which industrial developments, market shifts, and changing commercial imperatives underwrite production and distribution of a film-type as well as the content of individual films.

Nowell’s (Ibid: 46-54) model is employed throughout this thesis to recognise the historical development of this thesis’ genre cycle from the success of an initial ‘Trailblazer Hit’ (*Doctor Who*) to the production of a ‘Reinforcing Hit’ (*Life on Mars*) and its eventual winding down as many ‘Carpetbagger Cash-Ins’ (see Chapter Six) saturate the market. However, if applied to television, this thesis argues that greater attention should be paid to how genre cycles are shaped by specific national concerns. The current service licence for BBC One highlights the channel’s requirement to produce dramas that are perceived as ‘innovative’ by audience(s) (see BBC Trust 2012: 2) and so necessitates that its contributions to a cycle are appropriable by such discourses. This argument is developed across the thesis.

Throughout this section, multiple allusions to the progress of this thesis’ arguments and its research questions have been made. The next section develops these points further.

Into the Future!

Making a study’s research aims explicit are essential (see Altheide 1996: 24-25, Phillips and Hardy 2002: 60, McKee 2003: 80) and the following questions guide this thesis:

- How, when theorised as a discursive ‘mode’, can constructions of nostalgia be read through the codes and conventions of a range of telefantasy case studies – *Doctor Who*, *Primeval*, *Life on Mars*, *Ashes to Ashes* and *Lost in Austen*?
- When analysed as ‘textual strategies’, how do production factors arising from specific institutional contexts, such as target audience(s), scheduling and public service/commercial responsibilities, impact upon constructions of nostalgic discourse?
- How does such analysis allow the category of ‘quality popular’ television to be critiqued and developed?
- How does analysis of post-2005 British time travel drama open up new avenues of research regarding nostalgia, science fiction television, and televisual genre cycles?

To explore these questions, the argument progresses as follows: Chapter Two begins by summarising the hostility that has circulated around nostalgia within academia. These dismissals coalesce around accusations of:

falsifying the past; severing the past from the present; preventing historical continuity; fostering disillusionment with the present; hindering attempts to improve present circumstances; stifling creativity, innovation and progress; commodifying history; and exploiting emotions for profit. (Sprengher 2011: 31)

The discussion accounts for this opposition by recognising a set of recurring binary oppositions that are used to devalue nostalgia across academic disciplines and, through combining Grainge's (2000a) work on mediated nostalgia 'modes' with social constructionist ideas (see Gergen 1999), theorises nostalgia as a discourse. Approaching nostalgia through social constructionism allows for different discursive constructions to be accounted for by recognising how individual instances of nostalgia are structured by any combination of social, historical, cultural and – when analysing its mediated forms – institutional contexts. The chapter's final section then reviews existing discussions of televisual nostalgia, focusing specifically upon debates concerning different inflections of television 'heritage', and outlines how production factors such as institutional remit (e.g. public service or commercial), scheduling and imagined audiences have been largely overlooked in this area. The chapter then concludes by noting nostalgia's absence in analyses of TV science fiction.

The thesis' focus upon individual channel remits, target audiences and scheduling as significant production factors arises from two interconnected factors. Firstly, as implied above, Chapter Two identifies a problem arising from previous studies of nostalgia where scholars adopt a generalised attitude towards the concept. To counter this, a case-by-case approach utilising social constructionist theory is instead posited. The use of this case study approach is then reinforced when reviewing previous academic work concerning nostalgia and television as this has further implied how different production processes produce alternative inflections of nostalgia (cf. Holdsworth 2011: 5 above on differences between the UK and the US also). Examining previous studies of TV 'nostalgia networks' demonstrates this by suggests that different channels encode varying forms of nostalgia in accordance with their imagined target audience (see Spigel 1995, Grainge 2000a, Spigel 2005). Similarly, issues concerning scheduling are also important because, within the context of the UK,

regulation such as the 9pm watershed on broadcast channels such as BBC One and ITV1 create distinctions between ‘adult’ and ‘family’ programming and so envision audiences for these programmes differently (see Chapters 5 and 6). The need for a case-by-case consideration of individual constructions of televisual nostalgia therefore suggests that production issues such as channel remit, imagined audience profile and scheduling impact upon how specific programmes construct nostalgia.

To examine how these factors impact upon constructions of nostalgia, this thesis combines analysis of secondary academic material concerning the contemporary television industry (such as Nelson 1997 and 2007a, Dunleavy 2009) with discussion of “government and regulatory issues” (Caldwell 2009: 210) arising from publically-available institutional material such as channel licences as its methodology. This approach has been utilised historically across Television Studies (see Chapter Three) to provide insights into how specific discourses are formed within television - as Johnson’s (2005) study of telefantasy successfully demonstrates. However, although this thesis examines discourses of nostalgia through a production-orientated lens, it should be noted, following John Thornton Caldwell’s (2009; see also Caldwell 2008) recent work on production contexts, that:

conglomerates do not simply manufacture content. Screen content results from a loosely organised and dispersed arena of socio-professional and intercultural contestation that unfolds within the conglomerates. (Caldwell 2009: 200)

Caldwell therefore recognises that a range of “contexts in which embedded industrial sense-making and trade theorising” (Ibid: 202) are identifiable which shape content production across various institutional and professional sites. Caldwell thus suggests that other production factors, such as “semi-embedded ...“deep texts”” (Ibid) including trade press material, would also impact upon constructions of nostalgia in the post-2005 British time travel dramas that this thesis discusses. However, given that channel remit, scheduling and target audience have been alluded to in existing scholarly work concerning television and nostalgia as key issues, this thesis focuses on these points (rather than the broad range of factors that Caldwell recognises) to develop existing debates concerning nostalgia and television.

Chapter Three further outlines this thesis’ methodology, reviewing the strengths and weaknesses of Michel Foucault’s (1995, 2003) notion of discourse “as about language *and*

practice” (Hall 2001: 72, original emphasis) and critical perspectives (see Fairclough 1995) to this study. Rejecting these approaches, the chapter outlines how and why textual analysis, utilising ideas from Bignell (2002), Alan McKee (2003), Glen Creeber (2006a) and others, is selected. This chapter also reviews the advantages and disadvantages of conducting case studies of television series, highlighting the insights such an approach can offer when, following Johnson’s (2005) work on telefantasy, case studies are combined with institutional analysis. The chapter concludes by defending its methodological choices against post-structuralist critiques of textual analysis and the thesis’ absence of empirical work on audiences.

Chapter Four draws upon recent studies of television and genre to set the parameters of its cycle. Recognising the need to build genre categories “bottom up from disparate micro-instances” (Mittell 2004b: 174), the discussion identifies post-2005 British time travel dramas as examples of *denotative time travel*. As “[t]elevision program[me]s cite generic categories, and advertising, promotions, parodies, and intertextual references within shows are all vital sites of generic discursive practice” (Ibid), this distinction is necessary to differentiate post-2005 British time travel series from other series exhibiting similar elements such as soap operas and reality TV. The chapter then argues against producing solely ideological readings of its textual corpus by demonstrating how institutional analyses of nostalgic discourse(s) considering factors such as public service or commercial remits, target audience and scheduling provide more nuanced readings. Joanne Garde-Hansen (2011: 50) demonstrates the one-dimensional readings that discussions exploring mediated memory and institutions solely from an ideological perspective produce by arguing that:

powerful media and cultural institutions whose business it is to record, archive and make accessible the everyday life, major events and social and cultural heritage of nations and communities, invariably write those narratives in ways that glorify not only themselves but the cultural hegemony of the societies they serve.

Garde-Hansen (Ibid: 57) implies that media producers display selectivity towards how and what becomes remembered since “certain mediated memories have a market while others do not”. This critical approach suggests that media producers employ “institutionalised templates” (Ibid) when mediating historical and/or nationally-significant events which reflect dominant interests and maintain hegemony (see Gramsci 1971). The recent coverage of the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee in the UK demonstrates this point: attracting over fifteen million

viewers (see Deans 2012), this televisual event demonstrates that “[i]t is still possible for broadcasters to gather enormous audiences for ...events” (Turner 2009: 61) that project imaginings of nationality through memory and nostalgia. However, singular ideological arguments overlook how:

just as social affiliations are not the sole determinants of memory, neither are ideological structures. They are another structure of meaning, intersecting with social networks and representational conventions, through which memory is filtered and shaped. (Keightley 2010: 59)

Chapter Four demonstrates the advantages of a more expansive analytical framework by outlining how nostalgic discourses in *Primeval* are shaped by the ‘representational conventions’ arising from its production context. While the programme’s nostalgic forms suggest ideological conservatism, this reading is reductive as other institutional processes, including ITV1’s responsibilities towards child audiences, become overlooked if *Primeval*’s encoding(s) of nostalgia are analysed solely for ideologies.

Chapter Four also introduces two discourses of nostalgia - ‘societal’ and ‘personal’ nostalgia - that are discussed throughout the ensuing case studies³. Chapter Five, for example, draws upon Creeber’s (2004a) discussion of ‘soap drama’ to explore encodings of personal nostalgia in this cycle’s ‘trailblazer hit’ (see Nowell 2011: 46-49), *Doctor Who*. This chapter analyses various areas of the programme, including its construction of lead characters, aesthetic strategies and performance codes, arguing that personal nostalgia in *Doctor Who* is encoded to attract the imagined audience tastes of ‘popular’, ‘quality’ and ‘youth’ audiences and build these into a coalition audience for a primetime Saturday evening BBC One series. The chapter also builds upon Matt Hills’ (2010a: 218-227) analysis of *Doctor Who*’s ‘mainstream-cult’ narrative strategies, arguing that a variety of age-based and fan audiences are targeted through the programme’s “intratextuality” (Hills 2005a: 188) for its ‘classic’ incarnation during the early-to-mid-1970s. *Doctor Who*’s encodings of nostalgia can be read in terms of its status as commissioned by a public service broadcast channel that is required to attract a diverse audience comprised of multiple ages and classes.

Chapter Six analyses *Life on Mars* and *Ashes to Ashes*. Highlighting *Life on Mars*’ status as the cycle’s ‘reinforcing hit’ (see Nowell 2011: 51), the chapter considers how discourses of

³ See Davis (1979: 37) or Sprengler (2011: 32). Alternatively, see Merchant *et al* (2011: 610)

nostalgia become recoded in a primetime BBC One series that occupies a weekday scheduling position and solely targets adult audiences. The chapter identifies two juxtaposing discourses: ‘affective nostalgia’ recognises the negative (e.g. sexist and racist) elements of both series’ representation of the ‘past’ but values the norms of sociality (Davis 1979: 80, Castiglia 2000) associated with 1973 and 1981. ‘Present-orientated nostalgia’ instead articulates Sam Tyler’s (John Simm) and Alex Drake’s (Keeley Hawes) desires to return to the ‘present’. ‘Present-orientated’ nostalgia differs from existing arguments regarding ‘nostalgia for the present’ such as Jameson’s (1991, 1997) positing of how “late capitalism ...represents the final colonisation of the last enclaves of resistance to commodification” (Homer 1998: 108) by rendering historicised thinking impossible. Alternatively, Grainge (1999b: 384) uses ‘nostalgia for the present’ to discuss how black and white aesthetics in photography connote (immediate) historical importance to the events/people depicted. This chapter defines the nomenclature ‘present-orientated nostalgia’ differently, as capturing the desire of both characters to return ‘home’ in *Life on Mars* and *Ashes to Ashes*’ ongoing ‘temporal contrast’ (see Burling 2006) plots. The interplay between ‘affective’ and ‘present-orientated’ nostalgia is analysed as enabling simultaneous appeals to ‘popular’ and ‘quality’ audiences. Both discourses overlap with either programme’s ‘popular’ pleasures of repeated narrative and character functions (see Chapman 2009, Nelson 2010) whilst also constructing a complex reading position for audiences where neither ‘past’ nor ‘present’ worlds are favoured (see Nelson 2007a: 178-179, Hills 2012).

Chapter Six also addresses *Life on Mars* and *Ashes to Ashes*’ strategies for targeting gendered audiences through discourses of nostalgia. Developing Estella Tincknell’s (2010) argument that *Life on Mars*’ construction of 1973 primarily appeals to male audiences, the chapter’s final section analyses both series’ encodings of ‘affective’ and ‘present-orientated’ nostalgia in gendered terms. This section argues that *Ashes to Ashes* widens its layered polysemy by appealing to female imagined audiences through inflecting its discourses of nostalgia via Alex Drake’s female and feminist character attributes and Keeley Hawes’ performance codes. These textual strategies help both programmes appeal to a wide range of audience niches and, again, assist in securing large ‘coalition’ audiences for a BBC One drama.

Responding to Catherine Johnson and Rob Turnock’s (2005a) critique of how British Television Studies foregrounds the BBC over ITV and its programmes, Chapter Seven

analyses discourses of nostalgia in *Lost in Austen*. *Lost in Austen* represents ITV's preference for commissioning what Director of Drama Laura Mackie names "20th century dramas" (in MacMahon 2009: online) that primarily target young twenty-something audiences (see Kaplan 2010). This is partly true of *Lost in Austen* as the series encodes societal nostalgia to target 'quality' tele-literate audiences (see Nelson 2007a: 18) by ironising its construction of Georgian England. However, appeals to traditional middle-class 'quality' viewers remain readable from textual strategies including the programme's aesthetics and its replaying of plot points from Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813 [1911]). 'Popular' audience tastes are also partly targeted through *Lost in Austen*'s appropriation of Jameson's (1997) ideas regarding 'nostalgia for the present': the series collapses distinctions between 'past' and 'present' through having its 'past'-located characters adopt 'present' attitudes, offering reassurance to some viewers about the world they live in. Across the chapter, *Lost in Austen* is also discussed as a 'Carpetbagger Cash-In' (Nowell 2011: 52-54), reflecting mainstream UK commercial broadcasters' tendency for favouring "the "tried and tested with a new twist" rather than radical experiment" (Nelson 2007a: 70). The chapter demonstrates this point by discussing the programme's recoding of 'affective nostalgia', arguing that *Lost in Austen* maximises its appeals to female audiences via romance fiction's cross-demographic appeal (see Margolis 2003).

Chapter Eight concludes the thesis by outlining and critically reflecting upon the contributions that the research has made to scholarly discussions of nostalgia, television and genre whilst also suggesting avenues for further research. The final section discusses the research's apparent 'nostalgia for Television Studies', arguing for the need to retain textual analysis of television programmes over paratextual sources (see Gray 2010a) for fear of inserting the TV fan as the imagined default viewer within contemporary TV Studies (see also Hills 2010b).

The importance of national production contexts and textual analyses of television programme case studies are argued for across this thesis, meaning that many claims in favour of 'broadcast' television culture (see Johnson 2012: 8) are offered throughout. These arise from the thesis' social constructionist theorisation of nostalgia, which locates nostalgic discourses within specific socio-historical language cultures, avoiding the tendency for scholarly engagements with nostalgia to employ vague definitions. Theorising nostalgia as a discourse

argues against the “basic value or function of nostalgia remain[ing] unacknowledged” (Tannock 1995: 454) and counters “assumption[s] that nostalgia is pathological, regressive, and delusional” (Ibid: 455). Instead, as the next chapter demonstrates, specific expressions of televisual nostalgia can be approached as linguistic constructions arising from production contexts.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter has two aims: firstly, it summarises how ‘nostalgia’ has been discussed within academia. Much of this prior writing has treated nostalgia with hostility by constructing binary oppositions between ‘past’ and ‘present’, or truth and falsity, to position nostalgia negatively. However, another tendency for devaluing nostalgia concerns the lack of rigorous definition that some scholars use. To avoid these trends, this chapter argues for a case-by-case approach towards individual instances where nostalgia becomes articulated by extending Svetlana Boym’s (2001) work (as well as others). The chapter’s second aim is to introduce a theory of nostalgia which will be deployed across the thesis by synthesising social constructionist arguments (see Potter 1996, Gergen 1999 and 2001) and applying these to studying nostalgia and television. This involves considering nostalgia as a discourse characterised by recurrent “linguistic resources” (Edley 2001: 198). A social constructionist theory of nostalgia offers many advantages: for example, nostalgia’s diversity of meanings can be maintained by recognising that dissimilar constructions of nostalgia arise due to differing social and/or cultural factors. However, engaging with mediated forms of nostalgia requires social constructionism’s arguments to be extended since, following Paul Grainge (2000a), constructions of mediatised nostalgia also need to address factors arising from production contexts such as target audience, institutional remit and scheduling practices.

The chapter’s final section reviews previous studies of nostalgia and television, highlighting how these debates have overlapped with heritage discourses, and focuses upon discussions of ‘television heritage’ itself (see O’Sullivan 1998, Kompare 2005, Holdsworth 2011) and televisual representations of the ‘past’ in dramas (see, for example, Nelson 1997, Caughie 2000a and Cardwell 2002). It is argued that these discussions prioritise sociologically-based ‘*zeitgeist*’ explanations (see Collins 1995, Grainge 2000a) over considering how production factors impact upon individual constructions of nostalgia. The section concludes by introducing ideas expanded upon in Chapter Four regarding why ‘time travel’ narratives may be suitable for studying television and nostalgia.

Beyond Denigrations and Generalisations: Tendencies in Academic Discussions of Nostalgia

Susannah Radstone (2007: 114) has observed that “the first thing that strikes any reader of this critical corpus is its weighting towards the denigration of nostalgia”. Other scholars agree with Radstone’s position (see Tannock 1995: 454, Pickering and Keightley 2006: 933) and further examples supporting this position are easily found. Susan Stewart (1993: ix) refers to “the social disease of nostalgia” throughout her book-length study whilst Fredric Jameson (1981, 1982, 1991, 1998) - who Radstone (2007: 116) argues “the vast majority of commentaries follow ...in adopting a highly critical stance towards nostalgia” – associates nostalgia with the “imitat[ion ...of] dead styles” (Jameson 1998: 132; see below). Jameson’s essays constitute a complaint (Brooker and Brooker 1997: 7) against nostalgic aesthetics in cinema, providing an entry point for showcasing how academic discussions of nostalgia have frequently expressed hostility towards the subject.

One explanation for the widespread resentment directed towards nostalgia concerns ideological readings of the term. ‘Nostalgia’ has frequently been connected with “a more or less unabashed assertion of “The Beautiful Past and the Unattractive Present”” (Davis 1979: 18) which leads to its dismissal on ideological grounds. Despite some arguments positing that “[t]o simply say that nostalgia involves a longing for the past cannot accommodate its expressions that have no basis in feeling or emotion” (Sprenghler 2011:1), a binary opposition between ‘past’ and ‘present’ recurs across many expressions⁴. The presence of this binary has propagated the belief that “[n]ostalgia is often thought to have an intrinsically conservative bias” (Tannock 1995: 455) because “the rhetoric of nostalgia posit[s] a decline and ...appeals to a more authentic and politically serviceable golden age” (Grainge 1999a: 623). Because nostalgia constructs meaning through opposing ‘past’ and ‘present’, where the ‘past’ becomes the valued object, nostalgia favours ‘past’ social structures and their accompanying (oppressive) values including⁵:

a commitment to family values, to a caring governing order, to abstract ideals such as truth, freedom, and justice, to the safety of one’s comrades, and to a sense of personal integrity. (Gill 1997: 167)

⁴ Sprenghler (2011: 11) later concedes to this point by recognising that “a basic sense of longing for something lost in time or space remains a central component of the nostalgic experience”.

⁵ See also Barker (1994: 235) and Cardwell (2002: 150-151) for similar ideological readings.

Nostalgia's ideological conservatism leads Fred Davis (1979: x) to posit that politically left-leaning writers despise nostalgia due to its past-fixation whilst suggesting that those on the right "succumb abjectly to it" (Ibid) since nostalgia supports 'lost' values such as the elite control of power or stable constructions of 'the family' (see also Coontz 1992). Elsewhere it has been convincingly counter-demonstrated that the Left expresses nostalgia just as much as those on the Right (see Turner 1987: 154, Stauth and Turner 1988, Tannock 1995, Spigel 1995: 33, Grainge 1999a, Grainge 2002: 23-27, Bonnett 2007) and that nostalgia is therefore "transideological" (Hutcheon 1998: online; see also Barker 1994: 237). However, David Morley and Kevin Robins (1995, 2001) demonstrate the Leftist critique of nostalgia when discussing constructions of national identities during the political restructuring of Europe in the 1990s. Morley and Robins (1995: 5) recognised that:

Europe is experiencing a process of economic and social transformation which is weakening older institutions and structures. The geography of Europe – economic, political and cultural – is being refashioned in the context of an ever more apparent global-local nexus.

Coinciding with these changes, Morley and Robins identified "regressive forms of pan-European white racism" (Ibid: 3) emerging at this time, and it is here that nostalgia becomes discussed:

we see all around us, in contemporary Europe a resurgence of various forms of nationalism and calls for return to the pure (if mythic) certainties of the 'old traditions' and to the homogeneity of identity on which they are presumed to have been based ...[such as] a regressive 'little Englandism', ...a nostalgic attempt to revivify pure and indigenous regional cultures in reaction against what are perceived as threatening forms of cultural hybridity. (Ibid: 8)

Morley and Robins here echo points raised in the Introduction (see page 10) concerning how feelings of nostalgia emerge during periods of uncertainty and upheaval. Yet, by demonstrating how nostalgia is positioned as "progress's conceptual opposite ...fixed in a determinate backwards-looking stance" (Pickering and Keightley 2006: 920), it becomes apparent why some scholars dismiss nostalgia as reactionary.

Negativity has also been directed towards nostalgia because of how it "*uses the past* – falsely ...or ...in specially reconstructed ways" (Davis 1979: 10-11). Davis' (Ibid) apologetic use of 'special' is not shared by others, as Morley and Robins' (1995: 8) use of 'mythic' attests.

‘Mythic’ is here being used in the Barthesian (1972) sense and alludes to criticisms of nostalgia that have emerged - especially within the discipline of History⁶ - concerning how nostalgia-infused representations of previous historical periods produce a “falsification of the past” (Chase and Shaw 1989: 1; see also Lowenthal 1985: 7-8 and 1989: 20, Smith, M. 2000: 5). Such dismissals suggest another binary opposition - between ‘truth’ and ‘falsity’ – impacting upon scholarly discussions of nostalgia. Nostalgia has been dismissed from this perspective because it offers “historical phantoms that cannot be equalled or measured because they were fictional imaginings in the first place” (Brabazon 2005: 14). Versions of ‘the past’ expressed through nostalgia are evaluated as offering inadequate engagements with the ‘past’ to historians by producing highly selective understandings of history⁷.

Mobilising a ‘truth/falsity’ binary to denigrate nostalgia also suggests how methodological concerns demanding objectivity have devalued nostalgia. Arts and Humanities methodologies – whether concerning History (see Samuel 1994: ix, Brabazon 2005: 46) or other disciplines (see, for example, Jenks 1993: 155-157, Edgar and Sedgewick 1999: 263, Lewis 2002: 36) – require “a *universal* commitment to the ideal of objectivity” (Couldry 2000: 138). This necessitates that “our statements about the world be[come] accountable to others on terms that we do not set ourselves” (Ibid) through being verifiable by others. Cross-disciplinary commitments to ‘objectivity’ cause problems for studying nostalgia not only because nostalgic reconstructions of ‘the past’ lack the claims to validity that ‘objective’ research requires; nostalgia’s recollections are also seen as “‘intensely personal’” (Davis 1979: 52; see also Garde-Hansen 2011: 7 on memory in general). The personal nature of nostalgia positions it as a subjective way of engaging with the ‘past’. Nostalgia might therefore be seen as representing what Jan Assman (1995: 126) names ‘communicative memory’ as it is “based exclusively on everyday communications” and is characterised by a “high degree of formlessness” (Ibid: 127); further evidence of this being nostalgia’s association with wistfulness (Chase and Shaw 1989: 9; see also Davis 1979: 21). Thus, despite arguments complicating distinctions between ‘objective’ History and ‘subjective’ memory by either noting memory’s socio-cultural dimensions (see Garde-Hansen 2011: 14-23) or addressing memory forms in specific disciplinary contexts (see, for example, Pajala 2010: 134-135, Piper 2011: 418-419 in relation to television), a split between ‘objective’ History and

⁶ It is *only* History that has formulated such objections. See also Stewart’s (1993: 23-24) comments made from a Cultural/Literary Studies context.

⁷ Garde-Hansen (2011: 2) challenges these ideas.

‘subjective’ nostalgia remains identifiable. Lynn Spigel (2010: 70) displays this tendency by distinguishing between the nostalgic appeal of old television clips online and historical research:

As the archive goes viral, the nature of television history changes not only because of what is available, but also because of well-entrenched tastes and presuppositions about what counts as official history and what counts as popular memory or nostalgia. Things that are easy to get seem somehow just trivia for buffs, whereas the rare text sequestered in a physical archive or available only through some equivalent sort of dusty labo[u]r remains the purview of the real historian. As a homeless and viral medium, old TV loses it[s] aura as history, and returns instead to the present—or telepresent— culture of the everyday. It becomes a conversation piece.

Memory and/or nostalgia are separated out from history here, implying that the former lacks the detachment required by academic analysis, subsequently devaluing nostalgia as a concept worthy of serious academic discussion.

A third tendency that denigrates nostalgia concerns how some studies fail to provide a rigorous theoretical mapping of the term. Many examples showcase this (see, for example, Miller 1999, Waldrep 2000, Rachman 2000, Smith, M. 2000, Hollows 2003a, Moran 2006, Roper 2006, Sandon 2007, Tincknell 2010, Booth 2012) but Susan Aronstein’s (2005: 1) study of “Hollywood Arthuriana” demonstrates the point well. She identifies her work as engaging with:

a politics of nostalgia that responds to cultural crises by first proposing an Americanised Camelot as a political ideal and then constructing American knights to sit at its Round Table. In their return to Camelot to provide a vision of national identity and a handbook for American subjectivity, these films participate in America’s continual appropriation of the medieval past which, from the late nineteenth century on, has responded to attacks on traditional modes of authority, masculinity, and national identity and legitimacy by retreating to an ideal past. (Ibid: 1-2)

Aronstein’s statement alludes to some of nostalgia’s ‘linguistic resources’ (see below) such as the idealisation of an ‘object’ designated as ‘lost’ or ‘past’. However, the above quotation also suggests a complacent attitude towards nostalgia since it is not explained how the points raised relate to ‘nostalgia’. Despite including ‘nostalgia’ in the sub-title of her study, then,

Aronstein's failure to define 'nostalgia' suggests that the term's meanings are pre-established and require no further discussion⁸.

This tendency to not fully define 'nostalgia' is also observable in Ruth E. Ray's (2000) *Beyond Nostalgia: Aging and Life Story Writing*. Ray's (Ibid: 5) research concerns how elderly Americans (predominantly women) "tell a story of adult development through personal narrative" through both communal and individual writing. Her research therefore outlines how 'life-writing' plays a role in the ways that elderly people articulate and negotiate their senses of self-identity. Through doing this, Ray (Ibid) explores how such writings challenge cultural discourses equating aging with sustained periods of reflection (see, for example, Saul 1974, Davis 1979: 66-69, Kastenbaum 197, Meyers 2009: 738). What is disappointing is that Ray (2000: 29) never explicitly outlines the 'nostalgia' mentioned in her title. Gestures are made towards providing a definition by noting that:

conventional scripts for age are essentially decline narratives based on the assumption that the life trajectory of fifty (or even earlier) is one of decreasing effectiveness, gradual loss, and limitation.

However, it is never clarified how these conventions directly relate to 'nostalgia'. Once again, nostalgia becomes connoted to the reader as a term which has pre-established meanings that will not require further explanation.

Whilst the arguments surveyed so far present a gloomy outlook regarding academic discussions of nostalgia, this is only one side of the debate. Other scholars have attempted to re-evaluate nostalgia. Raphael Samuel (1994: 260) has argued against the trend amongst historians for chastising nostalgia and 'heritage culture' for "wanting to turn the country into a gigantic museum ...and preserving tradition". Samuel (Ibid: 17) views such attitudes as elitist and instead argues that greater attention be paid towards "the perceptions of the past which find expression in the discriminations of everyday life" (see also Sandon 2007). As Michael Pickering and Emily Keightley (2006: 928) note:

⁸ Aronstein (2005: 2-3) also devalues nostalgia by omitting nostalgia from her summary of academic disciplines that the study contributes to.

Samuel's examination of the proliferation of local museums and the amateur historian, archivist and oral history projects, serves to contest the claim of left-wing critics that heritage is ideology through and through, and as such inherently serves the interests of a bourgeois agenda which diminishes or glosses over the democratising power of popular historical practices.

Although commendable for its attempts to take nostalgia seriously within academia, Samuel's (1994) work has been criticised for its "tendency ...towards cultural populism over critical engagement" (Pickering and Keightley 2006: 928). Thus, whilst Samuel's (1994) attempts to re-evaluate nostalgia deserve recognition by considering how nostalgia makes History accessible to the wider public (see also Radstone 2007: 128), his project is nevertheless too general and celebratory. However, if these critiques of Samuel's (1994) 'positive' approach to nostalgia are considered in relation to the hostile attitudes towards nostalgia, an interesting position emerges. Whilst Samuel is criticised for lacking nuance, the outright negativity that has been expressed towards nostalgia operates at a similar level of generality since all articulations of the concept are dismissed. Instead of subscribing to either generalised dismissals or embraces, this thesis argues for greater discrimination concerning how and where nostalgia is put to use.

Responding to the need for a more nuanced attitude towards nostalgia, scholarly discussions from the last fifteen years have provided more in-depth considerations. As Sprengler (2011: 33) summarises:

[p]art of the effort to reevaluate nostalgia involved its compartmentalisation into different types... In some cases, this was done to enable the identification of some types of nostalgia as socially valuable while still ascribing to others pernicious characteristics. It was also done in order to demonstrate the complexity of nostalgia including its diverse functions and expressions.

Examples of scholarly work seeking to either re-evaluate and redeem some aspects of nostalgia (see Battaglia 1995, Tannock 1995, Tacchi 2003, Pickering and Keightley 2006) and/or distinguish between different 'types' of nostalgia (see, for example, Strathern 1995) are easily identifiable. However, Svetlana Boym's (2001) work best exemplifies attempts at re-positioning certain forms of nostalgia. Boym (Ibid: xvi) theorises nostalgia as "a historical emotion" that is nowadays linked to times of both individual and social upheaval where historical events such as political revolutions (Ibid) or the shift from pre-modern to modernised societies (see Ibid: xvii and 9-13; see also Chase and Shaw 1989: 3) act as

triggers to nostalgic feelings. From this position, Boym (2001) examines a range of cultural-historical examples (see also Sprengler 2011: 11-37). Boym's historical approach is vital to the social constructionist understanding of nostalgia developed in the next section but it is also important to note that Boym's (2001: 41) approach allows her to distinguish between 'restorative' and 'reflective' forms of nostalgia:

Restorative nostalgia puts emphasis on *nostos* and proposes to rebuild the lost home and patch up the memory gaps. Reflective nostalgia dwells in *algia*, in longing and loss, the imperfect process of remembrance. The first category of nostalgics do not think of themselves as nostalgic; they believe that their project is about truth. This kind of nostalgic characterises national and nationalist revivals all over the world, which engage in the antimodern myth-making of history as a return to national symbols and myths ...Restorative nostalgia manifests itself in total reconstructions of monuments of the past, while reflective nostalgia lingers on ruins, the patina of time and history, in the dreams of another place and another time.

Boym's definitions therefore attempt to revalue nostalgia – albeit in a specific form – as 'restorative nostalgia' echoes the type of nostalgia frequently attacked by critics for being politically regressive. 'Reflective nostalgia' instead represents a form of nostalgia that Boym (Ibid: 49) values since it is linked to "the irrevocability of the past and human finitude ...[it is] about individual and cultural memory" and displays the potential for a combination of ironic and/or humorous engagement with the 'past' (see Ibid: 49-55). What emerges is a process where certain forms of nostalgia become redeemed by separating out and othering the negative attributes associated with nostalgia and its supposed ideology. 'Nostalgia' becomes (partly) re-evaluated by offering an in-depth understanding of the concept but also by distancing this 'acceptable' form from its other negative connotations.

Through celebrating 'reflective' nostalgia's ironising potential, Boym's (Ibid) argument overlaps with Linda Hutcheon's (1998) attempt at redeeming a specific form of nostalgia. Hutcheon's work is frequently associated with a more 'positive' perspective towards nostalgia than her postmodernist peers (see Collins 1989: 140-141, Radstone 2007: 116) since, although admitting to an initial hostility (see Hutcheon 1998: online), she concedes that "some, not all, (not the commercial variety, usually), but *some* nostalgia we are seeing today (what I want to call postmodern) is of a different order, an ironised order" (Ibid). Once again,

nostalgia becomes ‘acceptable’ as an object of discussion when it is possible to discuss a form of nostalgia that is not ideologically conservative:

there is little irony in most memorials, and next to none in most truly nostalgic re-constructions of the past – from Disney World’s Main Street, USA to those elaborate dramatised re-enactments of everything from the American Civil War to medieval jousts restaged in contemporary England. (Hutcheon 1998: online)

Whilst not interested in this ‘traditional’ – what Boym (2001) names ‘restorative’ - form of nostalgia, Hutcheon (1998: online) values an ‘ironised nostalgia’ that “creat[es] a small part of the distance necessary for reflective thought about the present as well as the past”. Just as ‘reflective nostalgia’ is valued by Boym (2001) for providing critical distance and satirising memories of objects linked to cultural and/or individual ‘pasts’, ‘ironic’ nostalgia is acceptable for Hutcheon (Ibid) because it also offers a detached perspective. Nostalgia again becomes redeemed here through separating out its ‘good’ and ‘bad’ forms.

Other examples of this attempt to partly redeem nostalgia through distinguishing between ‘bad/regressive’ and ‘good/critical/reflexive/future-orientated’ forms of nostalgia can be identified (see Davis 1979: 16-26, Strathern 1995). What all of these studies argue is that, although hostility remains towards nostalgia within academia, it is possible to move beyond such dismissals by avoiding generalisations and developing a more nuanced understanding of nostalgia’s operations. Doing this requires looking at specific manifestations of nostalgia and, as Boym (2001) and Radstone (2007: 117-118) advocate, locating individual instances of nostalgia within historical contexts. It is also necessary to move beyond redeeming only specific (i.e. non-regressive) forms of nostalgia, though, by instead analysing historical instances of nostalgia regardless of their underlying ideologies⁹. This thesis does this by adopting a discriminate attitude towards articulations of nostalgia within post-2005 British time travel television dramas.

A useful starting point that eases definitional problems requires recognising the “differentiation between nostalgia as a structure of feeling ...and nostalgia as a commodified style” (Pickering and Keightley 2006: 932). This is a point that has been made elsewhere in

⁹ See Gray (2010b: 124-126) for another example of this.

Cultural Studies work on nostalgia (see also Brooker 2003: 180-181), especially in Paul Grainge's (2000a) work. Grainge (Ibid: 27) has rightly identified that, in contemporary society, nostalgia constitutes "a cultural style, a consumable mode as much as it can be said to be an experienced mood". Making this differentiation (which is not a rigid binary – Grainge Ibid: 28-29; see also Grainge 2002: 21) provides an entry point for distinguishing between different 'types' of nostalgia. For example, whilst Jameson (1981, 1982, 1991, 1998) discusses nostalgia-as-'mode' by addressing nostalgic aesthetics in cinema, Morley and Robins (1995) and Boym (2001) engage with nostalgia-as-mood by linking nostalgia to either individual or social dispositions. This distinction between nostalgia as 'mode' and 'mood' is returned to throughout this chapter because it is important to how the thesis approaches televisual nostalgia. Before this can be developed further, though, it is first necessary to make explicit the approach to nostalgia that this thesis employs. The next section therefore theorises nostalgia from a social constructionist perspective and highlights its many advantages.

Theorising Nostalgia: Social Constructionism and Nostalgia-as-Discourse

Nostalgia is a difficult concept to study (see also Holdsworth 2011: 103). If the variety of academic disciplines which have engaged with nostalgia are considered alongside Grainge's (2000a) position that nostalgia exists as both a 'mood' and a 'mode' then its dispersal of meanings make it a slippery term to comprehend (see also Pickering and Keightley 2006: 943). Whether approached as an aesthetic style (see also Davis 1979: 81-82), a form of memory and/or affect, or both, nostalgia presents obstacles regarding how to study 'it'¹⁰. Nostalgia's status as an emotion generates a set of problems for analysts since:

nostalgia is not something you "perceive" *in* an object; it is what you "feel" when two different temporal moments, past and present, come together for you and, often, carry considerable emotional weight. In both cases, it is the element of response – of active participation, both intellectual and affective – that makes for the power. (Hutcheon 1998: online)

Nostalgia's location in the affective "responses of *subjects*" (Ibid, original emphasis; see also Holak and Havlena 1998: 218) makes it a challenging concept to analyse because "nostalgia

¹⁰ Holak and Havlena (1998) and Sprengler (2011: 1) also recognise nostalgia as both memory and/or affect.

is experienced ...bodily, through the senses, emotions and memories” (Tacchi 2003: 289). Experiences of nostalgia lack the “representativeness and generalisability” (Gray 2003: 15) required for objective investigation if approached as an emotion experienced internally by subjects¹¹.

Davis (1979: 82) argues in relation to communicating nostalgia through artistic forms that these problems can be avoided since “the artist’s use of the form ...need not get bogged down by d[e]finitonal ...considerations” since ‘nostalgia’ is communicated through his or her own intuition. Better solutions to these immediate problems can be found by turning to social constructionist theories. Social constructionism has been employed across a variety of academic contexts (see Ray 2000: 19 for a summary) and is premised upon rejecting “the positivist position ...[where] language is unproblematically representational, a mirror of ontological reality” (Ibid: 26; see also Andrews *et al* 2000: 5). Social constructionist theories therefore challenge what Kenneth Gergen (1999: 20) has named “the correspondence theory of language” by critiquing positivism’s central assumption “that words can correspond to the world as it is” (Ibid). Instead, social constructionists take as their starting point a questioning attitude towards “how the mind could know its own contents (self-knowledge)” (Ibid: 14) and so posit that all concepts are linguistic productions and are “specific to particular traditions – lodged in culture and history” (Ibid). Social constructionism therefore rejects the idea that objects or notions have specific meanings existing ‘within’ them (see also Potter 1996: 68). Social constructionism instead draws attention to how the meanings attached to any term – whether the ‘mind’, the ‘self’ or ‘nostalgia’ – are produced through the social, cultural and historical operations of language (Gergen 1999: 45; see also Crossley 2000: 21, Denzin 2000: xii, Edley 2001: 190). Positions such as that adopted by Davis (1979: 82), where the human mind is the producer of ‘truth’ and ‘knowledge’ about itself and its surroundings, are destabilised in this paradigm (Gergen 1999: 48) by focusing on how linguistic structures impact upon individuals within specific contexts¹². In summary, social constructionist ideas constitute:

a constellation of theories articulating the belief that mind, thought, self, and reality are largely products of history, culture, and language. The world – and the self within

¹¹ See Brooker (2007) for another example of this argument surrounding generalisability.

¹² As Edley (2001: 212) notes, debate remains amongst social constructionists as to the weight individual writers working within the paradigm place between concepts of structure and agency.

it – are not taken-for-granted entities warranted through objective observation but constructions or creations achieved through socially agreed-upon methods of seeing, naming, and interpreting. (Ray 2000: 18)

Social constructionist theories have various uses for studying nostalgia. Take, for example, problems arising from understanding nostalgia as a form of affect experienced internally by subjects. Social constructionism has interrogated the assumptions upon which individual comprehensions of sentiment are based by questioning a “view of the emotions as “just natural”” (Gergen 1999: 108) and instead posing such questions as “how would you go about identifying an emotional state” (Ibid)? Gergen (Ibid: 12-13) develops this questioning attitude towards emotional states by suggesting that:

[a]lthough we may all agree on our use of mental terms (for example, that we experience happiness, sadness or anger on particular occasions), how do we know that what we experience privately is the same for others? I can never see into your mind, so how can I be certain that what you are calling “fear” is not what I call “anger” and that my word “happiness” refers to the state you call “anxiety” ...no one has access to your “inner life”, nor vice versa.

Emotions might be experienced internally by subjects but comprehension and classification of such states only become meaningful through the socio-historical operations of language. It is for these reasons that social constructionism understands “emotion as a cultural construction ...not as a feature of our biological make-up, a constitutional urge that drives our actions, but as a component of cultural life” (Ibid: 109). It may be true that ‘nostalgia’ is today “likely to be classed with such familiar emotions as love, jealousy, and fear” (Davis 1979: 5). However, from a social constructionist perspective, the reason why a specific part of our emotional capabilities can be designated as constituting ‘nostalgia’ is a consequence of the socio-cultural workings of language (see also Tacchi 2003: 289-290). ‘Nostalgia’ becomes comprehensible to ourselves, and open to communication to others, because a specific part of the language systems allows for the experience of certain phenomena to be classified under this term.

As well as having been employed to understand the social nature of emotions, constructionist theories have also been used to theorise another key area associated with nostalgia - memory. Social constructionist ideas have been utilised for studying memories within academia due to

the paradigm's "reject[ion of] the traditional assumption of 'a central and unitary concept of self'" (Crossley 2000: 31) which is produced through 'self-knowledge'. Constructionist understandings of 'the self' instead highlight "the inextricable relationship between self and language" (Ibid: 24) and posit that "personal identity is ...a social manifestation ...created through language acts, social patterns, and social relationships" (Ray 2000: 21). Such an understanding of selfhood recognises that "accounts [of self-construction] are ...highly context-specific" (Edley 2001: 190), and therefore fluid, since the self-actualising subject is responding to a combination of environmental factors (Ibid: 192; see also Potter and Wetherell 1996, Gergen 2001). Conceptualising self-identity as a linguistic construction intersects with the concept of memory by forcing recognition that memories:

serve as a critical means by which we make ourselves intelligible within the social world. We tell extended stories about our childhoods, our relations with family members, our years at school, our first love affair, our thinking on a given subject, and so on ...In each case, we use the story form to identify ourselves to others and to ourselves. (Ibid: 247)

Thus, "when people express an attitude or express an episode from the past, they are usually doing a lot more than just retrieving a stock of information" (Edley 2001: 190). Social constructionist theories view recounting memories as a "creative means of exploring and describing realities" (Andrews *et al* 2000: 7) and, hence, constructing self-identity within the context of the present. If it is accepted that memories (like emotions) are linguistic constructions, and that nostalgia can be understood as a form of memory (see, for example, Davis 1979: 10), then social constructionist ideas again become beneficial for studying nostalgia. Both Annette Kuhn (2002: 8-9) and Emily Keightley (2010: 67) have argued that memories can be approached as texts and, rather than having a highly subjective nature (see pages 26-27), can instead be objectively analysed for how they represent 'the past'. The textual approach to memory these arguments outline is developed across this thesis.

Accepting social constructionist approaches to memory and affect suggests that nostalgia can be defined and analysed as a discursive form or an 'interpretive repertoire' (see Edley 2001: 197-202):

[a] relatively coherent way... of talking about objects and events in the world. In discourse analytical terms, they are the 'building blocks of conversation', a range of linguistic resources that can be drawn upon and utilised in the course of everyday social interaction. (Ibid: 198)

Whilst nostalgia resists concrete definitions due to its diffusion across a variety of historical and disciplinary contexts, there are nevertheless recurrent linguistic resources which subjects and/or cultures employ for expressing nostalgia. It is frequently recognised that "it is *always* the adoration of the past that triumphs over lamentation for the present" (Davis 1979: 16) when communicating nostalgia. From this perspective, nostalgia becomes "a form of idealised remembrance" (Grainge 2000a: 28) since the 'past' object that is recalled is appropriated in a positive way. Observations can also be made with regard to the structure of nostalgic discourse. Since nostalgia has been approached as "a periodising emotion" (Tannock 1995: 456), constructions of nostalgia mobilise what Kuhn (2002: 10) calls a "past/present register" where individuals "shift or 'shuttle' back and forth between past and present standpoints" (Ibid). In the case of nostalgia this 'register' is mobilised so that the discursive construction of the 'past' is evaluated as somehow 'better' than the comparative period designated as 'present' (hence nostalgia's idealised nature). Expressions of nostalgic feeling therefore construct a "regressive narrative" (Gergen 2001: 254) by "depict[ing] a continued downward slide" (Ibid) from past to present and it is these recurring 'linguistic devices' that allow nostalgia to be theorised as a discourse¹³.

Interpreting nostalgia as representative of a 'regressive' penchant for 'past'-located objects alone has been criticised by academic work engaging with nostalgia for providing a one-dimensional (Chase and Shaw 1989: 8; Davis 1979: viii-x) or 'simplistic' (Ibid: 18-20) perspective. To develop a more nuanced understanding of nostalgia, which incorporates wider academic discussions on how memories become constructed as a result of present-located stimuli¹⁴, previous academic discussions have explained nostalgia as responding to anxieties experienced in the present. This perspective is developed further by Georg Stauth and Bryan S. Turner (1988: 513):

¹³ See also Jacobs (2000: 27) whilst Seale (2000: 37) also recognises that "'narrative' is ... a pervasive feature of social life, being present in many situations".

¹⁴ See Schwartz (1982), Nora (1989), Halbwachs (1992), Spigel (1995), Johnson (2007a), Sandon (2007) and Olick (2010: 152-157).

the nostalgic paradigm has four principal components. First there is the notion of history as decline and fall, involving a significant departure from a golden epoch of homefulness. Secondly, there is the idea that modern social systems and their cultures are inherently pluralistic, secularised and diverse; this pluralisation of life-worlds brings about an intense fragmentation of belief and practice. Thirdly, there is the nostalgic view of the loss of individuality and individual autonomy, since the autonomous self is trapped within the world of bureaucratic regulation under the dominance of a modern state. Finally, there is the sense of the loss of simplicity, authenticity and spontaneity. The regulation of the individual within a bureaucratic and administered world prohibits genuine feeling and emotion.

Recurrent across all of these attributes is the assumption that “[u]ncertainty and insecurity in present circumstances create fertile ground for a sentimental longing for the past, or for a past fondly reconstructed out of selectively idealised features” (Pickering and Keightley 2006: 925). Addressing such a point furthers the understanding of nostalgia as a discourse by providing an explanation of ‘how’ and ‘why’ such discourses become constructed. Such arguments suggest that constructions of nostalgia discourse are always reacting to ‘present-day’ anxieties.

The approach to nostalgia outlined across this chapter raises some philosophical questions that need addressing. How ‘past’ does an object have to be to become constructed through a discourse of nostalgia? Could, hypothetically, a child become nostalgic for something experienced the previous day or is this too soon? Are children even able to recognise and articulate feelings of nostalgia? The latter of these questions is arguably difficult to engage without empirical research; regrettably, such questions fall outside of this thesis’ parameters. However, when previous work on children and nostalgia has inferred this issue, uncertainty has been suggested. On the one hand, Maire Messenger-Davies (2002: 128) indicates this might be possible by alluding to how television time travel dramas made for children juxtapose discourses of ‘past’ and ‘present’ and so “demonstrate both similarities and disjunctions between contemporary children’s lives and the lives of children in former times”. This point is developed further by noting that the ‘past’ children encountered in these series “may be ancestors of the contemporary characters; as such they function as *alter egos*’ enabling the contemporary child to explore hidden aspects of his or her own identity and inheritance” (Ibid). Whilst these observations suggest a child’s ability to recognise differences between ‘past’ and ‘present’, this recognition is directed towards child characters discovering emerging personality traits from past generations rather than revisiting ‘past’

understandings of selfhood and so questions their ability to comprehend nostalgia. Elsewhere, Chase and Shaw (1989: 5) discourage an association between children and feelings of nostalgia by arguing that children, up until a certain age, possess only a “subjective experience of time” (Ibid: 4). This differs from the organised structures of “public time” (Ibid) which children have to be encultured into, therefore suggesting that children have different experiences of temporal progression. Alternatively, other areas of academic discussion regarding children and nostalgia have sidestepped questions regarding the potential for children to experience nostalgia by instead focusing upon how objects from one’s childhood – such as children’s television programmes – become appropriated by a discourse of nostalgia later in life (see Brooker 1997: 101-102, Krips 1997, Lewis 2001, Messenger-Davies 2001a: 111, Buckingham 2002a: 1-6, Wood 2010a: 175). By framing their studies from the perspectives of adult reminiscence, consideration of children’s experiences of nostalgia subsequently becomes overlooked (see also Messenger Davies 2001a: 89).

What these adult-framed discussions of nostalgia and children’s media suggest is that, instead of simply constructing meaning through opposing representations of ‘past’ and ‘present’, the discursive split between temporal periods occurs here between notions of ‘adult’ and ‘child’. In other words, a more precise conceptualisation of nostalgia can be offered by recognising that nostalgia works by juxtaposing *discursively bounded periods* from an individual/social group’s life course. Recognition of this point can be found in other scholarly work discussing nostalgia. Davis (1979) has discussed nostalgia in relation to the ‘life cycle’ and argues that, in Western societies, the elderly represent “those most tempted to submit to nostalgia’s balm” (Ibid: 71) due to the diminished position attributed to them by social structures. Although this is not the only way that Davis discusses nostalgia and the life cycle (see Ibid: 56-64 on the teenage years), his utilisation of this sociological concept needs updating. Stephen Hunt (2005: 3) alludes to this point by stating that:

to a large degree notions of the ‘life cycle’ are now redundant outside of medical circles and make little sense in this changing world where ...the once assumed ‘stages’ of life such as ‘childhood’ and ‘adulthood’, and what they entailed for life chances, are no longer so ‘fixed’ and predictable.

Whilst consumer society may have eroded some of the traditional markers of age progression by extending the salience of ‘youth’ as a marker of age-based identities beyond its traditional

associations with the mid-twenties (Ibid: 30; see also Hodkinson 2011: 263), it should nevertheless be recognised that:

it would ...be wrong to entirely discard ...age categories ...they have lost their deterministic qualities ...[but] are better designated as ‘phases’ of life; lacking coherence, direction, and open to considerable negotiation and discontinuity. (Hunt 2005: 2)

Although the boundaries between discrete age-based identities are less secure nowadays (and have been deconstructed as signifying terms in social constructionist thought – see Ibid), distinctions between specific parts of the life course are still useful for thinking about the subject’s temporal progression. This point is especially evident in articulations of nostalgia. Paul Hodkinson’s (2011) research into members of Goth subcultures who continue to participate in this community from their late twenties onwards demonstrates this point. Hodkinson rejects the correlation between ongoing subcultural engagement and “an expansion in the longevity of youthful approaches to life” (Ibid: 264). Instead his research demonstrates how “the endurance of subcultural identities may sometimes accompany, adapt to and form part of the development of ...identities which most would associate with adulthood” (Ibid: 281). His participants recognise the transition between different age-based periods of the life course and find ways of developing and maintaining markers of subcultural identity across socially-constructed markers of age. The significance of distinctions between different temporal ‘eras’ becomes most evident, however, when characterising “nostalgia-themed events” (Ibid: 279). By stating that these evenings “specialised in older music and attracted a particularly older clientele” (Ibid) Hodkinson suggests that, for something to be considered ‘nostalgic’, it must be associated with a distinctly ‘past’ time period (see also Spengler 2011: 16). Thus, whilst still structured around opposing ‘past’ and ‘present’, nostalgic discourse becomes constructed in relation to discursively-distinct time periods where ‘past’ objects accrue their value due to their absence from representations of the ‘present’ (see also Keane 2000 on the nostalgic appeal of *Star Wars* (Lucas 1977) to generational audiences).

Theorising nostalgia as a form of discourse has wider advantages for its study within academia since other problems, such as the possibility of different inflections of nostalgic sentiment, can be eased through applying social constructionist arguments. It has been argued

that the regressive-tragic, or ‘golden age’, structure of nostalgia can be constructed in different ways that still result in expressions of nostalgia. Boym (2001: xiv) has argued that “[s]ometimes nostalgia is not directed toward the past ...but rather sideways” in that nostalgia can be used to envision alternative versions of the present had different choices been made (see Cook 2008). It has also been argued that nostalgic narratives can be constructed around “the story of the Homecoming, and the Pastoral” (Tannock 1995: 454) or, alternatively, “the stability of [the] past ... a permanent state of childhood innocence and an awakening of sensuality” (Wood 2006: 282; see also Chase and Shaw 1989: 5-6). Each of these alternative inflections share some overlaps with nostalgia’s ‘linguistic resources’: the idealisation of ‘rural’ societies and/or ‘childhood’ is premised upon the notion of a ‘lost’ object or ‘golden age’ whilst the idea of a ‘fall’ leading to a negatively-evaluated ‘present’ is also structured into Boym’s (2001) sideways-glancing nostalgia. Social constructionist theory provides a way of managing these different inflections of ‘nostalgia’ by rejecting the possibility of achieving absolute definitions of terms:

[one] aspect of the definition is that it constitutes ...only a section of the possible global encyclopaedia ...The Immediate Object established by the definition puts the corresponding Dynamic Object in focus only *in some respects* ...This means that the regulative model of an encyclopaedia foresees many ‘paths’ or many complementary disjunctions of the entire semantic spectrum. (Eco 1984: 188)

Nostalgia should therefore be recognised as a dynamic, encyclopaedic term housing a number of overlapping meanings which can never be fully utilised at any one time. Similar to an interpretive repertoire, there is “no single, consensual” (Edley 2001: 197) definition of nostalgia that captures the term’s encyclopaedic meaning(s). However, due to the vitality of the word, academic discussions of nostalgia require clear definition as to how nostalgia is being used within a specific context. Additionally, further acknowledgments are also required to recognise that the definition of nostalgia being mobilised applies to a specific discursive context and so may be open to different articulations within alternative circumstances. Boym’s (2001: xvi) argument that nostalgia constitutes “a historical emotion” needs to be extended since, when considered from a social constructionist perspective, this permits:

acknowledging the existence of multiple nostalgias – some productive and socially useful and others less so ...Nostalgia is not all of a piece. It is subject to circumstance, motivation and interests, and over both time and space, to degree, variation and change. (Pickering and Keightley 2006: 928-929; see also Tannock 1995)

Recognising nostalgia as a concept that produces meaning through linguistic practices, but that in each instance constructs meaning through incorporating only some of its “patchwork of ‘quotations’” (Edley 2001: 188), avoids losing the term’s diversity but allows for specific instances of nostalgia to be identified and analysed according to contextual factors.

Recognising how individual articulations of ‘nostalgia’ draw upon only certain aspects of the term’s interpretive repertoire allows for different inflections of the term, such as those which might occur across different cultural or national contexts, to be brought under a social constructionist theory of nostalgia. Seremetakis (1994) has argued that “[t]here is a difference between the Greek and American uses of nostalgia” (Tacchi 2003: 287) in that ‘American’ nostalgia is seen to be overly sentimental and falsifying whereas the Greek equivalent elicits a ‘deeper’ form of affective response from subjects (Ibid). Seremetakis’ (1994) argument obviously produces value judgements between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ forms of nostalgia. What it overlooks, however, is that different cultural factors may have contributed towards producing nationally-specific definitions of ‘nostalgia’. The possibility that different contexts may produce alternative inflections of nostalgia is further demonstrated in Debora Battaglia’s (1995) analysis of the ‘nostalgic’ practices of immigrant workers in Papua New Guinea. Battaglia (Ibid: 77) notices that through growing and exhibiting yams:

urban Trobrianders ...talk about the gardens of “Home” (the Trobriand Islands) as distinct from their experience of the “house” they have returned to each day for twenty years after working “for cash” in Port Morseby.

The understanding of nostalgia that Battaglia uses here is drawn from early-European definitions of the term in that it is linked to notions of ‘homesickness’ and separation from one’s homeland (see Davis 1979: 2-4, Boym 2001: 3-7, Sprengler 2011: 11-17) and places greater emphasis on these attributes of nostalgic discourse. However, if the versions of nostalgia identifiable in American, Greek and Papua New Guinean cultures are brought together and analysed according to social constructionist ideas, they highlight how different

cultures produce variations in their definitions of ‘nostalgia’. Each of these culturally-specific understandings of nostalgia is drawn from nostalgia’s encyclopaedia of meanings within different contexts. Defining nostalgia through social constructionism allows for such variations to be recognised and highlighted when a case-by-case approach is adopted for analysing specific nostalgic instances.

Approaching nostalgia as a social construction also allows for criticisms surrounding the production of decontextualised definitions of nostalgia to be avoided. Radstone (2007: 117) has outlined this critique of previous studies of nostalgia by stating that some scholarly work mobilises “an ahistorical approach ...[which] assumes its universal and ahistorical lure”. She develops this assessment by noting that:

[m]uch recent writing on nostalgia ...stresses only nostalgia’s historical origins and specificity. Though nostalgia’s origins are variously located, and though nostalgia’s ontology is variously understood, the dominant trend in historical studies of nostalgia is to establish the contemporary ubiquity of nostalgia, to trace the term’s meanings back to its origins, and then to explain the meanings and significance of contemporary nostalgia. (Ibid: 118)

Radstone’s complaint is directed towards a tendency in some academic work – especially that in disciplines such as Psychology (see Sedikdes *et al* 2004) and psychoanalysis (see Sohn 1983, Smith, K. K. 2000) – to mobilise a “universalist view of nostalgia” (Radstone 2007: 117; see also Sprengler 2011: 12-13). This ‘universalist’ approach negates issues arising from specific historical contexts such as how contemporary definitions of nostalgia might be considered as one of the “side effects of the teleology of progress” (Boym 2001: 10). This second, more historically-focused perspective, recognises that ‘nostalgia’ is now related to the “narrative of temporal progress and spatial expansion” (Ibid) first initiated by the social changes brought about by Modernity, industrialisation and the widespread displacement that people experienced as a result¹⁵. The ‘universalist’ understandings of nostalgia that Radstone (2007) attacks overlook historical dimensions of the term’s ‘modern’ meaning(s) and instead proclaim an essentialised version of nostalgia stressing continuity over context-specificity. Approaching nostalgia from a social constructionist perspective incorporates Radstone’s

¹⁵ See Boym (2001: 8-10) for a more detailed engagement with these issues. See also Agacinski (2003: 3-10). Chase and Shaw (1989: 2-4), Battaglia (1995) and Birchall (2004: 179) also discuss nostalgia’s links to spatial and temporal locations.

critique since the historical nature of meaning forms a core assumption of this paradigm. Social constructionism provides another solution to problems with studying nostalgia by forcing acknowledgement that a specific term is constructed and used within a given set of contextual factors.

Despite the advantages that a social constructionist approach to nostalgia offers, some of the ideas outlined in this section need extending when engaging with constructions of nostalgia in media texts. The assumption that nostalgic discourses become articulated in response to anxieties perceived in the present provides an insufficient account of how and why nostalgia becomes constructed “as a media style” (Grainge 2000a: 27). A sociological explanation of nostalgia, which “articulates a concept of experience” (Ibid: 28) or nostalgic *mood*, is rooted in what Jim Collins (1995: 7) has named the “*Zeitgeist* model” since instances of nostalgia are accounted for “by relating it to a governing narrative or cultural temper” (Grainge 2000a: 27). Grainge (Ibid) argues that, “[w]hile the production of nostalgia may have grown in tandem with a sense of cultural crisis”, accounts of individual cases of mediated nostalgia “cannot be reduced to this explanatory model”. Sociological explanations overlook a number of other factors that impact upon how and why nostalgic *modes* - and not *moods* - become constructed in mediated contexts. He posits that specific nostalgia ‘modes’ cannot be accounted for solely in relation to social ‘moods’ as “modes of (media) nostalgia have developed in a culture that ...is able to transmit, store, retrieve, reconfigure, and invoke the past in new and specific ways” (Ibid: 28). Analysing nostalgic discourses constructed through media forms instead needs to implement:

an approach that resists a critical reduction where nostalgia modes become the reflex result of anxieties and dissatisfactions with the present. As a cultural style, nostalgia has developed in accordance with a series of cultural, demographic, technological, and commercial factors that have made “pastness” an expedient and marketable mode. The aestheticisation of nostalgia has emerged in a cultural moment able to access, circulate, and reconfigure the textual traces of the past in new and dynamic ways. (Ibid: 33)

Grainge’s argument does not deny either the recurrent linguistic resources of nostalgic discourse or the overlapping social constructionist assumption that “[p]roducts of popular culture cannot be divorced from the political climate in which they emerge” (Ibid: 29-30). Instead, he posits an extension of a social constructionist approach to studying nostalgia.

Accounting for mediated modes of nostalgia solely through considering socio-cultural and historical factors is insufficient since such explanations overlook how the priorities of media producers and capabilities of media forms impact upon constructions of nostalgic discourse¹⁶. The analysis of mediated nostalgia modes therefore needs to address “*specific configurations* of taste and textuality” (Ibid: 29, my emphasis) whilst also considering the operations of broadcast institutions and/or industry structures (see Ibid: 31). Grainge suggests a social constructionist analysis of nostalgic discourse in media forms that employs a case study approach and combines this with a focus upon the operations of individual media texts and their institutional contexts (e.g. television).

This section has countered some of the problems surrounding the study of nostalgia by proposing a social constructionist theorisation of nostalgia as a discourse. Considering nostalgia in this way involves recognising that all definitions of nostalgia are drawn from specific social, historical, cultural and, in the case of media texts, institutional and technological resources. The form of ‘nostalgia’ discussed across this thesis therefore draws from nostalgia’s interpretive repertoire a regressive narrative structure and the idealisation of a ‘lost’ object that is discursively identified as ‘past’. Having set up this definition of nostalgia, the final section of this chapter examines how nostalgia has been discussed in relation to specific television programmes and/or genres highlighting how this previous work has preferred *zeitgeist*-based interpretations of televisual nostalgia over analysing production contexts. These arguments emerge through reviewing nostalgia’s intersection with different notions of television and ‘heritage’.

I Remember When: Nostalgia, Television and Heritage

Many studies have discussed nostalgia and screen media¹⁷. Moreover, some of this work on screen-based forms such as cinema has intersected with Grainge’s ideas regarding mediated nostalgia¹⁸. However, given this thesis’ focus on TV, this section reviews studies of nostalgia

¹⁶ See Grainge (1999b and 2000b) for further discussion of this in relation to black and white photographs.

¹⁷ See Lury (2000), Hasian Jr (2001), Dika (2003), Aronstein (2005), Cook (2005), Muller (2007), Radstone (2007), Cook (2008), Turner (2008) and Sprengler (2011) for discussions of nostalgia and cinema.

¹⁸ See Sprengler’s (2011: 48-58) problematic linking of the ongoing prevalence of ‘Fifties’ nostalgia in American society to television’s institutional contexts of the 1950s and its consumerist ideologies. Although initially convincing, and useful for her analysis of “‘Populuxe Fifties’” (Ibid: 42) nostalgia for consumer items of the period such as cars and kitchen goods, this point is less convincing in relation to the other inflections of ‘Fifties’ nostalgia she identifies such as “‘Hollywood Fifties’” (Ibid) nostalgia. This latter form, which

and television. One area where discussions of nostalgia and television have overlapped has been regarding discourses of television heritage since “it is nostalgia that emerges here as the dominant framework through which television remembers and refers to itself” (Holdsworth 2011: 96). Derek Kompare (2005: 101-125) has also alluded to nostalgia’s interrelationship with archiving practices and remembering old television by first noting how, in the American context, television gained legitimacy as a medium worthy of preservation and study during the 1960s due to shifting attitudes towards popular culture¹⁹. Against this backdrop, television became culturally re-valued as a way of engaging with the ‘past’ since the medium:

provided a vivid connection to the recent past, helping cement the dominant narratives of the post-World War II era in popular memory, and fostering the subsequent development of the cultures of retro and nostalgia that pervaded the last quarter of the century. (Ibid: 103)

Kompare’s statement implies that any study seeking to take nostalgia seriously within a contemporary context should recognise how nostalgia becomes articulated through television. Alongside this point, though, Kompare’s analysis also addresses nostalgia as a discourse by critically examining the widely-accepted idea that American television from the 1950s constitutes a ‘Golden Age’ of the medium (see also Creeber 2001a: 9, Johnson 2007a: 56, Holdsworth 2011: 117-118):

[t]he myth ...blossomed in the seventies, as biographies, insider accounts, and retrospectives of 1950s programs such as *Your Show of Shows*, *The Honeymooners*, and *The Garry Moore Show*, as well as ...live dramas, were published, painting a picture of a new, innocent medium, and implying a narrative of innovation and achievement, followed by a grand fall into mediocrity. (Kompare 2005: 108)

This statement implies some of the suspicions concerning studying nostalgia, such as the idea that nostalgia produces ‘mythical’ accounts of the ‘past’. Nevertheless, Kompare recognises how nostalgia-inflected accounts of old television series are produced discursively by mentioning that nostalgia is not a quality that can be found residing within texts. Instead, Kompare (Ibid: 107) notes how “[t]he objective quality of any period of any creative medium

constitutes “a noirish vision of urban America that uses silver-screen glamour to cloak the anxieties, fears and bigotry lurking beneath the surface” (Ibid), is, after all, linked to a different set of institutional practices beyond television. What is useful about Sprengler’s argument here, though, is that it supports this chapter’s observation of nostalgia’s split between distinct periods of ‘past’ and ‘present’.

¹⁹ See also Spiegel (2005).

is always a contentious discursive struggle” that is shaped across cultural sites. These can include published works produced about televisual ‘eras’²⁰, journalistic reviews (see Ibid: 114-119) and the attitudes of television institutions towards their programming catalogues (see Ibid: 107-111; alternatively, see Kompare 2010: 82 on online reruns). In line with social constructionist theories, old television programmes become positioned as nostalgic through a process of (re)appropriation whereby particular shows become constructed through nostalgia’s discursive attributes within a given set of contextual circumstances (see also Johnson 2007a: 56-57). However, Kompare’s (2005: 102) account of the motivations behind how and why nostalgic appropriations of old programmes occur foregrounds a *zeitgeist* understanding of nostalgia by referring to “an unprecedented and highly mediated nostalgia that defined much of the cultural landscape at this time”. One of the causes of this ‘unprecedented’ mood of nostalgia can be located in “the tumultuous experiences of the past few decades” (Ibid: 105) suggesting that a driving factor behind American nostalgia for 1950s television in the 1970s was its role in easing social anxieties²¹. Thus, although Kompare notes that a variety of cultural sites constructed the discourse of televisual nostalgia that emerged during the 1970s, he also suggests that this discourse can be explained through a *zeitgeist* account of nostalgia (see also Ibid: 108-109 and 114-115).

A similar critique can be applied to Helen Piper’s (2011: 411) study of how British television currently reappropriates aspects of its past. She initially suggests that:

A range of different narratives in various registers might be called upon to explain the mobilisation of nostalgia within such a pivotal popular cultural industry as television. It would seem reasonable, for example, to cite the economic interests and industrial pressures which have been driving the growing market in secondary exploitation of television programmes, sometimes long after their original broadcast. Consumer demand for DVDs, publications and other home entertainment products derived from ‘vintage classics’ has been stimulated so as to develop additional income streams for company shareholders, producers and rights-owners and, in some cases, to meet funding shortfalls or to plough into new programming.

Instead of “privileging the industrial and regulatory concerns associated with texts and markets, products and exploitation” (Ibid: 413), Piper explores this form of televisual

²⁰ The term ‘era’ is used tentatively here because, as Nelson (1990: 81) argues about reruns, “[t]he signifier “time period” ...begin[s] to lose a single, stable signified: does it refer to a programming slot, a period of program origination or of program reception, or a time period depicted in a program?”

²¹ See also Sprengler (2011: 46-48).

nostalgia in relation to a perceived social *zeitgeist* by linking British television's engagement with its past to the current uncertainty and fragmentation affecting the industry:

The utility of such 'classic' selections from the archive is that they can prompt, structure and allow space for general memories of a more settled broadcasting communality and its profound everyday signification, at the very point that the future of television, at least as we have always known it, looks increasingly uncertain. (Ibid: 427)

Other examples of TV Studies arguments that gesture towards an examination of production contexts, but ultimately prioritise *zeitgeist* explanations of televisual nostalgia, are observable. Tim O'Sullivan's (1998) account of why a number of 'nostalgic' review shows appeared on British television throughout the 1990s demonstrates this trend²². He argues that "the 1990s has witnessed the triumphant return of old television, sometimes in new clothes" (Ibid: 202) and accounts for this trend through recounting the changes that affected British television after the 1990 Broadcasting Act. He states that "television broadcasting in Britain, as within many other national cultures, was once marvellous and novel" (Ibid: 199) but, as a result of deregulation (and what he sees as commercialisation²³), there has been "a general quickening of the competitive pulse of television" (Ibid: 198) that has contributed towards the production of this form of nostalgia programming. O'Sullivan employs a narrative of decline to suggest that British television instigated a nostalgic re-appraisal of its past due to the increased competition it had been exposed to; in other words, British television turned towards its past as a way of negotiating change within the 'present' (see also Holdsworth 2011: 119-120). Attempts are made to provide an industrial account of why nostalgic television programmes appeared by addressing changing attitudes within British television production. However, O'Sullivan's (1998) argument ultimately mobilises a refocused notion of the *zeitgeist* where socio-cultural trends are replaced by explanations concerning the perceived climate of the British television industry. Similar problems are also observable in Amy Holdsworth's (2011) study of televised memory and nostalgia. Despite arguing for "a re-evaluation that remains respectful of both the specificity and the diversity of television's forms and practices" (Ibid: 2) in relation to memory, Holdsworth links television's forms of nostalgia solely to prevailing historical-industrial developments by stating that "[f]ear that television ...will itself inevitably disappear might be seen to lead towards an increased

²² See Brunson (2004: 115) for an alternative description of these types of programmes.

²³ O'Sullivan (1998: 198-199). For further discussion of nostalgia in relation to discourses of commercialism see Lowenthal (1985:4-8 and 1989: 21-24) whilst de Groot (2009: 164-165) and Holdsworth (2011: 97) also consider such shows through commercialised discourses.

obsession with television memory and the nostalgia for television past” (Ibid: 4). Holdsworth (Ibid: 113) repeats this point when considering “BBC nostalgia” and the Corporation’s marketing of acclaimed writer-director Stephen Poliakoff:

The BBC’s nostalgic promotion of Poliakoff as both one of a kind and as part of the lost tradition of the single play and the creative freedom associated with it might be read as a response to the current period of technological and institutional uncertainty and transition, where the renewed emphasis on its public service tradition forms part of a response to competition and digitisation. (Ibid: 116)

This argument does suggest an attempt to connect a construction of nostalgia with the BBC’s institutional remit for “showcasing the nation’s cultural achievements, breaking new cultural ground” (Petley 2006: 43). Unfortunately, these observations do not go far enough since Holdsworth’s argument foregrounds the industrial *zeitgeist* as her interpretive framework by linking this to a prevailing climate of uncertainty within the institution. What all of these examples (as well as others - see Buckingham 2002a: 1-12, Spigel 2005: 82) overlook is detailed examination of how instances of televisual nostalgia are constructed through a range of production issues, such as target audience and institutional remit, instead of reflecting a dominant historical-industrial *zeitgeist*.

The advantages of a production-focused approach have been demonstrated by Grainge (2000a) in his work on nostalgic modes in television. Writing specifically in relation to ‘past’ television and nostalgia, his study analyses The Nostalgia Network – a US cable station that directly targeted “post-49-year-olds” (Ibid) through scheduling “lifestyle programs with acquired shows like *The Love Boat*, *The Rockford Files*, and *The Streets of San Francisco*” (Ibid). Grainge argues that the presence of The Nostalgia Network on cable TV “must be measured, first and foremost, not in relation to a political project or pervasive cultural temper, but to the massive expansion in cable television during the 1980s”. Through foregrounding industrial practices over *zeitgeist* explanations, Grainge demonstrates how The Nostalgia Network was borne out of industrial priorities “such as market segmentation and media syndication” (Ibid: 31; see also Reeves, Rodgers and Epstein 1996: 22-35, Kompare 2005: 131-159). This stronger industrial focus provides a more rounded account of how and why discourses of nostalgia become mobilised than that outlined by O’Sullivan (1998), Kompare (2005) and Holdsworth (2011). Focusing upon a specific instance where nostalgia became constructed, and locating that discourse in relation to the circumstances that were structuring

American television at that time, results in the myriad factors impacting upon this construction of nostalgic discourse being incorporated into the analysis. What is problematic is that Grainge's (2000a) analysis only focuses on one example and so leaves room for greater expansion of his points in relation to other televisual genres and broadcasting contexts.

If Grainge's analysis of The Nostalgia Network is useful in moving TV Studies discussions of televisual nostalgia beyond prioritising *zeitgeist* understandings, it also implies how different encodings of nostalgia might be employed to target alternate audience demographics. Grainge (Ibid: 31) argues that "the Nostalgia Network provides a programming service, as well as an advertising platform, aimed at the post-49 market". The mode of address adopted by this channel differs from that which is associated with other American "nostalgia networks" (Spigel 2005: 86) such as Nick at Nite. Nick at Nite has attracted a lot of attention from television scholars concerning either its industrial location (see Kompare 2005: 179-184, Spigel 2005: 86-87) or its emergence within the context of the expanding US cable market (see Buckingham 2002a: 9, Kompare 2005: 169-178). These studies provide a sound institutional understanding of how the channel has come to exist. However, it is also interesting to consider Nick at Nite's mode of address towards its audience, as this indicates how nostalgia can be encoded for different audience demographics (see also Holdsworth 2011: 98 on televisual recontextualisations). Lynn Spigel (1995: 18-19) implies this point:

[t]he popularity of Nick at Nite's reruns probably has less to do with the universal appeal of television art – its ability to last through generations – than with the network's strategies of recontextualisation. Nickelodeon created a new reception context for old reruns by repackaging them through a camp sensibility ...Such tongue-in-cheek programmes and promotions speak to a young, television-literate generation by constructing a vision of the past that implicitly suggests the 'progress' of contemporary culture.

Similar to Kompare (2005), Spigel (1995) notes how the nostalgic 'value' of programmes aired on Nick at Nite arises not from specific qualities inherent in programmes but through the appropriation of shows within a nostalgic discourse (see also Spigel 2005: 86-87). However, Spigel (1995) also notes that the construction of nostalgia on Nick at Nite is

characterised by a more ironic stance than that seen on The Nostalgia Network – a sensibility which has elsewhere been named mass camp:

an increasingly prevalent ‘hit-and-run sensibility’, selecting moments from historical artefacts that seem particularly anachronistic when viewed with the concerns, conventions and values of contemporary audiences. (Brunsdon 2004: 118; see also Klinger 1994, Grainge 2000a: 31, Spigel 2005: 87, Holdsworth 2011: 100)

This mass camp encoding of nostalgia, where ‘past’ objects are rendered humorous – and subsequently safe and innocent – within the context of the ‘present’ (see also Brunsdon 2004: 128), is, as Spigel (1995: 19) notes, a strategy employed to attract an audience of young, television-savvy viewers (see also Spigel 2005: 87). The mode of address utilised on Nick at Nite therefore differs from the more straight-faced approach taken by The Nostalgia Network (see also *Ibid*: 89) and encodes its construction of nostalgia to attract an alternative age-based demographic. If the two modes of address discussed here are considered alongside each other it becomes evident that, within an industrial context based around the principles of narrowcasting, different encodings of nostalgic discourse can be produced to address alternative audience demographics (see also Grainge 2000a: 31). Whilst the possibility for audience niches to move across these encodings of nostalgia remains (see Buckingham 2002a: 9), the different targeting strategies employed by channels nevertheless suggest that greater attention should be paid to this practice across a range of industrially-focused case studies. If various encodings of nostalgic discourse can be identified then research should focus upon different televisual cases and consider how constructions of nostalgia arise from contextually-based production factors such as audience targeting strategies.

Although the body of work discussed here concerning industry structures, nostalgia, and television points towards the advantages of a comparative case study approach, a significant point of absence can be identified. These studies (Grainge 2000a, Kompare 2005, Spigel 1995 and 2005) have mostly focused on examples emerging from American television. This means that, despite O’Sullivan (1998), Holdsworth (2011) and Piper’s (2011) brief attempts, detailed consideration of how constructions of nostalgic discourse occur within broadcasting contexts such as the UK, with its ongoing public service responsibilities, have not been considered (see also de Groot 2009: 164-165). This does not mean that gestures haven’t been made towards discussing audience targeting strategies: O’Sullivan (1998: 202) noted that

Channel 4's *TV Heaven* (1992) series was "targeted at older, more nostalgic viewers" whereas the BBC's response - *TV Hell* (1992) - was "aimed at younger, more cynical audiences". Unfortunately, though, he does not expand upon these observations through wider consideration of institutional and/or public service priorities. Similarly, Brunsdon's (2004) discussion of mass camp nostalgia in relation to Channel 4 clip shows identifies this discourse but does not explore it in relation to the channel's targeting of youth and/or minority audiences²⁴. Thus, as argued in this thesis' Introduction, scholarly analysis needs to address how nostalgic discourses become constructed in nationally-based television systems. Such a focus allows questions concerning whether different articulations of nostalgic discourse are observable and, if so, how these can be accounted for in terms of the differences between public service and commercial production contexts. This nationally-specific approach to studying television has been challenged within some recent Television Studies work on the grounds that it overlooks issues such as the ongoing interrelationships between different broadcasting systems in Britain and the US (Johnson 2005: 14; see also Rixon 2003: 48-61). Nevertheless, if nationally-specific examples are analysed within their production contexts then different articulations of nostalgic discourse can be discerned as a result of such factors as commercial or public service priorities (see Chapters Five, Six and Seven).

However, whilst discussions of nostalgia and 'television heritage' can be critiqued for their skewing towards US examples, this set of debates is not the only way that nostalgia has overlapped with discourses of 'heritage' within Television Studies. There has also been significant discussion of nostalgia in relation to how television (re)presents historical periods in TV dramas. Robin Nelson (1997: 74-88) has analysed the drama series *Heartbeat* (ITV/Yorkshire Television 1992-2009) and noted that the programme constructs nostalgia for various aspects of the 1960s through its inclusion of popular music, fashion, transport and intertextual allusions to television police programmes associated with the period (see Ibid: 76-79). These signifiers offer audiences "public nostalgia" (Unger *et al* 1991: 346) through mobilising "images that relate to historic events or times that are socially or collectively held to be of value" (Ibid) and work alongside *Heartbeat*'s rural setting to "evoke ...a rural England apparently little changed by the incursions of modernity, let alone postmodernity" (Nelson 1997: 75). Nelson's approach to discussing nostalgia is problematic as he employs a

²⁴ See Ellis (2002: 158-159), Hill and Calcutt (2007: 58), Johnson (2007b) and Grainge (2009: 98-102) on Channel 4 and its target audience(s).

generalised understanding that fails to define the concept (see pages 27-28). However, Nelson's study does overlap with some aspects of Grainge's (2000a) argument by accounting for *Heartbeat*'s nostalgic mode in relation to production factors such as the show's need to maximise advertising revenue by combining multiple audience demographics. Nelson's (1997) acknowledgement of traditional TV Studies issues regarding how production practices intersect with nationally-based institutional structures (see Chapter Two; see also Allen 2004: 1-26) gestures towards the extended social constructionist approach to studying nostalgia and television this chapter argues for. However, by taking nostalgia's meaning(s) for granted, Nelson also contributes to the concept's denigration within academia whilst also overlooking how other contextual factors such as scheduling contribute towards the programme's construction of nostalgic discourse (see below).

Much of the academic debate concerning nostalgia and TV drama has elsewhere coalesced (albeit not exclusively²⁵) around the analysis of British 'classic' novel adaptations, or costume dramas²⁶, and how this genre offers audiences "nostalgic, conservative visions of Olde England, a green and pleasant land, pre-industrial, safe and welcoming" (Higson 2004: 42). Costume dramas are therefore characterised by:

diegetically unnecessary (or at least excessive) lingering shots of various parts of English 'heritage' – landscapes, houses, furnishings, even ornaments – [which] work not to further the narrative, build a discourse, etc., but to beautify and romanticise the objects portrayed thus, and infuse the audience with a sense of appreciation of and pleasure in these articles and a longing for the days for which they are referents. (Cardwell 2002: 119; see also Higson 1993)

²⁵ de Groot's (2009: 150-152) overview of the problems of factual historical television overlaps with a number of the arguments denigrating nostalgia. Alternatively, see Dyer (1981), Jennings (2004) and Henderson (2007: 32-34) on *Coronation Street*'s (ITV/Granada 1960-) nostalgic mode. This work has accredited the soap opera's nostalgic viewpoint to a set of historical factors that impacted upon the programme's creation such as the influence of Richard Hoggart's *The Uses of Literacy* (1958) and its impact upon working class identities in post-war Britain as well as genre developments concerning social realism.

²⁶ Many (but not all) academic discussions of 'classic' novel adaptations conflate filmic and televisual examples together as objects of study. See Higson (1993, 1995, 2004), Caughie (2000a: 203-225), Cartmell, Whelehan and Hunter (2001), Giddings and Sheen (2000) and Whelehan and Cartmell (1999) for further evidence. Robert Giddings and Keith Selby (2001) offer variation on this trend by choosing to focus upon adaptations in television and *radio* but nevertheless bring together the study of adaptations in two separate media. Exceptions to this trend can be found in the work of Nelson (1997: 139-150, 2001a, 2001b, 2004: 120-124) Cardwell (2002) and Cooke (2003: 166-169) who all engage with the adaptation of literature to television.

The representation of 'past' historical periods in costume dramas works to elicit "'nostalgia' for a long-lost past" (Cardwell 2002: 119) through the construction of "a lavish *mise-en-scene*" (Kerwani 2004: 163) that includes "colourful costumes ...fine houses in verdant parklands, horses and carriages" (Nelson 2001a: 38) and so on. Due to the regularity with which "the seductiveness of the imagery" (Cooke 2003: 169) has been discussed as a key attribute of costume drama (see also Caughie 2000a: 203-225, Nelson 1997: 143, Nelson 2004, Street 2004: 102, Voights-Virchow 2004: 11, Peirse 2010: 111-112), Sarah Cardwell's (2002: 97) observation that "[m]any approaches to this genre focus on the programmes' rose-tinted representations of the past" is well-judged.

Given that nostalgia has been one of the primary discourses used in critical discussions of costume drama it is unsurprising that "academic television criticism ...has treated the classic serial with a certain disdain" (Caughie 2000a: 207). John Caughie (Ibid: 215-216) has expanded upon the reasons why these dramas have attracted negative scholarly attention with regard to nostalgia by noting that, for critics, "[t]he disappointment ...is that the pleasure in period detail is not so much an awakening from the nineteenth century as a slumbering in it". Caughie (Ibid) implies that 'classic' novel adaptations encourage passivity within their audiences and, as a result of "the audience recognis[ing] the stories as fictitious, [but] accept[ing] the validity of the programmes' representations of the past." (Cardwell 2002: 114; see also Kerr 1982: 13-14), viewers become ideologically interpellated by these programmes with regard to the values they articulate about the represented 'past' (see also Cooke 2003: 167-168). Cardwell (2002: 148) has elaborated upon this point concerning how audiences are directed towards feeling nostalgic by costume dramas by analysing the dancing sequences in the BBC's adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* (1995):

The mood of this sequence is not specifically nostalgic. However, because the affects elicited are not strong emotions but subtle moods, they can be co-opted into, or reconfigured as, nostalgia. As the scene is marked as 'past' through a plethora of period details, many viewers may feel wistful admiration, as they compare Elisabeth's and Darcy's 'naive' flirtation with the complexities of sexual politics and interaction in the 2000s.

Cardwell here also gestures towards a discursive understanding of nostalgia by suggesting that the feeling is not a quality built into these texts but instead is one which is activated in

audiences because of how they are positioned in relation to textual attributes (see also Ibid: 143-144). Thus, although her argument casts a more questioning eye towards the apparent 'passivity' of audiences that Caughie (2000a) had implied, the implication remains that costume dramas work to manipulate audiences into feeling nostalgic about the 'lost' values depicted in these programmes through their aesthetic strategies. Representations of 'past' time periods in costume dramas provide contemporary viewers with a "historical consciousness" (Spigel 1995: 16) of the time period depicted and, since these have been seen "to perpetuate particular, contemporary ideologies" (Cardwell 2002: 65) about that 'past', scholars have treated these constructions with suspicion.

Another parallel set of criticisms directed towards costume drama concerning nostalgia can also be identified. This overlapping set of critical discourses coincide with both Caughie's (2000a: 215-216) and Cardwell's (2002: 65) suggestions that costume dramas tell audiences more about the 'present' than the historical period depicted but are rooted in theories of postmodernism. Such critiques are indebted to Fredric Jameson's (1982, 1991, 1997, 1998) statements concerning "the matter of historical deafness" (Jameson 1991: xi) in postmodern societies. Jameson (Ibid: 27) has argued that, under the conditions of postmodernism, subjects occupy an 'eternal present' where differences between 'past' and 'present' have become eroded (see also Jameson 1998). One consequence of this collapse is the rise of "'historicism", namely, the random cannibalisation of all the styles of the past" (Jameson 1991: 18). Comprehension of the 'past' for subjects living under the conditions of postmodernity is deemed nostalgic since it is drawn from "the glossy qualities of the image, and "1930s-ness" or "1950s-ness" by the attributes of fashion" (Ibid: 19) instead of the historical record (see also Buchanan 2006: 95). Such accusations have been applied to costume dramas since within these programmes:

History becomes the present in costume, showing us only human continuities and lingering generalities of tone and style – the seduction of the image – without the formal distance and the historical particularity which might enable us to experience difference and change. (Caughie 2000a: 211)

Robin Nelson's (1997: 125) evaluation of the BBC's *Middlemarch* (1994) is symbolic of this set of arguments since he critiqued the series as "subjected to the dehistoricising tendencies of popular television forms in postmodernity" through offering easily recognisable characters

and familiar narrative conventions such as a love story (see also Nelson 2001a and 2004). Similarly, Simon Barker's (1994: 240; original emphasis) argument that "*Inspector Morse* is a *quasi-period* product" is also emblematic of postmodern critiques since, despite its (then) 'present-day' setting, the programme evokes nostalgia for values associated with the 1950s due to the attributes encoded into the show's lead character(s) (Ibid: 238-239). Both of these TV examples offer 'nostalgic' pleasures for audiences since "[t]he detail which makes the past different from us ...be[comes] absorbed and dissolved into a generality of style designed to give us the patina of pastness without its materiality" (Caughie 2000a: 217; see also Collins 2001: 85 and 88, Harris 2003: 51). Within costume dramas, as well as period-set drama series such as *Heartbeat*, "[t]he past is dislocated and, in place of history, 'free-floating signifiers' are attractively packaged and recirculated" (Nelson 1997: 149) in a way that inspires 'nostalgic' rather than 'historical' understanding.

Not all period-set television dramas have been dismissed through recourse to Jameson's arguments concerning postmodernism and nostalgia. Scholarly analyses of *Mad Men* (AMC/Lionsgate Media 2007-) have recognised that the series' "incarnation of [the] 1960s ...enacts a shrewd critique of the period's values, one that has little patience with nostalgia" (Butler 2011: 55). What is problematic about these discussions is the frame of reference that has been employed when accounting for *Mad Men*'s negotiated attitude towards nostalgia. The series' perspective towards representing the 'past' has been read as indicative of a contemporary *zeitgeist* regarding either uncertainty (Edgerton 2011a: xxviii) or technological change (Bevan 2012) or, alternatively, to demonstrate the potential that popular forms of history such as television offer for mediating the past (de Groot 2011). What has been overlooked is how *Mad Men*'s constructions and critiques of nostalgia may instead relate to its institutional context as a product of a niche-orientated cable channel (AMC) seeking to "produce programming that [i]s edgy, sophisticated, and ...innovative" (Edgerton 2011b: 7) and so attract 'quality' audiences. Different institutional policies for targeting specific imagined audience niches may therefore result in alternative forms of, and dispositions towards, nostalgia becoming constructed in individual cases.

Overlaps between *Mad Men* and Jameson's arguments concerning 'stylised' intertextual representations of past eras are nevertheless also identifiable (see Butler 2011) and have been used to directly critique the series (Tudor 2012). Yet, despite the negativity directed towards

costume/period dramas in relation to nostalgia via postmodernist discourses, these arguments can be critiqued. Discussions positioning costume/period dramas as solely representative of the consequences of a postmodern society mobilise a *zeitgeist*-informed interpretive framework by assigning the nostalgic ‘mood/mode’ of these programmes to underlying social conditions (cf. Grainge 2000a). At the same time, dismissals of television’s ‘presentism’, or of texts being “too stylised and unrealistic” (Edgerton 2005: 370) when representing the past, reduce academic discussions of nostalgia to the ‘history/nostalgia’ binary that has been highlighted across this chapter. When read through this structuring opposition, costume (and/or period) dramas are devalued because they offer audiences ‘nostalgic’ pleasures instead of ‘historical accuracy’ and so appear less worthy of serious critical engagement²⁷. What becomes overlooked are social constructionist critiques of how concepts such as ‘History’, and/or the category of ‘the historian’, are culturally- and socially-constructed and legitimated²⁸. Due to the legitimacy accrued by these discourses, such concepts close down the potential for serious engagement with nostalgia and its articulation within specific production contexts and through generic codes and conventions such as those of costume drama. Critical engagements with these representations should instead display “a willingness to appreciate the film/television text as a work of art in its own right” (Cardwell 2002: 44). This can be achieved by foregrounding a range of factors, that includes televisual aesthetics, genre conventions and such industrial issues as public service/commercial responsibilities, within the analysis over discussions of ‘historical accuracy’ (see also Edgerton 2005). Higson (2004: 37) has gestured towards this point by arguing that:

[t]he most productive accounts of adaptation, then, are those which try to understand an adaptation in its own terms, as a product of the moment in which it was produced, and addressed to audiences with their own contemporary preoccupations and interests.

Despite retaining elements of a *zeitgeist* interpretation by stressing ‘the moment in which the text was produced’, Higson nevertheless recognises costume dramas as media *products* and goes on to consider some industrial issues relating to film production practices (see *Ibid*).

²⁷ See also Edgerton (2005: 370-371) on ‘objectivity’ and ‘History’.

²⁸ A discursive approach to nostalgia has further advantages since it allows for the critique that “[n]ostalgia ...produce[s] “erroneous representations” ...[by] confusing ...real and imaginary events” (Boym 2001: 3) to be countered since social constructionist theories have also demonstrated the ‘constructed’ nature of ‘facts’. See White (1984, 1987), Jenkins (1991), Ankersmit (2002, 2007) and Jenkins (2007) on critiques of history as narrative or Potter (1996) and Denzin (2000: xi) on how statements produced by subjects such as scientists or, by extension, historians, accrue cultural legitimacy through their institutional context of production.

What his approach overlooks is foregrounding how a range of contextually-based production issues relate to the articulation of nostalgic discourses in *specific* cases. Caughie has also implied the insights that a production-focused approach to nostalgic discourse can provide by locating costume dramas in relation to the global export of cultural goods. He has stated that:

in the 1980s and 1990s ...the dramatic serialin co-production or co-financing ...[was] expected to project the kinds of images of our lives which others have come to expect of us. For Britain, this has very often meant the representations of a classic literature in which irony and wit are rendered as English quaintness, and the national past is captured like a butterfly on a pin in a museum of gleaming spires, tennis on the lawn, and the faded memory of empire. (2000a: 208-209)

For Caughie, the nostalgic mode utilised within costume dramas should be partly understood as a response to shifts taking place in the television industry where, in aid of increasing profitability, British television sold an image of itself to the world; as he argues, “[a]t a time when Britain struggles to sell much else on the international market, it became particularly adept at selling the past” (Ibid: 208). Problems with Caughie’s approach are identifiable, though: because his argument is partly informed by Jameson’s (1981, 1982, 1991, 1998) postmodernist writings, his work remains indebted to a *zeitgeist* interpretive frame. When this aspect is combined with the generalised focus of his overall argument, it suggests that all costume dramas are representative of the same set of issues surrounding the commodification of national identities in the ‘present’. Thus, despite having resonances with Grainge’s (2000a) argument by recognising some industrial issues, his avoidance of a case-by-case approach towards individual programmes means that a range of industrial factors such as target audience and public service/commercial imperatives become omitted from his argument. This latter approach is mobilised over this thesis’ following chapters.

One industrial factor that preceding work on nostalgia and costume and/or period drama has failed to address is the scheduling of these programmes. John Ellis (2000: 25) has argued that scheduling “has scarcely been studied academically”. Ellis’s statement is not entirely accurate, though, since some prior Television Studies work had discussed such practices²⁹.

²⁹ This work had either been conducted from a mass communications perspective by outlining strategies for American broadcasters on how to maximise audience figures through scheduling adjustments (see Rust and Eechambadi 1989, Adams 1997) or has been framed in response to Raymond Williams’ (1974) arguments surrounding television-as-‘flow’ (see Rixon 2006: 26-30).

Nevertheless, although some recent scholarly work has explored the scheduling of imported programmes in alternative national contexts (Ibid: 106-134; see also Johnson 2005: 124-129, Havens 2007, Hill and Calcutt 2007), it is Ellis's (2000: 25) statement that "[i]f programmes are the building blocks of television, then the schedule is its architecture" that is most relevant to considering the scheduling of nostalgia on British television. Whilst scheduling works to define the shape and identity of a(ny) television channel (Ibid: 36), for broadcast channels such as BBC One and ITV1 it is structured on a day-to-day basis to mirror the domestic rhythms of "the idealised family" (Meehan 2002: 113). This means that specific 'dayparts' (Einstein 2002: 38, Havens 2007: 222) of the schedule become associated with industry-defined audience profiles which then results in certain programmes occupying set positions in the schedule³⁰. In British television the tendency has been to schedule both costume dramas and heritage dramas including *Heartbeat*, *Inspector Morse* (ITV/Zenith Entertainment/Carlton UK Productions 1987-2000) and, more recently, *Foyle's War* (ITV/Greenlit Productions 2002-) on a Sunday evening between 8 pm and 10 pm. Cardwell (2002: 82) confirms this by stating that:

The scheduling of classic-novel adaptations has altered little ...1990s adaptations such as *Pride and Prejudice* (1995), *Moll Flanders* (1996) and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1996) ...were broadcast on Sunday evenings, although alternate episodes of *Moll Flanders* were transmitted on Monday evenings, allowing a rare escape from the traditional slot.

This prime-time slot³¹ has greater associations with older 'adult' audiences (such as those for The Nostalgia Network in the US) than the equivalent period on Saturday evenings: the latter carrying connotations of "family viewing" (Johnson 2005: 133) since children don't have to attend school the next day³². The lingering atmosphere and relaxed pace of costume drama is reflective of stereotypical understandings of 'Britishness' where Sunday is a day of rest³³. These scheduling practices suggest that within British television nostalgic drama series have

³⁰ See Johnson (2005: 124-129), Hill and Calcutt (2007) and Rixon (2006: 108-111) on the scheduling of imported 'cult' television series from the UK to US.

³¹ See Einstein (2002: 38) and Meehan (2002: 113) on scheduling slots.

³² This scheduling practice is one that has occurred in the last twenty years on British television (see Nelson 1997: 74). Prior to this, 'classic novel adaptations' occupied a 'children's teatime' slot on Sunday afternoons (see Nelson 2001a: 38).

³³ Religious programmes such as the BBC's *Songs of Praise* (BBC 1961-) also occupy an early evening position in the Sunday schedules.

been associated with specific types and times of programming³⁴ but this industrial issue has been downplayed in scholarly work in favour of *zeitgeist*-based explanations found in discourses of postmodernity. This thesis addresses these absences within existing TV Studies work on television and nostalgia by considering how issues arising from scheduling and target audience impact upon the construction of nostalgic discourses within programmes such as *Doctor Who*, *Life on Mars* and *Lost in Austen*.

The arguments surveyed in this section add validity to Kompare's (2005: 103) claim that "[t]elevision ha[s] always served, in part, as a kind of time machine, constantly presenting and representing sounds and images of the past". Television content has provided present-day audiences with both re-presentations of its own past *and* images of historical eras, and it is in relation to these forms of programming that discussions of nostalgia have been offered. Given television's predilection for transporting audiences to different 'historical' periods (whether televisual or otherwise), it is curious that previous academic work on television and nostalgia has not examined how nostalgia becomes constructed through the codes and conventions of 'time travel' television programmes³⁵. Although "time travel is often the central novum for sf stories" (Johnson-Smith 2005: 166), previous scholarly work on TVSF has largely overlooked how discourses of nostalgia may become constructed through the conventions of 'time travel' programming³⁶. Paul Booth (2012) has attempted to address this absence by studying the increasing visibility of televisual narratives featuring what he names 'temporal displacement':

Temporal displacement occurs when television program[me]s play with time, using flashforwards, flashbacks, time travel, and/or changes in the protagonist's memory, to heighten the spectacle of the television narrative. (Ibid: 5)

Despite recognising intersections between time travel and memory, Booth only briefly discusses nostalgia (see Ibid: 86-90), as constructions of memory more generally are focused upon. However, where nostalgia is mentioned, the potential for its televisual forms to target

³⁴ Ironic retro-TV shows that are targeted towards alternative audience profiles have, as Flett (2001) has mentioned, been scheduled in a Saturday evening slot.

³⁵ See Bignell (2007: 136-144) for arguments concerning cinema's status as a 'time machine' by manipulating temporality.

³⁶ See also Cook and Bernink (1999: 192), King and Krzywinska (2000: 22), Landon (2002: 39), Hockley (2001: 27), Cook and Wright (2006: 5-6), Burling (2006: 6) and Redmond (2007a: 114) on time travel's centrality to science fiction stories across media forms.

generational audiences is implied by arguing that “[t]he appeal of shows like *Life on Mars* and *Ashes to Ashes* ... lies in re-experiencing a time period that exists in one’s memory” (Ibid: 88). Despite alluding to issues regarding target audience(s) here, production contexts are continually backgrounded across his study. Instead, Booth (Ibid: 4) argues that “[c]ontemporary temporal displacement both amplifies and mirrors the audience’s reconstruction of the cultural temporal discontinuity that emerges on our computer screens”. Representations of memory (and nostalgia) in 21st century time travel programmes are therefore indicative of a perceived social and technological *zeitgeist* where social media technologies and the internet have altered how individuals remember in a manner that reflects the experience of temporality in postmodern societies (see Ibid: 24-25, 41-105). This interpretive framework therefore leads Booth (Ibid: 48) to posit that:

By representing memory as a tangible entity, by reflecting on the unpredictability and instability of memory, and by allowing for alterations in memory temporality, shows with temporal displacement like *Doctor Who*, *Dollhouse*, *Flashforward*, *How I Met Your Mother*, and *Lost* become emblematic of larger cultural changes engendered by our technological use. (Ibid: 48)

Alongside being problematic for prioritising a *zeitgeist*-rooted account, Booth’s approach also lacks nuance since both US and UK programmes are analysed alongside each other. Consequently, any differences resulting from national production contexts, such as differences between commercial and public service requirements, individual channel remits and scheduling, cannot be addressed by his study. For example, within the context of British television, TVSF has been scheduled differently to ‘nostalgic’ dramas such as classic novel adaptations since science fiction programmes have tended to occupy slots designed for ‘family’ audiences (Johnson 2005: 124-143, Hill and Calcutt 2007). Considering these scheduling differences raises questions concerning whether, when analysed through the specificities of national production contexts, constructions of nostalgia within time travel programmes respond to different industrial requirements regarding target audience than those placed upon costume drama. To address such absences within discussions of TVSF and nostalgia, then, this thesis explores nostalgic discourses across a range of case studies emerging from a cycle of post-2005 British time travel dramas.

Conclusion: Displaced Nostalgia?

This chapter has summarised how nostalgia has been discussed within previous scholarly work – especially with regard to television – whilst also suggesting the limitations of these studies. Firstly, it has been noted that any scholarly discussion of nostalgia needs to take the term seriously by avoiding generalisations and instead focusing upon how ‘nostalgia’ emerges on a case-by-case basis. For these reasons, a social constructionist theory of nostalgia has been outlined and defended. Theorising nostalgia in this manner allows individual instances of nostalgia to be accounted for through examining the historical, social, cultural and, in the case of media forms, industrial circumstances that contribute towards constructing nostalgia *in that context*. The advantages of this approach have been outlined, such as allowing for cultural/definitional variations in nostalgia to be recognised. Moreover, if a social constructionist theorisation of nostalgia is deployed in relation to television, encodings of nostalgia can be accounted for in relation to a range of factors arising from the production context such as target audience and scheduling. Addressing these issues avoids the *zeitgeist* explanations that have been foregrounded by previous writers on televisual nostalgia. One area where discourses of nostalgia have not been fully analysed, however, is in relation to TV ‘time travel’ programmes despite previous Television Studies work having engaged with nostalgia through other televisual forms offering representations of alternate temporal periods, e.g. costume dramas. To counter this absence, the remaining chapters of this thesis focus upon constructions of nostalgic discourse that are ‘displaced’ from their traditional Sunday night position in British television schedules by being constructed through the conventions of television ‘time travel’ shows.

Despite nostalgia having been theorised here as a discourse, discussion of the methodological framework that will be used for analysing these discourses is yet to be provided. At the same time, while it has been suggested that nostalgia can be analysed in relation to the conventions of ‘time travel’ narratives, this point requires further explication. The next chapter engages with these issues.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter develops the thesis' discursive understanding of nostalgia by outlining its methodological frameworks and addressing some of the limitations to these choices. Firstly, the chapter outlines the thesis' 'units' and 'levels' of analysis (see Altheide 1996) by outlining how theories of genre cycles will be applied. The first section also discusses issues relating to the concept of discourse and how a social constructionist approach overlaps with other schools of discourse analysis (Garrett and Bell 1998: 6). Foucauldian (1995, 2003; see also Hall 2001) and critical (Fairclough 1995) frameworks are evaluated, leading to semiotic textual analysis being selected as the chosen methodology. The discussion then outlines how and why semiotics will be used across the thesis. This section outlines how semiotics' relational construction of meaning (see de Saussure 1983) can be used for identifying and analysing nostalgic discourses in time travel narratives. To show sensitivity towards criticisms of textual analysis (see Bignell 2004: 86) this section also discusses Catherine Johnson's (2005) work on 'telefantasy' and the advantages of combining semiotics with analysis of institutional discourses when producing case studies of television programmes. Adapting Johnson's methodology to this thesis' constructionist definition of nostalgia allows nostalgic discourses to be analysed as "textual strategies" (Ibid: 7) shaped by specific production contexts.

The chapter's last section addresses some potential limitations and objections regarding the thesis' methodological selections. Firstly, working within a constructionist epistemology requires reflexivity to be displayed towards both how any definition of nostalgia is itself a social construction and how my reading formation (Tulloch and Jenkins 1995: 125-143) as a researcher can impact upon the analysis. The discussion then addresses the objection that textual analysis "simply offers 'subjective' or 'arbitrary' readings of a text" (Creeber 2006a: 26). Such objections are countered here by arguing that the analysis presented in this thesis is strengthened by developing its readings through an interpretive framework (see Hills 2005b) comprised of institutional discourses. The section also addresses other post-structuralist objections to textual analysis by discussing the thesis' omission of work with empirical audiences. Here it is argued that focusing upon audiences risks confusing nostalgic 'modes'

and ‘moods’ and so, as a textualist method has been selected, the contextual framework used for analysis will be production-focused.

Research Units, Genre Cycles and Approaches to Discourse

David L. Altheide (1996: 25) argues that providing a clear outline of “[t]he problem to be investigated helps clarify the unit or level of analysis” for a piece of research. This thesis’ research questions were outlined on page 15 of this thesis, and these highlighted that its ‘units’ of analysis will be post-2005 British time travel dramas (see next chapter for further definition). One level of analysis relevant to this thesis concerns approaching these series as a genre cycle. Cycle-orientated accounts of television production have been alluded to, but not fully developed, in prior TV Studies work (see Holmes and Jermyn 2004: 5-6, Hill 2005: 41-46, Nabi 2007: 371-375, Dunleavy 2009: 134, Pearson 2010: 13), resulting in discussions of genre cycles being more common in relation to cinema (see Drake 2003: 195, Krämer 2005: 11). Drawing upon post-structuralist theories (see also Metz 1997, Mittell 2004a and 2004b), Rick Altman (1999: 36) argues that before genres become recognised as meaningful interpretive categories for situated agents (audiences, producers, marketing), “nascent genres traverse a period when their only unity derives from shared surface characteristics deployed within other generic contexts perceived as dominant”. This leads to his theorising of genre cycles from a production perspective by proposing the ‘Producer’s Game’ (see Ibid: 38). In this game new films (and subsequently genre categories) are created by producers analysing previous commercial successes and offering audiences subtle variations upon popular textual elements:

[a]lmost every film is meant to serve the function of creating synergy by locating a successful device and carrying it to another [film – RPG] where, if it again succeeds, still further success is guaranteed. Yet these attempts are by definition multiple, inconsistent, contradictory, and thus in constant internal competition. (Ibid: 44)

The rationale behind this approach to textual genesis is that, because there is a high level of uncertainty surrounding whether any commercial product will generate a profit (see Grant and Wood 2004: 62-65), a ‘Producer’s Game’ mentality helps to reduce risks by “cloning” (Ibid: 71) proven successes (see also Nowell 2011: 24-26). Richard Nowell (Ibid: 27) develops these ideas by also stressing the importance of industrial contexts when analysing filmic genre cycles:

The key to gaining insight into the commercial logic underwriting the industrial employment of hybridity at the level of film production, and, for that matter, film promotion, lies in the identification of the imperatives and objectives that govern production of the film-type generally during a particular period and those that govern the production of individual examples of the film-type at specific points in time.

Foregrounding an industrial perspective leads Nowell (Ibid: 45-46) to posit that filmic genre cycles are:

comprised of either three or four stages. Each stage consists of a chronologically distinct phase of production operations during which films are produced to a specific filmmaking model ...Although it may be preceded by a film that fails commercially but is considered to exhibit some economic potential (stage one), the process of cycle development begins when a film that differs from contemporaneous hits is adjudged to have performed well commercially (stage one or two). Thereafter, follow two chronologically distinct phases of film production operations. During the first of these phases (stage two or three), at least one additional hit is generatedDuring the second of these phases (stage three or four), more textually similar films are made, usually in greater quantities than the first phase. Thereafter, production drops to base level.

Nowell (Ibid: 43) aims for his model to “become part of an ongoing scholarly process” of debate and refinement across other historical and/or media contexts. This thesis’ research responds to these calls because, rather than overlooking “the specificities of the medium” (Mittell 2004a: 175; see also Feuer 1992) by simplistically applying concepts derived from filmic concepts of genre to television, the following case studies demonstrate the uses and limitations of Nowell’s model when applied to post-2005 British time travel dramas. For example, both Nowell and Altman’s ideas are developed in relation to commercially-driven industries. Similarly, although Jonathan Gray (2008: 23-27) gestures towards a cycle-based account of contemporary television production, he focuses upon American commercial television. In the UK, despite the BBC’s ongoing blurring of its ‘commercial’ and ‘public service’ responsibilities during the historical period that this thesis studies (Nelson 2007a: 56-58 and 68, Johnson 2012: 63-111), the Corporation’s public service charter still affects its attitude towards production and commissioning (see especially Chapters Five and Six)³⁷. This

³⁷ Although not directly mentioning cyclical production methods, Julie Gardner’s influence is noted on *Life on Mars*’ initial press release (see BBC Press Office 2005: online) whilst similar production issues are alluded to in fan discourses detailing the programme’s industrial development (see, for example, Marcus 2007: online <http://www.televisionheaven.co.uk/lifeonmars.htm> [Accessed 17/02/09]).

means that Nowell's model of genre cycles provides one analytical level that guides, and becomes critiqued across (see Conclusion), the ensuing chapters.

Exploring post-2005 British time travel dramas as a genre cycle provides this thesis with an innovative approach for studying TVSF. Despite Johnson's (2005) employment of a transatlantic perspective to study how 'fantastic' imagery in telefantasy arises through differing historical production contexts (see next chapter), the 'lone case study' approach to studying TVSF has produced a methodological absence within the field concerning how themes such as nostalgia may recur across a range of (sub)generic examples (see Kuhn 1990: 9). Thus, although this thesis still employs a case study approach to analyse specific programmes (see below), locating individual programmes within a genre cycle model also allows for similarities and developments in programmes arising from a specific historical period of production to be recognised and explored.

Analysing a cycle of genre programmes may, however, appear to contradict the previous chapter's position against *zeitgeist* accounts of television production (cf. O'Sullivan 1998, Holdsworth 2011, Piper 2011) since genre cycles are defined by a temporal discourse (see Altman 1999, Nowell 2011). However, approaching the selected case studies as a cycle actually allows *zeitgeist*-based accounts of nostalgia to be further critiqued. As Milly Williamson (2005: 5) suggests, "[s]ocio-historical accounts ...work with an analytical model that accepts the notion that the spirit of any age is shared by all members of society". Such explanations are problematic as they:

minimize heterogeneity in pursuit of a dominant style, collective spirit, or any other such unitary conception. The common denominator of all such histories ...has been the privileging of homogenous structures that allow historians to draw rather neat generalisations that support far more grandiose claims about a culture "as a whole". (Collins 1989: 116; see also King 2007: 22-23)

If a *zeitgeist* account of this cycle were to be mobilised, it should be the case that the discourse(s) of nostalgia across programmes would be identical as they would all be responding to a uniform underlying structure affecting all of British television production. This is not the case, since treating each series as a case study structured by a range of factors arising from differing production contexts results in alternative encodings of nostalgic

discourses being constructed. Rather than offering “sweeping generalisations about the era in which a work was produced, and thus the work itself” (Williamson 2005: 5; see also Moretti 1988), focusing upon individual cases from the same televisual milieu - and at different stages across a cycle - allows for the inadequacies of *zeitgeist* accounts of nostalgia to be demonstrated further.

An additional level of analysis for this thesis concerns its alignment with what Roger D. Wimmer and Joseph R. Dominick (2000: 103) name the ‘interpretive paradigm’. Interpretive research “aim[s] ...to understand how people in everyday natural settings create meaning and interpret the events of their world” (Ibid) and so analyses “how they [i.e. cultures] express ...understandings through language, sound, imagery, personal style and social rituals” (Deacon *et al* 2007: 5). Social constructionist theories arise from this paradigm since the assumption “that language ...is *constructive* of social reality” (Phillips and Hardy 2002: 12; original emphasis) overlaps with interpretive research’s focus on meaning-making through linguistic resources. As should be obvious, then, rather than employing a quantitative methodology drawn from positivist suppositions suggesting that phenomena ‘exist’ independently of socio-culturally produced meaning structures (Wimmer and Dominick 2000: 104, Jensen 2002a: 256, Deacon *et al* 2007: 6), this thesis employs a qualitative methodology³⁸.

However, a quantitative methodology has also been rejected due to the problems that arise from quantifying an audio-visual medium such as television. Although “there have been a plethora of studies of television news content” (Bertrand and Hughes 2005:181) that have utilised quantitative methods to study “the accuracy or bias or objectivity of news” (Ibid: 179; see Glasgow University Media Group 1976 and 1980, Philo and Berry 2004), it remains the case that “the design of a [quantitative] study ...can be difficult to establish” (Bignell 2004: 211) when studying television fictions. Television’s audio-visuality makes it “a messy thing” (Seiter 1992: 45; see also Fiske 1989: 4-13, Bignell 2002: 158, Creeber 2006b) to quantify since content analysis requires texts to be separated into individual ‘units’ for analysis (see Bignell 2004: 212, Creeber 2006a: 32). This generates:

³⁸ Gunter (2002: 209) and Jensen (2002a: 254-255) discuss the separation between these two methodological paradigms. See Jensen (2002a: and 2002b: 235) and Deacon *et al* (2007: 138-140) on calls for bringing these two disciplinary areas together within a research project.

[p]roblems of establishing units of measurement ...Television has both aural and visual components, which interact and change across time: how do we cut this continuum up into discrete measurable units? (Bertrand and Hughes 2005: 184)

Quantifying television programmes therefore involves “isolating one TV ‘message’ from the social-cultural context in which it is produced, circulated and interpreted by audiences” (Hills 2006a: 95). Splitting a television programme into individual units of meaning can result in the researcher removing signifiers from either their context in a particular programme and/or their interrelationship with other signs constructing meaning in that instance (see below). This can then lead to quantitative readings of television programmes being produced that are far removed from those made by actual audiences (McKee 2003: 129). In relation to this thesis, what individual programme units could be coded as representing ‘nostalgia’ audibly and/or visually?; could an individual sound, object, use of colour or gesture from an actor alone be taken to denote nostalgia as a concept? Whilst it is true that “[a] degree of evaluation and interpretation applies to all forms of cultural research” (Deacon *et al* 2007: 138), including the identification of variables in statistical research (see Gunter 2002: 210-212), considering how specific signifiers create meanings indicative of ‘nostalgia’ requires interpretation. As a result of the need to read signifying practices, the following chapters do not conduct quantitative research (see also Bertrand and Hughes 2005: 184).

Having summarised why this thesis locates itself within the ‘interpretive’ research paradigm, it is necessary to return to the concept of discourse and consider this from a methodological perspective. Social constructionist theories posit that “[w]e build up our sense of the social world through the language we use, the talk we hear, the words we combine, ...in specific cultural and historical contexts” (Deacon *et al* 2007: 152; see also Hall 2001: 73). However, despite providing a theoretical definition of ‘discourse’, this definition offers little information regarding how to understand constructions of discourse beyond considering contextual issues. Discourse studies represents “a complex, diverse, and growing field of study” (Phillips and Hardy 2002: 18) which is characterised by “a great deal of cross-fertilisation” (Fairclough 1995: 20) between its ‘schools’ (Garrett and Bell 1998: 6). It is therefore necessary to consider what approach(es) overlap with the aims of this thesis as the choice of one interpretive framework over another can affect both the selection of textual material for analysis and how those elements are read (see Fairclough 1995: 20-32). Whilst Alan McKee (2003: 75) rightly notes that the textual material selected for analysis should be

guided by the research question(s)³⁹, the approach used for synthesising that material must similarly align with the research goals (see Altheide 1996: 24).

One approach to studying discourse that has recently become visible in contemporary TV Studies involves appropriating aspects from Michel Foucault's (1995, 2003) studies to understand how discourses circulate and construct meaning at specific times (see, for example, Mittell 2004a, Hills 2010a and 2010c). Foucault examines the historical development of specific "discursive formations" (Hall 2001: 73) and stresses the importance of addressing historical contexts by "look[ing] both synchronically and historically at larger configurations of discourse" (Luke 1997: 347; see also Carrabine 2001: 273, Deacon *et al* 2007: 152). This technique is employed across Foucault's studies; *The Birth of the Clinic* (2003), for example, analyses how observational forms of medical knowledge and practice became normalised during the seventeenth and eighteenth century and how this validated specific forms of medical treatment and the training of physicians. Certain aspects of how Foucault theorises discourse do overlap with points already made in this thesis: Foucault's work draws attention to how "discourses are productive. They produce the objects of which they speak" (Carrabine 2001: 268). Such an observation echoes social constructionist positions by acknowledging that concepts such as nostalgia do not exist outside of socio-historical language practices (Deacon *et al* 2007: 152). Additionally, the emphasis that Foucault places upon analysing constructions of discourse synchronically through examining institutional practices also resonates with this thesis in that analysing nostalgic discourses within television programmes through a range of context-specific production factors overlaps with a study of historical-institutional procedures. At a theoretical level, then, Foucault's approach to discourse intersects with this thesis' social constructionist definition of nostalgia.

Despite these similarities, this thesis does not utilise a strictly Foucauldian methodology due to the range of sources that are analysed as evidence in Foucault's work. The idea of a 'Foucauldian methodology' is in itself contestable since "there are no 'hard and fast' rules which set out, step by step" (Carrabine 2001: 268) how to apply his theory of discourse. Nevertheless, where Foucault's writings have been utilised, they have favoured "a broader discourse analysis" (Luke 1997: 347) beyond solely analysing television texts:

³⁹ See also Altheide (1996: 24).

He is concerned with the production of knowledge and meaning through discourse. Foucault does indeed analyse particular texts and representations, as the semioticians did. But he is more inclined to analyse the whole *discursive* formation to which a text or a practice belongs. His concern is with knowledge provided by the human and social sciences, which organises conduct, understanding, practice and belief, the regulation of bodies as well as whole populations. (Hall 2001: 78)

Foucault's approach to discourse analysis proposes "thinking of discourse as the ways that an issue or topic is 'spoken of', through, for example, *speech, texts, writing, practice*" (Carrabine 2001: 268, my emphasis). A Foucauldian methodology requires that sources other than television programmes are analysed for evidence of how they contribute towards wider discursive formations (see also Mittell 2004b). Instead of looking solely at television's texts for how they construct nostalgic discourses, the analytical scope would instead need to be expanded to include a range of other sources. This could include historically-situated research into how 'nostalgia' is spoken about within internally-circulated institutional documents such as channel remits, charters and commissioning requirements. Such analysis would allow for consideration of where, when, and if, discourses surrounding 'nostalgia TV' are constructed by different broadcast institutions. Asking these questions may produce an interesting piece of research: it is notable, for example, that production personnel involved in making both *Doctor Who* and *Life on Mars* have expressed 'anti-nostalgic' sentiments in interviews about the programmes⁴⁰. However, despite the insights that a Foucauldian approach may provide, this thesis adopts a constructionist understanding of nostalgia but uses this in combination with textual analysis (see below) to prioritise how discourses of nostalgia are constructed in specific television case studies. Although this requires addressing institutional contexts⁴¹, these production discourses are employed to align this thesis with ongoing debates in Television Studies (see below).

As well as rejecting a Foucauldian methodology for the expansiveness range of 'texts' it would require, this thesis also rejects a purely critical framework. Critical Discourse Analysis

⁴⁰ *Life on Mars*' executive producer and producer, Julie Gardner and Claire Parker, have both made comments distancing the programme from being classified as a 'nostalgia show' (see Unaccredited 2012: 175) whilst similar statements that attempt to distance *Doctor Who* from readings associated with nostalgia have been made by both Russell T. Davies (see O'Brien and Setchfield 2005: 38) and Steven Moffat (see Lesnick 2008: online).

⁴¹ As Hall (2001: 78) states, Foucault's "his definition of *discourse* is much broader than language, and includes many other elements of practice and institutional regulation". See also Potter (1996: 86), Luke (1997: 347), Carrabine (2001: 276) and Deacon *et al* (2007: 152).

(CDA) approaches, such as those outlined by Roger Fowler (1991) and Norman Fairclough (1995), usually “focus ...explicitly [o]n the dynamics of power, knowledge, and ideology that surround the discursive process” (Phillips and Hardy 2002: 20; see also Garrett and Bell 1998: 5-6). However, choosing to only focus upon “the beliefs, values and categories” (Deacon *et al* 2007: 152) articulated through specific discursive examples raises questions concerning cross-thesis consistency. An explicitly critical framework risks reproducing arguments critiqued in the previous chapter (see pages 24-25) where nostalgia is criticised for its regressive tendencies and conservative ideologies since CDA is designed towards addressing unequal distributions of social power (see also Phillips and Hardy 2002: 15, Deacon *et al* 2007: 157; see next chapter). Instead, if nostalgia is to be taken seriously within an academic context, attention must be paid towards how nostalgic sentiments are constructed and what role they play in constructing ‘social reality’ (see Phillips and Hardy 2002: 20). This does not mean that this thesis completely overlooks ‘critical’ issues; as Glen Creeber (2006a: 32) argues, text-based studies “amount to very little if they are not implicitly tied up with various forms of ideological analysis” (see also Phillips and Hardy 2002: 20). Nevertheless, the following analysis primarily considers how and why discourses of nostalgia are constructed within a specific set of time travel television programmes, and how these intersect with factors arising from historical production contexts, employing ideological readings where necessary (see Chapters Four, Six and Seven).

This section has discussed a number of analytical levels at which this thesis’ research takes place such as genre cycles, interpretive epistemologies and discursive schools. The following chapters employ a qualitative methodology to analyse how texts create meaning and investigate how and why discourses of nostalgia become constructed within specific case studies. The next section continues to develop this thesis’ methodology by discussing why semiotics will be used to analyse specific television series before clarifying the motivation(s) behind locating textual analysis within an examination of production contexts.

Textual Analysis and Nostalgia-as-Strategy

One key issue regarding nostalgic discourses that has recurred across this thesis is that a constructivist approach requires “appreciat[ing] language in its social context” (Gee 1996: viii; see also Fairclough 1995: 33, Garrett and Bell 1998: 3, Jensen 2002b: 248). Phillips and Hardy (2002: 19) complicate approaches to constructivist discourse analysis by stating that,

despite its dual focus on texts and contexts, researchers need to decide upon “the relative importance of text versus context in the research”. This thesis foregrounds textual over contextual analysis and so uses individual case studies of programmes as its primary object of study. If this decision is located on Phillips and Hardy’s (Ibid: 20) continuum of discourse analysis methods, prioritising texts over contexts results in social linguistics being the technique best-matched to the research. ‘Social linguistic analysis’ occurs when:

[r]esearchers focus on individual texts, broadly defined, relating them only marginally to the distal context in which they occur or exploring the power dynamics in which they occur. The goal of this work is to undertake a close reading of the text to provide insight into its organisation and construction, and also to understand how texts work to organise and construct other phenomena. (Ibid: 22)

Hardy and Phillips locate text-based research under this heading because their discussion of constructivist discourse analysis methodologies focuses upon social science research. Within this discipline, sociolinguistics is employed “to move towards a theory which provides a motivated account of the way language is used in a community, and ...the choices people make when they use language” (Holmes 2001: 12; see also Fairclough 1995: 21). Previous social science-based studies have employed sociolinguistics to investigate how verbal and non-verbal language is deployed within and between social groups (see Gee 1996, Holmes 2001: 4-8).

Those familiar with sociolinguistics may quite rightly think that using this method for analysing television programmes is strange. Although there is some precedent for applying sociolinguistic methods to television (see Bloome and Ripich 1979, Richardson 2010), the fine-grained analysis of written or spoken language that sociolinguistics favours (Fairclough 1995: 21) means that television’s other signifying practices risk becoming overlooked. In comparison, semiotic textual analysis allows for a strong textualist focus (Ibid: 24) but also recognises that “[a] semiotics of television provides us with a set of problems different from those we encounter when we study written or spoken language” (Seiter 1992: 42) due to its multiple audio, visual and generic codes. Where sociolinguistics is ill-suited to analysing television programmes’ complex levels of signification, “[s]emiotics claims to be able to deal with all of these different technical systems, by breaking each down into its component codes, then into signs” (Bertrand and Hughes 2005: 185). As Ellen Seiter (1992: 45) argues, the density of televisual texts “is precisely why it [i.e. television] has been of interest to semioticians: simply describing its signs presents a formidable challenge”. Because of its

textualist focus, as well as its ability to address how multiple audio-visual signifiers combine to produce meaning, this thesis uses semiotics as its method for analysing post-2005 British time-travel television dramas.

When discussing semiotic analysis, David Deacon *et al* (2007: 148) argue that this method is best understood as “a bunch of concepts, derived in the first place from Saussurian linguistics, which sets out to identify the structural principles by which communication and culture are possible”. Glen Creeber (2006a: 29) also recognises the diversity of contemporary semiotic approaches by stating that “the field of contemporary textual analysis has become a complex combination of textual methodologies and critical perspectives”. Textual analysis is wide-ranging and can incorporate narrative analysis, genre-based readings and/or psychoanalytic perspectives, amongst other approaches (see *Ibid*). Consequently, “[t]he structuralist (and poststructuralist) study of signs requires the creative application of a conceptual and theoretical corpus to particular texts” (Deacon *et al* 2007: 148). The range of critical perspectives that ‘textual analysis’ encompasses makes it important to “make clear the approach ...[since] textual analysis is less open to criticism if it employs a transparent and self-reflexive methodology” (Creeber 2006a: 29). As a result of these calls for precision regarding how textual analysis is to be employed (see also Creeber 2006c: 85-86), the following paragraphs summarise the approach taken in the later chapters.

One way that a ‘semiotics of nostalgia’ can be analysed is by recognising that “[t]he simplest way of marking difference is, of course, by means of a binary opposition” (Hall 1997: 31; see also Seiter 1992: 50). Since its inception, semiotics has noted the construction of meaning through binary opposition as a tool for analysing the structure of narratives (see Kozloff 1992: 72, Herman 2005: 571-573) and this structuralist assumption has guided analysis of cultural myths (see Lévi-Strauss 1994, Lévi-Strauss 2001, Herman 2005: 573, Segal 2005: 332) through to television narratives (see, for example, Fiske 1989: 131-133, Creeber 2004a, Nelson 2007: 27-35, Hills 2010d, Garner 2010). As I have pointed out, nostalgic discourse is characterised by a recurring binary between opposing notions of discursively-bounded constructions of ‘past’ and ‘present’. As Pam Cook (2005: 4) argues, nostalgia:

is predicated on the acknowledgement that the past is gone forever. Nostalgia plays on the gap between representations of the past and actual past events, and the desire to overcome that gap and recover what has been lost.

Since nostalgia constructs meaning through opposing concepts of ‘past’ and ‘present’, a common starting point for analysis in this thesis will be to identify how specific case studies juxtapose representations of spatiotemporal periods⁴². This approach is well-suited to analysing British ‘time travel’ programmes because the (sub)genre has been “prone to pessimism, anxiety or ... absurdist humour” (Cook and Wright 2006: 4; see also Bould 2008: 209). Whereas science fiction is frequently (but not always - see Hockley 2001: 27) associated with “envisioning and re-imagining the future” (Cook and Wright 2006: 1; see also Redmond 2007b: xi, Telotte 2008: 3), British TVSF has taken an ambivalent attitude towards ‘progress’, suggesting that discourses of nostalgia are a distinct possibility within British time travel TV series.

Identifying constructions of a past/present binary will be used to analyse specific case studies primarily at a narrative level. However, past/present oppositions are also further analysed for their interrelations with other audio-visual signifiers such as genre conventions, *mise-en-scene*, acting/performance and/or ideological meanings. The analysis therefore demonstrates how discourses of nostalgia become constructed through a series’ organisation of various syntagmatically- and paradigmatically-arranged signifiers (see also Seiter 1992: 58, Hall 1997: 31, Bignell 2002: 9, McKee 2003: 12 and 29). Frequently, though, this textualist method necessitates stepping outside of the boundaries of the broadcast ‘text’ by recognising post-structuralist arguments concerning intertextuality and “the interdependent relations among texts” (Metz 1997: 40). Chapter Five demonstrates this approach by not only noting the myriad generic discourses that *Doctor Who* employs. The chapter also analyses juxtapositions between ‘past’ and ‘present’ to discuss how one of the programme’s nostalgic discourses exhibits layered polysemy (see Chapter Four) by appealing to both ‘mainstream’ and ‘fan’ audiences through referencing elements from its ‘classic’ incarnation. Whilst the chapter focuses upon “finished, fixed and bounded” (Hills 2010a: 9) episodes of post-2005 *Doctor Who*, the argument nevertheless recognises post-structuralist debates by considering

⁴² See Grainge (1999b and 2000b), Muller (2007), Cook (2008) and Tincknell (2010) for deployment of a similar methodology when studying nostalgia across different media.

how “discourses ...circulate around the text of BBC Wales’ *Doctor Who*” (Ibid: 14) regarding genre and intertextuality.

Textual analysis nevertheless generates practical problems for researchers concerning the volume of data it generates since a semiotic analysis of an hour-long episode of a television programme can produce large amounts of information on the text’s signifying elements (see Seiter 1992: 54, McKee 2003: 73-76). Such problems then multiply when entire series become the object of study. These issues can partly be eased by only selecting material for analysis that is relevant to the research questions (cf. Ibid: 75). However, it is also necessary to address the complaint that “[t]extual approaches tend to focus on textual detail” (Bignell 2004: 86) by prioritising the television text over issues surrounding production or reception contexts. This meant that early structuralist studies – especially those analysing narrative (see Kozloff 1992: 68 and Herman 2005: 575) – produced predominantly formalist accounts of texts. It must therefore be acknowledged that “describing a phenomenon is not the same thing as explaining it” (Bertrand and Hughes 2005: 187). Formalist ‘descriptions’ can be avoided, however, by supporting the analysis with relevant “cultural theories (Marxist, feminist, or post-colonial ...) ...[which can] explain how the content came to be that way” (Ibid). Bignell (2004: 86) argues that textual analysis of television programmes should be interpreted by aligning such work with the institutional context in which a programme is made. Television’s “conventions of storytelling ...are established by television institutions and by legal regulations” (Ibid: 20) and these influence the type of programmes made. The importance of combining textual analysis with institutional interpretations has been frequently expressed in Television Studies:

[w]hatever your conception and understanding of television drama, actual programmes almost certainly benefit from being placed within their wider, social, technological, economic, historical and *institutional context*. (Nelson 2006b: 75, my emphasis)

Although early semiotic studies of television overlooked linking institutional issues with televisual content and form (see Fiske and Hartley 1989, Fiske 1989), Television Studies has since regularly combined textual analysis of programmes with consideration of its institutional structures (see Caldwell 1995, Reeves, Rodgers and Epstein 1996, Nelson 1997, Caughie 2000a, Rogers, Reeves and Epstein 2002, Creeber 2004a, Mittell 2004a, Mittell 2004b, Johnson 2005, Nelson 2007a, Hills 2010a, Hills 2010e, Johnson 2010a, Johnson

2012). Although awareness of institutional factors is just one way of interpreting programmes (see Creeber 2006a: 30-33), the insights that combining textual analysis with institutional developments has produced makes it difficult to disagree with John Corner's (1999: 12) statement that:

[t]elevision ...cannot exist *non*-institutionally since even its minimal resource, production, and distribution requirements are such as to require high levels of organisation in terms of funding, labour and manufacturing process.

One way that consideration of television's institutionality has been insightfully combined with textual analysis is in Catherine Johnson's (2005) study of the 'strategies' that specific programmes have used for representing 'fantastic' content in British and American 'telefantasy' (see Ibid: 2) programmes. Johnson provides a range of historical case studies (see Ibid: 12-16) and relates a programme's "[t]extual strategies" (Ibid: 7) – the ways that fantastic content becomes represented through audio-visual codes – to the implementation of "[p]roduction strategies" (Ibid: 6). The latter are defined as:

[t]he strategies put in place at the point of production ...These are strategies that can only be understood in relation to the context of production, and enable us to understand how that context shaped the ways these programmes look and the kinds of stories they tell. (Ibid: 6-7)

This interpretive framework allows Johnson to make informed readings of, amongst other examples, the continually mutating narrative format of *The Prisoner* (ITC/Everyman 1967-8) by demonstrating how this textual attribute helped to satisfy the demands placed upon ITV by regulators during the 1960s to produce 'serious entertainment' and satisfy its public service requirements (see Ibid: 42-64). Linking *The Prisoner*'s fantastic elements to its historical-institutional production context therefore produces an innovative historical interpretation of a much-studied TV series (see Gregory 1997, Short 2006: 71-92).

Elements of Johnson's (2005) methodology can easily be integrated with Grainge's (2000a) work on nostalgia and television outlined in the previous chapter. Firstly, considering programme 'strategies' shaped by production contexts echoes Grainge's argument that nostalgic 'modes' are constructed through the intersection of myriad contextual factors. Bringing these two approaches together allows for articulations of nostalgia to be analysed as 'strategies', considering how and why discourses of nostalgia become constructed. Unfortunately, despite making gestures towards television-specific issues, production

contexts are not considered in Amy Holdsworth's (2011) recent analysis of how television drama represents forms of remembering. Despite discussing how "memory, perhaps more specifically remembering, is represented within some of television's dramatic forms" (Ibid: 36), issues regarding how institutional remits, such as the differences between imagined audiences for *Grey's Anatomy* (ABC/The Mark Gordon Company/Touchstone Television 2005-) and *The Wire* (HBO/Blown Deadline Productions 2002-8), or genre may impact upon a series' representational strategies for communicating 'memory' are omitted (see Ibid: 52-64). Although (via Michael Z. Newman's (2006) study of contemporary television narrative) Holdsworth (2011: 34) recognises that "story structures and patterns [are] dictated by production contexts and commercial imperatives that run across scenes, episodes and seasons", her study prioritises televisual aesthetics over industrial framings (see Ibid: 34-35). As a result, "[t]he rhythm of movement and stasis, the cyclicity and endlessness of the television text" (Ibid: 34) take precedence over production discourses. The following case studies address such absences by focusing upon how a programme's representational, narrative and/or performance strategies can be read through such channel-specific institutional discourses as imagined audience(s) and scheduling decisions. This approach allows questions including 'how does the construction of nostalgic discourse in *Doctor Who* interlink with the BBC's public service remit?' (Chapter Five), 'how do *Life on Mars* and *Ashes to Ashes* construct nostalgia in a way that targets a post-watershed and/or gendered audience?' (Chapter Six) and 'how does the gender-based inflection of nostalgic discourse in *Lost in Austen* intersect with contemporary trends for drama programming in ITV?' (Chapter Seven) to be addressed.

Johnson's (2005) adoption of a case study approach to individual TV shows dovetails with the argument that individual instances of nostalgia should be analysed on a case-by-case basis. Although a case study approach to studying television has its limitations, such as the canonisation of some programmes over others (see Ibid: 15), this thesis argues for the importance of addressing individual instances where nostalgia becomes constructed and relating these discourses to production contexts. Additional criticisms regarding a case study approach may also be raised concerning how representative of the cycle of post-2005 British time travel dramas *Doctor Who*, *Life on Mars*, *Ashes to Ashes* and *Lost in Austen* are (see Titscher *et al* 2000: 43). However, these programmes represent the various scheduling slots (i.e. Saturday evenings and post-watershed weekday evenings), target audience groups and

institutional remits (e.g. public service or commercial) that post-2005 British time travel dramas occupy. The chosen examples are therefore comprehensive of the varying production contexts, and temporal stages (see Nowell 2011), of this genre cycle.

This section has outlined how the ensuing analysis provides case studies of individual television programmes and uses semiotics as its methodology. This analysis is combined with consideration of how discourses of nostalgia are readable as textual strategies by relating such constructions with factors arising from their production contexts. The thesis therefore “combine[s] elements of both” (Philips and Hardy 2002: 20) text and context by analysing how discourses of nostalgia are constructed within post-2005 British time-travel dramas whilst “provid[ing] insight into the “bigger picture”” (Ibid: 24) by relating these discourses to the production context of British television. This methodology is, however, open to a range of critiques regarding its claims to producing knowledge, and its foregrounding of textual analysis over other factors. The following section engages these points.

Limitations and Objections

Philips and Hardy (Ibid: 6) state that “a strong social constructivist view ...tries to explore the relationships between text, discourse and context” within its chosen subject area. This thesis acknowledges these concerns through linking textual analysis to television’s production contexts as its interpretive framework. The emphasis upon acknowledging ‘context’ within social constructivism nevertheless suggests that a reflexive stance also needs to be taken by the researcher towards their role. This stance has been raised by a number of social constructionists:

[d]iscourse analytic methods are unavoidably reflexive because the strong social constructivist epistemology that forms its foundation applies equally to the work of academic researchers. Academic discourse also constitutes a particular reality, and we are continuously challenged to retain a sensitivity to our role in the constitution of categories and frames that produce a reality. (Ibid: 10; see also Potter 1996: 9-10, Gergen 1999: 162-163)

Reflexivity can firstly be directed towards the theory of nostalgia constructed in this thesis by considering that “[d]iscourse ...defines and produces the objects of our knowledge” (Hall 2001: 72; see also Potter 1996: 86, Carrabine 2001: 273). This point has been expanded upon elsewhere by social constructionists suggesting that the paradigm:

stud[ies] individual texts for clues to the nature of the discourse because we can never find discourses in their entirety ...[it is] the interrelations between texts, new textual forms, and new systems of distributing texts that constitute a discourse over time. (Hardy and Phillips 2002: 5)

These statements suggest that this thesis' method for defining nostalgia draws from, yet contributes to, the body of statements producing knowledge about 'nostalgia'. The thesis' arguments are therefore already shaped by pre-existing "structures of culture and society" (Seiter 1992: 63). Since this research plays a "*constitutive* part" (Potter 1996: 47, original emphasis) in understanding nostalgia, it should be recognised that this thesis' arguments apply to a specific historical and televisual context. It is for this reason that Svetlana Boym's (2001: 7) notion of nostalgia as "a historical emotion" has been extended to recognise nostalgia as a discourse that is constructed through the historical, national, institutional and technological circumstances structuring televisual forms. The arguments concerning constructions of nostalgia and post-2005 British time travel dramas apply to this specific context and are open to further exploration in alternate national (and international) television systems (see Conclusion).

Adopting a reflexive stance also requires acknowledging that an 'elevated' position outside of culture from which to perform analysis is unobtainable. It is therefore important to outline my own reading formation and how this influences the ensuing analysis. John Tulloch and Henry Jenkins (1995: 142, original emphasis) argue that "[t]here *is* no neutral place where we can get access to the 'real' interpretation" of any cultural text, forcing the researcher to acknowledge that "all readings take place in contexts where some agents and agencies will have more power in determining interpretations than others" (Ibid: 125). Academic readings of television provide only one example of how a text can be interpreted and these findings assist in building a body of knowledge on nostalgia and/or British time travel TV. This thesis' arguments are products of a reading formation where certain forms of 'inter-textual' knowledge are mobilised (Ibid: 127-142; see also Seiter 1992: 61) such as the discursive approach to nostalgia that this thesis develops. The arguments are also inter-textually informed by the 'cultural capital' (see Bourdieu 1986) acquired from a university education and studying for a PhD. Moreover, as a life-long fan, and now a 'scholar-fan' (see Hills 2002: 2-20), of *Doctor Who*, the discourse of intratextual nostalgia discussed in Chapter Five displays evidence of a 'fannish' reading formation being used in the interpretation of this programme. Previous studies of fan reading strategies have demonstrated that such audience

groups favour reading their fan object through reference to its programme history (see Tulloch and Jenkins 1995: 135-142). The chapter's discussion of how fan preferences for certain periods of 'classic' *Doctor Who* have been read into its current production format is therefore emblematic of 'academic' and 'fan' reading formations coalescing. This thesis' arguments are therefore produced through the intertextual knowledges that I bring to the analysis. However, whilst this self-reflexivity acknowledges "that different cultures can have very different experiences of reality" (McKee 2003: 10) and so produce multiple interpretations of text, it is nevertheless the case that my arguments arise from an institutional context that grants me the "authority to introduce concepts into culture" (Ibid: 100). Thus, although I provide only one set of interpretations about nostalgia and post-2005 British time travel dramas, my arguments partly accrue validity from their cultural site of articulation (see also Hills 2005b: 20-21 on discursive hierarchies and ordering).

Acknowledging how reading formations impact upon analysis suggests how "within nations, various different identity subcultures can ...have distinct enough sense-making strategies to produce ...different definitions of a text" (McKee 2003: 65). Alan McKee's point alludes to a set of critiques that have been directed towards textual analysis concerning its implied "universal reader" (Creeber 2006c: 82) who denies the polysemic nature of texts. Such arguments against semiotic methodologies originate in post-structuralist discourses and highlight "that the researcher is not an objective observer of any textual phenomenon, but actively engaged in meaning production in relation to the text" (Bertrand and Hughes 2005: 192). These critiques question how textual analysis offers "the likely interpretations of texts made by people who consume them" (McKee 2003: 2): since textual analysis produces readings of texts by "mak[ing] an educated guess at some of the most likely interpretations that might be made of that text" (Ibid: 1), it is the 'guess work' associated with semiotics that attracts criticism:

textual analysis (however loosely applied) can offer little more than wholly personalised and unfounded interpretations. If a text can be read in a number of (sometimes contradictory) ways then what makes one interpretation of a television programme more valid than another? (Creeber 2006a: 33; see also Creeber 2006c: 82)

This chapter has developed two counterpoints to this objection. Firstly, this section has acknowledged that instances of textual interpretation are produced through "the situational and inter-textual contexts" (Tulloch and Jenkins 1995: 127) that constitute my reading

formation. Secondly, McKee (2003: 70) argues that criticisms concerning the subjective nature of interpretations produced by textual analysis can be partly avoided by aligning the analysis with relevant theoretical frameworks:

[w]e need to have evidence that particular interpretations are reasonable. That evidence consists of other texts that make it clear that other people might have made such an interpretation.

McKee (Ibid) restates the importance of interpreting texts through wider contextual discourses to counter the possibility of producing purely descriptive accounts of the chosen text. When taken together, the importance of “display[ing] ...affiliations, connections and ruptures with established schools of thought” (Hills 2005b: 112) by using “theory’s intertextual matrix” (Ibid) to support the arguments made is demonstrated. Recourse to supporting evidence – whether academic, institutional, or a combination of both - adds validity to the research in two ways: firstly, it demonstrates that others have interpreted a text in a comparable manner. Additionally, if support comes from examining institutional contexts, the arguments presented gain legitimacy by correlating with wider industrial practices (see also Potter 1996). Rather than assuming that “the scholarly interpreter of TV is a privileged ‘reader’ who can produce a ‘true’ and full interpretation of the text in question” (Hills 2006a: 93), this thesis instead draws upon existing evidence from British television’s contemporary production contexts to support its arguments.

Further objections towards this chapter’s semiotic methodology can still be offered. Identifying oppositions of ‘past’ and ‘present’ within each programme is a traditionally structuralist assumption and risks prioritising narrative form over other aspects of the televisual text (see Creeber 2006a: 37). Furthermore, this analytical starting point is also structuralist since it is indebted to the Lévi-Straussian (1968) supposition that common structures underpin all instances of sense-making within different cultures (see also Seiter 1992: 58-60, McKee 2003: 9). Post-structuralism has heavily criticised this idea by stressing that “people from different cultures experience reality differently” (McKee 2003: 9). This point shifts emphasis towards the polysemic nature of cultural texts (see Creeber 2006a: 28-29, Deacon *et al* 2007: 145-146) and the role of audiences:

post-structuralism places its emphasis on language as it is used and inflected through ages, gender, race, ethnicity, class and so on (on *parole* rather than *langue*). Post-structuralists assert that viewers do not decode a pre-existing meaning, but that they actively construct meaning in the process of reading: the post-structuralist seeks to understand how the meaning of a text is constructed within a cultural context. (Bertrand and Hughes 2005: 192)

Post-structuralist theory therefore advises television scholars to move away from textualist studies. Firstly, acknowledging audiences has “called into question the limits of traditional textual analysis” (Creeber 2006c: 83) by asking “where a ‘text’ starts and ends” for television’s viewers. Due to its origins in literary criticism (Feuer 1992: 138-140; Hartley 2002: 29-30), textual analysis has traditionally defined a ‘text’ as a self-contained unit, as McKee’s (2003: 29) definition of a text as “things that we make meaning from, from books to television programmes, to items of clothing, to buildings” suggests. However, in the case of television, drawing discrete boundaries around specific units of television – such as individual programmes - is problematic as it overlooks “TV’s notorious extensiveness as a cultural form” (Turner 2001: 5). Some television scholars have consequently argued that the experience of watching television means encountering a ‘flow’ (Williams 1974) and/or ‘segments’ (Ellis 1982) of meaning that continually reference each other intertextually. Deciding to analyse individual programmes therefore risks “falsify[ing] the object of analysis” (Crisell 2006: 1) by removing televisual ‘texts’ from their everyday reception context(s).

The usefulness of understanding televisual content as ‘flow’ has been debated and contested amongst Television Studies scholars (see Corner 1999: 60-69) but, in recent years, arguments surrounding the boundaries of any contemporary televisual ‘text’ have acknowledged how programmes ‘overflow’ beyond the broadcast material to instead include paratextual material (see Brooker 2001: 456-457). Consequently, “[e]xtra-textual material, such as product merchandising, DVD extras, fanzines, and Internet sites, [have] made textual analysis frustratingly unsure of its object of study” (Creeber 2006c: 83). Reacting against this destabilisation of the ‘primary’ TV series text, Hills (2007a: 45) counter-argues that contemporary industry-promotional practices – such as DVD releases – have been “extremely significant in relation to ...textual conversion (from moments-within-flow to isolated objects)”. He expands this point by stating that in the contemporary era:

TV texts are converted from being primarily moments in a schedule, designed to hold audiences or reach audiences of a specific type, to symbolically bounded objects more akin to artworks or novels, which audiences can search for and keep as digital files, or purchase as DVDs/legal downloads. (Ibid)

Although technological and promotional strategies challenge the broadcast programme's status as the primary site of meaning construction, these ideas are less convincing upon closer inspection. The release of TV dramas on DVD may heighten their status as individually-bounded units by audiences⁴³, meaning "that digital technologies such as DVD have been used to discursively and promotionally shift television ever closer to text-based ...valorisations" (Ibid: 58). When combined with wider critiques surrounding whether (and which) audience groups engage with paratextual material (see Brooker 2001, Brereton and O'Connor 2007), a primarily textualist focus still appears relevant for Television Studies (see also Conclusion).

Post-structuralist theory has further challenged the centrality of the televisual text within TV Studies by arguing that scholars should focus upon the various interpretations of programmes produced by empirical audiences. Whilst "the pendulum of TV theory has swung back and forth in a variety of ways" (Hills 2006a: 93) between prioritising texts or audiences, however the latter group is defined (see Ibid: 93-99), many TV scholars advise post-structuralist approaches. Jonathan Bignell's (2002: 155) argument that "semiotic analysis ...needs to be extended and problematised by research done on the reception of television programmes" demonstrates this point (see also Hills 2006a: 93). If this set of arguments is applied to my methodology, its textualist approach could be viewed as out of step with Television Studies' dominant paradigms (see also Creeber 2006a: 28, Bignell 2004: 86 and Deacon *et al* 2007: 141 for further critiques of structuralism).

The decision to overlook audiences in a study focusing upon nostalgia may also appear objectionable. Scholarly understandings of nostalgia have recognised that "nostalgia is about the relationship between individual biography and the biography of groups or nations, between personal and collective memory" (Boym 2001: xvi; see also Radstone 2007: 113).

⁴³ As Hills (2007a) notes, though, the release of TV drama on DVD still devalues forms of 'ordinary television' (see Bonner 2003) such as game shows and/or reality TV.

As a result, a textualist focus upon constructions of nostalgia leaves itself open to critique. Focusing upon discourses of nostalgia within mass media texts risks accusations “of ‘textual determinism’” (Creeber 2006a: 34) since it overlooks “revealing the varied array of meanings by which readers and viewers make sense of a text” (Ibid). Questions such as whether (or which) viewers identify with the discourses of nostalgia discussed in this thesis (see Ibid: 34; see also Seiter 1992: 60-61), or how these programmes work to activate nostalgic memories for different audience groups, are a potentially notable absence.

These audience-based and/or post-structuralist critiques point towards avenues for further research beyond this thesis (see Conclusion). Despite these objections, counterpositions addressing such critiques can be provided. Although a textualist focus is followed, using a case study approach means that constructions of nostalgia’s ‘past’/‘present’ binary can be analysed as “specific utterances” (Deacon *et al* 2007: 141) of nostalgic discourse. Specific discourses that arise through the presence of a narrative opposition between distinct spatiotemporal locations are related *to the context in which they occur* and so treated as instances of ‘parole’ rather than representing a singular monolithic structure of ‘langue’ (see also Lewis 2002: 159). Whilst this thesis is predicated upon structuralist assumptions that meaning is constructed by a set of structured signifying absences, its method addresses post-structuralist critiques of semiotics by focusing upon specific case studies and interpreting these through a framework that addresses production contexts.

Moreover, whilst post-structuralism has challenged textualist studies of television, these theoretical discourses seek to refine, rather than abandon, structuralist paradigms (see Barker 2003: 17, McKee 2003: 12-13, Bertrand and Hughes 2005: 175, Creeber 2006a: 30); as Bignell (2004: 166) states, “‘post’ means after ...[and] has to be thought of as a stage or movement in time which follows another stage or moment”. Thus, whilst post-structuralist methodologies have ‘de-centred’ texts as objects of study (see Mittell 2004a), it still remains the case that “the semiotic analysis of how programmes are meaningful, and how they position viewers to understand and enjoy these meanings, is an essential mode of study” (Bignell 2002: 176). Textual analyses of television programmes continue to remain relevant to the academic study of television so long as structuralist assumptions are combined with post-structuralist developments.

Finally, although audience-centred research may be well-suited to a study of nostalgia, prioritising this interpretive context over an institutional focus confuses nostalgic modes and moods. The difference between these types hinges upon recognising that:

[w]hereas nostalgia as mood is centred on longing for a deep-structured past, a grounding response to forms of cultural discontinuity, nostalgia as mode converts the past into a consumable image (Turner 2008: 161)

Grainge's (2000a) distinction suggests that "the cultural and discursive specificity of nostalgia [needs] to be fully historicised" (Drake 2003: 190) on a case-by-case basis since the term "encompass[es] affective, stylistic and historical dimensions" (Ibid). Nostalgia-as-mode should therefore be analysed as an alternative form of nostalgia from its co-existent status as an emotion where the former is constructed in a commercial-industrial context that incorporates factors beyond the sociological explanations associated with nostalgic moods. Identifying textual nostalgic 'modes', but then explaining these in relation to how audience groups articulate nostalgic 'moods', overlooks the differences between these forms of nostalgia by conflating them. Additionally, prioritising audience 'moods' over textual 'modes' means that analysis of "the genesis, development, and function of particular nostalgia modes" (Grainge 2000a: 29) continues to be an under-researched area of academic work that helps reinforce negative attitudes towards nostalgia and popular culture (see Davis 1979: 118-138, Boym 2001: 33-39, Turner 2008). For these reasons, this thesis considers nostalgia as a textual 'mode' that constitutes "a recognisable style or framework through which we glimpse" (Holdsworth 2011: 100) 'past' representations. These constructions are then analysed as discursive constructions and related to such channel-specific production discourses as target audience, scheduling and institutional remit. The textualist focus means that production contexts are of greater significance to the analytical process than discussion of audience moods through recourse to a mythical, yet monolithic, underlying *zeitgeist*.

Conclusion

This chapter has set out why the thesis adopts a textualist approach to constructions of nostalgia within post-2005 British time travel dramas. This methodology involves using textual analysis to investigate how different discourses of nostalgia are constructed within

specific case studies. However, to avoid criticisms of semiotics relating to its subjective interpretations, as well as attempting to satisfy post-structuralist critiques arguing for textual analysis to be combined with wider contextual discourses, constructions of nostalgic discourse are analysed as textual strategies (Johnson 2005). This means that discourses of nostalgia identified in individual case studies are read through discourses arising from the production contexts of post-2005 British time travel dramas (see Chapters Four, Five and Six). The following chapter provides an overview of the benefits of this analytical framework by considering how combining institutional analysis with studying nostalgia can move beyond purely ideological readings of nostalgic discourses. My approach also allow for ideas concerning “structured polysemy” (Morley 1995: 301) to be revisited from a production-based perspective and arguments concerning what I have named layered polysemy to be made.

CHAPTER FOUR

NOSTALGIA AND ‘COALITION’ TIME TRAVEL TELEVISION: FROM IDEOLOGY TO INSTITUTION

Introduction

This chapter explores how discourses of nostalgia can be analysed in relation to post-2005 British time travel programmes, focusing upon their status as ‘quality popular’ television (Nelson 2007a: 174-179). The chapter brings together the social constructionist theory of nostalgia set out in Chapter Two with the textualist methodology outlined previously to demonstrate how, if the analysis of nostalgic discourse moves beyond purely ideological discussions, nostalgia can be approached as a production strategy (Johnson 2005: 6-7) constructed in response to institutional pressures. The discussion thus extends Leonie Rutherford’s (2004: 29) observation that Australian TV time travel programmes “are typically double- or triple-coded, cross-written with a range of references which address teen, child and ‘family’ audiences”. By inserting analysis of nostalgia into discussions of target audience, and arguing that such constructions assist the “multifaceted” (Gwenllian Jones 2005: 586) nature of contemporary television programmes, this chapter explores how ‘quality’ and ‘popular’ audience segments are targeted by ‘mainstream’ UK television programmes.

The chapter’s structure is as follows: responding to recent arguments concerning the medium specificity of genre categories (see Feuer 1992, Altman 1999, Mittell 2004a and 2004b), some of the generic characteristics of post-2005 British time travel dramas are outlined. This involves recognising that each of these programmes combine conventions from the “temporal contrast” (Burling 2006: 8) time travel narrative with denotative encodings of time travel nova (Suvin 1979). The discussion then addresses the programmes’ status as ‘quality popular’ television. This allows for two encodings of nostalgia, entitled ‘societal nostalgia’ and ‘personal nostalgia’, to be identified. Societal nostalgia arises from the juxtaposition of differing spatiotemporal worlds within each programme whilst personal nostalgia concerns how discourses of ‘past’ and ‘present’ are negotiated through the arcs constructed for these series’ recurring characters. Both of these discourses could, following William Burling (2006), be read ideologically. However, this chapter argues that such accounts produce reductionist, *zeitgeist*-informed interpretations of mediatised nostalgia. Ideological readings

need to be complicated through acknowledging how factors arising from the production context impact upon constructions of nostalgia (cf. Grainge 2000a). These ideas are demonstrated through examining *Primeval*'s construction of societal nostalgia alongside its budgetary and regulatory requirements. When these contextual factors are addressed, the nostalgic discourses identifiable within programmes can be read as strategies partly designed to simultaneously target 'quality' and 'popular' viewers. The chapter's final section consequently argues that Nelson's (2007a: 174-179) concept of 'quality popular' is inadequate as it posits that a singular 'preferred reading' (Hall 2003) for audiences of post-2005 British time travel programmes can be identified. Instead, the discussion engages with a range of arguments concerning either the structured polysemy (see Morley 1992, 1995) or 'aesthetics of multiplicity' (Ross 2008, Johnson 2012: 159-165) of television texts and, by retaining a textualist approach, argues for examining what I call the *layered polysemy* of post-2005 British time travel dramas. Layered polysemy arises from each programme's institutional status as 'coalition' television (see also Johnson 2005: 131-143, Hills 2010a: 218-227) that constructs multiple overlapping, and often contradictory, reading positions to target multiple imagined audience niches and satisfy institutional requirements.

Defining Televisual Time Travel: Temporal Contrast and Denotative Time Travel

Recent post-structuralist studies of genre have questioned the methodological assumptions underpinning how a generic corpus is constituted. This research has destabilised how individual genre categories become formed. Such critiques question the 'definitional' approach to studying genre (Mittell 2004b: 172), where genres are constructed by identifying recurring "internal characteristics" (Altman 1999: 2), and instead recognises that:

there are no uniform criteria for genre delimitation – some are defined by setting (westerns), some by actions (crime shows), some by audience effect (comedy), and some by narrative form (mysteries). This diversity of attributes suggests that there is nothing internal mandating how texts should be generically categorised. (Mittell 2004b: 173; see also Altman 1999: 18)

Thus, if genres are constructed through recognising recurrent elements across a range of texts, "genre is dependent on *intertextuality*, it cannot be an *internally textual* component" (Mittell 2004b: 173; see also Altman 1999: 25). Since genres emerge through external textual relations, such categories cannot 'exist' within texts waiting to be discovered by academics:

[g]enres are made, not born. The coherence is provided in the process of construction, and a genre is ultimately an abstract conception rather than something that exists empirically in the world. (Feuer 1992: 144)

Recognising that genres “are actually culturally constituted and mutable” (Mittell 2004b: 174) raises questions concerning who is constructing a genre category and for what purposes (see also Feuer 1992: 141). If the contextual nature of genres is accepted (see page 63), then “[t]he methodology that the analyst brings to bear upon the texts determines the way in which that analyst will construct the genre” (Feuer 1992: 144). It is therefore necessary to explicate how this thesis constructs its understanding of ‘time travel’ discourses.

Like the vast majority of cultural narratives (see Fiske 1989: 131-133; Lévi-Strauss 2001), time travel storylines are structured around a set of recurring binary oppositions. Time travel narratives differ from the majority of science fiction’s other stock plots with regard to how they envision the encounter with alterity that has recurred throughout the genre⁴⁴. Narratives of alien invasion, bodily contamination and transformation (see Hutchings 1999: 11-30), or space exploration and ‘first contact’ (see Sobchack 2005: online) generate scenarios where a representation of ‘humanity’ encounters an ‘alien’ coded as Other (see also Williams 2007: 29; Gomel 2009: 343). Time travel plots vary this opposition, however, as narratives of “chronomotion” (Lem 1976: online) work “to explore man’s temporal horizons” (Parrinder 1976: online; see also Williams 2007: 130). Keith Williams’ also suggests this point by arguing that the representation of time travel in H.G. Wells’ *The Time Machine* (1895 [1949]) “visualis[es] entire cityscapes and eventually ecologies on an evolutionary timeline” (Williams 2007: 25). These statements imply that time travel narratives map the genre’s wider human/alien opposition on to an encounter between characters from one spatiotemporal location with those from an-Other (the ‘past’ or the ‘future’; see also Bould 2008: 209). Wells’ novel narrates these clashes by including a sequence where his Time Traveller is “attacked by a ‘post-historic’ monster” (Williams 2007: 27) but Sean Redmond (2007a: 114) also outlines these formal properties by arguing from a psychoanalytical perspective⁴⁵, that cinematic treatments of time travel have “allow[ed] one to come face to face with one’s

⁴⁴ See, for example, Kuhn (1999: 3), King and Krzywinska (2000: 11-13), Telotte (2001), Sardaar (2002), Rutherford (2004: 30), Jones (2010: 46), Moore (2010: 63), Barron (2011: 180) and Sharp (2011). See also Furby and Hines (2012: 18-19) on fantasy cinema.

⁴⁵ See also Wood (1986: 79) on the doppelgänger figure as ‘other’.

doppelganger, alter ego or mirror reflection” (see also Keller 2006: 41-45, Gordon 2007, Penley 2007, Shail and Stoate 2010: 85-94). These positions imply that time travel narratives, from Wells onwards⁴⁶, are structured around recurrent oppositions combining human/other dichotomies with juxtapositions between characters from distinct spatiotemporal periods (see also Booth 2008: 406, Barron 2011: 183).

Burling (2006) explores time travel narrative’s ability to contrast representations of alternate time periods in relation to literary examples of the subgenre, arguing that time travel storylines can be classified under two distinct headings. The first, “temporal dislocation” (Ibid: 8) narrative, covers stories engaging with the philosophical and scientific possibilities and problems of travelling back in time⁴⁷. The “temporal contrast” (Ibid) time travel plot involves characters journeying to past (or future) time periods and foregrounds the differences between the spatiotemporal setting visited and the character’s ‘home’ location. Burling’s observations about the structure of temporal contrast narratives have been recognized elsewhere in discussions of (predominantly literary) time travel stories (see Bergonzi 1976: 39-55, Parrinder 1976: online, Philmus 1976: 56-68, Parrinder 1995: 49-64, Kaye and Hunter 1999:6, Williams 2007: 130-138, Shail and Stoate 2010: 50-51, Booth 2012: 90-91; see also Jowett 2010: 109 on fantasy genres). These discussions suggest that the conventions of time travel narratives overlap with how this thesis has defined nostalgia since both are structured around conflict between representations of the ‘present’ and an alternative time period. A discourse of *societal nostalgia* can be read from the structure of temporal contrast narratives since concepts associated with the ‘past’ diegetic worlds may become valued over those associated with either the represented ‘present’ or, conceivably, ‘future’⁴⁸. Lee Barron (2011: 183) alludes to this when outlining the *Torchwood* (BBC 2006-) episode ‘Out of Time’:

⁴⁶ Chapman (2011: 13) argues that “Wells provided paradigmatic examples of some of the major templates of modern science fiction ...[such as] time travel” whilst Gormel (2009: 334) similarly argues that “time travel originates in a single text [i.e. Wells’ novel – RPG]”. Both Williams (2007: 2) and Shail and Stoate (2010: 77) expand this point by citing Wells’ inclusion of a time travel machine as a significant innovation in time travel stories. See also Bergonzi (1976) Philmus (1976), Parrinder (1995) and Barron (2011: 179) for further discussion of Wells’ novel and his wider *oeuvre*.

⁴⁷ For more on the philosophical implications that the narrative device of time travel generates see Hunter (2006: online) whilst Gomel (2009: 335) and Ryan (2009) further discuss temporal paradox narratives. Examples of temporal dislocation time travel narratives within the history of British SF television include the single plays *The Flipside of Dominick Hide* (BBC 1980) and its sequel, *Another Flip for Dominick* (BBC 1982), whilst these issues are often alluded to within the format of *Crime Traveller* (BBC/Carnival Films 1997) since the programme posits strict ‘laws of time’ that cannot be broken.

⁴⁸ See also King and Krzywinska (2000: 26) and Sobchack (2005: online) and Penley (2007).

In this instance, the *Torchwood* team do not react to any threat that has emerged from the Rift, but rather, they must act as counselors to three passengers of an airplane that has crossed from 1953 to 2006... “Out of Time” ...concentrate[s] on ...the ways in which people from the past must reconcile themselves with the present.

This *Torchwood* episode employs time travel conventions to explore how characters embodying ‘past’ values adjust (or fail to adjust) to the text’s depiction of ‘present’ day society. One of the episode’s time travellers, John Ellis (Mark Lewis Jones), rejects the present by committing suicide partly due to the amorality and lack of social ties he encounters, whilst recurring character Owen Harper (Burn Gorman) embodies another inflection of societal nostalgia by falling in love with 1950s pilot Diane Holmes (Louise Delamere). Various encodings of societal nostalgia regarding qualities ‘lost’ from the ‘present’ are therefore constructed through the plot’s temporal contrast structure.

This outline of time travel TV’s generic conventions is nevertheless contestable because, *Torchwood* aside, the characteristics discussed here are drawn from literary and filmic examples spanning a range of historical contexts. Mittell (2004b: 177) argues that “[w]e cannot simply superimpose genre definitions from film or literature onto television ...film genre processes cannot account for many specific television practices” (see also Altman 1999: 83-84). Instead, a medium specific approach is required by working “from the bottom up, ...collecting micro-instances of generic discourses in historically specific moments and examining the resulting large-scale patterns and trajectories” (Mittell 2004b: 175). This can involve “start[ing] with a specific media case study and analys[ing] how genre processes operate within this specific instance” (Ibid: 177). This approach is advantageous in that it allows genre categories to be identified and constructed through consideration of each medium’s historical, institutional and/or aesthetic factors (Ibid: 174-176; see also Altman 1999: 30-48).

However, if specific ‘micro-instances’ from the cycle of post-2005 British time travel programmes are considered, overlaps between previous discussions of ‘time travel’ plots and contemporary televisual equivalents can be made. *Torchwood*’s ‘Out of Time’ provides one example of how conventions derived from temporal contrast plots are employed by post-2005 British time travel programmes. Expanding beyond this example allows for further overlaps

between the pre-existing conventions of ‘time travel’ narratives and contemporary televisual equivalents to be identified. *Life on Mars* and *Ashes to Ashes*, for example, “dramatise... movement between past and present in a way that emphasises historical difference” (de Groot 2009: 204; see also Nelson 2010: 144); both series feature characters that are introduced to audiences within one time period - the ‘present’ - but move backwards in time and come into conflict with the values embedded within the ‘past’ narrative world. Such a reading of the format of either *Life on Mars* or *Ashes to Ashes* is, as de Groot (2009: 204) and others have noted (Nelson 2010, Tincknell 2010), a simplification of each programme (see Chapter Five). This summary, as well as similar observations concerning both *Lost in Austen* (see Kaplan 2010) and *Doctor Who* (see Britton 2011: 157), highlight that oppositions including human/other and past/present (or present/future) that are identifiable in other historical and media contexts are also employed by the cycle analysed across this thesis. Further analysis of post-2005 British time travel programmes for constructions of nostalgia is therefore viable.

Responding to calls to address specifically televisual genres (Feuer 1992; Mittell 2004a and 2004b), it should be recalled that “[t]elevisual genres ...have a ...tendency to recombine *across* genre lines” (Feuer 1992: 158; see also Mittell 2004a: 155-157; Nelson 2007a: 20-22). This makes it possible that the oppositions representing ‘time travel’ narrative might be identifiable in a range of other television programmes. For example, although not conventionally a time travel narrative, the soap opera *Eastenders* (BBC 1985-) currently employs a past/present binary in its affair storyline involving Kat Moon (Jessie Wallace), her ongoing love for husband Alfie (Shane Richie) and a secret lover. This plot represents soap opera’s established narrative convention of unstable ongoing character relationships (see Geraghty 1991: 15). However, as the storyline is structured around the juxtaposition of ‘old’ and ‘new’ romantic partners, it also suggests the possibility for some audiences to interpret the plot as constructing a form of ‘time travel’ through “secondary processes of connotation” (Tolson 1996: 17). Temporal contrast’s wider “cultural themes, concepts or meanings” (Hall 1997: 38) of comparing different time periods are readable from this example, suggesting a combination of ‘soap opera’ and ‘science fiction’ to narrate the character’s emotional dilemma (see also Chapter Five). Although not denoted in the text, then, this example from *Eastenders* could be read as a connotative encoding of a temporal contrast plot that subsequently constructs a discourse of personal nostalgia (see below) to denote Kat’s continuing feelings for Alfie. The possibility for other, non-conventional forms of television

‘time travel’ is also suggested by Paul Wickham’s (2010: 71) discussion of crime drama series *New Tricks* (BBC/Wall to Wall Television 2003-):

Like *Life on Mars*, *New Tricks* works on a reflection between what life is like now and what it was before ...Every episode brings up some difficult moral questions, to which there are no easy answers proffered.

By juxtaposing narrative discourses of ‘past’ and ‘present’ through its aged cast’s encounter with contemporary attitudes and institutions, *New Tricks*’ narrative format may connote ‘time travel’ to some audiences (see Ibid: 77-78 for other examples). Additionally, a subgenre of reality television that transports ‘modern’ people to recreations of ‘past’ historical events or periods might also offer audiences a connotative form of ‘time travel’ by dramatising a clash between separate spatiotemporal periods. Erin Bell (2011: 52) mentions “the BBC2 2002 series *The Trench*, in which descendents of Great War soldiers, [became] involved in a reenactment of life in the trenches” as representative of this form of factual programming but shows like *The 1900 House* (Channel 4/WNET/Wall to Wall Television 1999) and *Coal House* (Indus Films/BBC 2007) provide further examples (see also Cook 2005: 2, Hill 2005: 42-43, de Groot 2009: 169-172, McElroy and Williams 2011). All of these examples, as well as others (see Booth 2011: 379-380 and 2012: 90 on US sitcoms), remind us how television’s dense intertextuality allows for myriad encodings of connotative ‘time travel’ to be observed across multiple programmes and genres.

Recognising that time travel conventions may be identifiable across a variety of programmes suggests some unusual avenues of research (see Conclusion), but also threatens to overwhelm the thesis’ scope. Analysis is therefore limited to examples of *denotative time travel* programming: shows whose fictional plots feature a ‘novum’ (see Suvin 1979; Roberts 2000: 7-13) that violates “our intuitive idea[s] of what it [i.e. - time] is” (Ryan 2009: 142) by allowing characters to experience either accelerated or reversed temporal movement⁴⁹. Post-2005 British time travel programmes combine temporal contrast with a time machine novum despite offering differing denotations of this “accepted” (Roberts 2000: 13) science fiction device. In *Life on Mars* and *Ashes to Ashes*, the novum’s presence represents the central

⁴⁹ Ryan (2009) develops these ideas by noting that, if considered as an arrow, temporal movement can be split into a variety of experiential categories that includes individual cognition, biology and/or causality. See also Lewis (1976), Parrinder (1995: 36) and Hunter (2006: online).

enigma driving both programmes' serialised narrative (see also Nelson 2007a: 177; de Groot 2009: 206). Elsewhere in the cycle the novum is more immediately and directly established: both *Primeval* and *Prehistoric Park* (ITV/Impossible Pictures 2006) denote time travel through temporal gateways or anomalies, whilst *Doctor Who* retains its “structuring icons” (Britton 2011: 26, original emphasis) such as the Doctor (see also Johnson-Smith 2005: 166) and the TARDIS (see also Newman 2005: 11; Hills 2010a: 90). Although each series filters its ‘time travel’ nova through “the idiom of ‘pseudo-science’” (Roberts 2000: 9; see also Porter 2010: 202), rather than Suvin’s (1979) ‘hard SF’ codings⁵⁰, they all employ a time travel ‘novum’ to denote their characters’ temporal movements.

This section has engaged with definitions of ‘time travel’ narratives in other media forms and considered how these previous definitions apply to televisual examples post-2005. Burling’s (2006) temporal contrast form allows for characteristics of time travel narrative to intersect with nostalgia but, when these ideas are applied to television, further parameters need to be set out. For these reasons, post-2005 British time travel dramas are defined by combining temporal comparison conventions with denoted time travel nova. Another shared characteristic between these programmes is their status as ‘quality popular’ programming. The next section applies this categorisation and explores how this status impacts upon constructions of nostalgia.

Beyond Ideology and *Zeitgeist*: Institutional Readings of Quality Popular Temporal Contrasts

Burling (2006: 8) argues that literary temporal contrast narratives can provide the reader with a critical perspective on the present. By offering a representation of an alternative time period, temporal contrast narratives construct a ‘detached’ reading position where the narrative’s “structural juxtaposition of sharply differing nova ...express... intentional manifest ideological estrangement” (Ibid; see also Rutherford 2004: 31; Moore 2010: 62). Ideological commentary is therefore possible since one time period is evaluated against another (Burling 2006: 12; see also Redmond 2007a: 114). The potential for social critique comes about through what John Tulloch and Manuel Alvarado (1983: 106) name “conjecture”: the allegorical appeal of science fiction narratives where tropes, characters or

⁵⁰ See also Newman (2002: vii-x), Johnson (2005: 2) and Furby and Hines (2012: 33-34) on the overlap between ‘science fiction’ and ‘fantasy’ in screen media.

narrative worlds are readable as “social extrapolation[s]” (Gomel 2009: 344) from historically-located discourses (Burling 2006: 6; see also Kuhn 1999: 3-4, King and Krzywinska 2000: 22; Hockley 2001: 26-27; Sobchack 2005: online; Cook and Wright 2006: 3; Redmond 2007b: x; Williams 2007: 130-138; Telotte 2008: 1-5; Chapman 2011: 13-14, Furby and Hines 2012: 11-12). Although Burling (2006: 6) notes that the ideologies articulated through temporal contrast storylines can be “variously reactionary and utopian”, and hence not always progressive, these plots can offer readers a critique of the present by constructing contrasting narrative worlds from a perceived *zeitgeist*.

Erica Moore (2010: 67) employs the sociological SF-as-allegory discourse to analyse how the *Doctor Who* episode ‘The End of the World’ uses its far-future setting to satirise contemporaneous attitudes towards body image through the episode’s villainous character of Cassandra (Zoe Wannamaker). Reading temporal contrast narratives, and consequently any constructions of societal nostalgia, as solely representing socio-historical trends and values is, however, inadequate. A purely ideological interpretation of representational strategies employed within temporal contrast narratives produces a reductionist account that overlooks the TV text’s status as a media product. Applied to articulations of nostalgia within a temporal contrast narrative, any such sociological framework fails to acknowledge the “differentiation between nostalgia as a structure of feeling or affective and experiential discourse and nostalgia as a commodified style or commodified set of practices” (Pickering and Keightley 2006: 932). An ideological perspective ultimately leads analysis back to the *zeitgeist* since narrative worlds are presumed traceable to an identifiable structure of feeling. Any discourses of nostalgia constructed through the text’s structures thus become representative of deeper sociological trends. An alternative, more nuanced, analysis of nostalgia, which moves analysis beyond the *zeitgeist*, can be provided by treating mediated nostalgia as constructions shaped through both textual conventions and industrial requirements. Nostalgia is, from this second perspective, considered as “a cultural style” (Grainge 2000b: 137) that is produced through institutional and industrial practices (see also Grainge 2003: 1). This approach can account for different inflections of nostalgic discourse within individual texts (cf. Collins 1989; Williamson 2005) by demonstrating how these discourses are shaped by specific production contexts. The advantages of this method for studying nostalgia can be demonstrated by considering the limitations of a purely ideological

approach to the ‘quality popular’ post-2005 British time travel dramas discussed in this thesis.

As alluded to previously (see pages 11-12), Nelson (2007a: 176) lifts the *nomenclature* ‘quality popular’ television from an industrial (ITV) context to analyse drama programmes commissioned by broadcast television channels such as BBC One and ITV1 in the UK (Ibid: 177) and locates such programmes’ ‘popular’ appeal in their adherence to established genre frameworks. The ‘quality’ attributes of ‘quality popular’ programmes are located in a number of elements: a show may be characterised by high production values (see Brunsdon 1997: 142-143) or employ a recognisable authorial voice within its scripts (Nelson 2007a: 177). Another attribute of ‘quality popular’ programming could be its genre combinations, as Nelson (Ibid: 179) observes about *Life on Mars*:

Life on Mars is a “quality popular drama” in that it is a police series with a twist, but an original twist which opens up potential for it to be much more than a mere reworking of the ingredients in a formula.

Through combining ‘police procedural’ and temporal contrast conventions, *Life on Mars* displays the ‘edginess’ he associates with ‘high-end’ TV dramas such as the products of US cable channel HBO (Ibid: 2-4; see also Nelson 2007b). However, despite moving towards ‘quality’ status, ‘quality popular’ dramas are constrained by the regulatory practices arising from their ‘network’ status and the need to appeal to “a broader audience” (Nelson 2007a: 177) by including an ensemble cast that caters to a wide range of viewing niches⁵¹.

Post-2005 British time travel dramas exemplify ‘quality popular’ television. All employ ‘high’ production values to visualise believable alternative temporal worlds (such as in *Life on Mars* (see Ibid: 179), *Lost in Austen* and *Doctor Who*) or employ CGI techniques to realise various fantastic creatures (e.g. *Doctor Who*, *Primeval* and *Prehistoric Park*). Additionally, each of these programmes is commissioned by the UK’s broadcast channels. One exception to this tendency has been *Primeval*’s fifth series which was first aired on Tuesday evenings at 8pm on the British cable/satellite-only channel, Watch (Charlton 2009). The series’ first-run on Watch came about due to alterations in *Primeval*’s funding between the programme’s

⁵¹ See Jaramillo (2002: 61-62) and Rogers, Epstein and Reeves (2002: 50-51) on HBO.

third and fourth seasons which meant that BBC Worldwide and UKTV (part of the BBC that co-owns various UK satellite channels including Watch – see Tryhorn 2009, Johnson 2012: 76-80) became the programme’s major financiers. Part of the deal meant that *Primeval*’s fifth series would be broadcast first on Watch and then followed by an ITV1 repeat/first-transmission in 2012. Although series five of *Primeval* appears to indicate a shift from a series with broadcast appeal to a niche product for a narrowcast channel⁵², the programme’s quality popular status remains since *Primeval* is still produced by the UK’s two major broadcast institutions with the changes to its transmission pattern coming about due to alterations in its funding. Moreover, whilst series five averaged an audience of half a million viewers on Watch⁵³, the first episode of series five debuted on ITV1 to an audience of 2.52 million meaning that, despite being available on DVD for over a year, *Primeval* has not become a niche-interest programme⁵⁴.

Another attribute of ‘quality popular’ drama is the ideological position encoded into these programmes. Since ‘quality popular’ television is drawn from “the relative predictability of TV genres” (Nelson 2007a: 175) it displays “a tendency towards making sense, and the affirmation of an explanatory paradigm ...though no single meaning is offered, a reassuring notion that things can make sense is afforded” (Ibid: 176). Although Nelson initially appears to reject the idea that ‘quality popular’ television constructs a preferred reading position for its audience here, this point is nevertheless contradicted by Nelson’s assertion that ‘quality popular’ TV “reassure[s] through not only narrative but also ideological closure” (Ibid). ‘Quality popular’ television offers support for dominant ideologies and the status quo by mobilising established generic frameworks and provides audiences with narrative closure in each episode:

as the villain is unmasked and order restored, they seem to resolve or dispose of social conflicts or contradictions in an ideological acceptable manner. Popular genres ...perform an ideological function ...They allay anxieties about disturbing or

⁵² BARB figures indicate that, for May 2011 when series 5 of *Primeval* was first broadcast on Watch, ITV1 had an average daily viewership of 21 million viewers whereas shows on Watch other than *Primeval* were attracting between 100,000 and 150,000 viewers. See <http://www.barb.co.uk/report/weeklyTopProgrammes?> [Accessed 07/07/11].

⁵³ Figures obtained from BARB <http://www.barb.co.uk/report/weeklyTopProgrammes?> [Accessed 07/07/11].

⁵⁴ Another exception to ‘quality popular’ television’s tendency to originate on broadcast channels in the UK would be *Torchwood* which started on the BBC’s youth-orientated niche channel, BBC Three, before moving to BBC2 for its second series and then arriving on BBC One for seasons three and four. See Hills (2010e), Barron (2011: 189-190) and Williams (2011) for further discussion.

potentially subversive aspects of contemporary society. (Thornham and Purvis 2005: 25)

Primeval's narrative format demonstrates its conservative nature. Each episode features a "monster-of-the-week" (Mittell 2006: 33) intruding into the 'present' from an-Other time period. The programme's represented temporal locations range from the historical 'past', where a variety of dinosaurs, bugs, birds and sea mammals originate, to the inclusion of 'future predators' (see episodes 1.6 and 3.8) that represent a connotative dystopian 'future' (see Figures 4.1 and 4.2). By the point of narrative closure, each of these temporal invaders is either removed or contained within the present by being returned to its original time period or stored safely within the high-tech research centre (named the ARC for series three) where temporal intrusions are monitored. The programme's strategy of containing temporally othered creatures within its depiction of the present does introduce some uncertainty to the programme by connoting how "[e]xcessive or disturbing elements may not in fact be fully excised with the return to order which marks each episode's close" (Thornham and Purvis 2005: 25). This can lead to scenarios, such as in episodes 2.6 and 5.4, where creatures previously rendered 'safe' break out again. Despite these possibilities, the values articulated through *Primeval*'s temporal contrast narratives confirm "the way in which hegemonic values are articulated through the not-so-harmless pleasures of popular mass culture" (Britton 2011: 151). The programme is readable as conservative since its narrative strategies connote contemporary society's ability to deal with external threats⁵⁵.

This ideological reading of *Primeval* also extends to the development of serialised arcs running across individual seasons. Across many of *Primeval*'s serialised narratives, conventions from 'temporal dislocation' are employed to raise philosophical questions concerning the possibility of making changes to the present through altering the past. Although series one codes these ideas through affective discourses (see page 9), other series include characters threatening the 'present' by altering the 'past'. Helen Cutter's plans to prevent human evolution occurring in episode 3.10, as well as Ethan's (Jonathan Byrne) mysterious intentions throughout series four, exemplify this characteristic. In each of these instances, the narrative goal becomes stopping destabilisations of the 'present' by altering the 'past', or ensuring that the 'present' extends into the 'future', by overcoming characters

⁵⁵ See also King and Krzywinska (2000: 56) on temporal contrast narratives in Hollywood.

seeking these ends. Thus, through a range of ideological readings, *Primeval* emblematises how ‘quality popular’ television “resonate[s] with the need to negotiate with ...but not to open up fundamentally disturbing questions and, ultimately, to reassure” (Nelson 2007a: 176). The programme’s conservatism reassures audiences about the capabilities of *Primeval*’s team of scientists and military figures to contain all forms of temporal intrusions⁵⁶.



Figure 4.1: *Primeval*'s Future Predator.

⁵⁶ In this respect, *Primeval* overlaps with Leman’s (1991) observations concerning on the ‘good’ scientist figure in early examples of British TVSF such as the *Quatermass* serials (BBC 1953-8) and *A for Andromeda* (BBC 1961) and Jancovich (1996) on representations of scientists and the military in American B-movies from the 1950s.



Figure 4.2: Envisioning *Primeval's* future dystopia.

Primeval further constructs societal nostalgia to support its quality popular status by positioning its representation of the ‘present’ as the ‘ideal’ that needs to be protected from destabilisation. Although each episode plays out a structural clash between the ‘present’ and either the ‘past’ or ‘future’ by having evil characters destabilise the ‘present’, the programme uses temporal contrast conventions to direct nostalgia towards its depiction of the present. *Primeval* therefore positions the values and attitudes associated with the ‘present’ as superior to those found in alternative spatiotemporal locations. Whereas *Primeval's* temporal invaders display savagery by viewing other creatures solely as food sources, the team articulate positive attributes, such as the caring attitude towards temporal Others that Professor Cutter and Abby Maitland (Hannah Spearritt) convey. This ‘present-orientated nostalgia’ (see Chapter Five) is further reinforced through *Primeval's* serialised ‘temporal dislocation’ narratives. Series five’s serialised arc involves the character of Matt (Ciaran McMenamin) – a time traveller from the future – stopping Philip Burton (Alexander Siddig) and Connor Temple’s (Andrew Lee Potts) creation of a man-made anomaly within the ‘present’ that produces a future dystopia. Reading this narrative ideologically suggests that, similar to Andrew Shail and Robin Stoate’s (2010: 50-76) analysis of *Back to the Future* (Zemeckis 1985), a better (or improved) version of a ‘future’ time period can be achieved through maintaining values associated with another spatiotemporal location depicted within the text (see also Sharp 2011). *Primeval* therefore directs multiple discourses of societal nostalgia

towards its representation of the ‘present’ since destabilising this results in the dystopian world inhabited by the future predators being constructed (see also episode 3.8; see Figure 4.3). Matt’s line of ‘when I got to your time, I thought it was the Garden of Eden’ symbolises *Primeval*’s ‘present-orientated nostalgia’ as it connotes a conservative ideology to audiences that reassures them about the world they inhabit.



Figure 4.3: A future worth avoiding?

Focusing solely upon *Primeval*’s articulations of ideology would, however, overlook how factors arising from the programme’s production context impact upon its format. Jane Feuer (1992: 144) argues that “ultimate originality of programming would be a disaster [for television], because it could not assure the delivery of the weekly audience”. *Primeval*’s repeated narrative structure provides audiences with familiar characters and situations on an episodic basis. This familiarity also partly relates to the programme’s adherence to genre expectations since, as Johnson (2005: 81-82) notes, televisual ‘science fiction’ and/or ‘action adventure’ programmes feature recurring characters that become threatened by external forces which are overcome by the end of each episode (see also Chapman 2001). Nelson (2007a: 176) also suggests the need for closure within ‘quality popular’ television, however, by arguing that “the broad cultural disposition of viewers is as important a factor as the formal structures of the programmes themselves”. Audiences for a series like *Primeval* may therefore experience its recurrent plot situations as pleasurable since it combines generic

familiarity with a sense of ‘ontological security’ about the external world (Ibid; see also Silverstone 1994: 16).

The series’ temporal basis within a representation of the ‘present’ which is episodically destabilised could also be accounted for in relation to issues surrounding programme budget. Interviews with *Primeval*’s cast have identified that, for series four and five, cost-cutting has been introduced by shooting the series in Dublin and altering the programme’s shooting style as the highest proportion of expenditure remains the show’s CGI dinosaurs (see Hemley 2011: online). Due to *Primeval*’s budgetary constraints, it becomes logical that its high SFX expenses can partly be off-set by setting the majority of its plots within the present rather than having to further increase costs by providing ‘believable’ representations of different time periods on an episodic basis (as is the case in *Life on Mars* and *Ashes to Ashes*). Máire Messenger Davies (2001a: 72-73) makes a similar point concerning time travel dramas for children’s television, arguing that it is cheaper for producers to locate these narratives within the present as this avoids the costs of achieving ‘accurate’ representations of either past or future time periods (see also MacDonald 1998: 135; Messenger Davies 2002: 128). Thus, whilst *Life on Mars* and *Ashes to Ashes* can reduce production costs by building standing sets that act as the ‘hub’ of their depicted past worlds (e.g. the CID offices), neither of these shows has to combine these costs with representations of CGI monsters. *Primeval* is, in comparison, partly forced to be located within the ‘present’ due to its SFX costs. *Primeval*’s ‘anti-nostalgic’ stance, where characters connoting other time periods become ejected from (or incorporated into) the ‘present’, is partly accountable to production strategies implemented to keep the programme within its budget⁵⁷.

Further analysing *Primeval* through such production factors as scheduling and target audience provides additional insights into how and why the programme’s temporal contrast narratives, and encodings of societal nostalgia, are constructed in this manner. Since its first transmission *Primeval* has, like *Doctor Who* (see also Booy 2010: 189), been aired in an early

⁵⁷ A BBC news report following the second series of *Doctor Who* questioning the programme’s Earth-based focus attributed this to the cost of depicting ‘realistic’ alien worlds – as well as audience preferences for ‘relatable’ stories (see <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/entertainment/5359552.stm> [Accessed 14/04/08]). See also Britton (2011: 161).

evening slot on Saturdays⁵⁸. This is a slot on British television that is traditionally reserved for “game shows, variety, soap operas and mainstream drama series ...which are seen to have a broad demographic appeal and can be viewed by the whole family” (Johnson 2005: 133). This scheduling position is significant for *Primeval* since, by targeting family audiences, regulatory frameworks place constraints upon its narrative format concerning suitable material for children. Messenger Davies (2002: 133) alludes to this issue in her work on costume dramas made for children’s television by highlighting the requirement that “the child protagonists are restored to their rightful places” by the point of narrative conclusion despite being separated from their families, and associated class structures, throughout the plot. Whilst Messenger Davies reads this requirement in terms of a conservative ideology (Ibid), it can also be interpreted in respect to institutional pressures placed upon British children’s television. Messenger Davies (2001a: 30) has elsewhere noted that, due to public service responsibilities, British children’s television is required to adopt a ‘paternalist’ attitude towards its intended audience by protecting them from exposure to potentially ‘harmful’ material (see also Messenger Davies and Machin 2000, Messenger Davies 2001b and 2001c).

Recent years have seen a decline in ITV1’s provision of programming for ‘child’ audiences (see Steemers 2010: 38-42) but the channel remains subject to rules surrounding “standards in matters such as offence... [and] protection of children” (OFCOM 2008: online). Although *Primeval* may appear reactionary, this reading overlooks how its narrative format is structured by regulatory requirements stating that programmes to be viewed by children should not include potentially unsettling material. Having a character that has become a point of identification for children become stranded in a dystopian temporal location could be potentially distressing for younger viewers and leave the broadcasting institution open to claims of irresponsibility. It is noticeable in *Primeval* that, even when uncertainty was introduced in the ending to series three, the narrative was readable through these institutional requirements. Episode 3.10 ends on a cliff-hanger where its two central characters, Connor and Abby, become stranded in the prehistoric ‘past’. Despite this potentially unsettling finale, reassurance was arguably connoted in that the two characters are kept together and symbolise a heterosexual couple. Moreover, when the programme returned from its (unplanned – see

⁵⁸ *Prehistoric Park* was a slight variation on this scheduling decision by first being transmitted on a Saturday evening but then being moved to Sunday evenings (<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0760139/episodes#season-1> [Accessed 23/04/10]).

French 2009) hiatus, one of the series' immediate focuses is returning these characters to the security of the 'present' (see episode 4.1).

This section has examined how discourses of nostalgia can be identified and discussed in relation to 'quality popular' post-2005 British time travel programmes. Rather than producing purely ideological interpretations of nostalgia, the advantages of contextualising these discourses within an institutional framework have been demonstrated by analysing ITV1's *Primeval*. Despite *Primeval*'s multiple constructions of societal nostalgia suggesting the series' conservatism, purely ideological interpretations of these discourses overlook the impact of various institutional requirements. These include the programme's status as quality popular television and other regulatory frameworks such as *Primeval*'s status as a drama series broadcast on ITV1 as a primetime Saturday evening show targeting child audiences. What has not yet been discussed is how another discourse of nostalgia – termed personal nostalgia – is constructed through serialised character arcs in post-2005 British time travel dramas. The next section explores this discourse, developing further the thesis' institutional approach to nostalgia by noting how personal nostalgia supports the 'quality popular' appeal of post-2005 British time travel programmes, before introducing layered polysemy as a critique of how Nelson's (2007a) concept of 'quality popular' theorises its audiences.

From 'Quality Popular' to 'Coalition' TV: Personal Nostalgia and Layered Polysemy in Post-2005 Time Travel TV Drama.

Nelson (2007a: 179) argues that *Life on Mars*' narrative "offers the pleasures of the [police procedural] genre in resolving cases within the episodes but throw[s] out a serial hook in Tyler's quest to 'get home'". *Life on Mars* employs what Nelson (1997: 32-33) has previously named 'flexi-narrative' - a mode of storytelling that displays:

[a] number of stories involving familiar characters in familiar settings [which] are broken down into narrative bytes and rapidly intercut. Any lack of interest of an audience segment in one set of characters or story-line is thus not allowed to last long as another story with a different group of characters is swiftly taken up, only in turn to give way to another before taking up again the first narrative.

Nelson (Ibid: 34) expands by noting:

[t]he difference between soaps and popular series with regard to the deployment of flexi-narrative is that new characters and narrative strands are introduced in each episode of a series. Their stories are usually brought to closure within the episode whilst a number of regular characters ...[are] involved in unresolved narratives which give continuity across episodes.

Since each episode involves a “blurring of the distinction between the series and serial” (Ibid) by rapidly moving between ongoing and self-contained storylines, building intensity throughout (Ibid: 38), *Life on Mars* uses a flexi-narrative structure. The problem for using this definition to delimit quality popular television is that, as Nelson (1997: 23 and 32 especially) and others have recognised (see Creeber 2004a; Thornham and Purvis 2005: 27; Mittell 2006: 29; Dunleavy 2009: 132-163), flexi-narrative has become television’s de-facto narrative form across ‘quality’ and/or ‘popular’ programming. Whilst flexi-narrative first emerged in 1980s American television as a response to fragmenting audience shares for the major broadcast networks (Nelson 1997: 31-32; see also Dunleavy 2009: 141), flexi-narrative’s conventions are now employed by myriad programmes and genres targeting a range of industry-imagined audiences. Whilst *Life on Mars* utilises flexi-narrative, a more nuanced understanding of quality popular television’s narrative format is required to define it with greater precision.

Different inflections of ‘flexi-narrative’ have been identified elsewhere (see Creeber 2004a: 7-12) but post-2005 British time travel dramas are best understood as “serialised series” (Dunleavy 2009: 157). Trisha Dunleavy uses this term to discuss “dramas produced for American broadcast networks” (Ibid) such as NBC, CBS and ABC – the equivalents to BBC One and ITV1 where quality popular programming is commissioned in the UK. ‘Serialised series’ represent “the most common approach to narrative complexity in the mainstream context” (Ibid) and combine “adherence ...to a traditional series framework ...with the addictive potentials of primetime soap opera” (Ibid: 157-158). *Primeval*’s past/future invaders, CID’s episodic investigations in *Life on Mars* and *Ashes to Ashes*, and the return of a different endangered creature to the safety of the ‘present’ in each instalment of *Prehistoric Park* all exemplify recurrent self-contained plot structures (see also Matthees 2005: 100, Siebel 2005: 114). Each programme’s serialised elements include returning characters that retain knowledge of, and refer to, events from previous episodes, connoting depth to audiences who watch the programme frequently (Dunleavy 2009: 157-158; see also Nelson

1997: 34). However, if the recurring characters in post-2005 British time travel dramas are read structurally (see Fiske 1989: 153-160), each programme's serialised-series framework constructs an additional discourse of nostalgia which can be termed personal nostalgia.

'Personal nostalgia' has been discussed elsewhere as "contribut[ing] to the continuity of individual identity" (Sprengher 2011: 32) and concerns "longing for the past actually "lived"" (Merchant *et al* 2011: 610; see also Sedikides *et al* 2004). In post-2005 British time travel dramas, discourses of personal nostalgia focus clashes between representations of 'past' and 'present' upon a "'temporal contrast" between differing times and worlds ...recurrently balanced with characters' emotional connections and choices" (Hills 2010a: 102; see also Booth 2012: 83). The Doctor (played by Christopher Eccleston, David Tennant and Matt Smith) in *Doctor Who* is partly defined, especially across the first series, as "the traumatised war veteran ...racked [*sic*] by guilt over his inability to prevent the destruction of the Time Lords" (Chapman 2006: 190; see also Barron 2010: 140, Britton 2011: 172). The Doctor's construction has then been read as indicating a wider "sense of loss and separation" (Bould 2008: 225; see also Newman 2005: 115; Chapman 2006: 190-191) pervading the programme. The character is thus positioned between memories of a golden and awe-inspiring 'past' home world (see 'The Sound of Drums' and 'The End of Time: Part One') and a 'present' status as a wandering 'lonely God' (see 'New Earth' and 'The Girl in the Fireplace') which results in constructions of personal nostalgia on an episodic basis. A more bizarre variation upon this convention, that demonstrates the trope's ubiquity across post-2005 British time travel programmes, concerns *Prehistoric Park*'s Martha the Mammoth. Martha occupies an analogous position within this programme's narrative format since episode two sees wildlife explorer Nigel Marven journey back to save the mammoth from extinction by bringing one to his modern day zoo. However, as the series progresses, the rescued creature (named 'Martha' by Marven) becomes 'lonely' within the present since she is separated from her herd and her originating spatiotemporal period. In both of these instances, temporal contrast conventions are used to construct serialised character arcs yet, as time travel scenarios are explored through private issues (see also Hills 2010a: 100), discourses of personal nostalgia become constructed alongside societal equivalents.

Since discourses of personal nostalgia are constructed and negotiated episodically, they display a continued "lack of resolution" (Nelson 1997: 31) that can be related to

contemporary social discourses. The “ambivalence and contradiction” (Gorton 2009: 84) that lead characters express towards representations of personal ‘pasts’ and ‘presents’ could be read as indicative of postmodern experiences:

the postmodern ...television text, which tends to be contradictory and unstable in all kinds of ways, is ...an ideal vehicle for allowing viewers to recognise their own contradictory and unstable sense of who they are. (Jowett 2010: 133)

Both postmodern society and its products are here characterised as “an epoch of identity dislocation” (Booth 2012: 84) that arises from a combination of the redundancy of grand explanatory narratives (Lyotard 1984) and, according to Paul Booth (2012: 84-85), how digital media forms (e.g. online avatars and social media sites) engender fragmentary notions of identity. Since recurring characters continually negotiate between ‘past’ and ‘present’, articulations of personal nostalgia could be read as indicating postmodern experience⁵⁹. This explanatory discourse is inadequate, though, as it interprets discourses of personal nostalgia through a postmodern *zeitgeist* regarding ambivalent structures of feeling. Matt Hills (2010a: 88) argues against such interpretations of the relaunched *Doctor Who*, stating that sociological explanations identify “one theoretical story about society, find... a version of that same story in the programme, and speculatively conclude ...[by identifying an] alleged similarity” between the textual reading and the programme’s wider socio-historical context. A more rounded account of personal nostalgia can be provided by replacing “reflectionist” (Ibid) accounts with an explanation that “situates formal developments [in television - RPG] within specific historical contexts of production, circulation, and reception” (Mittell 2006: 30). Discourses of personal nostalgia should therefore be read as a strategy responding to specific factors arising from the production context(s) for quality popular television.

This industrial context involves declining audience ratings and shares for BBC One and ITV1 (Dunleavy 2009: 207-208) arising from changing political ideologies towards British television (Johnson 2012: 10) and an increase in both channel provision and access to

⁵⁹ An alternative ideological interpretive framework that could be mobilised to interpret constructions of character in post-2005 British time travel programmes would be that derived from Lévi-Strauss’ (2001) work on mythical narratives. From this perspective, characters with mythical attributes are those that function “as a mediator between ...opposing concepts” (Fiske 1989: 133) such as discourses of ‘past’ and ‘present’. See Zinder (2007), Hills (2010d) and Wilcox (2010a: 37-38) for further discussion of television programmes in relation to theories of myth.

televisual content through numerous technological platforms (see Reeves, Rodgers and Epstein 1996: 29, Johnson 2005: 96-99, Thornham and Purvis 2005: 27, Mittell 2006: 31, Nelson 2007a: 13, Johnson 2010a: 141, Richards 2010: 179). Within this context, ITV1 still “seek[s] volume rather than [purely] niche audiences” (Nelson 2007a: 70) but nevertheless attempts to encode appeals to ‘quality’ demographics within its output since these remain “most prized by advertisers” (Dunleavy 2009: 139). Similarly, although BBC One partly understands its public service remit as offering ‘something for everyone’ (i.e. not just ‘quality’ audiences) across its weekly schedules (Petley 2006, Nelson 2007a: 64-65), the Corporation’s output continues to be a cultural yardstick for ‘quality’ British television (see Nelson 2007a: 68, Johnson 2012: 96). Output on both ITV1 and BBC One is required to appeal to “a *coalition* of audiences” (Johnson 2005: 130; original emphasis) that includes both ‘quality’ and ‘popular’ taste formations. As quality popular products, post-2005 British time travel dramas must therefore include strategies that construct a preferred reading position (see Hall 2003) for audiences that is simultaneously ‘quality’ and ‘popular’. As David Morley (1995: 301) explains:

[t]he television message is ... a complex sign, in which a preferred reading has been inscribed, but which retains the potential, if decoded in a manner different from the way in which it has been encoded, of communicating a different meaning. The message is thus a structured polysemy.

Whilst audiences make a variety of readings of the broadcast programme, quality popular television are required to unite ‘quality’ and ‘popular’ tastes into a singular preferred reading position (Ibid). However, exploring this requirement through discourses of personal nostalgia suggests that such a requirement is ultimately impossible. On the one hand, ‘quality’ television is associated with “multi-layered, literary narratives, ...complex backstory and serial ‘memory’” (Örnebring 2007: 12) that enables characters to be read as psychologically ‘deep’ by audiences (see also Mittell 2006). In contrast, ‘popular’ appeal is, as Michael Z. Newman’s (2006: 17) argument that “[m]ass art strives for accessibility and ease of comprehension” suggests, associated with repeated narrative iterations and character ‘flatness’. Angela Ndalians (2005: 89) supports this understanding of ‘popular’ appeal by analysing American primetime dramas such as *Law and Order* (NBC/Universal Network Television 1990-2010) and *CSI* (CBS/Jerry Bruckheimer Television/Alliance Atlantis Communications 2000-), arguing that “each episode places emphasis on goal-orientated

characters ...[where] little or no information about the main characters is provided ...beyond its significance to the unravelling episode storyline” (see also Fiske 1989: 144-145). Thus, since ‘quality popular’ drama is supposed to close down audience interpretation (see above), the form requires the construction of an internally-contradictory reading position where ‘quality popular’ characters can be read as simultaneously ‘deep’ and ‘flat’.

Encoding a ‘quality’ reading position into post-2005 British time travel drama’s recurring characters requires that “at least one ...problem ...is left unresolved from one episode to the next” (Hagerdorn 1995: 39). Discourses of personal nostalgia provide an unresolved narrative strand since they recur across episodes, providing an “endlessly deferred narrative” (Hills 2002: 134) where the character is represented “as ‘unfinished’/unknown” (Ibid: 135; see also Hills 2004a: 512-513). The serialised exploration of this discourse then allows for allusions to depth of character to be made (see Creeber 2001b and 2004a: 2-12, Allrath, Gymnich and Surkamp 2005: 5). For example, the *Doctor Who* episode ‘The Waters of Mars’ challenges the Doctor’s (David Tennant) singularly heroic status by having the character for once succumb to his sense of loss and alter established ‘past’ events. Although the character’s heroic status is reinstated by the point of narrative closure, indicating how “SFTV ...is ...about the actions of extraordinary people who must sacrifice themselves for the greater good” (Mains 2008: 153), the episode nevertheless connotes ‘edginess’ to audiences by complicating the Doctor’s representation. Frequent associations between a ‘quality’ reading position and complex TV characters have been made (see Creeber 1998: 35, Gwenllian Jones 2002: 86, Creeber 2004a: 4-6, Cardwell 2007: 26-27, Feuer 2007: 154-155, Brown, S. 2010: 158-159), especially in academic discussions of *The Sopranos* (HBO 1999-2007; see Auster 2002: 13-14, Lavery 2002: xiv, Creeber 2004a: 100, Johnson 2010a: 149). Ellen Willis (2002: 4) identifies that Tony Soprano (James Gandalfini) suffers from “cognitive dissonance” through operating in “two morally opposed worlds” (Creeber 2004a: 105) whilst Nelson (2007a: 28) also writes that when *The Sopranos*:

[t]ak[es] one of television’s most successful narrative forms with opportunities for strong female roles and combin[es] it with one of cinema’s most successful macho genres, not only does [it] offer a broad appeal across genders but, by bringing two traditionally gendered narrative forms in tension, it invites an interesting narrative mix affording complex characterisation and challenging thematic concerns.

Tension arises in *The Sopranos*' narrative format from its mixing of genres which assist the programme's construction of complex characters. *The Sopranos* can partly be read as 'quality' television due to its sophisticated treatment of narrative issues that adds depth to lead characters and encourages viewers to re-watch episodes for their nuances (see Thompson 2007: xvii, McCabe and Akass 2007a: 11, Gorton 2009: 120-125, Johnson 2010b: 149; see also Mittell 2006: 31-32 on DVD rewatching). Characters such as the Doctor, Martha the Mammoth and Nick Cutter (see page 9) do not display the same dense character psychology as Tony Soprano as each of these examples, and their related programme formats, have been developed under different regulatory structures (see Jaramillo 2002, Rogers, Epstein and Reeves 2002: 49-52 on HBO and the FCC), institutional remits and definitions of imagined audience. *Prehistoric Park*'s lonely mammoth should also be partly read through genre discourses such as the anthropomorphisation of the natural world within documentaries (see Elliot 2001) and how wildlife documentaries target child/female audiences by constructing animals through strong affect-based storylines (see Ellis 2002: 141, Matthews 2009: 558). Despite these differing institutional and generic contexts, the intertextual overlaps between these characters suggests how "distinctions between 'regular' and 'quality' [programming-RPG] ...have declined as the latter approach has edged out the former" (Dunleavy 2009: 163). Discourses of personal nostalgia constructed through recurring characters in post-2005 British time travel programmes suggest that a 'quality' reading position has been encoded into post-2005 British time travel dramas.

This 'quality' reading of post-2005 British time travellers is compromised, however, by the contradictory 'popular' reading position that is also observable. Piers D. Britton (2011: 172) suggests the 'popular' reading of these characters by arguing that whilst *Doctor Who*'s lead characters are "conceived ...in terms of psychodrama", exhibiting "quasi-realist pathos and angst" (Ibid), "[i]t would be a mistake to imply that all or even the best of the new series depends on 'depth' of characterisation" (Ibid: 174). Instead, the programme's recurring characters display a "*harlequinade motif* ...a function of 'flatness' of character in *Doctor Who*" (Ibid: 158; original emphasis). Britton's argument overlaps with Henrik Örnebring's (2007) analysis of narrative and character in US spy-drama *Alias* (ABC/Bad Robot/Touchstone Television 2001-6). Örnebring (Ibid: 11) rejects the immediate correlation between "increased seriality ... [and] increased narrative complexity" to instead argue that *Alias*' "seasonal narrative(s) serve to highlight the key traits of ...character" (Ibid: 24-25).

Each episode instead provides opportunities for “*character showcasing* ...providing discursive opportunities not to develop and change the character but to let the character do ‘what he/she does best’” (Ibid: 25).

Examples of character showcasing have been suggested in analyses of post-2005 British time travel programmes: Hills (2010a: 161) argues that David Tennant’s portrayal of the Doctor was partly characterised by such repeated traits as “exclamations of “oh yes!”, and ...delivery of immensely speedy dialogue”. Discourses of personal nostalgia also provide opportunities for character showcasing. Following the Doctor and Rose’s (Billie Piper) separation in ‘Doomsday’, *Doctor Who* regularly foregrounds the character’s anguish about this event: relevant examples include ‘The Shakespeare Code’, where the villainous Carrionite Lilith (Christina Cole) taunts the character over his loss, and the character’s whimsical reaction to Rosita (Velile Tshabalala), his alleged future self’s companion, in ‘The Next Doctor’. Similarly, *Torchwood*’s Gwen Cooper (Eve Myles) “reflects a distinct sense of “alienation” ...related to the pressure of living simultaneously in two very different spaces, and maintaining a relationship with a fiancée” (Barron 2011: 185) that is repeated across the programme. When Gwen’s divided characterisation is brought out through a denotative time travel novum, such as in the episode ‘Ghost Machine’, a discourse of personal nostalgia is articulated by juxtaposing the character’s life before and after *Torchwood*. In each of these instances the “introduction of new paradigmatic elements provides just enough novelty to maintain viewer interest” (Gwenllian Jones 2005: 587; see also Fiske 1989: 157-160, Wickham 2010: 72) by allowing for discourses of personal nostalgia to be negotiated across the episode. Such character functions can be related to the industrial need for serialised-series to gain popular appeal by including “common and recognisable patterns” (Johnson-Smith 2005: 54) offering audiences episodic familiarity. Although these characters’ serialisation may lead some audiences to obtain a deeper “understanding of the central characters and how they behave” (Wickham 2010: 72), lead characters in quality popular television must remain easily-identifiable to occasional viewers by displaying repeated or ‘flat’ character traits (see also Ibid: 75).

If ‘quality’ and ‘popular’ readings of post-2005 time travellers are combined, a contradictory preferred reading position for quality popular television arises since its textual structures are

readable as simultaneously ‘depthless’ and ‘complex’. This challenges arguments on the structured polysemy of television which posit that:

all meanings do not exist ‘equally’ in the message: it has been structured in dominance, despite the impossibility of a ‘total closure’ of meaning ...the ‘preferred reading’ is itself part of the message, and can be identified within its linguistic and communicative structure. (Morley 1995: 301)

For lead characters in post-2005 British time travel dramas to support this argument, they should be containable within a dominant reading as either ‘complex’ or ‘flat’. As both readings can be placed alongside each other, however, these characters instead appear “internally polysemous” (Condit 1989: 108) by “offer[ing] unstable or internally contradictory meanings” (Ibid). This point may not seem surprising. Cornell Sandvoss (2005: 124) argues that, in recent years, Media and Cultural Studies has been guided by a “fundamental assumption that (popular) texts are *open*, open to different interpretations and to different meanings constructed in the process of reading and by different readers” (see also Fiske 1989, Nelson 2006a: 65). As Morley (1995: 310) argues, though, media texts’ polysemic nature should not mean that “the concept of a ‘preferred reading’, or of a ‘structured polysemy’, drops entirely from view” (see also Morley 1992: 122). Celeste Michelle Condit (1989: 107) supports this point by positing that, despite having different readings of programmes, television viewers “share a basic understanding of the story line or even of what [a] program[me] was trying to convey”. It is instead through the “instability of connotation” (Ibid) that multiple interpretations develop. Although a supposed dominant reading position may be fractured through an audience’s close readings, the text’s encoded meaning structures do still need to be negotiated. Thus, whilst a textualist approach should be retained, this section’s analysis of personal nostalgia suggests that the notion of structured polysemy needs further development. Indeed, Morley (1992: 122) alludes to this point in relation to fictional television by considering whether:

the preferred reading generated by the narrative closure of a television drama may well be in tension with the various other scenes and elements in the text which operate to undercut this ‘closure’.

Structured polysemy underpins Morley’s argument here by suggesting that, although contradictions may appear between the closure of a fictional television narrative and earlier

sequences, a single preferred reading can still be produced. A similar problem occurs in Cornel Sandvoss' (2005: 126) analysis of textual 'neutrosemy'. Neutrosemy focuses on (fan) readings and "describe[s] the semiotic condition in which a text allows for so many divergent readings that, intersubjectively, it does not have any meaning at all", supporting Sandvoss' (Ibid) wider argument that "fan texts function as a mirror, ...fans find their reflected image in the object of fandom" (Ibid). However, structured polysemy resurfaces when Sandvoss (Ibid: 137) discusses how lack of proximity to the chosen object permits self-reflective readings since "[t]he greater the communicative distance, ...the lesser the text's denotative power and the greater the number of possible interpretations". Yet, as proximity increases, "the object of fandom loses its reflective surface" (Ibid: 139). Thus, through providing a range of examples such as a Sting fan's encounter with their idol in a pub and "female fans of *Beauty and the Beast*, who come to realise that network executives have little regard for their reading[s]" (Ibid: 139-140), Sandvoss curiously reinstates structured polysemy:

Fans following their object of fandom from a large communicative distance can relatively easily maintain a self-reflective reading of their fan object. Yet, the greater the knowledge that fans accumulate about their object of fandom, ...the more they narrow the distance between themselves and the fan text. As they move ever close to the *intention auctoris*, it becomes increasingly difficult to maintain a self-reflective reading. (Ibid: 139)

Similar to Condit (1989), Sandvoss (2005) posits that, despite fans producing multiple readings from the text's connotations, a denotative reading that is anchored through, and structured by, production discourses remains identifiable. Thus, although having nothing to say about how industrial contexts may encourage or discourage polysemy, Sandvoss suggests that a singular dominant reading can be identified through locating a text in relation to 'production' discourses. Since recurring characters in post-2005 British time travel dramas construct contradicting reading positions, through exhibiting industrial understandings of both 'quality' and 'popular' appeal, ideas concerning structured polysemy are inadequate in this instance. It is instead better to analyse these characters (and series) as exhibiting what I call *layered polysemy*: a production strategy where different aspects of textual structure can be highlighted to offer incongruous - yet co-existing – preferred readings and so build a coalition audience.

Thinking of these characters as exhibiting layered polysemy raises potential problems surrounding whether a "preferred reading [is] a property of the text ...something that can be

generated *from* the text ... or [by] the audience” (Morley 1992: 122). Acknowledging that a TV programme may be encoded with multiple layers of audience address recognises that “[t]he meaning of the text will be constructed differently according to the discourses ... brought to bear ... by the reader” (Morley 1992: 87). Viewers seeking ‘quality’ experiences can obtain such pleasures by engaging with the structural layers of the text that sanction such readings. At the same time, infrequent and/or inattentive audience members (see Nelson 1997: 35) can engage with the episode through reading alternative textual layers to gain pleasure (or hypothetically move between layers throughout viewing the episode).

Sharon Marie Ross’s (2008: 20-26) discussion of contemporary television series’ ‘aesthetics of multiplicity’ conceptually intersects with layered polysemy since an ‘aesthetics of multiplicity’ describes how:

[s]hows that have marked tele-participation feature narratives with multiple points of view, typically through the use of ensemble casts, and often, but not always, through complex narrative structures. These program[me]s also often focus on incomplete stories, typically on seriality and interruption. (Ibid: 255-256)

Discourses of personal nostalgia constructed by post-2005 British time travel dramas intersect with this argument since they are attached to serialised character narratives and allow for ‘complex’ readings to be made. Moreover, Ross’s definition also suggests ‘quality popular’ appeal by noting how an ensemble cast provide multiple identification points for audiences (cf. Nelson 2007a: 177). Ross’s (2008) ‘aesthetics of multiplicity’ is problematic, however, as it rejects the textualist focus adopted by this thesis. By focusing upon online tele-participation, Ross overlooks in-depth textual analysis of how programme structure(s) facilitate multiple appeals to overlapping audience niches. Additionally, an aesthetics of multiplicity suggests decentring the broadcast programme as the object of study. This issue can be seen in Catherine Johnson’s (2012: 160-165) appropriation of Ross’s argument to analyse *Top Gear*’s (BBC 1978-) branding strategies. Johnson (Ibid: 162) recognises that “the three presenters, each with his own persona” enable *Top Gear*’s aesthetic of multiplicity:

Top Gear’s transferability is hinged upon an aesthetic of multiplicity. The three different presenters offer multiple points of access to the show, whether through the bullish and iconoclastic Clarkson, the metrosexual Hammond or the bumbling masculinity of May ...all of which helps extend the appeal of the show beyond the presumed middle-aged male audience for motoring programmes. (Ibid: 163)

Yet, despite noting that “the *Top Gear* brand ...enables discourses of masculinity and conservative politics to be worked through by a wide range of different viewers from a variety of perspectives” (Ibid: 164), this analysis rejects a textualist focus by instead analysing multiple branded paratexts. Layered polysemy differs in its conceptual focus by retaining the textualist focus of structured polysemy but it revises and updates this to recognise the industrial requirements (audience targeting strategies, scheduling etc.) surrounding *coalition television series*. ‘Coalition’ captures the multiple imagined audience discourses that are targeted by the textual layers of programmes produced for mainstream channels and acknowledges that such series construct various (sometimes contradictory) ‘dominant’ reading positions to maximise programme appeal. This does not mean that the text becomes “*neutrosemic* ...carry[ing] no inherent meaning” (Sandvoss 2005: 126), or solely accountable to the reading strategies of myriad audience (sub)cultures (McKee 2003). Instead, layered polysemy functions as a mid-level concept between audiences and (para)texts and recognises that coalition programmes encode structural layers that represent strategies designed to combine imagined audience niches. In other words, rather than offering a singular preferred reading, the ‘coalition’ text exhibits layered polysemy by incorporating multiple overlapping (and therefore sometimes contradicting) reading positions.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that discourses of nostalgia can be explored through the conventions of post-2005 British time travel series by considering how each programme’s ‘temporal contrast’ conventions overlap with this thesis’ theory of nostalgia. However, if a medium-specific approach to TV genres is taken, it becomes necessary to further demarcate the boundaries of post-2005 British time travel dramas due to television’s perceived intertextuality. For these reasons, other attributes including denotative time travel nova and their ‘quality popular’ status have been discussed. When attention is directed towards how ‘quality popular’ status impacts upon these programmes - such as the need for both appeal to multiple imagined audiences and a combination of ‘edginess’ with reassurance and closure - a range of nostalgic discourses can be discussed in relation to these requirements. The narrative may, for example, construct discourses of societal nostalgia by putting representations of ‘past’ and ‘present’ spatiotemporal locations into conflict through combining ‘time travel’ with ‘action adventure’ conventions. Additionally, ‘past’ and ‘present’ discourses can be temporally contrasted through the serialised narrative of lead

characters, so constructing a discourse of personal nostalgia. Both discourses of nostalgia can occur simultaneously within a programme's serialised-series format to construct a complex, yet reassuring, set of values through the juxtaposition of different spatiotemporal locations.

However, rather than simply reading these programmes ideologically, this chapter has analysed constructions of nostalgia as production strategies. More nuanced readings of how and why nostalgic discourses become constructed are provided through locating a series within its specific production context and examining how these factors impact upon articulations of nostalgia. *Primeval*'s apparent conservatism is complicated by recognising its need to appeal to 'popular' audiences, budgetary restrictions and its public service responsibilities concerning child audiences. The ambivalence that lead characters display towards both 'past' and 'present' in post-2005 British time travel dramas is also readable as a textual strategy designed to attract both 'quality' and 'popular' audiences. In each case, nostalgic discourses are informed by specific production contexts and so these issues should be foregrounded when analysing how post-2005 British time travel dramas construct nostalgia.

The encoding of personal nostalgia also renders 'quality popular' television internally contradictory as an analytical category, and necessitates that a more nuanced term than 'structured polysemy' be provided to discuss the textual structures of post-2005 British time travel dramas. Since discourses of personal nostalgia simultaneously connote character 'depth' and 'flatness', 'quality' and 'popular' cannot be reconciled into a unified reading position. Post-2005 British time travel dramas should therefore be analysed as examples of coalition television: a form of television constructed for mainstream broadcast channels that displays layered polysemy by constructing a variety of overlapping reading positions to maximise each programme's appeal. The concepts of coalition television and layered polysemy are developed further across the next three case study chapters by outlining how encodings of nostalgia respond to a range of industrial requirements including target audience and scheduling. For example, appeals to 'quality' and 'popular' tastes can be analysed further in relation to *Doctor Who*'s appeals to 'mainstream', 'cult' and generational audiences, as the next chapter discusses.

CHAPTER FIVE

GALLIFREY REVISITED: PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTING AND COALITION AUDIENCES FOR *DOCTOR WHO*

Introduction

This chapter explores how discourses of nostalgia can be discussed from an institutional perspective by providing a case study of *Doctor Who*. The success of *Doctor Who*'s return to British television has been frequently noted in academic work discussing the series, with many scholars identifying its ability to draw large audiences as part of its appeal⁶⁰.

Doctor Who's popularity with audiences alludes to the show's status as "Trailblazer Hit" (Nowell 2011: 46) within this thesis' genre cycle. The programme is both "commercially successful and ...content-wise ...differ[s] significantly from contemporaneous hits" (Ibid), triggering the commissioning of direct imitators (e.g. *Primeval*) and others that utilise time travel motifs but occupy different scheduling positions and are targeted towards different audience coalitions. However, despite *Doctor Who*'s trailblazing status, the programme challenges Nowell's (Ibid: 46-48) ideas surrounding how genre cycles begin. *Doctor Who* combines elements of the instigating "Speculator Production" (Ibid: 47) with aspects of the "Pioneer Production" (Ibid: 46) which Nowell (Ibid: 47) views as discrete categories. Speculator Productions generate "success with a ...type that either has not performed well commercially or has not generated a hit for a considerable time" whereas Pioneer Productions constitute "an incredibly high-risk business practice" (Ibid) by "plac[ing] great value on product differentiation" (Ibid). *Doctor Who* combines both of these categories: on the one hand, it is 'speculative' since the absence of a successful British science fiction TV series prior to the programme's return has been noted (see Cook and Wright 2006: 17-19). At the same time, its commissioning retains some aspects of BBC One's Saturday evening scheduling practices from the early-to-mid-noughties. Programmes such as *Strange* (BBC/Big Bear Films 2003), the remake of *Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)* (see Johnson 2005: 131-141, Chapman 2006: 188) and *Sea of Souls* (BBC/Sony Pictures International 2004-7) all occupied a later, post-watershed (see next chapter) scheduling position and so could be considered as less successful predecessors. Despite these antecedents, *Doctor Who* is also readable as 'pioneering' since its success displays BBC One's commitment "to take

⁶⁰ See Chapman (2006: 184), Newman (2005: 7), Butler (2007: 10), Hills (2010a: 2 and 2010c: 97) and McNaughton (2010: 192).

creative risks and innovate” (BBC Trust 2006: 5) in its drama output by producing programmes directed towards early-evening ‘family’ audiences. *Doctor Who* is thus a ‘Pioneering Speculator Production’ that re-establishes the popularity of British telefantasy/time travel motifs through institutionally-required strategies of risk-taking.

Doctor Who has generated much academic interest since its return (see, for example, Burdge, Burke and Larsen 2010, Hansen 2010) but none of these previous works have directly addressed how nostalgic discourse has contributed towards the series securing a cross-demographic coalition audience (although some articles have implied the point - see Bould 2008, Hills 2010d). This chapter addresses this absence by inserting nostalgia into these arguments. Firstly, the discussion considers how *Doctor Who*’s scheduling position of around 7pm on Saturday evenings on BBC One places an institutional requirement on the programme concerning its public service responsibilities and the need to achieve a ‘mainstream’/coalition audience. The chapter then examines how, through the programme’s combination of time travel conventions with those concerning ‘soap drama’ (Creeber 2004a), *Doctor Who* constructs discourses of personal nostalgia that are readable in relation to the imagined preferences of various audience segments. The programme’s combination of time travel and soap drama elements can be read as a strategy designed to court the high volume of audiences associated with soap opera (see Dunleavy 2009: 97 and 99), but through analysing *Doctor Who*’s narrative and aesthetic encoding(s) of personal nostalgia, strategies for attracting ‘youth’, ‘popular’, ‘quality’ and ‘cult’ audiences can also be observed. Through displaying layered polysemy, *Doctor Who*’s encoding of personal nostalgia unites disparate viewing niches into a BBC One coalition audience. The final section furthers the chapter’s overall argument by examining a different discourse arising from the extra-diegetic relations formed between the series’ post-2005 incarnation and its ‘classic’ (BBC 1963-89) version. Layered polysemy can again be discussed in relation to this discourse by considering how post-2005 *Doctor Who*’s “intratextuality” (Hills 2005a: 188; my emphasis) constructs reading positions for ‘mainstream’, fan and residual-occasional viewers of the old series.

Before beginning, two of the chapter’s parameters should be established. Firstly, although engaging with *Doctor Who*’s encoding of discourses of nostalgia, the analysis does not discuss the series’ construction of societal nostalgia. One explanation for overlooking this discourse could be offered by agreeing with de Groot’s (2009: 204) point that:

Doctor Who ... does not generally consider movement *between* times so much as movement *to* particular periods; similarly the series is interested in the specificity of the particular moment rather than its relationship to anything else – the past in *Doctor Who* is simply a backdrop to have the particular episodes' narrative projected onto.

Rather than using temporal contrast conventions to critique representations of 'past' and 'present', this posits that *Doctor Who* instead uses spatiotemporal locations as a backdrop for action-adventure narratives (see also Hills 2010a: 103-105). Whilst some fan-scholars have echoed de Groot by stating that the programme uses the 'past' to tell stories about present social structures (see Miles 2008: online), *Doctor Who*'s strategies for depicting 'past' historical periods "should not lead us to conclude that such representations are entirely without merit" (Hills 2010a: 109). However, this chapter argues that the series' construction(s) of personal nostalgia better demonstrate the programme's strategies for targeting different segments of a coalition audience since personal nostalgia recurs across numerous episodes and is inflected in ways that simultaneously address disparate audience niches.

Secondly, the chapter primarily focuses upon examples from the 'Russell T. Davies' era⁶¹, which ranged from 2005 to Christmas 2009 and covered Christopher Eccleston and David Tennant's tenures as the Doctor. Since *Doctor Who*'s re-formatting in early 2010 under executive producer Steven Moffat, discourses of nostalgia – and personal nostalgia especially – have become less prominent. Although Moffat's reign began by "poach[ing] furiously from the old, taking bits of visual continuity ...[and] generating pastiche Davies-style dialogue, e.g. the alien Atraxi being addressed as "you lot"" (Hills 2010f: online), these echoes have not been sustained. Instead, *Doctor Who* is now characterised by the heightened level of narrative complexity and uncanny monsters that some scholars associate with Moffat's author-function (see Hills 2010a: 31-32, Charles 2011) but, regarding the former trait, could also be related to wider perceived shifts in fictional television narrative (see Booth 2011, 2012). Nevertheless, a consequence of *Doctor Who*'s reformatting post-2010 has been that:

[w]hereas Davies layered emotional realism into *Doctor Who*'s fantastical premise ...Moffat has tended to fuse soap drama with SF more thoroughly. The result is that

⁶¹ Newman (2005: 113-118), Chapman (2006: 187), Rolinson (2007: 188) and Hills (2010a: 25-42) all discuss this period of the programme in relation to its lead writer and executive producer.

rather than the ordinary tempering and illuminating the extraordinary, they are intermixed and muddled: Amy is a mother, but the mother of a super-weapon, part-Time Lord character she already knows as a grown woman. (Hills 2011a: online)

Discourses of personal nostalgia remain obtusely identifiable within Moffat-era *Who* since episodes from this period have depended upon Amy Pond (Karen Gillan) remembering absent objects from the ‘present’, such as the Doctor (Matt Smith) or her husband, Rory (Arthur Darvill), as the solution to storylines (see ‘The Big Bang’ or ‘The Doctor’s Wife’). Moreover, some episodes of series six and seven have narrated the separation between the Doctor and Amy in affective terms (‘The Girl Who Waited’, ‘The God Complex’, ‘Dinosaurs on a Spaceship’). However, whilst Moffat-era *Who* occasionally constructs personal nostalgia, the prominence of these discourses has decreased in favour of alternative encodings of time travel that have an established popularity with audiences such as overlaps with the highly successful novel *The Time Traveller’s Wife* (Niffenegger 2005; see Ryan 2009: 152-153, Hills 2011b). Despite these changes, Moffat-era *Who* nevertheless continues to attract coalition audiences since final audience figures show an average of between seven and eight million viewers per episode (despite press reports to the contrary – see Spilsbury 2011: 11). This appeal is, however, premised on foregrounding the development of serialised enigmas through non-linear plotting over developing emotional connections between audiences and characters. Subsequently, the reformatting of *Doctor Who* post-2010 suggests that, although personal nostalgia remain residually identifiable in the programme, the discourse is now less central to its format⁶².

Negotiating the Definitional Vortex: Mainstream Appeal, *Doctor Who* and Genre Hybridity

‘Mainstream’ appeal is vaguely defined within Television Studies. Mark Jancovich and Nathan Hunt (2004: 27) note that, when the term is engaged with by TV scholars, it is characterised by a discursive elusiveness as ‘mainstream’ programming is usually defined in absentia. ‘Mainstream’ television is therefore connoted as something that other, more academically stimulating⁶³ forms such as ‘cult’⁶⁴ and/or ‘quality’⁶⁵ television are understood

⁶² An article in *The Guardian* saw Chris Weston identify the 2011 series’ ‘soap’ elements (i.e. “the number of cross-episode plotlines” (in Saner 2011: online) as off-putting.

⁶³ See Mills (2010: 6-7), Wickham (2010: 69-70).

⁶⁴ See Jancovich and Hunt (2004: 27), Chapman (2006: 189), (Lavery 2010: 2), Jowett (2010: 107), Robson (2010a: 209).

against⁶⁶. Hills' (2010c: 97) discussion of *Doctor Who* as a cult text demonstrates this point as he comments that "*Doctor Who*'s recent ratings success and newfound status as a flagship BBC program make it a "mainstream" TV program rather than cult TV". BBC Wales' *Doctor Who* is here positioned as 'mainstream' programming since it does not display the niche appeal traditionally associated with programmes accruing 'cult' status (see Gwenllian-Jones and Pearson 2004: ix, Angelini 2010: 41, Hills 2010g: 67, Jowett 2010: 107). Thus, despite the fact that binary oppositions between 'cult' and 'mainstream' appeal are difficult to sustain within the contemporary televisual landscape (see Johnson 2010a: 141-147, Lavery 2010: 2-5) – especially with regard to the relaunched *Doctor Who* (see Hills 2010a: 203-226 and 2010c), the notion of 'mainstream' television casts a shadow over Television Studies due to its absent presence. Mainstream TV incorporates what Brett Mills (2010: 2) names 'invisible television': programmes such as serialised-series and/or soap operas which have "repeatedly garnered high ratings" but remain overlooked within TV Studies.

What can be extrapolated from the definitional vortex surrounding previous discussions of 'mainstream' TV is how the concept is largely understood in relation to the size or volume of audience that these shows attract (see also Wickham 2010: 70). Hilary Robson (2010b) states in relation to *Grey's Anatomy* – a show with debatable cult appeal (see also Lavery 2010: 2) – that "*Grey's* defies the typical understanding of cult based on its viewership alone – with 18-21 million tuning in" (Robson 2010b: 74). Mills (2010: 4) also recognises the correlation between 'mainstream' appeal and audience quantity by replacing the former label with 'popular' and arguing that:

'the popular' is not a generic category, a component of a text or a motivator of production: it is instead precisely an indicator of the sustained mass appeal of a programme and, by implication, one indicator of its social significance.

Equating 'mainstream' or 'popular' appeal with audience size is difficult as it implies the 'mass' audience – a problematic term within debates concerning contemporary television because it partly connotes audience passivity (see Morley 1995: 297-298). Additionally, in the UK at present, "[a]udience figures of three or four million are generally enough to get a BBC One or ITV1 show into its channel's top twenty [rated programmes - RPG] for the

⁶⁵ See Mills (2010: 4), Pearson (2010: 14-17).

⁶⁶ See Smith (2006: 82-83) for a less binary approach to 'normal' and 'good' television.

week” (Lyon 2005: 401-402). Figures of three to four million may not sound like a ‘mass’ audience in a country populated by around 60 million people but, given that “competition between channels is measured by audience size ...and by the proportion of the total audience watching one channel” (Bignell 2004: 24), what numerically constitutes a ‘mass’ audience is questionable. Social, political and technological changes have impacted upon how, where and when people watch television nowadays (see, for example, Ang 1991: 94-97), meaning that a ‘mass’ audience could be relatively numerically small (e.g. four to five million viewers for a primetime drama series in the UK) but high in its percentage of audience share.

Singular definitions of ‘mainstream’ appeal can also overlook how various scheduling decisions and production contexts approach this status differently (see, for example, Johnson 2012: 68-72 on Channel 5’s initial branding)⁶⁷. Analysing BBC One provides an example of this point. The official service licence drawn up by the BBC Trust to outline the remit of BBC One for the year 2006-7 (the twelve month period immediately following *Doctor Who*’s successful relaunch), sets out the channel’s ‘mainstream’ requirements in amorphous terms by stating that “BBC One should deliver its remit through high quality programmes with wide appeal across all genres” (BBC Trust 2006: 2)⁶⁸. This requirement for BBC One programming to generate wide appeal links the ‘mainstream’ to the Corporation’s continuing status as subsidised by the licence fee. As Mary Debrett (2010: 37) argues, “audience share ...remains important for continued public funding”; so long as the BBC can demonstrate that its lead channel is the most-watched in the UK (see BBC Trust 2010: 1), whether at any one time or, alternatively, in terms of the amount of people watching at least once a week (Debrett 2010: 37; see also Petley 2006), then its status as a valuable public entity remains. It is subsequently unsurprising that BBC One remains committed to producing programmes with ‘wide appeal’ (see BBC Trust 2010: 2) as series employing textual strategies to attract and sustain a ‘mainstream’ audience comprised of high audience figures/percentage audience share form a key part of the channel’s remit.

Settling upon an equation between ‘mainstream’ audiences and a high percentage share of viewers nevertheless overlooks how definitions of mainstream appeal are also subject to internal differentiations regarding scheduling (see also Mills 2005: 6). Writing in relation to

⁶⁷ For further evidence of this point, see Hendy (2000) on ‘mainstream’ audiences in the context of radio.

⁶⁸ See Debrett (2010: 45) on the formation and responsibilities of the BBC Trust.

Doctor Who's Saturday evening prime-time slot on BBC One, Johnson (2005: 143) argues that a major requirement for this scheduling position is that programmes fulfil the channel's "public service remit to appeal to a broad consensus audience". For a series occupying this scheduling position to be internally-evaluated as 'successful' for BBC One, the show must obtain "popular appeal across a wide demographic" (Ibid) by bringing together diverse age/race/gender/taste demographics into a single 'coalition' audience. BBC One's remake of *Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)* was deemed 'unsuccessful' despite mobilising a variety of strategies designed to layer the text with simultaneous appeals to various demographics (Ibid: 141). The BBC subsequently cancelled *Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)* after two series as it failed to acquire the cross-demographic reach necessitated by the channel since audience figures indicated that it was only popular with younger viewers (Ibid). Thus, whilst there has been a widespread "shift from consensus television, based on creating programmes to appeal to the largest possible audience" (Johnson 2010a: 141), Saturday evening programming on BBC One instead needs to appeal to "a coalition of different groups who [are] view[ing] a text for diverse, possibly contradictory, reasons" (Angelini and Booy 2010: 23). Considering the audience for primetime BBC One programmes as 'coalition', rather than 'mass' or 'mainstream', allows for recognition that, instead of being based purely on numerical size, the appeal of a show to multiple overlapping and, in some cases, diverging audience niches deems such series a 'success'. Coalition success for early Saturday evening programming on BBC One means being a "'consensus' audience grabber" (Hills 2010a: 211) and this is something that *Doctor Who* sustains post-2005. One of the ways in which this appeal can be accounted for is through analysing its encoding of discourses of personal nostalgia. By displaying intertextuality with a variety of generic and/or demographic discourses, *Doctor Who* offers audiences a multitude of overlapping-yet-contradictory reading positions. The next section introduces these ideas by analysing *Doctor Who*'s combination of 'soap drama' and 'time travel' discourses.

The Structures of Time Travel: Genre Hybridity, Personal Nostalgia and Coalition Appeal

One way that *Doctor Who*'s narrative format constructs personal nostalgia is through assigning serialised plot structures to its lead characters and positioning these protagonists between discourses of 'past' and 'present'. Although personal nostalgia in *Doctor Who* is partly constructed through its serialised-series narrative strategies, these discourses are also

shaped by the programme's combination of genres. It has rightly been noted that generically-mixed programmes are not unique to the contemporary televisual environment (see Mittell 2004a: 155, Johnson 2005: 55-63 and 75-80, Nelson 2007a: 21). However, the increasing hybridity of television programmes can be aligned with contemporary industrial trends:

genre and television historically has been a useful way of informing and attracting viewers, and audiences might be built by combining different genres which appeal to different market segments. (Ibid: 22)

Cross-generic programmes are useful for television institutions as they work strategically to construct coalition audiences by bringing together disparate niches (see also Mittell 2004a: 155-156). Hills (2010a: 88) explores *Doctor Who*'s combination of genres by questioning whether "there may, in fact, be a host of different representations of time travel in BBC Wales' *Doctor Who*", proffering that "time travel works in the show as a multi-layered device linked to [myriad] genres" (Ibid: 89) such as 'mainstream' genres like sitcoms (Ibid: 98-99). However, it is the programme's combination of 'time travel' and 'soap drama' conventions that results in constructions of personal nostalgia⁶⁹.

Soap drama is a category of TV drama that has become increasingly visible in both US and UK television from the 1990s onwards (Creeber 2004a: 113-115) and encapsulates dramas which characteristically "explor[e] the intimate dynamics of 'families' made out of close friends, colleagues and small communities" (Ibid: 114). Soap drama's exploration of personal issues is linked to the industrial-historical context of fragmenting TV audiences discussed in the previous chapter because its conventions are shaped by:

the continuous nature of the series and serial allowing for greater room for ...cumulative narratives to explore both story and character complexity ...from the perspective of ...private and emotional lives. (Ibid: 115)

Glen Creeber (Ibid: 113-151) discusses 'soap drama' purely in relation to 'realist' forms of TV drama and suggests the genre overlaps with 'quality' appeal by making reference to enhanced depth of character that this form permits. One way that *Doctor Who* fuses soap

⁶⁹ See Bignell (2004: 115) on the usual separation of these discourses within TVSF.

drama tropes with time travel discourses is through such narrative devices as recurring allusions to the Doctor's private life (see also Hills 2010a: 100-102). These include references to the character's potential status as a father in 'Fear Her', 'The Doctor's Daughter' and 'A Good Man Goes to War', Davros' (Julian Bleach) references to the Doctor's multiple assistants as his 'Children of Time' ('Journey's End'; see also Barron 2010: 146), and, most notably, the increasing prominence of River Song (Alex Kingston) as the Doctor's potential future/past wife from the programme's fourth series onwards (see also Ibid: 147-148). Alternately, the inclusion of friends and family for Rose Tyler (Billie Piper), Donna Noble (Catherine Tate) and Amy Pond provide further examples of how 'soap drama' elements have been structured into *Doctor Who*'s format. As James Chapman (2006: 191) argues, "[t]he inclusion of Rose's mother Jackie (Camille Coduri) and on-off boyfriend Mickey (Noel Clarke) ... is evidence of ... [an] attempt to create a social context for the companion" by tying each companion to the 'everyday'.

Doctor Who's combination of 'time travel' and 'soap drama', when fused with its serialised-serial narrative structure, produces a format which episodically "revises its crucial binary oppositions and reworks them through new and altered character relationships" (Hills 2010d: 206). These renegotiations regularly involve oppositions between a companion's 'pre-' and 'post-'TARDIS existence. For example, Donna requests to be taken back to her home time after witnessing human cruelty towards the Ood in the future ('Planet of the Ood'). Similarly, after having seen Jackie transformed into a Cyberman in a parallel dimension, Rose is taken back to see her mum at the conclusion of 'The Age of Steel'. This scene counterpoints the character's sustained enthusiasm towards TARDIS life throughout the rest of series two. *Doctor Who*'s serialised lead characters therefore provide a flexible narrative format where "the contemporary world is both celebrated ... and critiqued" (Hills 2010a: 101-102) by introducing new characters/situations at the beginning of each episode. At the same time, the series' temporal juxtapositions are also mapped onto oppositions between the 'everyday' and the 'fantastic' that arise from *Doctor Who*'s genre combination(s) (see also Barron 2010: 139). Many episodes therefore include scenes where a character's contemporary status as travelling in time becomes compared with the 'normality' that they have left behind. Examples of this include 'Boom Town', where Mickey attempts to make Rose jealous by suggesting that he's seeing someone else, or the initial scenes between the Doctor and former companion Sarah Jane Smith (Elisabeth Sladen) in 'School Reunion'. Each of these scenes

“emotionally connects ...two time periods, the contemporaneous ordinary and the extrapolated extraordinary” (Hills 2010a: 100) by highlighting the differences between ‘past’/normality and ‘present’/fantastic.

The discourses of personal nostalgia constructed in these sequences can be read as a production strategy implemented to build a coalition audience for *Doctor Who* because:

[a]lthough suffering from the decline in audience figures which has affected all terrestrial programmes, *Coronation Street* (1960 - present), *Eastenders* (1985 – present) and *Emmerdale Farm/Emmerdale* (1972 – present) are still essential to television culture in Britain. (Geraghty 2010: 83)

Trisha Dunleavy (2009: 109) builds upon this observation by noting that within the UK “soaps have increased their frequency of schedule appearances in the last decade” and continually achieve consistently high ratings despite their increased visibility⁷⁰. Thus, as “mid-primetime British [soap operas] have always been obliged to target broader audiences than women” (Ibid: 116) due to the UK’s public service history (see Scannell 2000), it is logical that *Doctor Who* would seek to incorporate soap opera/drama conventions. Whilst wider changes affecting the television industry have resulted in ‘soap’ elements being incorporated into myriad forms of programming at present (see also Nelson 1997: 23-24, Creeber 2004a: 1-15, Smith 2006: 92, Dunleavy 2009: 149-152, Angelini and Booy 2010: 24), the articulation of soap drama tropes in *Doctor Who* works as a strategy to achieve cross-demographic appeal and assists the programme’s evaluation as ‘successful’ for BBC One. Discourses of personal nostalgia constructed through *Doctor Who*’s formal structures represent a production strategy that helps build a coalition audience.

However, equating *Doctor Who*’s success in fulfilling its scheduling-derived public service requirements with its combination of generic and narrative elements produces a one-dimensional reading of why the programme constructs personal nostalgia. The series’ encoding of this discourse can be interpreted in relation to the reading preferences of multiple

⁷⁰ Information lifted from the BARB website for July 2011 shows that each weekly episode of these soap operas occupies slots within the top ten programmes viewed by audiences for BBC One and ITV1. See <http://www.barb.co.uk/report/weekly-top-programmes?s=4>. [Accessed 09/08/11].

distinct imagined audience niches. The next section outlines another of these strategies by considering the programme's appeal to 'youth' audiences.

The In-Between People: Emotional Realism, Liminality and Youth Audiences

It has been argued that the 'Russell T. Davies era' of *Doctor Who* is characterised by an overt use of emotion (Hills 2010d: 207; see also Hills 2011a: online). The centrality of sentiment to post-2005 *Doctor Who* arises partly from the programme constructing discourses of personal nostalgia as these add an "affective trope" (Corner 1999: 50; original emphasis) to the show's lead characters which helps "create personal involvement ... in the viewer" (Ibid: 49) by provoking an emotional (alongside an intellectual) response (Gorton 2009: 39). Affective responses to televisual material have traditionally been overlooked and devalued within TV Studies (see Gorton 2006: 76), but Kristyn Gorton (Ibid: 74) argues against this absence by challenging "assumptions made about popular programmes which place sentiment in opposition to 'good television'" (see also Gorton 2009: 79). 'Good' television in the UK is equated with 'serious' dramas rooted in a social-realist tradition (Caughie 2000a: 13, Corner 2001, Creeber 2001a, Creeber 2004a: 12-14, Nelson 2007a: 44-52 and 170-171, Dunleavy 2009: 28-33; see also Nelson 2006a: 63-64). Gorton (2006: 74) counters these ideas by arguing "that emotion can be viewed as an aesthetic quality [of programmes] ... instrumental in its ability to create recognition between the viewer and screen". The emotional 'qualities' that programmes generate are encoded through formal devices (Ibid), and affective responses can be elicited from audiences by "[c]reating a tension within the character and within the situation" (Ibid: 75). In *Doctor Who*, positioning companion characters between a drab 'past' and a fantastic 'present' travelling through time, or constructing the Doctor as lonely due to Gallifrey's destruction, allows for tensions to be structured into lead characters. Discourses of personal nostalgia are therefore readable as forming part of *Doctor Who*'s affective appeal. Although the series is not defined by the "empirical realism" (see Ang 1985: 36) of 'quality' social realist serials such as *State of Play* (BBC/Endor Productions 2003) or *Exile* (BBC/Abbott Vision/Red Production Company 2011), in *Doctor Who* "[p]rivate emotional relationships – the typical terrain of soap – are represented as having psychological depth, with this being brought out via time-travel scenarios" (Hills 2010a: 101).

As Matt Hills (Ibid: 101-102) also observes, *Doctor Who* is characterised by what Ian Ang (1985: 42) terms ‘emotional realism’ since:

things, people, relations and situations which are regarded at the denotative level as unrealistic, and unreal, are at a connotative level apparently not seen at all as unreal, but in fact as ‘recognisable’.

The episode ‘Army of Ghosts’ provides an example of *Doctor Who* constructing emotional realism through discourses of personal nostalgia. Whilst hiding in the TARDIS, Jackie Tyler observes her daughter as she assists the Doctor in tracing the origins of shadowy figures (the titular ‘ghosts’ that are later revealed to be dimension-travelling Cybermen) that have been frequenting Earth. At a denotative level, this scene is highly unrealistic since it is located within an alien time machine and is based around science fiction themes of unknown invaders. However, during this sequence Jackie remarks to Rose:

You’ve changed so much ...And you’ll keep on changing. And in forty years time, fifty, there’ll be this woman, this strange woman walking through the market place on some planet a billion miles from Earth. But she’s not Rose Tyler, not any more. She’s not even human.

The emotions alluded to in this dialogue are ‘realistic’ on a connotative level since they allude to the changes that people go through– not necessarily evaluated as better by others – over the life-course. This scene can therefore “creat[e] empathy between viewer and screen” (Gorton 2006: 75) by alluding to situations that historically-located audiences may have experienced such as the pulls to the ‘past’ that maintaining long-distance relationships with family and/or friends require (see also Gorton 2009: 83 and 151).

Doctor Who’s discourses of personal nostalgia display the layered polysemy that coalition television requires since they are interpretable in relation to the reading formations of myriad imagined audience niches. Personal nostalgia could be read in relation to discourses of quality affective television since:

an emotional journey ...makes good television ...emotion becomes reflective of society and therefore enables its viewers to connect with what they are watching in a more meaningful way. (Ibid: 80)

This point is nevertheless problematic in that it accounts for an audience's affective response to the programme by recourse to a prevailing social *zeitgeist*. Instead, as argued throughout this thesis, emotional discourses articulated through textual devices can be read as strategies implemented in response to production discourses such as audience targeting. From this second perspective, affective responses to *Doctor Who*'s personal nostalgia can be read as a strategy designed to construct a reading position for 'quality' demographics (see also below).

One audience niche that *Doctor Who*'s constructions of personal nostalgia appear not to target are children, again raising questions concerning a child's ability to interpret nostalgic discourse (see Chapter One) and the discourse's viability as a strategy for targeting such audiences. The inclusion of child characters, such as CAL (Eve Newton) in 'Silence in the Library/Forest of the Dead' or Tim (Thomas Brodie-Sangster) in 'Human Nature/The Family of Blood', are crucial to *Doctor Who*'s coalition appeal since their presence within an ensemble cast provides children with points of identification (Messenger Davies 2001b: 97, Nixon 2002: 96). However, although these characters are constructed through *Doctor Who*'s juxtaposition of the 'fantastic' and the 'everyday', the affective discourses articulated through these characters concern fear and/or alienation rather than tensions between distinct 'past' and 'present' time periods. Chloe Webber (Abisola Agbaje) in 'Fear Her' exemplifies this trait since the character is represented as lonely due to her mother's refusal to discuss the death of her father, which then leads to her possession by the estranged Isolus child. The fantastic (Isolus) and the everyday (Chloe) combine here to convey the child's affective state but this emotional discourse prioritises binaries between 'insider/outsider' and 'security/insecurity' over splits between 'past/present'. Children such as Chloe, or the titular Empty Child (Albert Valentine) from 'The Empty Child/The Doctor Dances', can be read in relation to a range of generic discourses: on the one hand, both of these characters might signify the recurrent trope of the 'monstrous child' in horror texts (see Cherry 2009: 108). However, given the frequency with which both monstrous and non-monstrous children in *Doctor Who* are positioned as frightened and/or alone, they can also be analysed in relation to the convention within children's texts to "symbolise and find resolutions for unconscious psychological conflicts typical among children ...[including] fears of abandonment" (Damour

2003: 15; see also Messenger Davies 2001b: 97). It is therefore unsurprising that *Doctor Who*'s child characters are always rescued from their affect-based predicaments through the Doctor's agency. Moreover, if it is considered that children's television is created with a view "to encourag[ing] increased expression in children through imitation and repetition" (Wells 2001: 103; see also Buckingham 2002b: 50), the recurrence of this trope could be read as a strategy employed for developing children's emotional literacy. This recurrent plot device connotes that, no matter how scared or lonely children feel whilst watching, the Doctor will always be there to save them from the monsters under the bed ('The Girl in the Fireplace') or lurking within the family ('The Idiot's Lantern'). Rather than seeking to affectively engage children through personal nostalgia, *Doctor Who* instead targets these viewers through a variant form of emotional realism that reassures young viewers about the Doctor's heroic qualities⁷¹.

However, although *Doctor Who* does not emotionally engage children through personal nostalgia, the ongoing negotiation of this discourse through the programme's lead characters is readable as a strategy designed to incorporate 'teen' and/or 'youth' audiences into a coalition BBC One audience. *Doctor Who*'s lead characters connote a sense of "pass[ing] through a realm or dimension that has few or none of the attributes of the past or coming state" (Turner and Turner 1978: 2) since the Doctor and the companion are positioned between discourses of 'past' and 'present', 'quotidian/fantastic' and 'human/alien' (see Hills 2010d: 199-207, Britton 2011: 19). The characters' 'in-between' status makes them readable as expressions of liminality, subsequently connecting the programme's constructions of personal nostalgia to this status. 'The Lazarus Experiment' and '42' provide an example of *Doctor Who*'s liminality-through-personal nostalgia via Martha Jones' character (Freema Agyeman). Throughout these episodes Martha's adventures battling scientific mutations or stopping a spaceship from crashing into a distant sun are interrupted by the intrusion of her mother, Francine (Adjoa Andoh), either stopping the character or contacting her on the telephone. Such interruptions indicate a change in genre since Francine's appearances onscreen result in 'soap drama' elements being foregrounded and juxtaposed with the ongoing 'science fiction' plot (see also Hills 2010a: 102-103). 'Past' and 'present', as well as

⁷¹ Such a representational strategy may construct another form of nostalgia in older viewers for their memories of watching *Doctor Who* as a child and being scared. See Wells (2002: 76) on the dual encoding of 'family' programmes and their ability to provoke nostalgic memories in adults. See also Krips (1997: 45-48) on children's literature.

‘everyday’ and ‘fantastic’, are contrasted in these scenes, generating personal nostalgia in relation to Martha and heightening the emotional impact of a scene by employing soap drama’s audio-visual codes of close-ups of anguished protagonists’ face(s) (Creeber 2004a: 115). Thus, whilst Hills (2010d: 200) argues that “the 9th and 10th Doctors narratively mediate human/alien and masculine/feminine binaries”, a corresponding argument can be made in relation to all of *Doctor Who*’s recurring characters concerning the programme’s narrative opposition of past and present. *Doctor Who*’s formal structures construct characters such as the Doctor and the companion as liminal by regularly reminding viewers of the ongoing negotiation between their textual ‘present’ and the spatiotemporal world that has been left behind.

This construction of character can be read in relation to appeals to teen audiences because *Doctor Who*’s liminal representation of lead characters overlaps with teen TV’s tendency to “define problems of teen identity” (Rutherford 2004: 29). Leonie Rutherford (Ibid: 30) suggests how cultural discourses associated with teenage identities map on to science fiction narratives by recognising that:

science-fiction drama explores ‘alienness’ ...a trajectory in which points of contact and communication must be found with difference. Potentially, this may construct a politics of exclusion, in which the teenager, troped as alien, may confirm the normative status of adult subjectivity.

As the examples of Rose and Martha suggest, when the companion character’s actions and whereabouts become evaluated from the viewpoints of their parents, each is viewed as ‘alien’ in that their behaviour violates norms of responsibility which are diegetically encoded as ‘adult’. It may be difficult to identify exactly where an individual audience member’s sympathies fall in these scenes; some older/adult viewers may empathise with Francine or Jackie. *Doctor Who*’s ability to “explore and connect different viewpoints on a topic” (Nelson 1997: 42) though personal nostalgia nevertheless demonstrates its status as television designed to appeal to a coalition audience; coalition television is, after all, intended “to appeal to a broader audience ...[by] includ[ing] teenagers ...and older characters” (Nelson 2007a: 177). Although *Doctor Who* does not strictly adhere to this trend in terms of casting – both Billie Piper and Freema Agyeman were in their mid-twenties during their time in the programme – the companion acts as a connotative teenager through being transient between

‘adult’ and ‘adolescent’ roles. Donna’s status as a temporary worker living at home with her parents exemplifies this strategy since the character connotes ‘younger’ attributes such as dependency on her family and immaturity despite Catherine Tate’s age. Nevertheless, despite providing different points for audience identification in scenes foregrounding the companion’s liminality, the companion, torn between their two lives, will most likely encourage audience identification since television characters exhibiting a “feeling of being hemmed in by circumstances ...gain our sympathies” (Smith 2006: 87).

Doctor Who’s liminal lead characters intertextually reference tropes used in ‘teen’ TV since aligning the companion with the Doctor’s ‘outsider’ status (see Barron 2010: 148) makes each character “one who is neither adult nor child, [and] may function as an avatar of potential other futures, critiquing social hierarchies” (Rutherford 2004: 30). A scene from ‘The Parting of the Ways’, where “Rose becomes dissatisfied with the typical, domestic life of a shop worker into which she was born, and desires to be “better”” (Selznick 2010: 82), best demonstrates this point. Rose’s longing to return to the Doctor’s world indicates the series’ occasional representation of “time travel ...[as] a consciousness-raising activity” (Hills 2010a: 102) in that the character’s liminal status permits alternative versions of ‘the present’ to become articulated through a discourse of personal nostalgia. In all of these examples, *Doctor Who* constructs a reading position targeting ‘youth’ audiences by combining the “intense emotionality” (Moseley 2001a: 42) of teen drama with the device successfully employed in a variety of US telefantasy shows of exploring issues concerning teen identities at a metaphorical level (see Johnson 2001a, Kaveney 2001: 16-17, Tonkin 2001: 38, Parks 2003, Banks 2004 and Williamson 2010).

Constructing a reading position for teen audiences within *Doctor Who*’s format is important due to the series’ institutional need to attract a coalition audience to Saturday evening BBC One programming. At present, the BBC targets youth demographics as a discrete audience niche that is catered for through programmes aired on the Corporation’s digital narrowcast channel BBC3 (see also Debrett 2010: 49). BBC3 is also used to strategically lead youth audiences to *Doctor Who* on BBC One by regularly repeating the series in its schedules and, up until 2011, screening the programme’s ‘making of’ series *Doctor Who Confidential* (BBC 2005-11) on the channel directly after airing new episodes. Targeting youth audiences through personal nostalgia can be read as a production strategy for BBC One since it has been

demonstrated elsewhere that ‘mainstream’ public service channels struggle to attract youth audiences within a multi-channel environment (see Born 2003: 782, Petley 2006: 43, Debrett 2009: 821, Turner 2009: 55, Brown, M. 2010, Johnson 2012: 87, 97-98 and 103). Issues surrounding the absence of youth demographics as part of a Saturday evening BBC One consensus audience have also been raised by production personnel working on *Doctor Who*. The audio commentary accompanying the DVD release of ‘The Poison Sky’ features a discussion between Russell T. Davies, producer Susie Liggat and David Tennant who, whilst watching the episode, talk about casing Ryan Sampson as Luke Rattigan in this story. During this exchange they joke that, prior to being given the role, Sampson was unfamiliar with *Doctor Who* and use the actor’s ignorance as an entry point to discussing wider issues surrounding the problems of attracting ‘youth’ audiences to BBC One programming:

Davies: It is that funny thing, it’s that age that you just can’t get people watching television. Quite right too as they’re busy [...] They are the lost viewers. Try as you might to get them, you might as well not bother.

[Tennant and Liggat hum in agreement]

Tennant: That’s why the PR Company are always trotting us onto Radio 1 desperate to try and get this missing audience

Davies: Yes, yes, yes.

(in ‘The Poison Sky’ [DVD Commentary], 2008)

Whilst ‘youth’ audiences are not important to BBC One because of their sell-on value to advertisers, as they are in the context of commercially-funded channels such as ITV2 and E4 (see Birchall 2004: 176, Davis and Dickinson 2004: 11, Johnson 2005: 107 and 126), this audience group remains significant to internal evaluations of *Doctor Who*’s ‘success’. Discourses of personal nostalgia can therefore be interpreted as textual strategies implemented to assist such concerns: Rachel Moseley (2001a: 42) argues that “[t]eenageness is a significant ‘in-between’ period, and teen drama deals with the stuff of adolescent anxiety”. Since *Doctor Who*’s encoding of personal nostalgia positions lead characters – especially its connotative teenage companions – between discourses of ‘past’/everyday/adult responsibility and ‘present’/fantastic/individual freedom, these affective tropes overlap with

contemporary discourses of teenage/youth experience as an ‘in-between’ stage (Hunt 2005: 103-104, Pole, Pilcher and Williams 2005: 1-4; see also Banks 2004: 23-26).

These strategies have been successful: end of series polls compiled by *Doctor Who Magazine*, the programme’s officially-licensed fan-orientated publication, highlight that stories where affective tropes become foregrounded are especially popular with the programme’s teen audiences. Episodes such as ‘Bad Wolf/The Parting of the Ways’ and ‘The Girl in the Fireplace’, which construct discourses of personal nostalgia through either separating the Doctor and the companion or exploring the Doctor’s lonely nature, have found greater resonance with 18-30 audiences than with the programme’s older viewers (see Spilsbury 2005: 34, Griffiths and Spilsbury 2007a: 48-49, Griffiths and Spilsbury 2007b: 44). Discourses of personal nostalgia within *Doctor Who* are therefore readable in relation to BBC One’s public service responsibilities concerning the need to attract “hard-to-get-to” (Birchall 2004: 176) youth demographics to its Saturday evening schedules.

Targeting ‘teen/youth’ viewers is not the only way that discourses of personal nostalgia in *Doctor Who* can be read as appeals to imagined audience segments. As is characteristic of coalition television’s layered polysemy, *Doctor Who*’s affective elements can also be interpreted in relation to other reading preferences such as ‘quality’, ‘popular’ and ‘cult’ niches. The next section argues these points.

The Dimensions Between Us: Personal Nostalgia, Melodrama’s Aesthetics and Layered Polysemy

Soap opera’s ability to articulate affective discourses and employ these as a strategy for “promoting audience loyalty and habitual patterns of viewing” (Dunleavy 2009: 97) is well documented (see also Hobson 2003: 128-130, Geraghty 2010: 86). Alongside its serialised narratives concerning the private lives of recurring characters, soap opera’s emotional engaging of its audience is also partly accredited to its aesthetic codes since “[a]cting, editing, musical underscoring, and the use of zoom lens frequently conspire to create scenes of high (melo)drama” (Feuer 1995: 119). Deploying these aesthetic devices, typically at the climax of individual scenes and/or episodes (see *Ibid*: 120-121), adds intensity to viewing by moving towards “moments of “peak” hysteria” (*Ibid*: 120). Although “the aesthetic experience of

soap is ...mixed rather than singular” (Dunleavy 2009: 117), soap opera – and soap drama – strategically deploy melodramatic codes for “*invit*[ing audiences] to feel” (Gorton 2009: 80; original emphasis) and actively engaging with the programme (Ibid: 41).

Doctor Who utilises soap drama’s aesthetic conventions to express:

[t]he blending of feeling-states and external events ...repeatedly encapsulated in a single image; that of the Doctor unable to say what he really feels, as tears brim in his eyes ...The Doctor becomes not only the mythic hero, but also a melodramatic one. (Hills 2010d: 209)

Hills’ use of ‘melodramatic’ is well judged since scenes of the Doctor looking forlorn are used to express heightened emotional states such as the loss of a companion (see Pearson 1992: 41, Feuer 1995: 115-116, Dunleavy 2009: 118-119). However, arguing that post-2005 *Doctor Who* is “about time travel imprinted by loss” (Hills 2010d: 210) doesn’t go far enough since the programme’s employment of melodramatic conventions is usually used specifically when articulating personal nostalgia. Emotional sequences such as Rose’s departure in ‘Doomsday’ (see also Walters 2008: 74), Pete Tyler’s (Shaun Dingwall) death in ‘Father’s Day’ or the shooting of Jenny (Georgia Moffett) – the titular character from ‘The Doctor’s Daughter’ – are all structured around a lead character’s experience of “regret at opportunities lost” (Cook 2005: 15). These scenes communicate a character’s anguish at being unable to recapture a lost ‘past’ and alter their ‘present’ status as alone. Through a combination of performance codes, mournful music and close-ups of characters’ faces (see Figures 5.1 and 5.2), melodramatic aesthetics enhance articulations of personal nostalgia by employing audio-visual codes that will emotionally engage viewers.



Figure 5.2: The death of Pete Tyler.



Figure 5.3: Rose becomes trapped in an alternative dimension.

Doctor Who's encoding of personal nostalgia through soap opera/melodrama's aesthetic conventions results in a number of overlapping reading positions being constructed for different audience niches. On the one hand, the programme's incorporation of soap opera conventions to express personal nostalgia utilises aesthetic strategies which have pre-established 'popularity' with audiences. What this reading closes off, is the potential for these

sequences to be read as textual strategies that could also attract ‘quality’ niches to *Doctor Who*. Jane Feuer (2007: 149) suggests tensions between ‘quality’ and ‘melodrama’ discourses by stating that “[l]ike all quality TV drama, *The West Wing* is a soap opera in terms of narrative structure although not in terms of melodramatic style”. Feuer therefore indicates how “debates about ‘quality’ ha[ve] tended to set soaps up as the (sometimes unspoken) other” (Geraghty 2010: 90) since ‘quality’ programming is not discursively associated with melodrama (see also Cardwell 2007: 27). As scenes expressing personal nostalgia in *Doctor Who* are framed through television’s conventional shot set-up of the close-up (Ellis 2006: 13; see also Bignell 2004: 90, Bignell and Orlebar 2005: 220), this convention could also be read as distancing the programme’s articulation of affective content from ‘quality’ discourses. TV Studies’ debates about ‘quality’ have implied that “textual analysis seeking visual interest or originality in a soap opera would not be worthwhile” (Geraghty 2010: 90; see also Cardwell 2007: 26). Additionally, the frequency with which melodramatic conventions are employed in *Doctor Who* – especially towards the end of Tennant’s tenure as the Doctor (see Hills 2010d: 209) - could be considered by some viewers as excessive (see, for example, Walker 2010, Saner 2011) and therefore work against the series’ claims to ‘quality’ status by positioning its emotional content as ‘trashy’ (see Feuer 1995: 115-116). *Doctor Who*’s regular employment of soap opera codes for visualising its emotional content provides multiple overlaps with discourses of ‘popular’ television and these disassociate the series with appeals to upper/middle class audiences (Nelson 1997: 30) and ‘quality’ television’s ‘edgy’ content (see Rogers, Epstein and Reeves 2002: 53, Feuer 2007).

Reading personal nostalgia’s aesthetic encoding within *Doctor Who* as ‘not quality’ overlooks how other aspects of these sequences cannot be contained within a singular reading of ‘soap opera’ or ‘popular’ television. As Greg M. Smith (2006: 89) argues, “good television distinguishes itself not by rejecting the practices of ordinary television but by using elegantly efficient instances of standard ... techniques”. *Doctor Who*’s encoding of personal nostalgia demonstrates this point since, if specific scenes are analysed in-depth (see Walters 2006, 2008), these sequences intersect with established discourses of ‘quality’ appeal. Jenny’s death scene in ‘The Doctor’s Daughter’ demonstrates this argument well. The emotional impact of this sequence is heightened by its position within the narrative’s syntagmatic progression. Jenny’s shooting by General Cobb (Nigel Terry) appears after a scene concluding the plot’s ‘conflict’ storyline by having the Doctor break open Messaline’s (the episode’s fictional

planet) mythical ‘Source’ and end the war between the human colonists and the native Hath. Jenny’s death is thus preceded by a sense of hope since the release of the Source’s energy is followed by multiple group shots and close-ups of members of both races looking, awe-inspired, up at the Eden-esque location, and shots of the Hath leader (Ruari Mears) laying down its weapon (see Figure 5.3). The tonal shift when Jenny jumps in front of the Doctor to prevent Cobb from shooting her father therefore involves audiences shifting quickly from a feeling of optimism to one of tragedy.



Figure 5.4: The Hath lay down their arms.

Throughout the death scene, Tennant’s performance displays restraint, nuance and, in terms of expressing affect, draws upon “verisimilar code[s] ... gestures coded by cultural expectations about how particular characters in particular situations might behave in real life” (Pearson 1992: 55). Following confirmation from Martha that Jenny won’t regenerate, Tennant’s performance expresses the character’s despair and anguish through subtle flicks of the eyes from right to left, connoting a sense of not knowing where to look or how to react, before then composing himself into a sense of anger by furrowing the brow and angling the eyebrows. Similarly, at the end of the scene, after lecturing both humans and Hath on the need for tolerance, the character’s unbroken glance, directed first down towards Jenny and then outwards towards the camera, suggests the Doctor’s linking of this death to the wider context of people he has lost during the series and beyond (see Figures 5.4 and 5.5).

Tennant's codes of performance during this sequence might be read as excessive by some since "[switching] non-naturalistically into ...intense performance ...convey[s] the Doctor's human-alien duality" (Hills 2010a: 154; see also Hills 2010d: 203, Britton 2011: 151) through "rapid shuttling between emotional states" (Ibid). Despite these potential readings of the scene, and as Hills (2010a: 154) also recognises in relation to other examples from the series, the emotional power that Tennant's performance conveys throughout this sequence displays the "careful characterisations and performances" (Cardwell 2007: 26) associated with quality television (see next chapter; see also Pearson 2009).



Figure 5.5: The loss of Jenny.



Figure 5.6: The anguish of a Time Lord.

The ‘quality’ encoding of this scene extends beyond aspects of Tennant’s performance, however, since ‘value’ is further readable in this sequence’s encoding of personal nostalgia due to its “use of appropriate, even original music” (Cardwell 2007: 26). As the Doctor strides towards Cobb and points a gun at the murderous character’s head, the soundtrack employs a lone bass drum, beating at a consistent rhythmic pace, that signifies on a variety of levels; the audio adds drama to the narrative by building tension whilst also connoting the inner turmoil of the Doctor’s character. However, as Tennant delivers the line ‘I never would’, the soundtrack changes and Murray Gold’s ‘Gallifrey’ theme is introduced as audio-accompaniment to the remainder of the sequence. The soundtrack works as an aural cue to the Doctor’s ‘past’, and how his racial heritage impacts upon the character’s decision making in the ‘present’, consequently adding depth to the scene by anchoring (see Barthes 1977) the general emotionality achieved through the sequence’s visual codes to the Doctor’s nostalgia for his destroyed home planet (see also Gorton 2009: 81-82). The synergy between audio, visual and generic codes in this sequence’s expression of personal nostalgia thus recalls how ‘quality’ television exhibits “a sense of stylistic integrity, in which themes and style are intertwined in an expressive and impressive way” (Cardwell 2007: 26; see also Mittell 2009: 125-128).

Analysing this scene's multiple audio-visual layers opens the sequence up to interpretation through multiple imagined audience discourses: some viewers may read this sequence purely in relation to melodramatic codes of "blaring music and operatic acting" (Feuer 1995: 116; see also Banks 2004: 18-19). Nevertheless, the scene's articulation of personal nostalgia can also be read through discourses of 'quality' television. Exact data concerning the demographic appeal of *Doctor Who* is scarce, but the programme's encoding of scenes articulating personal nostalgia through aesthetic strategies used elsewhere in TV Studies to discuss 'quality' television could be read as a policy used to incorporate ABC1 demographics into the programme's coalition audience. The wider success of this strategy is potentially validated by Tim Glanfield and William Gallagher's (2011: online) report that post-2010 *Doctor Who* "is ...attracting a different class of audience - Whovians are getting younger, but they're also getting posher". This information does, however, suggest that the programme's recoding and backgrounding of personal nostalgia correlates with a reconfiguration of the programme's coalition audience, where a higher percentage of ABC1 demographics watch *Doctor Who* when personal nostalgia becomes less prominent in episodes. However, Glanfield and Gallagher's research needs to be considered alongside other textual strategies employed in Moffat-era *Who* that are designed to appeal specifically to more sophisticated and younger viewers. These include re-coding the Doctor's character to connote an aristocratic eccentric through costuming and vocal performance/dialogue, increased narrative complexity and, with regard to children, greater inclusion of child characters (see 'Night Terrors' and 'The Doctor, The Widow and the Wardrobe'). It should be remembered that this data applies to a specific era of the programme that this chapter does not directly address and so generalisations to other historical-production periods should not be made. Despite this, pre-2010 *Doctor Who*'s textual strategies for encoding personal nostalgia are readable through 'quality' discourses and so can also be interpreted as appeals to upscale demographics.

This section's discussion provides another example of how 'quality' and 'popular' again constitute simultaneously available - yet discursively irreconcilable - reading positions that audiences can occupy in relation to *Doctor Who*'s articulation of personal nostalgia; both positions are readable from the series yet remain discrete (see also pages 107-114). The layered polysemy demonstrated by articulations of personal nostalgia suggests that audiences' negotiation of a series' affective tropes depends upon "interpretation of the events

on screen” (Walters 2008: 74) in that the discourse becomes readable in relation to different audience groups’ culturally structured and patterned tastes. Furthermore, when this range of interpretations is contextualised within prime-time Saturday evening BBC One scheduling, *Doctor Who*’s aesthetic encoding of personal nostalgia constitutes a strategy designed to combine multiple audience demographics into a coalition audience. However, alongside being readable through discourses of ‘quality’, ‘popular’ and ‘youth’ appeal, the combination of narrative and aesthetic strategies that *Doctor Who* uses for expressing personal nostalgia also exhibits characteristics associated with cult appeal. The remainder of this section outlines this argument.

Doctor Who’s textual strategies for encoding personal nostalgia in recurring characters can be discussed in relation to the programme’s cult appeal since, as mentioned on page 108, an ongoing negotiation between structuring oppositions provides lead protagonists in TV drama with an endlessly deferred narrative. This term refers to how “cult TV programmes often fail to resolve their major, driving narrative questions, these questions thus remain open, and narrative closure being indefinitely deferred” (Hills 2004a: 512-513). Previous academic work has frequently recognised that the Doctor’s mysterious nature represents the character’s central unresolved question and provides the programme with its core enigma (see Hills 2002: 134-135 and 2004a: 513, Newman 2005: 9, Green 2010: 7, Britton 2011: 17-21). However, throughout the Russell T. Davies era a parallel enigma structuring the Doctor’s character emerged concerning personal nostalgia. ‘Will the Doctor ever be reunited with the people he’s lost?’ was a recurring question across the series and, even when it appeared that this question would be resolved in ‘The End of Time: Part Two’ by restoring the Time Lords, final resolution was rejected since Gallifrey reappeared at the wrong point in its history (see also Hills 2010d: 209).

Relating *Doctor Who*’s encoding of personal nostalgia to the programme’s ‘cult’ appeal can be developed by considering that previous academic work on cult television has noted that lead characters in programmes attracting these audience are often “conflicted in some way” (Gwenllian Jones 2002: 85). Relevant examples here include Buffy Summers’ (Sarah Michelle Gellar) divided responsibilities as both the Slayer and a teenager⁷², or the status of

⁷² See Gwenllian Jones (2002: 85-86), Allrath (2005: 135), Wilcox (2010a: 38), Jowett (2010: 110) and Williamson (2010: 61).

some of *Battlestar Galactica*'s (Sci-Fi/NBC Universal Television/R&D TV/David Eick Productions 2004-9) Cylons as both human and alien⁷³, but many other examples could also be provided⁷⁴. These arguments suggest that the conflicted nature of cult TV characters arises through opposing narrative discourses such as human/alien or reality/fantasy. The Doctor's opposition between discourses of 'past' and 'present', which assists the programme's encoding of personal nostalgia, can be aligned with these other examples since it is indicative of how contemporary television characters are conceived with "interesting complexities built in ...at the ground-level" (Espenson 2010: 49) to engage a cult audience. Restoring the Time Lords (or Rose) fully to the diegesis, or having the Doctor completely forget the Time War, would "correspond either to a collapse of the format, or to a major (and risky) reinvention of the show concerned" (Hills 2004a: 513) and thus result in new aspects of the character having to become foregrounded to maintain audience interest⁷⁵. Although this has partly happened during Matt Smith's tenure as the Doctor by foregrounding the character's 'human/alien' binary⁷⁶ (see, for example, 'The Doctor's Wife', 'A Good Man Goes to War' and 'The Wedding of River Song'), the Doctor's negotiation between his remembered 'past' and contemporary 'loneliness' is indicative of a strategy designed to engage 'cult' fans with the character.

Studies of audience reception of cult texts add additional support to considering how *Doctor Who*'s discourses of personal nostalgia work strategically to incorporate cult reading preferences within a coalition BBC One series. This point can be made by extrapolating points from Roberta Pearson's (2009: 143-146) research into online discussions of *Lost* (ABC/Bad Robot/Touchstone Television 2004-10). Pearson demonstrates that *Lost*'s cult fans have displayed great interest in discussing the programme's ongoing hermeneutic concerning the show's enigmatic location, resulting in this audience group producing a wealth of online resources that provides:

⁷³ See Calvert (2010), Hills (2010g: 73), Maull and Lavery (2010: 48-49).

⁷⁴ See also Hills (2002: 135), Abbott (2010: 309), Battis (2010a: 79 and 2010b: 105), Byers (2010a: 93 and 2010b: 174), Gray (2010b: 123), Lacey (2010: 272), Millman (2010: 30-31), Morreale (2010: 72), Örnebring (2010: 24), Stafford (2010: 128) and Wilcox (2010b: 248)

⁷⁵ Resolving this issue may also defamiliarise the character for the programme's 'occasional' viewers. See, for example, Nelson (2007a: 89).

⁷⁶ See Hills (2010d: 199-207) on the negotiation of this binary during both Eccleston and Tennant's time as the Doctor.

character information ... addressed to the myriads of Internet fans who devote hours online attempting to decipher *Lost*'s central narrative enigmas, not to those who wonder whether Kate will end up with Jack or with Sawyer. (Ibid: 146)

This observation seems to downplay the importance of *Lost*'s 'soap drama' elements as part of the series' cult appeal since Pearson (Ibid: 143) instead notes how interest in the ongoing character relationships is associated with the show's 'mainstream' appeal in press discourses. The crucial difference between the unresolved enigma(s) in *Lost* and those in *Doctor Who* are that the latter's endlessly deferred narrative focuses upon the central character(s) instead of its location. Since *Doctor Who*'s core narrative questions focus upon the interiority of its lead character(s), the discourses of personal nostalgia articulated through the series' format can be read as an element of the show's appeal to cult audiences. Through utilising textual structures to construct an ongoing hermeneutic focused upon lead characters, and negotiating this question through melodrama's aesthetic codes, *Doctor Who* provides emotional engagement with the series whilst securing a cult audience.

So far this chapter has examined constructions of personal nostalgia and argued that this discourse displays layered polysemy through being aligned with various overlapping-yet-contradictory imagined audience discourses. The polysemic nature of personal nostalgia in *Doctor Who* assists the series' status as coalition television by providing simultaneous appeal(s) to various (potentially overlapping) audience niches and uniting these into a mainstream audience. *Doctor Who*'s encoding of personal nostalgia therefore helps the series to meet the public service requirements of its scheduling position by attracting a range of disparate audience niches to primetime BBC One on Saturday evenings. Personal nostalgia is, however, not the only discourse of nostalgia that *Doctor Who* constructs to fulfil these responsibilities. The next section identifies a separate discourse – arising through the series' intratextual relations with its 'classic' incarnation – that is readable in relation to a similarly wide range of age-based audience groups.

Revenge of the Seventies: Intratextuality, Nostalgia and Generational Appeal

Since returning in 2005, *Doctor Who* has regularly acknowledged its 'classic' incarnation by bringing back various characters and elements from the programme's original run between 1963 and 1989. The return of 'classic' villains such as the Master (John Simm) in 'The Sound

of Drums/Last of the Time Lords' and 'The End of Time: Parts One and Two' and monsters like the Silurians in 'The Hungry Earth/Cold Blood' illustrate this point. Other examples would also include the return of 'classic' companion Sarah Jane Smith in 'School Reunion' and aspects of the programme's wider "hyperdiegesis" (Hills 2002: 137) such as UNIT, which reappeared in 'Aliens of London' and many subsequent stories.

Paul Booth (2012) argues that reintroducing aspects from *Doctor Who*'s "infinitely large metatext" (Gwenllian-Jones and Pearson 2004: xii) represents the programme's deployment of a "[d]iegetic code ...that reference[s] previous episodes, events or characters as aspects of the particular narrativised history within the show's texts" (Booth 2012: 160). Elsewhere, Hills (2005a: 188; my emphasis) discusses references to returning elements as a form of "intratextuality" where, rather than referring outwards to external cultural discourses circulating around the text (see Fiske 1989: 115, Allen 2000: 6), audiences must instead engage with "knowledge of the ...franchise itself" (Hills 2005a: 188) to fully comprehend their significance. This does not mean that *all* audiences will recognise returning characters as references to the programme's 'past': as Barbara Klinger (2006: 25) argues "[w]atching a film or other media text inevitably brings into play innumerable variables drawn from ...intertextual zones". By extension, some viewers may watch *Doctor Who* and simply understand Davros, the Master or the Cybermen as 'evil' science fiction aliens since their 'intertextual zone' is drawn from knowledge of narrative and generic codes rather than a 'cultish' understanding of the programme's history (see Jenkins 1992; Tulloch and Jenkins 1995: 121-143). In fact, "the BBC Wales production team has insistently othered cult fandom in extra-textual publicity discourses" (Hills 2010a: 210), discouraging audiences from associating *Doctor Who* with dense programme continuity and subsequent niche appeal. However, despite these strategies for othering the programme's cultish associations, episodes featuring returning characters have received high visibility in promotional material such as trailers and listings magazines⁷⁷. Returning characters have also kept (yet updated) recognisable elements of their iconography such as redesigns of the Daleks (voiced by Nicholas Briggs) or the UNIT logo (see also Chapman 2006: 193, Hills 2010a: 223, Hills 2010c: 101). Therefore, although some non-fan audiences will probably be unfamiliar with the specificities of a returning character, many audience demographics might at least be

⁷⁷ See Griffiths (2005, 2006a, 2006b and 2008), Cook (2008a and 2008b) and Gatiss (2010).

aware that K9 (John Leeson) or the Autons (see ‘Rose’ and ‘The Pandorica Opens’) form part of the series’ heritage⁷⁸.

New *Who*’s intratextuality could be located in relation to institutional branding practices since Johnson (2012: 159) argues that “branding favours serialisation” and exploiting ‘classic’ *Who*’s back catalogue of iconic characters within the ‘present’ demonstrates this strategy. *Doctor Who*’s intratextuality can also be discussed in relation to strategies for targeting a coalition audience through nostalgia, though, since recognising intratexts requires viewers to use personal or popular memory when decoding. As Janet Staiger (2008: 249) recognises intertextuality, or here intratextuality, “clearly serves cognitive functions: we comprehend texts based on the series of other texts in which we insert the one we are viewing”. Intratextual decoding processes require audiences to assume the role of “amateur semiotician” (Tolson 1996: 12) as the reader/viewer must use accumulated cultural knowledge to interpret a text. Intratextual comprehension therefore overlaps with “the comparative nature of memory” (Spigel 1991: 187) since the act of decoding requires a subject to engage in “a dialogue between past and present” (Ibid) when viewing. Joanne Garde-Hansen (2011: 132-134) demonstrates the link between intratextuality and (fan) nostalgia through analysing Madonna’s extended career, arguing that “[p]op stars like Madonna are brands that create and promote ‘core emotional relationships’ with fans ...which engage personal and collective memory” (Ibid: 132; see also Jenkins 2006: 68-71). Through utilising representational strategies that reference and reappropriate previous signifiers of her star image, Madonna’s construction in the present:

is offering a mediated space for collective and personal nostalgia, communal reminiscence, fan articulation of personal memory and ageing, and public debate over what should be the consumable contents of her pop music archive. (Garde-Hansen 2011: 133)

Comprehending intratextual references therefore involves mobilising a(ny) combination of accrued cultural, fan and/or generational knowledge(s) within the context of the present to enable the viewer to arrive at the preferred meaning of an allusion (see also Grainge 2008: 76). In the case of *Doctor Who*, audience members could engage with the reappearance of a

⁷⁸ Audiences are also made aware of the programme’s returning elements in the show’s ‘making of’ series *Doctor Who Confidential*.

‘classic’ character through either activating previous memories of watching the series at a prior stage during their life cycle (see also Hills 2007a, Britton 2011: 15) or, alternatively, drawing upon the “shared set of references and experiences” (Spigel and Jenkins 1991: 132) that constitutes the series’ popular memory.

Beyond operating on a purely cognitive level, Staiger (2008: 249) also suggests that intratextuality “serves affective functions” such as provoking humorous responses (see Ibid: 244-249) or stimulating feelings of nostalgia (Spigel and Jenkins 1991: 131-142, Brooker 1997: 104, Keane 2000). Ian Gordon (2003) suggests the potential for intratextual allusions to encourage nostalgia in his discussion of *Lois and Clark: The New Adventures of Superman* (ABC/ Warner Bros. Television/Gangbuster Films Inc./December 3rd Productions 1993-7). Gordon (Ibid: 151) notes how *Lois and Clark* “appealed to audiences for whom Superman in his many guises ... were familiar figures”, noting how the series’ producers drew upon audience familiarity “to provoke memories of earlier versions of Superman and indeed to draw those without memories of earlier versions into a realisation that they existed” (Ibid). As a result of *Lois and Clark* incorporating representational strategies that recalled myriad versions of the Superman mythos, “a large dose of nostalgia was involved” (Ibid) in this series’ appeal to audiences (see also Birchall 2004). Johnson (2005) echoes Gordon’s point in her discussion of the remade *Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)*. She argues that “[a]s a remake of a 1960s television series, *Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)* functions in relation to the appeal of the original” (Ibid: 133) in that the series would generate “different levels of audience expectation ... structured around various levels of ... narrative ‘known-ness’”. Remaking a previously successful TV show would target older viewers by activating nostalgic memories of the original (see also Grainge 2008: 119-120). Given *Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)*’s status as a predecessor to *Doctor Who*, it is unsurprising that the latter would also utilise this strategy: intratextual allusions to ‘classic’ *Who* could help attract older audiences to the programme who previously saw *Doctor Who* as children. These arguments therefore suggest that nostalgia can be targeted towards specific age-based demographics. Producers can employ, to adapt Hills’ (2005a: 182) term, ‘intratextual strategies’ to evoke nostalgic memories of the original show and so draw generational audiences to the revamped series (see also O’Sullivan 1998: 203).

The intratextual nostalgia constructed between ‘classic’ and ‘new’ *Who* could be discussed in relation to Fredric Jameson’s (1981, 1991, 1998) theorisation of postmodern society as “the moment of pastiche in which energetic artists who now lack both forms and content cannibalise the museum and wear the masks of extinct mannerisms” (Jameson 1981: 114). *Doctor Who*’s references to its textual ‘past’ could indicate how contemporary society prefers imitating ‘past’ historical eras – such as recreating its television series - rather than engaging with the ‘present’ by producing original cultural artefacts. The series’ returning characters would exemplify this postmodernist critique since these would be indicative of the programme’s inability to cognitively map (see Jameson 2000) the (post)modern world and consequently create characters responding to this historical moment (see also Jameson 1982). Reading *Doctor Who*’s returning characters through Jameson’s ideas is problematic for two reasons. Firstly, attributing returning characters such as the Daleks and the Cybermen to discourses of pastiche overlooks how these characters *have* been updated to reflect contemporary concerns. The Daleks have “been linked to a range of religious meanings” (Hills 2010a: 190), being constructed through contemporary discourses of fundamentalism whilst the Cybermen have similarly been ‘upgraded’ to represent concerns about technological consumption (Ibid: 120; see ‘Rise of the Cybermen’/’The Age of Steel’). Secondly, as argued throughout this thesis, a purely Jamesonian account of returning elements in *Doctor Who* involves settling upon *zeitgeist* interpretations of nostalgia at the expense of considering the impact of factors arising from specific production contexts. Instead of being read through discourses of postmodernism, a more nuanced account of *Doctor Who*’s intratextual strategies can be provided by analysing these allusions in relation to the programme’s layered polysemy and so considering how these references demonstrate another of *Doctor Who*’s strategies for building a coalition audience through constructions of nostalgia.

Doctor Who’s intratextual discourse of nostalgia can be aligned with the programme’s ability to combine ‘mainstream’ and ‘cult’ appeal:

through a variety ofnarrative strategies ... new *Who* successfully unites 'cult' and 'mainstream' readings. Here, rather than 'cult' and 'mainstream' constituting an either/or binary, cult becomes simply one audience subset *within* a “consensus” audience defined as 'mainstream' by the BBC's Public Service remit. (Hills 2010a: 203)

As a result of the programme's narrative strategies, *Doctor Who* is readable as 'mainstream-cult' since it combines the reading preferences of both 'residual' and 'emergent' fan groups (Ibid: 218). Residual fans are defined as those linked to "old school' fandom of the classic TV series" (Ibid) whilst 'emergents' are "audiences [who] become fans of BBC Wales' *Doctor Who* wholly without back-reference to the classic show" (Ibid; see also Hills 2006b). One of the strategies that *Doctor Who* utilises to bring together these different generational audiences is its "*Dalek-centric storytelling*" (Hills 2010a: 222; original emphasis):

BBC Wales' *Doctor Who* has imported ...general audience expectation[s] back into the text, making the Daleks more narratively central than they ever were in the classic series ...A non-fan misperception is read back into the series and literalised. (Ibid: 222-223)

This statement alludes to how *Doctor Who* uses popular memories of its 'classic' incarnation to attract a coalition audience. Lynn Spigel (1991: 184) identifies that "popular memory is intimately connected to the more dominant perceptions of history that circulate in society" (Spigel 1991: 184) and so, recalling discussions from pages 25-26 of this thesis, is frequently discussed alongside nostalgia (Garde-Hansen 2011: 122). Popular memories of television series follow this tendency towards selective recall since previous research, whether conducted from a production (see O'Sullivan 1998: 202, Brunsdon 2003: 116-118, de Groot 2009: 164) or reception (see Hallam 2005: 44-47, Keightley 2011: 402) perspective, has demonstrated that "isolated but recurring images" (Spigel and Jenkins 1991: 135) of programmes become offered over specific textual details. Thus, as Lynn Spigel and Henry Jenkins' (Ibid: 135-136) research in to audience memories of the 1960s *Batman* (ABC/20th Century Fox Television/Greenway Productions 1966-8) series demonstrates, "[w]hat remain[s] in memory [i]s not the single episode, but rather a prototypical text, a repisodic memory that reflect[s] the generic qualities of the series" (Ibid: 135-136). Bringing the Daleks back for another confrontation with the Doctor in (almost) every series of post-2005 *Doctor Who* therefore exemplifies how popular memory "is bound up with its use-value in the present" (Spigel 1995: 30) in that recurrent images of 'classic' *Who* – such as each Doctor encountering the Daleks – influence contemporary production trends on the series. The Daleks' ongoing reappearances confirm *Doctor Who*'s popular 'narrative image' (see Ellis 1982) whilst also satisfying their ongoing popularity with the programme's fans (Bignell and O'Day 2004: 102, Bignell 2005). As Hills (2010a: 223) therefore states:

[b]y focusing on Daleks as recognisable icons and self-consciously playing up to their ‘general audience’ perception as ‘the number one monster’, new *Who* again implicitly unites ‘cult’ and ‘mainstream’ audiences.

More than this, though, *Doctor Who*’s ‘Dalek-centric’ narrative strategy constructs a discourse of nostalgia that addresses older audiences – irrespective of whether they might still be residual fans or are/were instead residual-occasional viewers of the series - by strategically activating popular memories of the ‘classic’ series from their childhood.

Although this argument correctly identifies how the Daleks have been strategically employed by new *Who* to combine mainstream and cult audience tastes, it does not go far enough with regard to how the show constructs intratextual nostalgia. If discussion of new *Who*’s intratextuality is expanded to include non-Dalek examples, the nostalgia constructed through such references displays more nuance in targeting a range of age-based audience niches including residual-occasional viewers and ‘old school’ fans. It is not coincidental that, Daleks and Cybermen aside⁷⁹, the other elements that ‘new’ *Who* has incorporated into its present form are lifted from a specific era of the programme’s history ranging from the early-to-mid 1970s. This was a period when *Doctor Who* achieved widespread popularity (see Hills 2010a: 204, Hills 2010c: 98) and established many of its iconic elements; Kim Newman (2005: 75) argues that “[t]he most important innovation was the introduction of the Master (Roger Delgado)” during this period. It was also in the early-to-mid-1970s when characters such as Davros (‘Genesis of the Daleks’), the Sontarans (‘The Time Warrior’) and the Autons (‘Spearhead from Space’) were introduced (Chapman 2006: 75-117). Thus, whilst intratextual references such as the Daleks, the Cybermen and K9 evoke a ‘generalised’ sense of ‘classic’ *Doctor Who* (Birchall 2004: 180) that non-fan or casual audiences would recognise⁸⁰, the specific period of the programme’s history that is continually referenced suggests new *Who*’s intratextuality as a strategy implemented to build a coalition audience. By bringing back elements from the early-mid 1970s, the programme uses nostalgia to address both older fans and adults aged 35 and over who may not be fans but nevertheless would remember such characters from their childhood. The ‘mainstream’ appeal encoded into *Doctor Who* as a result of its intratextuality therefore exhibits layered polysemy. Since television provides “a particular way of thinking about the past” (Spigel 1995: 17), these

⁷⁹ The Daleks first appeared in ‘The Daleks’ whereas the Cybermen first appeared in ‘The Tenth Planet’.

⁸⁰ K9 first appeared in ‘The Invisible Enemy’.

references consolidate knowledge about the ‘classic’ series’ for newer audiences whilst simultaneously addressing a residual-occasional viewership that grew up during the 1970s⁸¹.

At the same time, *Doctor Who*’s intratextual nostalgia is also readable in relation to the preferences of ‘classic’ *Doctor Who* fans. Many of the characters that have returned to *Doctor Who* since 2005, including Sarah Jane, the Autons and the Sontarans, are assigned within fan discourse to the author-function of Robert Holmes. Meanwhile, other iconic characters that have returned (most notably Davros) first appeared in the series during Holmes’ tenure as the programme’s script-editor between 1974 and 1977⁸². As Chapman (2006: 98) observes, Holmes’ period as script-editor, working alongside executive producer Philip Hinchcliffe, “represents the ‘golden age’ of *Doctor Who* when it attained the peak of its popularity” and this point has been regularly restated in both academic (see also McKee 2001, Newman 2005: 62, 78 and 80, Hills 2007b, Murray 2007: 217-232, Hills 2010a: 27) and scholar-fan analyses of the classic series (see Miles and Wood 2004; Griffiths 2009: 18-42). Similar authorial discourses have also been mobilised by fans of classic *Doctor Who* towards the ‘Barry Letts-Terrance Dicks’ era (1970-4) - the period directly preceding the ‘Hinchcliffe-Holmes’ era – since this period of the show is also seen to have “a particular type of story ...[and] tone” (Chapman 2006: 83, Miles and Wood 2009). As well as incorporating elements from ‘classic’ *Who* that would be recognisable to both ‘mainstream’ and residual-occasional audiences, new *Who*’s intratextual nostalgia is also readable as a strategy where pre-existing fan tastes for specific ‘authored’ eras of the programme have been read back in to the programme’s format. By simultaneously addressing a range of age-specific and/or fan niches through its intratextual strategies, post-2005 *Doctor Who* constructs a multi-layered discourse of nostalgia to unite these viewerships into a coalition audience. Again, new *Who* uses this discourse to satisfy the public service requirements arising from its scheduling position by providing BBC One with a programme that unites a wide range of age-based audiences.

Conclusion

This chapter has analysed the layered polysemy that discourses of nostalgia in *Doctor Who* exhibit. The series’ combination of soap drama and time travel elements, as well as its

⁸¹ See also Bould (2008: 225-226) for a different perspective on new *Who*’s ability to provoke nostalgic memories of watching television during this era.

⁸² See http://www.bbc.co.uk/doctorwho/classic/episodeguide/index_fourth.shtml [Accessed 26/08/11].

serialised-series narrative structure, assist in expressing personal nostalgia through *Doctor Who*'s recurring characters, with this discourse being negotiated on an episodic basis. However, by paying attention to the programme's various narrative and audio-visual strategies, this chapter has argued that personal nostalgia in *Doctor Who* contains intertextual overlaps with conventions used elsewhere for targeting 'teen', 'quality', 'cult' and 'popular' audiences. On the one hand, *Doctor Who*'s construction of personal nostalgia could simply be read either in relation to wider structural changes affecting television production (such as fragmenting audiences) and thus as a strategy designed to harness the ongoing popularity of soap opera with audiences. However, if such an argument is located within the institutional and scheduling context that *Doctor Who* occupies, then greater nuance is required. Since the programme is produced for BBC One's early evening schedules on a Saturday, *Doctor Who* must attract a coalition audience to be internally-evaluated as successful. Thus, by combining the narrative and aesthetic codes and conventions of soap operas with thematic overlaps to 'teen' issues, as well as 'quality' elements such as stylistic coherence, *Doctor Who*'s encoding of personal nostalgia addresses multiple overlapping imagined audiences simultaneously.

Similarly, *Doctor Who*'s intratextuality between its 'new' and 'classic' incarnations can also be analysed for related concerns. Whilst recurring villains such as the Daleks, Davros and the Master constitute aspects of the programme's popular memory, and therefore provoke recognition in 'mainstream'/non-fan audiences, *Doctor Who* has strategically skewed its returning characters/elements towards the programme's period of immense popularity during the early-mid 1970s. Settling upon returning elements from this period allows *Doctor Who* to construct nostalgia for its 'classic' incarnation that is aimed towards both residual-occasional viewers and dedicated fans of 'classic' *Who*. Returning characters from the 1970s provoke memories of viewing the programme as children in viewers aged 35+ (whether fans or otherwise) whilst also functioning as an acknowledgement of fan 'golden ages' within the series' present. Through intratextually referencing its past within its present, *Doctor Who* encodes intratextual nostalgia to build a coalition audience by uniting 'classic' fans and middle-aged viewers.

Doctor Who therefore constructs multiple discourses of nostalgia that respond to the programme's production context. However, recognising that factors such as scheduling may impact upon how a programme encodes nostalgia to attract a coalition audience provokes

questions concerning whether a thematically similar programme, produced for the same institution but scheduled differently, may construct nostalgia differently. This point also raises wider questions concerning how a show occupying a later temporal stage in the genre cycle draws, yet differentiates itself, from the ‘pioneering speculator production’. The next chapter considers these issues in relation to *Life on Mars* and *Ashes to Ashes*.

CHAPTER SIX

NICOTINE STAINS AND AN UNHEALTHY OBSESSION WITH MALE BONDING: 'QUALITY' AND GENDERED AUDIENCES IN *LIFE ON MARS* AND *ASHES TO ASHES*

Introduction

This chapter contrasts with its predecessor by analysing nostalgia discourses in *Life on Mars* and its spin-off *Ashes to Ashes*. Similar to *Doctor Who*, both programmes constitute ratings successes for BBC One since “*Life on Mars* ...regularly attracted over seven million viewers - a large audience for a non-soap, post-watershed drama in the modern multi-channel broadcasting environment” (Chapman 2009: 7; see also Lacey and McElroy 2012: 1). *Ashes to Ashes* continues to retain the popularity of its parent series (see also Dobson 2012: 41) since the programme’s final episode:

bowed out with just under 6 million viewers ...and attracted a 27.3% audience share on BBC One in the 9pm hour, comfortably winning the slot. ...This delivered a 31% boost to BBC One's audience share in the Friday 9pm slot ...the best performance of the day by that comparison on any of the five main terrestrial channels. (Deans 2010: online)

Where *Life on Mars* and *Ashes to Ashes* differ from *Doctor Who* is firstly with regard to target audience. Whilst *Doctor Who* is required to attract a coalition audience skewed towards ‘family’ appeal as a result of its Saturday evening scheduling, the same is not required of either of the series this chapter discusses. Although scheduled on different weekdays⁸³, each series of *Life on Mars* and *Ashes to Ashes* has been transmitted after 9pm meaning that both programmes are classified as ‘post-watershed’ dramas within their national broadcast contexts. Post-watershed scheduling means that both programmes can include “material considered unsuitable for children” (Johnson 2005: 133) as well as more complex and/or stylised approaches to narrative, representation or genre (see Bignell 2004: 270; see also Brunsdon et al 2001: 30, Brunsdon 2003: 9). Whilst *Life on Mars* and *Ashes to Ashes* still incorporate textual strategies to sustain “appeals to a broad audience” (BBC Trust 2006: 2),

⁸³ Despite arguments made elsewhere in TV Studies regarding how scheduling programmes on different days can impact upon the ratings success of different programmes (see Ellis 2000: 140 and Bignell 2004: 272) the sustained success of *Life on Mars* and *Ashes to Ashes* throughout the weekly schedules suggests this was not an issue in this case.

one difference between these shows and *Doctor Who* is that including strategies to target child audiences is not an institutional priority in these cases.

Life on Mars and *Ashes to Ashes* also differ from *Doctor Who* in terms of their position within the genre cycle. *Doctor Who* constitutes the “Trailblazer Hit” (Nowell 2011: 46) for post-2005 British time travel dramas since it “provides both a new textual model and demonstrates its ...viability” (Ibid) with audiences. *Life on Mars* instead represents a “Prospector Cash-in” (Ibid: 50), being “an attempt to capitalise on a hit, for which a tested and commercially proven model of evocation/differentiation has yet to be confirmed” (Ibid). *Life on Mars* also acts as the cycle’s “Reinforcing Hit” (Ibid: 51), where “the potential shown by the Trailblazer Hit [is] confirmed by at least one of the Prospector Cash-ins becoming a ...success”, since the programme subsequently allows for further commissions such as *Ashes to Ashes* and *Lost in Austen* (see next chapter). Some previous academic work discussing *Life on Mars* suggests that the programme’s commissioning adheres to a ‘Producer’s Game’ (see page 63) mentality by noting how the success of *Doctor Who* may have assisted the series appearing on British television (Jachimiak 2012: 92-93). Although this is not the case in all scholarly work – Robin Nelson (2010: 142 and 2012: 21) identifies creative personnel working on *Doctor Who* such as Julie Gardner as crucial to the programme’s commissioning but does not explore these links further (see Hills 2010a: 42-44) – James Chapman (2009: 7) alludes to the instigation of a time travel-themed cycle by stating:

Life on Mars had been in development since 1999, and had already been turned down by BBC One and Channel 4, when it was successfully 'pitched' to Julie Gardner, Head of Drama at BBC Wales. Its commissioning in 2004 needs to be seen as part of an ambitious production strategy at BBC Wales to produce 'quality' drama combining original ideas with high production values. This was spearheaded by the new series of *Doctor Who...*, written by Russell T. Davies, which triumphantly revived an old formula and revamped it for a new generation of viewers. *Life on Mars*, similarly, was seen as bringing a new vigour and freshness to a genre that some critics considered had become stale and formulaic.

Chapman alludes to other institutional issues impacting upon the production of *Life on Mars* and *Ashes to Ashes* such as BBC One’s increasing requirement to commission programmes from outside of London (see BBC Trust 2006: 3) and its ongoing necessity to offer “a wide range of high quality programmes” (Ibid: 1; see also Lacey and McElroy 2012: 3-4). This

latter issue is explored in greater detail below but, in terms of this thesis' arguments concerning genre cycles, *Life on Mars* represents a further time travel-themed programme that becomes popular and establishes the cycle's viability⁸⁴.

The chapter's structure is as follows: firstly, existing scholarly discussions of *Life on Mars* and *Ashes to Ashes* are considered to identify two overlapping nostalgic discourses structuring various levels of both programmes. These juxtaposing discourses are named 'present-orientated nostalgia', which refers to DI Sam Tyler's (John Simm) and DI Alex Drake's (Keeley Hawes) desires to escape the 'past' and return to the present, and 'affective nostalgia', which covers the pulls towards remaining in the 'past' that each character experiences. These discourses are constructed across each of the programmes' narrative levels and contribute towards targeting a range of different audience groups. The discourses display additional appeals to a coalition of audiences by satisfying the BBC's public service requirement to address a variety of identity-based groups (Petley 2006: 43) through equally celebrating and critiquing the past. The programmes' perspective(s) towards their spatiotemporal locations also allow for the 'complex seeing' associated with 'quality' television (Nelson 2007a). This is not the only way that 'quality' audiences become targeted through encodings of nostalgia, however, as the next section develops this point by analysing Simm's performance codes for conveying present-orientated nostalgia. Here it is also argued that the position that the lead character in each series occupies in relation to the series' narrative opposition between reality and fantasy impacts upon how audiences are encouraged to sympathise with the protagonist through constructions of nostalgia. The chapter's final section addresses how gendered audience appeals are constructed in both series' nostalgic discourses by reviewing academic arguments discussing the intertextual 'past' seen in *Life on Mars* (see, for example, Chapman 2009: 14, de Groot 2009: 205-207, Forde 2011: 72, Nelson 2010: 142-148 and Holdsworth 2011: 110-112). Using Estella Tincknell's (2010) analysis of the representation of 1973 in *Life on Mars* as a starting point, the discussion addresses how *Life on Mars*' prioritisation of male tastes through nostalgic discourses is altered in *Ashes to Ashes*. Instead, it is argued that *Ashes to Ashes* widens its appeals to a coalition audience by addressing male and female audiences equally through the layered polysemy that 'present-orientated' and 'affective' nostalgia exhibit.

⁸⁴ *Life on Mars* and *Ashes to Ashes* can also be further located in relation to institutional policies within the BBC through helping to satisfy their quota for commissioning programmes from the independent sector. See Johnson (2012: 100) for further details.

Building a Primetime Audience: Genre, Narrative and Coalition Audiences for *Life on Mars* and *Ashes to Ashes*

Many academic discussions of *Life on Mars* and *Ashes to Ashes* recognise the textual strategies that both programmes employ to attract a coalition audience to their primetime BBC One scheduling positions. Peter Hughes Jachimiak (2012: 91-92) suggests the series' implementation of genre-based strategies by stating:

both *Life on Mars* and *Ashes to Ashes* are takes on cop shows of the seventies and eighties respectively [but], ...due to their appropriation of the concept of time travel, both series sit firmly within British science fiction television.

Nelson (2012: 20) links this feature to the institutional context by noting how “most contemporary TV drama combines genres, or aspects of genre, partly in the hope of attracting a broad audience made up of different target market groups”. Like *Doctor Who*'s fusion of time travel and ‘soap drama’ (see pages 122-126), the combination of ‘time travel’ and ‘cop show’ discourses in both series represents an attempt to build an audience through combining the appeal of both genres. Jachimiak nevertheless suggests other strategies identifiable within *Life on Mars* and *Ashes to Ashes* that help move their audience appeals beyond genre pleasures. Internal documentation for BBC One states the importance of “audience approval of BBC One and perceptions of it as *high quality* and *innovative*” (BBC Trust 2006: 9; original emphasis). The BBC has historically defined “[q]uality ...in terms of difference to the products of commercial services” (Debrett 2010: 34) and commissioning shows that attract audiences because of their formal and/or thematic ‘innovations’ provides another way that BBC One attempts to secure ‘quality’ audience demographics by producing challenging output. When reviewing *Life on Mars*' reception, Stephen Lacey and Ruth McElroy (2012: 2) recognise that “*Life on Mars*'s generic hybridity ...allowed the show to earn its reputation for originality” suggesting that this aspect of the series combines appeals to ‘quality’ demographics with genre interests (see also Nelson 2007a: 177-179, Chapman 2009: 7). Additionally, other discussions of either programme suggest that evocations of ‘classic’ police dramas, especially *The Sweeney* (ITV/Euston Films 1975-8) for *Life on Mars* (see Curzon 2012: 69, Dobson 2012: 33, Nelson 2012: 22 and Willis 2012: 58), provide additional layers of appeal to generational audiences familiar with these characters and conventions. This latter point suggests one way that nostalgia is constructed through intertextuality - the

last section of this chapter addresses this issue in greater detail. If *Life on Mars* and *Ashes to Ashes*' genre strategies are placed within their institutional context, though, they suggest that both programmes combine genre pleasures with generational and 'quality' appeals through generic hybridity.

Chapman (2009: 8) suggests that *Life on Mars*' narrative format can also be read through audience-targeting strategies by arguing that "*Life on Mars* is a highly sophisticated and multi-layered series that works on several different levels". Nelson (2010: 143) echoes this observation, but expands it, by noting that "[l]ike many contemporary TV dramas, *Life on Mars* is a mix of serial and series forms". When brought together, these statements highlight the serialised-series structure (see Chapter 4) that *Life on Mars* and *Ashes to Ashes* employ. This structure can then be further analysed: on the one hand, both programmes' central fantastic/time travel premise (see Todorov 1975), where Tyler and Drake seek to return to the twenty-first century, provide the serialised narrative driving each series' format. Nelson (Ibid: 147) notes in relation to *Life on Mars*: "the time-travel aspect ...afforded such a predominant pleasure that, for [some] viewers, the series achieved telefantasy cult status" by providing a hook that inspired an "unusually strong investment" (Nelson 2012: 26) amongst some viewers (Chapman 2009: 9). In terms of audience-targeting strategies, *Life on Mars* and *Ashes to Ashes* "support a particular mode of engagement that might be termed 'forensic fandom'" (Mittell 2009: 128). Both series seek a dedicated audience through offering "small but telling details" (Nelson 2012: 26) in each episode that recap and develop the central enigma and so "demand a mode of forensic engagement to organize and uncover a wealth of narrative data" (Mittell 2009: 129).

However, alongside engaging 'cult' readers through time travel storylines, both series also court regular viewers through alternative "longer-form serial narrative[s] ...around the romantic or professional futures of the main characters" (Nelson 2010: 143). These serialised plots, which point towards 'soap drama' discourses (see previous chapter), include the simmering romance between Sam and WPC Annie Cartwright (Liz White) in *Life on Mars* (see Nelson 2012: 24-25) and the ongoing sexual tension between Alex and DCI Gene Hunt (Phillip Glenister) throughout *Ashes to Ashes* (see below). Alongside these cross-season narratives, season-specific plots are also offered. These include Sam eventually learning that the visions of a woman in a red dress running through woodland that haunt him throughout

Life on Mars' first series relate to the disappearance of his father, Vic (Lee Ingleby) when he was a child⁸⁵. The resolution of the Operation Rose plotline in episode 2.8 of *Ashes to Ashes*, or revealing the details of the wounded policeman (Mason Kayne) haunting Drake in episode 3.8 of this series, provide other examples of serialised plotlines which are resolved at the end of individual series⁸⁶. *Life on Mars* and *Ashes to Ashes* therefore offer audiences a variety of ongoing plots that draw from different genre discourses (telefantasy, police investigation, soap drama) to build a returning audience.

Yet, as Nelson (2007a: 177) notes elsewhere about *Life on Mars*' narrative format, "this twenty-first century policeman is seeking to resolve the mystery of his apparent time travel as well as the specific cases which confront his 1973 colleagues". By recognising the cases that are introduced and resolved across each episode, another strategy for attracting imagined audiences becomes observable:

In each episode a main story arc is drawn to a conclusion, resolving the case at the top of the detectives' agenda. This resolution affords the pleasure of narrative closure, which remains popular with audiences who like to know "whodunit", and it particularly suits those viewers who drop in casually for a single episode. (Nelson 2010: 143)

Life on Mars and *Ashes to Ashes* are "popular [dramas] in that [both draw] upon the popular form of the police-detective series and retain... its pleasures of swift action" (Nelson 2012: 27) as well as narrative resolution. They offer 'reassurance' to audiences in terms of generic pleasures being satisfied *and* the diegesis being rendered 'safe' (see Nelson 2007a: 176). The episodic investigation narratives of *Life on Mars* and *Ashes to Ashes* further build an audience through being accessible to 'occasional' audiences unfamiliar with ongoing plots whilst also offering ideological reassurance to some viewers about the police's capabilities (see also Nelson 1997: 34).

⁸⁵ Chapman (2009: 9) reads this series-long narrative alternatively in terms of Oedipal pulls upon Sam Tyler's character whilst also making similar psychoanalytically indebted observations of the first season of *Ashes to Ashes* elsewhere in the same article (see Ibid: 16).

⁸⁶ The 'wounded policeman' storyline in *Ashes to Ashes*' third series is, like the 'Hyde 2612' enigma threaded through series two of *Life on Mars*, more complex than just representing a season-specific narrative. Although the characters and information setting up these enigmas is introduced in the first episode of each season (and developed throughout subsequent episodes), the resolution of each intersects with the ongoing time travel/coma plots and so becomes important in revealing the 'reality' of Tyler or Drake's situation.

It has been necessary to outline the dense, multi-layered serialised-series format of *Life on Mars* and *Ashes to Ashes* as these structures assist in constructing two competing discourses of nostalgia – ‘present-orientated nostalgia’ and ‘affective nostalgia’. These discourses are identifiable across all of the self-contained, serialised and “myth arc” (Dobson 2012: 38) levels of each programme but are primarily focused around the experiences of the protagonists. Previous scholarly work has made allusions towards these discourses: Amy Holdsworth (2011: 109), for example, notes that “[t]he idea of home is a shifting site in *Life on Mars*”. Holdsworth’s observation alludes to the divided construction of Tyler and Drake between ‘past’ (e.g. 1973/1981) and ‘present’ and subsequently the narrative’s juxtaposing discourses of nostalgia. Although the opening monologue accompanying each episode foregrounds Sam/Alex’s present-orientated nostalgia through explicating their goal of returning ‘home’, this is juxtaposed with the discourse of affective nostalgia constructed around the relationships that Drake and Tyler form through their “temporal slips” (Jachimiak 2012: 91). This approach to characterisation has been noted in other academic work on the programmes (see Nelson 2010: 145 and 2012: 24), and has been used as an entry point for thinking about each series in relation to nostalgia (see, for example, Cook and Irwin 2012, Curzon 2012, Jachimiak 2012: 95, Willis 2012). The next section synthesises these arguments whilst combining them with analysis of each series’ production context.

Take Me Home?: ‘Present-Orientated Nostalgia’, ‘Affective Nostalgia’ and Production Contexts

Nelson (2007a: 177) observes that within *Life on Mars*’ episodic investigations “interest is not focused upon the resolution but on the means to the end by a comparison of twenty-first-century police methods with those of 1973” (see also Willis 2012, Cook and Irwin 2012: 81). This point applies equally to *Ashes to Ashes* since each episode similarly features clashes between Drake’s ‘modern’ approach to policing and that located in the 1980s. If this opposition is read alongside John Fiske’s (1989: 158) argument that “character is constituted ...by its oppositional relation to other characters”, the tension created through opposing policing methods provides an entry point for recognising how *Life on Mars* and *Ashes to Ashes* construct ‘present-orientated nostalgia’. Chapman (2009: 14) develops this point:

[t]he major theme of *Life on Mars* is the contrast between two very different methods and styles of policing. To this extent the time-travel/coma narrative is really only a

device to enable the series to provide a contrast between past and present. Sam, on the one hand, represents the face of modern progressive policing. He follows procedures, employs the latest techniques of psychological profiling and is insistent upon the careful collection of evidence. Gene, on the other hand, follows his instincts and is no stickler for the niceties of the law if it means he can achieve 'a result'.

A set of other binaries map on to the programmes' opposition between 'past' and 'present' including oppositions between Sam/Alex and Gene and include methodical/instinctual and cerebral/physical approaches to policing based upon evidence/gut feeling (see also Tincknell 2010: 161, Holdsworth 2011: 110, Cook and Irwin 2012: 81, Willis 2012: 63). An opposition between adult and childish behaviour (see also Nelson 2012: 21-22) is further identifiable in episode 1.3 of *Life on Mars* when Gene turns the investigation into Jimmi Saunders' murder into a childish bet for money and beer or in episode 2.8 of the same series where DI Chris Skelton (Marshall Lancaster) uses the photo-fit equipment to make a mock up of Bruce Forsyth. As Andy Willis (2012: 59) suggests about *Life on Mars*, "the [police] force of the seventies is shown as a gang of rather oafish but ultimately likable men/children" but, initially at least, this period "is horribly contrasted with the present day" (de Groot 2009: 205) since Tyler is left "frequently reeling with shock and an overwhelming sense of disbelief at what he is witnessing" (Cook and Irwin 2012: 81). As audiences are consistently reminded by the opening credits of each episode, 1973 (or 1981) and its approach to policing represent 'another planet', and this element is central to discussing the programme's construction of present-orientated nostalgia.

1973's 'alien' connotations are established in episode 1.1 of *Life on Mars* when Sam enters the CID office for the first time⁸⁷. The location's strangeness is visually communicated by a series of slow motion, point-of-view shots from Sam's perspective as he cautiously surveys his new environment. John Curzon (2012: 74) reads this sequence through the conventions of the Western by arguing that:

[t]he manner in which Sam first enters the seventies police station identifies him immediately as an outsider figure working within the conventions of an American western. Sam flings open the saloon-like doors of the department and in so doing, is positioned in the role of 'the stranger'.

⁸⁷ See also Tincknell (2010: 167) on how the sequences before this set up 1973 as an alien location or Holdsworth's (2011: 104-105) analysis of scenes preceding Sam's entry into the CID office for the first time.

Whilst the coding of this sequence may offer some viewers such genre pleasures, it aligns the audience with Sam's viewpoint and results in viewers experiencing the programme's representation of 1973 through "the 'shock of the old' ...allowing us to examine 'our difference from ourselves' as a nation" (Holdsworth 2011: 105). Episode 1.1's opening scenes establish a "narrative context of contemporary policing that is structured through the 'politically correct' discourses of multiculturalism and gender parity" (Tincknell 2010: 164) where police work utilises forensic technology and psychological profiling to achieve convictions (Ibid; see also Dobson 2012: 33-36, Willis 2012: 64). This narrative world contrasts starkly with the smoky, working men's club atmosphere of the CID office and "the decidedly non-politically correct Gene Hunt" (Chapman 2009: 12) who Sam encounters in 1973 (see also Cook and Irwin 2012: 83, Dobson 2012: 36). This sense of disorientation is repeated for Alex's first appearance in the 1981 CID office in *Ashes to Ashes*. When entering this location for the first time, apparently as a prostitute saved by Hunt, the camera tracks around her to connote the character's uncertainty whilst the location's mysterious nature is further conveyed in the way that the floor and ceiling of the office share the same 'chessboard' design.

The (initial) narrative Othering of 'past' spatiotemporal locations in *Life on Mars* and *Ashes to Ashes* positions the programmes' depictions of modern-day 2006/7 as the location "to which [the protagonist] is desperate to return" (Holdsworth 2011: 107-108) and is central to how each programme constructs 'present-orientated nostalgia'. Holdsworth (Ibid: 107) alludes to this discourse by recognising that "it is [the character]'s central ambition to 'get home' that makes the series, first and foremost, a nostalgic narrative". Sam and Alex's entrapment within 1973/1981 constructs a discourse of societal nostalgia focusing primarily upon the working procedures, attitudes and conveniences associated with how both programmes represent the 'present'. Present-orientated nostalgia is "overtly rooted in the diegesis" (Cardwell 2002: 123) since this is an absent world that is glimpsed in the first episode of each programme. Moreover, alignment with this discourse "is encouraged in the viewer through eliciting his or her sympathy for the characters" (Ibid) and aligning the audience with Tyler and/or Drake's perspective.

Although it may appear that *Life on Mars* “suggests that in general Tyler’s methods are more effective” (de Groot 2009: 205) than Hunt’s and the 1973 CID team, this is not always the case. Whilst both programmes construct a “dramatic message ...that a huge amount of progress has been made since the seventies in creating a fairer, less discriminatory Britain” (Cook and Irwin 2012: 82), it is also the case that:

Far from critiquing the past and championing the present, *Life on Mars* finds contemporary policing problematic and overly bureaucratic. This is reflected in Sam’s contemporary existence being dominated by meetings, thereby suggesting it is ineffective in its primary goal of stopping criminals. (Willis 2012: 61; see also Nelson 2012: 25)

Instead of singularly validating Sam’s (or Alex’s) contemporary perspective on policing, both programmes provide “a vehicle ...which ... makes comparisons between the ethics of today and those of another age” (Nelson 2007a: 177-178) in a two-way fashion. This “dialectical interrogation of 1973 and 2006 norms of police activity” (Hills 2012: 105) is best demonstrated by the fact that across each episode of *Life on Mars* the “crime is usually solved through a combination of Sam’s modern psychologically oriented, scientific thinking and Gene’s more instinctive and intuitive methods” (Chapman 2009: 8). The contrast between ‘past/1973’ and ‘present/2006’ policing methods is nowhere more evident than in the early episodes of *Life on Mars*. Sam’s contemporary methods frequently result in the character becoming momentarily ostracised from the CID team as his actions jar with the norms of sociality (see Davis 1979: 80, Castiglia 2000: 208) assigned to the programme’s representation of 1973. Episode 1.2 sees Sam temporarily shunned by his peers when his decision to release known criminal Kim Trent (Andrew Tiernan) because of a lack of evidence results in June (Rae Kelly), one of the police station’s cleaners, being severely wounded in the crossfire of a jewellery heist undertaken by Trent’s gang. Elsewhere, episodes 1.7 and 2.7 see Gene, Annie, Chris and DI Ray Carling (Dean Andrews) query Sam’s methods by questioning whether he should be investigating those of his colleagues. Thus, although audiences for *Life on Mars* are “invited by the 2006 perspective to see it [e.g. Gene and the team – RPG] from a critical distance” (Nelson 2007a: 178), a similarly questioning position is constructed relating to Sam’s actions when these violate the social values ascribed to the programme’s representation of 1973:

Life on Mars is careful not to side unequivocally with one or the other. It exposes the endemic political correctness of modern policing at the same time as showing where genuine progress has been made, particularly in forensic investigation. It is critical of police brutality, while also acknowledging that Gene's methods are often the more pragmatic. (Chapman 2009: 14)

As Sam's 'present'-informed actions have negative consequences for his peers/the wider community, an alternative discourse of societal nostalgia, where the 'past' of 1973 becomes valued over the present, can also be identified.

Arguing that *Life on Mars* constructs a nostalgic discourse for its representation of the 'past' should not suggest that the programme's societal nostalgia for 1973 is "that of *Heartbeat* – a warmth associated with an idealised past" (de Groot 2009: 205; see also Cook and Irwin 2012: 80-81, Jachimiak 2012: 101, Nelson 2012: 20-21). Both *Life on Mars* and *Ashes to Ashes* are "in no sense ... comfortable 'retro' show[s] about a harmless, disconnected past" (Ibid; see also Chapman 2009: 14, Hills 2012: 110). The past spatiotemporal worlds seen in both series are not envisioned in a manner that dovetails with the conventions of heritage/costume drama outlined on pages 52-55 of this thesis (Nelson 2007a: 189). Instead, *Life on Mars* "visualizes a bleak environment of urban decline that is shot in dull, muted colours under what seem like perpetually cloudy skies" (Ibid) and represents 1973 as a world of "casual racism as well as entrenched misogyny and macho aggression" (Nelson 2010: 144) personified by Hunt. Moreover, rather than being encoded through the generic conventions of 'costume drama', *Life on Mars* depicts 1973 Manchester in accordance with 'cop show' discourses since it includes "the standard police series storylines: murder, armed robbery, kidnapping, prostitution, protection rackets, drug dealing, football hooliganism and terrorism" (Chapman 2009: 13). This 'crime drama' encoding of 1973 in *Life on Mars* means that "the element of nostalgia is not sentimentalised" (Nelson 2012: 21) in the same way that the 'past' is treated in a series such as *Heartbeat* (see also Willis 2012: 57).

Despite not romanticising 1973, "[t]he programme ...uses dramatic irony to reflect upon what has been lost as well as gained – particularly the absence of community in the modern world" (de Groot 2009: 205). *Life on Mars* depicts 1973 as a world characterised by warmth and affect between its inhabitants. The difference between the affective characteristics attributed to the series' spatiotemporal locations is nowhere more evident than during the concluding

scenes of episode 2.8 of *Life on Mars*. Upon re-awakening in the ‘present’, Sam is greeted first by the smug, self-congratulating face of his surgeon/saviour, Frank Morgan (Ralph Brown – see also Nelson 2010: 146 and 2012: 25), and is then seen moving around a world that “is filled with hard-edged surfaces: light-flooded windows, television monitors and PC screens” (Tincknell 2010: 164). Sam is at one point (see Figure 6.1) literally blacked out against this landscape, connoting the character’s inability to ‘feel’ anything in this spatiotemporal location⁸⁸. When this setting is compared to the world that Sam has left behind:

The brown and caramel hues of the 1970s are no longer resonant of a tobacco-stained north rife with corruption and discrimination but of warmth, character and feeling compared to the concrete, glass and chrome-plated Manchester metropolis of 2007. (Holdsworth 2011: 108)

The combination of narrative oppositions and colour palettes used in visualising *Life on Mars*’ narrative worlds constructs a discourse of affective nostalgia⁸⁹. This is a nostalgic discourse that recognises the limitations and problems of this ‘past’ historical period but nevertheless values its levels of camaraderie, intimacy and friendship (Castiglia 2000). By representing 1973 as a time characterised by community spirit, but also containing attitudes that are unacceptable by contemporary standards and a grimy *mise-en-scene* (see Figure 6.2), the programme recognises the limitations of the 1970s but still posits that interpersonal relationships have changed for the worse in today’s society⁹⁰.

⁸⁸ See Chapman (2009: 10), Holdsworth (2011: 108) and Nelson (2010: 146 and 2012: 25-26) for further discussion of this sequence of episode 2.8.

⁸⁹ See also Johnson (2005: 108-116), Lury (2005: 54-55) and Hills and Luther (2007: 214) on colour palettes in TV drama.

⁹⁰ See Curzon (2012: 72) for a reading of this in relation to episode 1.3 of *Life on Mars* and its depiction of the progression from a ‘production’ to a ‘consumption’ based economy.



Figure 6.1: Sam becomes a present-day shadow.



Figure 6.2: Warm colours beneath the grime of 1973.

Affective nostalgia in *Life in Mars* becomes further identifiable if this discourse's construction is contrasted with its equivalent in *Ashes to Ashes*. *Ashes to Ashes'* representation of 1981 displays sensitivity to socio-cultural shifts by recognising this was the decade when post-Second World War 'consensus values' came under attack within the UK by competing socio-cultural discourses concerning race, gender and so on (see Ellis 2002:

149-151; Thornham and Purvis 2005: 151-154). Against discourses which “generated the promise of unity and integration” (Ibid: 153) within a common national culture:

What emerged in the 1980s was a situation whereby in an increasingly multicultural society, different interest groups found it necessary to defend their cultural positions. Straight white men perceived themselves to be under threat from discourses that attacked the preponderance of WASP (White Anglo-Saxon Protestant) and DWEM (Dead White European Male) culture in this increasingly multicultural climate. (Thompson 2007: 33)

Ashes to Ashes responds to these ideas by regularly “suggest[ing] that Gene has become a 'dinosaur' who will soon become extinct” (Chapman 2009: 17). The myriad social groups depicted within the series, such as yuppies (see episode 1.1) and rude boys (see episode 1.7) as well as sections of the police force itself (see episode 1.8, episodes 2.1-2.4 and the arrival of DI Jim Keats (Daniel Mays) in series three), inform Gene about the obsolescence of his methods within this historical period (Lacey and McElroy 2012: 12). Whereas *Life on Mars* constructs affective nostalgia for the forms of sociality depicted in its representation of 1973, *Ashes to Ashes* deconstructs this discourse by engaging with popular conceptions of 1981 but still “invit[ing] us ...to view a little more critically the fragmentation and privatisation of experience in twenty-first-century culture” (Nelson 2012: 29). The recoding of affective nostalgia in *Ashes to Ashes* is explored in greater detail in the last section of this chapter.

This overview of how *Life on Mars* and *Ashes to Ashes* construct nostalgic discourses suggests how these articulations can be aligned with both programme’s narrative strategies. Since tensions between ‘past’ and ‘present’ approaches to policing inform episodic investigation narratives, these discourses can be read as strategies designed to offer pleasure to ‘occasional’ viewers of either programme. This is because “self-contained episodes possessing their own individual conclusion” (Creeber 2004a: 8) encourage a ‘casual’ attitude towards viewing (see Reeves, Rodgers and Epstein 1996: 26, Newman 2006: 20) due to the repeated display of plot movements and character functions (see also Ndalianis 2005: 88, Newman 2006: 18). The episodic repetition of clashing forms of nostalgia becomes pleasurable for audience niches that are familiar with the programme format irrespective of whether they have seen every episode or not (see also Fiske 1989: 158, Gwenllian Jones 2002: 83). However, the additional articulation of these discourses within each programme’s

serialised plots assists *Life on Mars* and *Ashes to Ashes* in simultaneously targeting ‘cult’ audiences. As Sara Gwenllian Jones (2000: 11) argues, “seriality is an important, if not essential, contributory factor” in assisting a television programme to secure a returning (cult) audience since developing plotlines provide “serialised pleasures to ...faithful regulars” (Newman 2006: 20). Thus, since *Life on Mars* resolves its serialised narrative through recourse to Sam’s choice between ‘past’ and ‘present’ worlds, this programme also structures the negotiation between discourses of nostalgia into the series’ primary narrative enigma. Articulations of nostalgia can therefore be read as production strategies that assist in attracting ‘dedicated’ and ‘occasional’ viewers to both programmes and uniting these into a coalition audience for primetime weeknight BBC One dramas.

These competing discourses of nostalgia can be more precisely linked to *Life on Mars* and *Ashes to Ashes*’ production context by considering how these intersect with public service requirements. John R. Cook and Mary Irwin (2012: 85) suggest this point by arguing that:

Life on Mars works through a ...set of internal tensions, namely a constant oscillation between the seventies as a ‘golden’ time of freedom (compared to now) and the seventies as a time of restrictive unsophistication (also compared to now). In a sense, the different attitudes this popular drama must attract and reach on the mainstream BBC 1 channel help provide a measure of explanation for this constant oscillation. The series has clear appeal to thirty- and early-forty-something adults who ...remember growing up in the seventies: as a popular drama for the mainstream BBC 1 channel, however, *Life on Mars* also has to embrace (and not alienate) other demographics, including, for example, the youth audience, ethnic minorities, older audiences who may remember the decade with less pleasure, and so on.

The juxtaposition of ‘present-orientated nostalgia’ and ‘affective nostalgia’ allow for multiple points of identification to be adopted by different audience niches. Whilst the affective nostalgia towards 1973 embodied through Hunt’s character may provide a point of identification for politically right-wing viewers (see Lacey and McElroy 2012: 5), as well as some men (see below), the programme’s ‘present-orientated nostalgia’ counters this discourse by allowing for alternative reading positions. Negotiation between both discourses allows for imagined audience niches occupying differing political dispositions, as well as those positioned through other (e.g. racialised, gendered and/or generational) identity discourses, to be united into a coalition audience through constructions of nostalgia.

The ongoing arbitration between these nostalgic discourses is also readable as a strategy designed to target ‘quality’ audience niches in a variety of ways. Firstly, positioning Tyler and Drake between narrative oppositions of ‘past’ and ‘present’ adds internal conflict to Sam and Alex’s characterisation which, following arguments made in this thesis (see pages 108-109), opens either character to ‘quality’ readings (Newman 2006: 23). At the same time, the negotiation between discourses of nostalgia in *Life on Mars* and *Ashes to Ashes* produces texts which are “thought-provoking and, albeit to a limited extent, culturally challenging” (Nelson 2012: 20). Whereas ‘nostalgic’ programmes such as *Heartbeat*, *The Royal* (ITV/Yorkshire Television 2003-9) and *Last of the Summer Wine* (BBC 1973-2010) do not invite audience evaluations as ‘quality’ partly due to their “sentimentalised treatment ...of a mythologised past” (Ibid), the same cannot be said of *Life on Mars* and *Ashes to Ashes*⁹¹. Instead, the perspective adopted towards ‘past’ and ‘present’ in these programmes constructs a reading position that recalls the ‘complex viewing’ perspective of quality television (Nelson 2007a: 178-179, Hills 2012). Rather than being recalled in an idyllic manner (Nelson 2012: 28), *Life on Mars* and *Ashes to Ashes* invite critical approaches to all their spatiotemporal locations by asking audiences to consider what has been ‘lost’ from each world. The construction of competing narrative discourses is not the only way that discourses of nostalgia can be discussed as strategies designed to target ‘quality’ audiences. The next section extends this argument by analysing John Simm’s performance of present-orientated nostalgia.

Keeping it ‘Real’?: Performance Codes, ‘Quality’ Address and Point-of-View

Scholarly discussions of *Life on Mars* have regularly linked the programme to ‘quality’ television. These claims range from Teresa Forde’s (2011: 72) passing observation that *Life on Mars* can be considered “a high quality drama” to Trisha Dunleavy’s (2009: 210) inclusion of the series’ amongst British TV dramas “whose popularity ha[s] evidently been enhanced by the ‘freshness’ of its concepts”. Once again, *Life on Mars*’ ‘quality’ connotations arise from its overlaps with a discourse of innovation. Chapman (2009: 7) further argues that, due to the programme’s “expensive production values and ...multi-layered

⁹¹ See also Holdsworth (2011: 97) who argues in relation to ‘clip shows’ that “nostalgia television [i]s cheap and populist programming and corresponds with the commercial safety of reproducing past successes and familiar forms”.

narrative construction”, additional claims to ‘quality’ can be made. *Life on Mars* therefore overlaps with evaluative criteria that have been used within the context of American television to target distinct televisual products towards desirable audience niches (Ibid; see also Feuer 2007). One absence from these discussions concerns how *Life on Mars*’ encoding of nostalgia through performance allows the series to be evaluated as ‘quality’ from a variety of positions within a coalition audience.

John Simm’s casting as Sam Tyler works as an immediate signifier that *Life on Mars* can be classified as ‘quality’ television. Simm is a classically-trained actor (see Larman Date Unknown: online) who has become recognisable to British audiences through appearing in a range of ‘quality’ social realist programmes that includes *The Lakes* (BBC/Company Pictures 1997-9) and *State of Play* (BBC/Endor Productions 2003; see Nelson 2007a: 189-190). Associations between Simm and ‘quality’ productions have been further forged through his regular appearances in films by the acclaimed British film director Michael Winterbottom (Allison 2005). These past roles are important for audiences reading *Life on Mars* as ‘quality’ television because:

[r]epetition – the fact that television is there, week in, week out, and actors appear repeatedly in different roles and with different functions – means that the television actor is more likely to carry a history with him ...Television acting is layered with little histories which ...make watching the actor acting a complex and diverse process. (Caughie 2000b: 168)

Since “[r]esonances of previous roles ...encourage ...viewers to build up their perceptions of the characters actors are playing” (Cardwell 2002: 91), intertextual associations from Simm’s previous roles open the programme up to ‘quality’ readings. It is unsurprising, then, that within promotional interviews for *Life on Mars* “Simm was presented as a serious actor from the north of England, who had previously excelled in dramas such as *Cracker* and *State of Play*” (Lacey and McElroy 2012: 2). Extratextual material draws upon the correlation between “the best of British acting” (Brunsdon 1997: 142; see also Caughie 2000b: 162) and ‘quality’ discourses in the UK to use Simm’s casting as a signifier that tele-literate audiences should approach *Life on Mars* as a ‘quality’ product.

The expression of nostalgic sentiments through Simm's performance of present-orientated nostalgia provides another way of considering how *Life on Mars* can be located in relation to 'quality' television discourses and industrial strategies for targeting a coalition audience. Expanding upon the issue of studying performance and considering the approach that an actor may utilise to communicate feelings of nostalgia demonstrates this point. Within a visual medium like television "character is ...a textual device, constructed... from discourse ...the physical presence of the player is used ...to embody ...[those] discourse[s]" (Fiske 1989: 153). As Cynthia Baron (1999: 40) observes, "an actor is a kind of prism through which the character is refracted" and so it is the "techniques of expressiveness, repertoires of gesture and expression" (Caughie 2000b: 164) that the actor employs which make a character's emotions appear recognisable and relatable to audiences. When encoding expressions of nostalgia through performance, actors might utilise a specific acting technique since nostalgia is an emotion that is primarily experienced via the body (cf. Tacchi 2003: 289; see also pages 32-34). Since its emergence in the latter half of the twentieth century, the preferred way for actors to express psychological interiority is derived from 'The System' or, within the context of the US and Hollywood, 'Method' acting⁹². Method acting is linked to ideas of "naturalistic plausibility" (Tulloch and Alvarado 1983: 257) by having actors "focus on the psychological apparatus ...and the motivation ...'behind' a character's action" (Cornea 2007: 214; see also Baron 1999; Zucker 1999). Method acting prioritises expressing psychological states through "verisimilar codes ...intended to mimic reality" (Pearson 1992: 43) at the expense of melodrama. This helps an actor to produce a performance "denoting a characterisation of psychological depth" (Cornea 2007: 224) through such codes as the character's self-presentation, gestures, and their delivery of dialogue (see also Pearson 1999: 67; Carmeli 2007). Relating to communicating nostalgia, a Method acting approach would be suitable since it allows emotions to be expressed in a 'truthful' manner that audiences can recognise and identify with (see Caughie 2000b: 165).

Other scholarly analyses of *Life on Mars* have suggested that "Simm might ...be applauded for the quality of performance as Sam Tyler" (Nelson 2012: 23) due to the emotional range he brings to the character (see Hills 2012: 108). Simm's embodiment of present-orientated

⁹² Collapsing 'System' and 'Method' acting together as the same thing does, however, reduce and simplify the differences in approach that occur between both styles. For an outline of some of the key differences between these two approaches see Carnicke (1999), whilst Counsell (1996: 24-78) provides an overview that outlines the different philosophies of the self that underpin the two approaches to acting.

nostalgia throughout *Life on Mars* is contained within “a range of gestures to signify Tyler’s disorientation” (Holdsworth 2011: 105) with the ‘past’ world that the character is stranded in. These signs include pushing at (or slamming hands against) walls to connote the character’s frustration, throwing his arms out to convey despair with the immediate circumstances and employing a sarcastic tone when delivering quips about Gene’s policing methods. The dry, matter-of-fact tenor that Simm uses for commenting upon Hunt’s ‘beating up the fixtures and fittings’ in episode 2.5 would be one example of the latter performance technique (Nelson 2012: 23). Alternatively, Simm employs such gestures as raised eyebrows, deep sighs and/or throwing his head back against a wall to convey the character’s desire to escape 1973. As a result of performing Tyler’s ongoing exasperation through these codes:

the intensity of the experience captured by Simm is expressed through the character’s interiority, his vulnerability and his swagger – he closes his eyes as if he can’t believe it, he gulps, he squeezes the bridge of his nose, he sneers at the 1973 policem[e]n. He captures an impressive range of emotions without losing sight of either the gravity or the comedy of the scene. (Holdsworth 2011: 105)

The scenes following June’s shooting in episode 1.2 display the range of emotions, including present-orientated nostalgia, that Simm expresses through verisimilar codes. The sequence begins with a slow motion close-up shot where the camera pans around Sam as he first expresses numbness, then sadness and despair (communicated through occasional flicks of the eyes upwards towards the sky) at the events he is responsible for. The character’s caring attitude, and acknowledgement of his liability, aligns the audience with Sam’s emotional perspective despite viewers being visually positioned away from him at the end of the shot (the camera isolates Tyler by viewing him from Gene and Ray’s perspective). In what follows, as Gene angrily confronts Sam by pushing his face down towards the ground (framing him in the foreground of a two-shot involving both of the characters) and demands that he is responsible for clearing up June’s blood (see Figure 6.3), Simm’s performance switches intensity to capture first the character’s anger, and then despair, at his situation. Sam frees himself from Hunt’s grasp and stands to face his DCI, first seen in profile in a long-shot of the two characters, before then moving to a medium close-up of Tyler as he passionately responds to accusations regarding his ethics (see Figures 6.4 and 6.5). Simm’s gestures combine passionate anger (conveyed by loud vocal delivery of the dialogue and quickly flailing arms), despondency (signified by a combination of upward looking eye movements

and anguished facial expressions) and frustration (seen in how Simm tries to push away the street wall when reminding Hunt that they had no evidence with which to hold Trent). Cumulatively, these express Tyler's displeasure with his surroundings. Similar to how Caughie (2000a: 173) discusses Michael Gambon's performance as Philip Marlow in *The Singing Detective* (BBC 1986), Simm's "performance gives a depth and a vulnerability" to Tyler that makes Sam "a deeply sympathetic character" (Forde 2011: 72). This results in the character expressing a complex range of emotions, including present-orientated nostalgia, in a controlled, naturalistic manner through the deployment of verisimilar codes.



Figure 6.3: Gene's anger towards Sam.



Figure 6.4: Sam responds to Gene's accusations.



Figure 6.5: Sam's frustration in 1973.

Simm's encoding of a nostalgic discourse through performance codes can be contrasted with the previous chapter's analysis of David Tennant's performance of personal nostalgia in *Doctor Who* to demonstrate how the former can be read as a strategy used for positioning a coalition audience in relation to 'quality' discourses. Melodramatic styles of performance have become "increasingly inadequate" (Pearson 1992: 55) as a performance style on television since these have led to audience evaluations as 'excessive' or 'trashy'. In

comparison, performance styles conveying “psychological causality ...[in] the portrayal of individualised, psychologised characters” (Ibid) have been valued. Audiences therefore accredit greater cultural value to verisimilar performances grounded in Method acting over ‘excessive’/melodramatic styles. Although I noted that Tennant’s performance in *Doctor Who* displays restraint through employing verisimilar codes, this reading exists in tension with other aspects of the text *and* the polysemy of his performance. Scenes where the Doctor’s personal nostalgia is foregrounded are also readable as melodramatic due to their frequency across episodes, the framing of these sequences through close-ups, and the character’s construction as ‘alien’. Encodings of personal nostalgia in *Doctor Who* display coalition appeal by being simultaneously readable as ‘quality’ and ‘melodramatic’ and so allow multiple audience tastes to be targeted through layered polysemy. In comparison, Simm’s performance of present-orientated nostalgia in *Life on Mars* stresses plausibility and opens itself up to more singular readings as ‘quality’ acting. Simm’s performance remains readable in relation to popular audience tastes regarding the repetition of character traits on an episodic basis (see also Hills 2010a: 155), and therefore potential interpretations as melodramatic, since the gestures employed for conveying the character’s frustration with 1973 recur across each episode. Yet, these repetitive performance elements are always housed within a naturalistic discourse that arises from a combination of Sam’s character construction as ‘human’ and the uncertainty surrounding his possible temporal movement. Consequently, since Simm’s performance appears plausible within the narrative contexts where present-orientated nostalgia becomes articulated, this can be read as a strategy that connotes *Life on Mars*’ status as ‘quality’ television to both occasional and dedicated audiences⁹³.

Reading Simm’s performance of present-orientated nostalgia as representative of ‘quality’ appeal is assisted by other textual aspects of *Life on Mars*. The series’ construction from Sam’s point-of-view by “allotting [the character] more ... screen time” (Nelson 1997: 41) than any of the others assists audiences in sympathising with Tyler. This strategy for encouraging audience alignment is further demonstrated when compared with *Ashes to Ashes*. *Ashes to Ashes* constructs a less sympathetic time travelling character and this results in present-orientated nostalgia becoming less prominent as a discourse with which viewers can

⁹³ This strategy also extended into publicity material for the series since Simm was quoted as saying that the challenge of the role was to “make it believable – make it real – to *myself* ...because it’s such an outlandish, ridiculous idea” (in Adams and Thompson 2006: 105).

identify⁹⁴. The programme's format differs from *Life on Mars* and these changes impact upon Alex Drake's construction. Spin-off programmes are expected to "exploit the reputation, meaning or commercial success of a previous one" (Bignell 2004: 314; see also Grant and Wood 2004: 71-72, Ndalianis 2005: 90) by offering audiences small variations upon the pleasures of the parent series. *Life on Mars*' encoding of present-orientated nostalgia through performance codes signifies the programme's 'quality' status to a range of audience groups, helping to satisfy part of BBC One's remit for producing 'quality' output, so it might be expected that this strategy would be carried through to *Ashes to Ashes*. However, although it has been argued that *Ashes to Ashes* operates around "essentially the same formula as *Life on Mars*" (Chapman 2009: 16), it is more accurate to note that "*Ashes to Ashes* [is] more than simply a continuation of *Life on Mars*" (Lacey and McElroy 2012: 10). Whilst *Ashes to Ashes* employs the same time travel scenario and features a similar multi-layered narrative format (Ibid: 10-11), the programme constructs its lead protagonist differently:

Ashes to Ashes ...is posited on the notion that Alex knows from the outset that she is inhabiting someone else's imaginary world. She greets her new colleagues with a breezy 'Good morning, imaginary constructs' and puts finger-quotation marks around 'Gene' when she speaks to him. (Chapman 2009: 16)

The playful attitude that *Ashes to Ashes* adopts in relation to the ontological status of its 'past' spatiotemporal location (see also Dobson 2012: 40) is evident in *Life on Mars*. Episode 2.8 displays a "highly knowing referentiality" (Tincknell 2010: 163) about the programme's representation of 1973 being a construct by making the final shot the Test Card Girl (Harriet Rogers) switching off the TV set⁹⁵. Crucially, though, this 'knowing' address comes after the programme's central coma/time travel enigma has been resolved. Prior to this, *Life on Mars* continuously provides viewers with an experience of 'hesitation' that aligns the series with Todorovian (2000: 15) notions of the pure fantastic because:

[t]he series revolves around the disjuncture between a discourse of rationality (Sam's insistence that he is from the future and in a coma) and one of unreality (the world that he believes exists only in his imagination). (Chapman 2009: 10)

⁹⁴ Press reviews of *Ashes to Ashes* noted that Alex's character was difficult for audiences to identify with. See McFarlane (2008) and Rawson-Jones (2008).

⁹⁵ See also Chapman (2009: 7). See Hills (2012: 109) for an alternative reading of this sequence in terms of Sam Tyler's death.

Ashes to Ashes instead foregrounds Alex's awareness that the version of 1981 is "a product of the imagination" (Todorov 2000: 15) by including in the first episode a sequence making audiences aware that Alex was Sam Tyler's psychologist (Chapman 2009: 16, de Groot 2009: 207, Dobson 2012: 36). From the outset *Ashes to Ashes*' protagonist is aware that she is experiencing 'uncanny' events despite sustained attempts to reinscribe hesitancy and reposition the series as either a 'fantastic' or 'marvellous' text (Ibid). *Ashes to Ashes* is therefore "immensely self-conscious and self-referential ...[u]nlike Tyler, Drake immediately presumes that what she is experiencing is a delusion, a psychological reaction to the trauma of being shot" (de Groot 2009: 206, Dobson 2012: 37). Audiences are therefore positioned differently in relation to the central narrative enigma (and lead character) in *Ashes to Ashes*. Whereas the time travel scenario in *Life on Mars* works as a point of identification with Tyler for audiences, Drake's hyper-awareness and reflexivity addresses audience at a degree removed from the fiction's 'reality'.

Drake's knowledge about her arrival in 1981 results in the character being less sympathetic than her time travelling predecessor and a variety of elements support this reading. Firstly, throughout the programme's first series, Alex's awareness results in the character adopting a *laissez-faire* attitude towards the consequences of her actions. She randomly sleeps with people the police are supposed to be protecting (see episode 1.2) and expresses a selfish attitude by displaying little thought towards the wider effects this may have for her colleagues⁹⁶. Deciding to crush the car that she assumes will kill her parents in episode 1.8, alongside her decision to arrest her mother and father (played by Amelia Bullmore and Andrew Clover) for drug abuse on planted evidence, further connotes the character's individualism. This is especially the case within the context of this episode since events are juxtaposed with an overlapping narrative strand concerning CID's inspection by Lord Scarman (Geoffrey Palmer) that threatens Gene and the others. Audience identification with Alex, and sympathy with her desire to return to the 'present', is therefore less assured in *Ashes to Ashes* since the character does not operate as the singular point of identification for viewers. Other aspects of the series also discourage sole alignment with Alex's situation: *Ashes to Ashes* adopts an ensemble approach to its characters by exploring Chris and Ray's characters in more detail (see episodes 2.7 and 3.3). Additionally, "Glenister's Gene ...is

⁹⁶ See de Groot (2009: 207) for an alternative reading of Alex's reflexivity in *Ashes to Ashes* relating to potentials for engaging with historical representations in TV drama.

promoted to the star role” (Chapman 2009: 17) alongside Hawes/Drake. Given that audiences have greater familiarity with established characters such as Hunt (Fiske 1989: 150, Lacey and McElroy 2012: 12), audience sympathy with Drake becomes less secure. Textual strategies used to encourage audience identification through present-orientated nostalgia are therefore more complex in *Ashes to Ashes*. This discourse occupies a less prominent position within the programme’s discursive hierarchy due to a combination of character construction and narrative framing.

This section’s discussion of performing present-orientated nostalgia in *Life on Mars* can be read as part of a wider strategy implemented to connote the programme’s ‘quality’ status to audiences through its choice of lead actor and ‘realist’ treatment of a ‘fantastic’ scenario. Whilst *Ashes to Ashes* also constructs present-orientated nostalgia, audience identification with this discourse appears less assured due to other attributes of the series such as its status as a spin-off and its promotion of secondary characters from *Life on Mars*. However, the absence of analysis concerning Keeley Hawes’ performance of present-orientated nostalgia here should not be taken as support for some arguments forwarded in the press concerning Hawes’ questionable acting ability (see, for example, Wollaston 2008). Instead, issues of performing present-orientated nostalgia are returned to in the next section as these relate to wider strategies observable in *Life on Mars* and *Ashes to Ashes* concerning how nostalgic discourses are encoded to target gendered audiences.

It’s Different for Girls?: Nostalgic Discourses and Gender

When discussing *Life on Mars*’ representation of 1973, Chapman (2009: 15) notes how:

[t]he series ...references, even subverts, children's television of the period. It includes nicely observed pastiches of *Basil Brush* (Series 1, Episode 4) and *Camberwick Green* (Series 2, Episode 5) ...And when Gene has to go on the run (Series 1, Episode 7) the only disguise available is Tufty the Road Safety Squirrel. These references ...suggest that a key target audience for *Life on Mars* were males in their thirties or forties who would remember the children's television programmes and road safety films of the 1970s.

Alongside referencing 1970s children’s television, *Life on Mars* also constructs 1973 through allusions to crime series such as *The Sweeney*. The programme’s heavily intertextual and

mediated 'past' suggests that its discourse of '70s nostalgia' may be related to Jameson's (1981, 1982, 1991 and 1998) writings on *la mode retro* by displaying a debt to popular images from 1970s media culture. Although the inadequacy of postmodern readings of nostalgic discourses have been demonstrated throughout this thesis due to their *zeitgeist*-informed interpretations, reading *Life on Mars*' depiction of 1973 solely through postmodern theory is further complicated by other scholarly discussions of the series. These difficulties arise partly from the ambiguity surrounding Tyler's time travel situation. The possibility that "events are presented as figments of Tyler's unconscious" (Tincknell 2010: 172-173) offers audiences a narrative explanation that "[i]f ...Sam is in a coma and is controlling the narrative, then he has constructed the elements from his own knowledge of the period and from what he has seen on TV" (Dobson 2012: 37). The prospect that audiences could be watching a subjective memory of 1973 (Chapman 2009: 11, de Groot 2009: 206) provides viewers with a narrative explanation that undercuts reading *Life on Mars*' representation of 1973 as exclusively emblematic of postmodern depthlessness⁹⁷.

A more rounded understanding of *Life on Mars*' intertextual nostalgia can be provided by considering this discourse as an audience-targeting strategy implemented as a result of the programme's production context (see also pages 143-150 on *Doctor Who*). Chapman (2009: 15) alludes to such a reading by suggesting that the programme's inclusion of icons from 1970s children's culture constructs a reading position that would specifically appeal to imagined male audiences of a certain age. Further support for the gendered and generational appeal of this discourse has been provided elsewhere in academic analysis of the series (see Booth 2012: 86 and 88). The programme's incorporation of acts such as The Who and T-Rex on its soundtrack also suggests that *Life on Mars* "offers ...a selective and very white memorialisation of British pop history in which masculine guitar rock is the privileged site of meaning" (Tincknell 2010: 172). These arguments imply that *Life on Mars*' intertextual borrowings construct a nostalgic discourse which is primarily encoded via the tastes of white male viewers who were children during the 1970s and grew up listening to these acts (i.e. the same generational and cultural identities as *Life on Mars*' writers/executive producers).

⁹⁷ Of course, following this narrative explanation, Tyler's envisioning of 1973 could still be located in relation to postmodern theory via Jameson's (2000) arguments concerning cognitive mapping and the contemporary subject's inability to comprehend their surroundings and so grasp the differences between 'past' and 'present'.

Other areas of the series' intertextuality complicate associating its construction of 1973 with targeting the tastes of male audiences between thirty and forty. Contextualising *Life on Mars*' allusions to 1970s children's culture demonstrates this point. British television during the 1970s would have been produced according to the principles of "the era of scarcity" (Ellis 2002: 39) meaning that "the television schedule was based on an averaging out of the variety of national domestic life into one pattern" (Ibid: 44). As 1970s children's television would have been produced in accordance with public service responsibilities forwarding 'consensus' values of a shared culture (Ibid: 149-151, Wood 2010a: 167), figures such as Tufty and Basil Brush would offer nostalgic appeal to male *and* female viewers of a specific age (Nelson 2010: 148, Cook and Irwin 2012: 80). Moreover, as Nelson's (2012: 27-28) audience research into the pleasures that *Life on Mars* offers to viewers in their late forties and early fifties attests, other aspects of the *mise-en-scene* such as its costumes and objects from 1970s material culture provide a site for older viewers to reminisce about the decade as well. *Life on Mars*' incorporation of various aspects from 1970s culture suggests that the series' intertextual nostalgia offers pleasures for wider audience niches rather than middle-aged white males alone.

In line with requirements for BBC One dramas to build a coalition audience through combining disparate audience niches, *Life on Mars*' references to 'the 1970s' instead suggest the implementation of a production strategy where the programme's intertextuality addresses both male and female audiences of myriad age groups. Although the programme's use of rock music may skew this discourse towards male tastes, the series' acknowledgement of 1970s children's culture complements such gendered appeal by also allowing female audiences in their mid-thirties upwards the pleasures of recognition (see Davis 1979: 60). At the same time, wider aspects of the 1970s diegetic world may provide nostalgic stimuli for older audiences. However, this discourse displays further polysemic layers by also being readable in relation to younger audiences. Taking *Life on Mars*' borrowings of favourite childhood characters as one case, children's programmes from the 1970s such as *The Clangers* (BBC/Smallfilms 1969-74) and *Bagpuss* (BBC/Smallfilms 1974) have recently achieved a renewed public visibility through being "promoted on video and DVD for parents to share with their own children" (Wood 2010b: 175). This point extends to figures such as Tufty since compilations of public information films have also been released in recent

years⁹⁸. *Life on Mars*' intertextual borrowings from the 1970s therefore intersect with Fred Davis' (1979: 61) argument concerning nostalgia and generational identity:

what returns as nostalgia for the parental generation constitutes a kind of new experience for the young generation, notwithstanding the latter's probable awareness that what it is witnessing has been around "at least once before".

As well as offering nostalgic pleasures for viewers who encountered Basil Brush and *Camberwick Green* (BBC/Gordon Murray Puppet Productions 1966) during their childhood (Keightley 2011: 402), the programme's intertextual nostalgia additionally offers (postmodern) nostalgic pleasures to younger adults familiar with the contemporary re-marketing of children's television through merchandising and DVDs (see also Lacey 2006: 7-8, Fiddy 2010). Similarly, "*The Sweeney* ...still circulate[s] on UK re-run channels such as ITV 4" (Willis 2012: 58) implying that this series may also have gained familiarity beyond purely middle-aged audiences. Additionally, artists such as The Who and David Bowie presently display a high level of cultural visibility through live appearances and new albums as well as back catalogue re-releases and the branding of their associated iconography through various ancillary products (see von Appen and Doehring 2006: 28-29, Young and Collins 2010: 342). Although skewed towards masculine tastes, *Life on Mars*' intertextual nostalgia allows for myriad age-based and gendered audiences to be combined into a coalition audience for a mid-week BBC One drama (Forde 2011: 73).

Estella Tincknell (2010: 174) offers an alternative set of arguments regarding *Life on Mars*' targeting of male viewers through constructions of nostalgia by stating that the programme's representation of 1973:

revels in the downmarket and 'masculine' pleasures of canteen food, mocking Sam's twenty-first century and feminised tastes for 'healthy' foreign foods such as olive oil, wine and coriander, while also celebrating Hunt's apparently authentic preference for saturated fats and masculine comfort: a pint, chips cooked in dripping, and beans on toast.

⁹⁸ A DVD entitled *Charley Says...*, which includes around 280 public information films, was commercially released in April 2005. See http://www.amazon.co.uk/Charley-animated-classics-Information-archives/dp/B0001HK0JI/ref=sr_1_1?s=dvd&ie=UTF8&qid=1332495998&sr=1-1. [Accessed 23/03/12].

For Tincknell, “*Life on Mars* offers a dream of ‘1973’” (Ibid: 175) which “invok[es] nostalgia for a lost world of white working-class male solidarity, even while the oppression of sexism and racism is acknowledged” (Ibid: 171; see also Curzon 2012: 74-75). This suggests that *Life on Mars*’ encoding of affective nostalgia represents a textual strategy implemented to target male audiences. Although the series “invites a ‘knowing’ and self-reflexive reading of many of its discursive tropes” (Tincknell 2010: 169) by aligning audiences with Tyler’s point-of-view:

the character of Hunt became an increasingly celebrated iconic figure within British popular culture as the series progressed, operating inter-textually and meta-textually as a signifier of an apparently authentic ‘old style’ male power. (Ibid: 164)

The combination of Hunt’s machismo and narrative positioning as metonymic for the programme’s understanding of 1973’s culture has resulted in the character becoming “an iconic figure for men’s magazines such as *FHM* and *Maxim*, whose thirty- and forty-something readership had grown up with *The Sweeney*” (Chapman 2009: 15). Despite *Life on Mars* drawing attention to Hunt’s negative attributes, the character’s charm, (male) loyalty and camaraderie nevertheless allow the character to become an identification point for ‘new lad’ viewers. Joanne Hollows (2003b: 231) defines the ‘new lad’ as “a central figure in men’s magazine publishing and popular television in the UK in the mid-1990s” who is characterised by “a refusal of the ‘political correctness’ associated not only with feminism but also the ‘nurturing’ new man” (Ibid: 232; see also Moseley 2001b: 39, McElroy 2012: 118). Hunt’s characterisation easily overlaps with these ideas - his view of women through derogatory terms like ‘birds’ and ‘plonks’ (Cook and Irwin 2012: 82-83) provides just one example of the character appropriating this gender discourse⁹⁹. Moreover, the character’s “‘afterlife’ beyond the television texts” (Tincknell 2010: 164) through a range of merchandise (books, calendars and t-shirts) featuring quotes such as ‘You sissy, girlie, nancy, French, bender, Man Utd supporting poof’ suggests how the character’s masculinity, and the programme’s masculinised affective nostalgia for the 1970s, has also formed part of *Life on Mars*’ branding¹⁰⁰. Although press coverage of the series discusses Hunt’s appeal for female

⁹⁹ See also episode 1.3, 2.3 and 2.6 for evidence of the character’s attitudes towards racial groups such as Sikhs, Irish people and Africans.

¹⁰⁰ The t-shirt is available from <http://www.play.com/Clothing/T-Shirts/4-/9692236/Ashes-To-Ashes-Genie-Hunt-Sissy-Girly/Product.html>. [Accessed 23/03/12]. Johnson (2007b: 15-17) outlines the various ways that merchandising can be produced in relation to television series but, given the centrality of branding to television

viewers as an object of desire (see Cooper 2007), Hunt's construction and marketing suggest that affective nostalgia in *Life on Mars* is partly encoded as a strategy designed to maximise appeal to noughties 'new lads'.

Life on Mars' encoding of present-orientated nostalgia is more complex in terms of its gendered appeals but also suggests male audience tastes being prioritised over female ones. Previous analyses have noted that Tyler's character displays "feminine' or 'new man' qualities when contrasted to the hyper-masculinity of Hunt" (Tincknell 2010: 168; see also Dobson 2012: 31). During sequences when Hunt's politically incorrect attitudes become foregrounded, the programme's use of Sam's perspective constructs a dominant reading position through which audiences are invited to share in Tyler's discomfort. As Nelson (2012: 23) suggests, "any attraction to him [Hunt – RPG] emotionally is offset by an awareness of today's cultural standards and the distance marked by the evident change in social attitudes" articulated through Tyler's character. Audiences are expected to identify with Sam and so empathise with the character's desire to return to a present where racist and sexist attitudes are unacceptable. In these terms, *Life on Mars*' encoding of present-orientated nostalgia incorporates both masculine and feminine discourses via Sam's feminised masculinity and so suggests the construction of a reading position designed to incorporate both male and female viewers¹⁰¹. Moreover, when Sam does return to 2006 in episode 2.8, the inclusion of scenes where the character visits his elderly mother underlines his "anti-sexist, caring, sharing" (Benyon 2002: 101) 'new man' credentials by associating Tyler with traditionally feminised discourses such as domesticity and family responsibilities (see Ta 2006: 247).

These elements support the latter part of de Groot's (2009: 205) argument that within *Life on Mars* "[t]he indexes of modernity and contemporaneity are either gadgets – a mobile phone, a Jeep – or a set of rules for behaving (not being sexist, racist, homophobic)". Closer inspection of this statement suggests a skewing towards discourses of masculinity, however, since other areas of Sam's desire to return are focused primarily around the traditionally masculine areas of the public sphere, technology and work (see also Ta 2006: 266). Despite *Life on Mars*

nowadays (see Johnson 2012: 1), suggests that merchandising through ancillary project represents just one area where branding now takes place (see Ibid: 145-149).

¹⁰¹ This construction is despite the inequalities that still exist between genders nowadays. See McElroy (2012: 119). See also Thomas (2011: 567-568) on female identifications with feminised masculinities on television.

highlighting Tyler's 'new man' attributes, a more detailed examination suggests that the programme's present-orientated nostalgia foregrounds culturally masculine elements over feminine equivalents. Aside from encountering Maya's mother (Alex Reid) in episode 2.6, Sam's separation from his 'present' girlfriend does not form part of the character's ongoing desire to escape 1973. Instead, the items from the 'present' that Sam expresses loss towards are aspects of police procedure such as the length of time it takes for forensics to access a crime scene. Although Tyler's characterisation combines 'masculine' and 'feminine' attributes, the character's present-orientated nostalgia privileges traditionally masculine-coded objects and so this discourse also prioritises male audiences over females.

The gendered encoding of present-orientated nostalgia in *Life on Mars* can be partly accounted for in terms of the programme's genre since there is often an "inherent maleness and masculinity [to] the British cop show" (Creeber 2004b: 160; see also Gledhill 1992: 119). Focusing Tyler's present-orientated nostalgia upon policing methods overlaps with the trend where "police and crime dramas routinely show male ...detectives ...ignoring the needs of their family in favour of the force" (Feasey 2008: 84). This convention is observable elsewhere in contemporary British crime dramas such as *Spooks* (BBC/Kudos 2002-12; see Ibid: 90-93) – a stablemate to *Life on Mars* since both are produced for the BBC by the independent company Kudos (Nelson 2007a: 212, Lacey and McElroy 2012: 2).

More nuanced interpretations of the gendered encoding of affective and present-orientated nostalgia in *Life on Mars* can be offered by locating these discourses within the programme's institutional context rather than utilising a purely genre-based approach. BARB (2011: 3) statistics demonstrate that across the period of *Life on Mars* and *Ashes to Ashes*' transmission female audiences watched on average more hours of television per day than men (4.3 hours per week against 3.71 hours). This information corroborates with studies undertaken in relation to US television that demonstrate a female-skewing of the audience for both primetime television (see Lauzen and Dozier 2002: 141, Kaufman 2008: online) and primetime dramas especially (see Gorman 2010: online). However, internal documentation for BBC One explicates that the channel "should reflect the whole of the UK in its output" (BBC Trust 2006: 1) and expands upon this responsibility by stating that "especially in peaktime, drama should be one of the biggest creators of BBC One's impact with its audience" (Ibid: 2). Constructions of nostalgia in *Life on Mars* assist in fulfilling these

criteria since a range of imagined audience profiles ('dedicated', 'occasional', 'quality') are combined into a coalition adult audience through the layered polysemy of the programme's nostalgic discourses. Yet, despite the apparent prevalence of female audiences for primetime programming (see also Moseley 2001b, Johnson 2001b, Brunsdon 2003 and Thomas 2011 on forms of lifestyle and reality TV), *Life on Mars*' encoding of nostalgia suggests an institutional policy where the tastes of WASP males aged in their mid-thirties upwards are prioritised over other identity-based demographics. Although the series makes "gesture[s] to multiculturalism in the form of the dreadlocked African-Caribbean barman, Nelson" (Tincknell 2010: 172), and includes female characters within its ensemble cast, the programme's encodings of nostalgia are nevertheless skewed towards white male viewers. This point accrues further validity if it is considered that in *Life on Mars*:

[t]he main female character, Annie Cartwright, is represented in highly conventionalised 'feminine' terms as supportive, sympathetic, emotionally intelligent and morally responsible, but never as the instigator of action or events. In other words, she occupies the traditional narrative position of women in the cop show rather than working to overturn the conventions which Tyler's *post-hoc* knowledge should question. (Ibid: 175)

Although acting as a point of identification for female viewers, Annie's character is also readable in relation to *Life on Mars*' gendered encoding of affective nostalgia in that she represents a form of femininity that is absent from the 'present' (see Maya in episode 1.1) and so connotes a time when constructions of femininity were 'simpler' (see also Cook and Irwin 2012: 83). The need for an ideological reading of nostalgia returns here, then, but not to necessarily critique the programme for its regressive representation of women (see Chapter Four). Although this line of argument could be pursued further (see Tincknell 2010), locating nostalgic discourses in *Life on Mars* within their production contexts demonstrates that, in this instance, the tastes of male audiences were prioritised over female viewers in an attempt to attract the former misplaced group to a primetime, post-watershed BBC One drama. Despite the channel's institutional requirement to attract a coalition audience, *Life on Mars*' constructions of nostalgia suggest a gendered (and racialised) bias in the Corporation's approach to generating 'mainstream' appeal here.

Comparing *Ashes to Ashes* to *Life on Mars*, the change of gender for the protagonist results in the later series' encodings of nostalgia again being reconfigured. Present-orientated nostalgia

is partly recoded through being focused around traditionally feminine qualities of caring and mothering (Keightley 2011: 403). Throughout *Ashes to Ashes*' three series – especially series one and two – Drake's goal of returning to 'the present' is explicitly directed towards being reunited with her daughter. It is the memory of Molly (Grace Vance) jumping to collect a kiss that Alex blows towards her shortly before she is shot that Drake replays across a number of episodes, whilst the character also regularly hallucinates that Molly is with her in multiple uncanny sequences set in the 1980s. *Ashes to Ashes* retains *Life on Mars*' masculine appeals by continuing to highlight the differences between 'past' and 'present' policing such as the insensitivity of 1980s attitudes towards rape victims (episode 1.3), the mentally ill (episode 1.7) or female undercover officers (episode 3.4). However, the programme also partly recodes present-orientated nostalgia by balancing feminine/private and masculine/public attributes with greater equality than in the parent series. Whereas appeals to female audiences are arguably backgrounded in *Life on Mars*, *Ashes to Ashes* widens its coalition appeal by encoding present-orientated nostalgia in a way that addresses both masculine and feminine imagined audiences.

In terms of performance, though, the codes that Keeley Hawes employs for conveying Alex's desire to return to Molly and the 'present' also incorporate feminine cultural discourses. A scene in episode 2.5, where Alex is confronted by mysterious fellow time traveller Martin Summers (Adrian Dunbar), demonstrates this point. Hawes' performance exemplifies the emotionality of her character's separation from her daughter as she employs softened vocal tones, a nervous quivering stance and widened, teary eyes to connote Alex's anguish and longing to return 'home' throughout the sequence (see Figure 6.6). On the one hand, this encoding could be read in relation to how "the histrionic code ...impose[s] ...uniformity on dramatic characters: with each emotion ...represented by a certain prescribed pose or gesture" (Ibid: 34; see also Caughie 2000b: 164). However, 'melodramatic' readings of Hawes' performance potentially overlook how the emotionality conveyed appears appropriate due to Alex's gender. Christine Gledhill (1992: 106) argues that, "the term *melodramatic* in twentieth-century usage ...refer[s] to emotions demanded for insignificant situations" and, through a process of social, historical and cultural developments, has become "a derogatory term to berate the products of mass culture for a backwardness excusable only in women and children" (Ibid: 105). Melodramatic forms have become equated with cultural discourses of femininity to the extent that this association now appears 'natural' (questioning this

equivalence within academia has, for example, provided the ground for much academic discussion concerning melodrama and gender positioning (see Cook and Bernink 1999: 157-166, Kuhn 1997) or the gendered appeal of associated genres such as soap opera - see Hobson 2003: 94-96). The cultural association between melodrama and feminine cultural discourses therefore influences Hawes' performance of present-orientated nostalgia: having Drake not display heightened emotions concerning her desire to be reunited with her daughter would connote a different set of gendered attributes by aligning the character with discourses of masculinity. Thus, through changing the gender of *Ashes to Ashes*' lead protagonist, the series' encoding of nostalgia through performance assists the show in targeting both 'popular' and female viewers.



Figure 6.6: Hawes' performance of present-orientated nostalgia.

Contrasting Hawes' performance of present-orientated nostalgia via culturally feminised discourses of melodrama with John Simm's approach in *Life on Mars* suggests that the former is readable through a wider range of imagined audience preferences than those appealed to by the latter. As with Hawes, the possibility remains that some viewers may read Simm's encoding of present-orientated nostalgia as excessive due to its reiteration across episodes. However, given that Sam's desire to escape 1973 is continually encoded within a 'realist' discourse, Simm's approach to performance is readable as "necessarily understated" (Holdsworth 2011: 105) and therefore as 'quality' to both 'dedicated' and 'occasional'

audiences. In comparison, Hawes/Drake's awareness of her 'uncanny' circumstances causes the character to rapidly shift between 'naturalistic' and 'melodramatic' performance modes on an episodic basis connoting both 'popular' and 'quality' appeal (see Jachimciak 2012: 96-97 on scenes where Tyler and Drake visit their childhood homes for an example of this). These sudden tonal variations produce a jarring effect, akin to the experience of watching 'postmodern' television series such as *Twin Peaks* (ABC/Frost-Lynch Productions 1990-1; see Collins 1992: 345-346). The possibility remains that some audiences may read Hawes' performance of present-orientated nostalgia as 'quality' as these scenes do suggest the construction of a "complex, multi-dimensional, and psychologised character..." (Pearson 1992: 32) by connoting interiority and 'realism' in accordance with culturally-gendered discourses. *Ashes to Ashes*' self-reflexive narrative strategies may also provide additional appeals to educated 'quality' audiences who understand and appreciate the set-up (see Thompson 1997: 113-114 and 153-160, Bianculli 2010: 303) and the sudden tonal shifts in Hawes' performance. At the same time, though, these same elements may discourage some viewers from identifying with Drake's character, and valuing Hawes' performance, as emotionally realistic as it challenges arguments concerning how audiences identify with a performance's emotionality:

Identification is ...a recognition of and identification with the revealed truth of an actor – with emotions and glimpses of feeling honesty and sometimes courageously revealed ...identification with what the actor is doing when she acts may sometimes explain the lump in the throat or the hollowness in the stomach. (Caughie 200b: 165)

Hawes' performance of present-orientated nostalgia therefore displays layered polysemy as it is readable according to multiple imagined audience positions. On the one hand, sudden oscillations in Alex's character from 'hyper-aware and detached' to 'emotional and missing her daughter' undermine the character's emotional 'truth' and so make Alex appear "neurotic" (de Groot 2009: 206) and thus readable in terms of how 'popular' genres such as soap opera appeal to audiences through histrionic acting. These dismissals replay associations between sentiment and 'bad' television (cf. Gorton 2006, 2009), however, and overlook how audiences may alternatively read Hawes' performance as 'quality' through valuing either the psychological interiority it connotes, its gendered emotional realism or, alternatively, the postmodern pleasures arising from Drake's awareness of her time travel scenario. Additionally, since "science fiction frequently operates to defamiliarise aspects of supposedly

‘naturalistic acting’” (Cornea 2007: 217), Hawes’ performance may be valued as ‘realistic’ when read through genre discourses. Thus, whereas the articulation of present-orientated nostalgia in *Life on Mars* closes down its potential for polysemic readings due to its framing within a ‘realist’ discourse, Hawes’ performance of the same emotion in *Ashes to Ashes* is encoded to address a wider range of audience niches simultaneously. Recalling how David Tennant’s performance connotes the Doctor’s alien nature by rapidly moving between emotional extremes (see pages 137-139; cf. Hills 2010a: 154-155), then, scenes where Hawes’ emotes present-orientated nostalgia in *Ashes to Ashes* display layered polysemy by targeting gendered, ‘popular’ and ‘quality’ audiences and uniting these into a coalition audience.

Ashes to Ashes’ encoding of affective nostalgia also attempts to recode this discourse by balancing appeals to male and female audiences. ‘New lad’ audiences remain partly targeted as a result of Hunt’s hyper-masculinity being more prominent due to the character’s established popularity (Lacey and McElroy 2012: 12). Hunt’s re-introduction in episode 1.1 “is clearly designed to celebrate the arrival of Gene Hunt” (Willis 2012: 66) and similar arguments apply to the character’s reappearance in episode 3.1. However, rather than constructing affective nostalgia for a generalised sense of 1970s culture via Hunt, the affective nostalgia articulated through Hunt in *Ashes to Ashes* becomes focused around two areas. Firstly, as Chapman (2009: 17) explains, “*Ashes to Ashes* includes what effectively amounts to an unequivocal defence of the ‘traditional’ method of policing in response to the reformist agenda of the Scarman Report”. Despite (in some cases brutally) highlighting the shortcomings of Gene’s methods, *Ashes to Ashes*’ three series represent Hunt’s integrity and unity with his colleagues as something to be protected. Whether in the face of wider police corruption in series two, or juxtaposed with the modernising attitudes of DCI Keats in series three, the programme continually romanticises Hunt by positioning him as the last of a dying breed. Consequently, more than in *Life on Mars*, *Ashes to Ashes* offers audiences “an indulgence with the attitudes Gene Hunt [represents] ...as a bad policeman with a good heart” (Forde 2011: 73). This becomes highly prominent in series finales: episode 3.8 literally casts Gene as the ‘good’ guy by revealing him as a self-appointed saviour who guides deceased police officers away from the ‘Hell’ that Keats symbolises (Lacey and McElroy 2012: 13). Similarly, episode 1.8 partly culminates in Hunt standing up to Lord Scarman (Geoffrey

Palmer) and rejecting the character's negative assessments of Fenchurch East. As Chapman (2009: 17) describes:

[t]his impassioned speech prompts loud and spontaneous applause from Gene's colleagues, including Alex. Ideologically, therefore, *Ashes to Ashes* has come full circle since *Life on Mars*: it now defends Gene and his approach to policing in the face of liberal reformers.

Alex's diegetic admiration of Hunt's tirade in this sequence ideologically suggests support for "a more timeless version of policing that centres on ... 'doing the right thing', one that supersedes the liberal perspective of the present" (Willis 2012: 60) demonstrated elsewhere across the series (Lacey and McElroy 2012: 11) and subsequently a conservative bias towards Hunt's attitudes. Especially across season finales, affective nostalgia posits 'sticking with the Guv' as the only certainty in an increasingly fragmented world, despite Hunt's racist, sexist and homophobic attitudes. *Ashes to Ashes*' construction of affective nostalgia is, on the one hand, encoded more directly towards masculine 'new lad' traits as this form of masculinity achieves legitimacy within the narrative.

The decentring of Hunt's values in *Ashes to Ashes* also provides a starting point for considering how the programme simultaneously encodes affective nostalgia for female audiences. Such appeals are not immediately obvious since Hunt is continually juxtaposed against Drake with their differences being accentuated through Alex's incorporation of third-wave (or post-) feminist discourses (see Brunsdon 1997: 81-102). Alex's status as a feminist is made explicit in episode 1.2 when the character explicates that she 'has had lunch with Germaine Greer'. However, Alex's embodiment of feminist values clashes with other constructions of this gendered discourse within the series such as those articulated through her mother, Caroline, in series one. Caroline represents second-wave feminism, which emerged in the 1960s (see Davis 1999, Jowett 2005: 4), and directly critiqued the white, masculine values represented by Hunt by offering "a scrutiny and criticism of and, often, an attack on all institutions" (Carden 1974: 10; see also Walter 1999: 3-4). As Alan Petersen (1998: 4) explains, "'[s]econd-wave' feminists ... critiqued essentialism in so far as they questioned the assumption that social differences between men and women are rooted in biological ... differences" (see Walczak 1988: 26-38, Jowett 2005: 20). These previous essentialist constructions of gender were seen by women to lead to "[m]ale domination

...exclud[ing] women from history, theory, and politics, and from all prevailing explanations of reality” (Grant 1993: 39). Caroline’s character articulates these values through her direct opposition to Hunt and also expresses hostility towards Alex’s post-feminist values, which include retaining “conventional feminine appearances, something second-wave feminists might interpret as being solely to please men” (Jowett 2005: 42). Yet, similar to how the contrast between Hunt and DCI Litton (Lee Ross) “allows the audience to read Hunt in a less critical manner” (Willis 2012: 64), Caroline’s juxtaposition against Alex positions the former negatively through connoting “the image of the [1980s] working mother, driven to desperation by the competing demands of job and family” (Davis 1999: 473). Alongside Alex and Caroline, feminist values are further identifiable through WPC Shaz Grainger’s character (Montserrat Lombard) who embodies such discourses in relation to her private life through her ongoing relationship with Chris. This means that Chris is also responsive to this discourse - albeit in a humorous manner - throughout the series, evident in such gestures as making the tea and questioning what type of shoes a female robber might wear.

Alongside these feminist discourses, *Ashes to Ashes* encodes affective nostalgia in a manner that targets female audiences through Gene’s version of masculinity. Hunt frequently becomes diegetically sanctioned as an object of feminine desire. Episode 3.2 demonstrates this point as the self-contained investigation plot focuses upon a number of gruesome murders of women that have taken place around the country but introduces comedy through having Hunt join a dating agency and attend Drake’s ‘speed dating’-inspired sting. The character’s penchant for steak and chips, Herb Alpert and his Tijuana Brass, a pint of bitter, and Winston Churchill reaffirms the character’s working-class attributes and jars significantly with Alex’s contemporary, middle-class tastes for fine dining and Georges Braque (see also de Groot 2009: 206). Despite Hunt’s failings, the character still attracts the attention of a (desperate) woman at the speed dating session and this ultimately results in Gene being romantically pursued by Elaine Downing (Beth Goddard) – the owner of the dating agency through which the killer has been operating – at the end of the episode. Their kiss, combined with the character’s line of ‘If you ever want a date, Mr Hunt, call me’, functions as a deliberate blurring of character and actor since both official pre-publicity (see BBC Press Office 2010: online) and press coverage (see English 2010: online, Unaccredited 2010: online) highlighted that Beth Goddard is Glenister’s real life wife. Nevertheless, the episode foregrounds Hunt’s construction as a desirable figure within the 1980s and for contemporary

female audiences “who adopt a “retro femininity” ...a form of nostalgia ...centred on ideas of tradition and the traditional” (McElroy 2012: 121-122).

Hunt is also coded as an object of desire for female audiences of modern political dispositions through his interactions with Drake. As Lacey and McElroy (2012: 11) note, “the possibility of romance between its two protagonists was introduced as a source of dramatic tension” early on in *Ashes to Ashes*’ first series resulting in a number of episodes where Hunt occupies the role of “archetypal romantic hero” (Cook and Irwin 2012: 85) by rescuing Drake from perilous situations (see episodes 1.6 and 2.1; see Redmond 2009: 68, Behm-Morawitz, Click and Aubrey 2010: 141 and Clasen 2010: 119 on this convention in romance fiction). Other examples of Gene’s construction as a Romantic hero to Alex can be found in the ongoing sexual tension between the two characters that develops throughout the programme as Hunt begins to respect Drake’s approaches and opinions (and vice versa). This serialised narrative follows conventions of romance fiction such as how “the heroine distrusts [the hero], precisely because of his aura of potent masculinity ...And she misreads his character, to his detriment” (Dixon 1999: 74; see also Bowdre 2009: 109). Hunt’s ambiguous nature is reinstated throughout *Ashes to Ashes*’ three seasons, such as when he coldly shoots DI Jeff Bevan (Nicholas Gleaves) in episode 3.5 due to the information he has about the character, and this obscures Gene’s continual positioning as Alex’s saviour (see episodes 1.8 and 3.8). When placed alongside other romance fiction codes constructing the Gene/Alex relationship – such as how “bickering and fighting indicate passion” (Clasen 2010: 125) – Hunt’s construction as an object for contemporary female audiences to desire through affective nostalgia become identifiable.

The simmering romance between Hunt and Drake is also foregrounded in publicity material for *Ashes to Ashes*’ second series (see Figure 6.7). Such coverage constructs an additional nostalgic discourse through intertextually referencing 80s cop shows featuring will they/won’t they romances between the leads such as *Moonlighting* (ABC/Picturemaker Productions 1985-9; see Thompson 1997: 112-118, Hills 2002: 135, McElroy 2012: 121). Thus, as a range of female characters express desire towards Hunt across the programme’s ‘past’ diegesis, these narrative strategies suggest that affective nostalgia is partly encoded towards imagined female audience tastes by sanctioning Hunt/Glenister as a sex symbol to a range of female audiences that includes ‘retro’ and ‘post-feminist’ perspectives (see Cook

and Irwin 2012: 84-85 or McElroy 2012: 126-127 for empirical evidence supporting this point). Changing the gender of the programme's time traveller results in *Ashes to Ashes* mobilising a production strategy designed to widen *Life on Mars*' gendered appeal by constructing Gene Hunt as an object of affective nostalgia for various female audiences to assist in building a coalition audience.

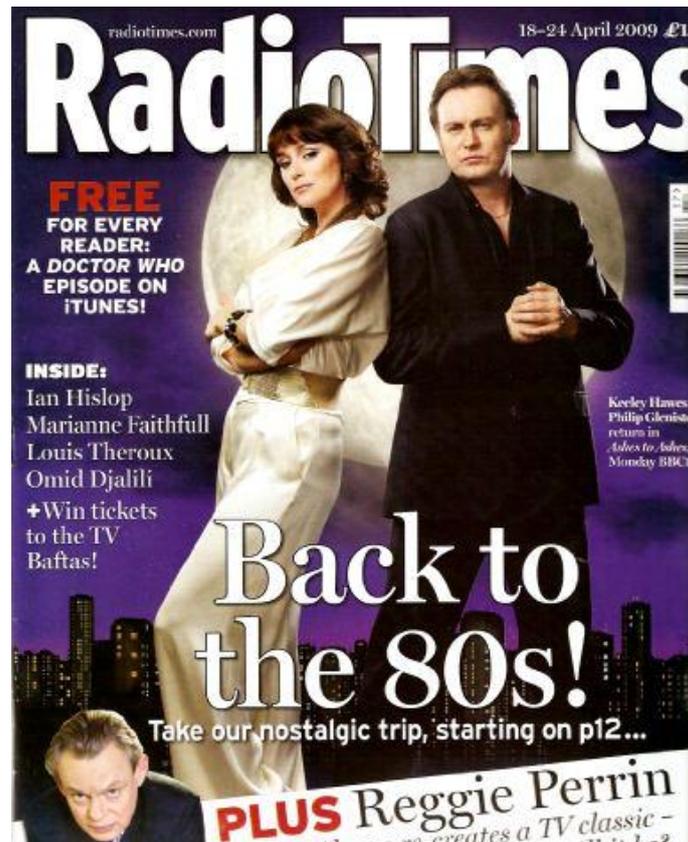


Figure 6.7: Promoting series two of *Ashes to Ashes*.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined a range of ways that *Life on Mars* and *Ashes to Ashes* construct nostalgic discourses to attract a coalition audience for a weeknight primetime post-watershed BBC One drama series. Firstly, the generic hybridity of both series results in two competing discourses of societal nostalgia – present-orientated nostalgia and affective nostalgia – being constructed. These discourses help both series appeal to a combination of ‘dedicated’ and ‘occasional’ viewers: on the one hand, the clash between ‘past’ and ‘present’ approaches to policing occurs within each episode’s investigation narrative and so becomes familiar to audiences irrespective of their knowledge of either series. Additional pleasures are provided through the pull between these two nostalgic discourses across both programmes’ serialised

narratives concerning Tyler and Drake's desires to return to the late noughties. This interplay between competing nostalgic discourses also opens up a space for 'complex viewing' with regard to representations of both 'past' and 'present' and so helps *Life on Mars* and *Ashes to Ashes* appeal to 'quality' audiences through offering a critical perspective on its spatiotemporal locations. Reading *Life on Mars* as 'quality' television is further assisted by John Simm's performance of present-orientated nostalgia since the 'realist' manner in which this discourse is encoded allows for appreciation from audiences regardless of whether they are 'dedicated' or 'occasional' viewers. Such arguments are more complex with regard to *Ashes to Ashes*, though. Keeley Hawes' performance of present-orientated nostalgia can be read through 'quality' discourses that value verisimilar performance codes as she expresses Drake's desire to be reunited with her daughter through culturally- and emotionally-realistic codes that are appropriate to the character's gender. However, other aspects of the series' format, such as Alex's awareness of the uncanny events being experienced, open Hawes' performance to a range of alternative readings. Whilst some audiences may still interpret the character's tonal variations, and the series' 'knowing' approach to its fantastic premise, through discourses of sophisticated self-reflexivity, Drake's quick changes in emotional modes could be read as excessive and melodramatic and therefore indicative of the series' appeal to 'popular' audiences. Thus, whereas *Life on Mars* attempts to secure singular readings as 'quality' TV through its approach to performance, *Ashes to Ashes* encodes this discourse in a manner that exhibits wider coalition appeal by simultaneously combining 'quality', 'popular' and gendered appeal.

Analysing encodings of performance are not the only way that constructions of nostalgic discourses in *Life on Mars* and *Ashes to Ashes* can be combined with institutional issues to discuss either series' gender-based audience targeting. Although *Life on Mars* appears to primarily target male audiences through its intertextuality and celebration of northern working-class life via Gene Hunt, *Ashes to Ashes* again widens its coalition appeal through equally targeting female audiences via its constructions of nostalgia. Present-orientated nostalgia is focused partly upon Drake's role as a mother in this series whilst the diegetic encoding of Hunt as an object for different female audiences to desire indicates additional attempts to target women via affective nostalgia. Whilst both series indicate how BBC One employs textual strategies to maximise the appeal of its programmes to myriad audience niches, *Ashes to Ashes* implements strategies to widen interest by displaying greater

sensitivity to female audiences. Although *Life on Mars* and *Ashes to Ashes* offer a range of avenues for further study due to their remaking on the international stage (see Bonaut and Ojer 2012, Lavery 2012, Mills 2012), allowing for consideration of how televisual discourses of nostalgia mutate in alternative national contexts, the next chapter retains this thesis' focus on British television. It does this by considering how gendered constructions of nostalgia allow for female audiences to become directly targeted through the strategies used by a 'carpetbagging' (Nowell 2011: 52) programme that develops the genre cycle analysed in this thesis further by capitalising on time travel's established popularity. Making these arguments requires engaging with commercial production contexts in British television and providing a case study of *Lost in Austen*.

CHAPTER SEVEN

‘WHAT SORT OF TRICK ARE YOU, MISS PRICE?’: COMMERCIAL INTERESTS, ‘QUALITY’ AUDIENCES AND FEMININE CODINGS IN *LOST IN AUSTEN*

Introduction

The previous two chapters have analysed constructions of nostalgia from post-2005 British time travel dramas which, although exhibiting such differences as target audience, combination of genre discourses and position within the genre cycle, share certain similarities. *Doctor Who* and *Life on Mars* are partly characterised by a discourse of ‘innovation’ since both programmes have developed successful spin-off programmes that extend and deepen the mythology of their hyperdiegeses (Hills 2002: 137-138, Gwenllian Jones 2002: 83-85). More significantly, each of these programmes are BBC commissions and therefore framed by the Corporation’s ongoing institutional public service priorities. This thesis might therefore be critiqued for contributing towards the ongoing bias within British Television Studies where “ITV has often been marginalised or neglected” (Johnson and Turnock 2005a: 1). This chapter addresses such objections by focusing upon constructions of nostalgia in the four-part mini-series *Lost in Austen*, maintaining the thesis’ interpretive framework by considering the programme as the product of “a *whole institution*” (Ibid: 2; original emphasis). This involves recognising ITV as “an institution that commissions, produces and broadcasts television programmes ...in a given social and cultural context at a given historical moment” (Ibid). At present, ITV1 aims to be “the biggest commercial television network in the UK” (ITV 2008: online) and remains regulated “in matters such as offence, protection of children, and political impartiality” (OFCOM 2010: online). The channel carries public service quotas concerning the provision of “news, current affairs, and originated productions” (Ibid) but has sought to relinquish some of these responsibilities in recent years due to the increased competition for audiences provided by digital television in the UK (see Smith and Steemers 2007: 47, Garside 2008a, Singh 2008, Johnson 2012: 86).

Lost in Austen was scheduled in a primetime post-watershed slot at 9pm on Wednesday evenings between the 3rd and 24th September 2008. The narrative follows Amanda Price (Jemima Rooper), a sassy twentysomething character from the ‘present’ who is disillusioned – especially with her unfulfilling relationship with boyfriend Michael (Daniel Percival) – and much prefers retreating into her favourite book, *Pride and Prejudice* (Austen 1813 [1911]). One evening, after inexplicably finding Elizabeth Bennet (Gemma Arterton) in her bathroom,

Amanda swaps places with her favourite literary heroine and journeys back in time to Georgian High Society only to find that this world is nowhere near as perfect as she had imagined. The serial can be located at the intersection of a range of policies structuring ITV1 during the late noughties. Firstly, it forms part of an institutional strategy where “ITV1 relaunched its evening schedule in January 2008. Under the new schedule, the weekends [became] more focused on entertainment, with drama concentrated on weekday evenings” (ITV plc 2008: 20; see also Thomas 2007). *Lost in Austen* is indicative of this alteration in scheduling policy since, although *Primeval*’s third series aired on Saturday evenings in 2009, press reports detailing *Primeval*’s temporary cancellation accredited this to ITV1’s change of focus towards scheduling weekday drama (see French 2009). *Lost in Austen* also reflects the channel’s prevalence for what Director of Drama Laura Mackie names “20th century dramas” (in McMahon 2009: online). This (ambiguous) internally-defined category includes programmes such as *Whitechapel* (ITV/Carnival Films 2009-), *The Fixer* (ITV/Kudos 2008-9) and *Married, Single, Other* (ITV/Left Bank Pictures 2009) and is indicative of a branding strategy where broadcast channels “develop... strands and zones within the schedules to make ...programmes easier to find” (Johnson 2012: 159). *Lost in Austen*’s four part structure indicates the problems that UK channels can have in branding short-run programmes (Ibid; see also Conclusion).

Lost in Austen’s ‘modern’ appeal can be seen in the programme’s targeting of what Laurie Kaplan (2008: 244) names “Generation-Y viewers”. These are younger audience members that ITV1 has elsewhere prioritised in its programming strategies (see Bignell 2004: 262 on *The Bill*, ITV/Talkback Thames 1984-2010). In this instance, Generation-Y viewers would be expected to:

recognize the classic Elizabeth and Darcy love story from assigned readings in schools and universities, and from films and television. They are *au courant* with text messaging, urban slang, high street fashion and accessories, and the rituals and problems of twenty-first-century romantic relationships. (Kaplan 2008: 244)

Lost in Austen further displays its contemporary quality in a number of ways: firstly, the serial demonstrates generic hybridity associated with the need for contemporary television programmes to combine multiple viewing segments into a coalition audience (see pages 122-123 and 156-157; see also Nelson 1997: 73-98; Nelson 2001a: 38-39; Hills 2005a: 125). Secondly, *Lost in Austen* demonstrates the trend that Nelson (2007a: 70) observes where

mainstream commercial broadcasters in the UK favour commissioning “the “tried and tested with a new twist” rather than radical experiment[s]” due to their ever-decreasing share of both audience figures and advertising revenue (Born 2003: 774, Johnson and Turnock 2005b: 31-32, Sedgwick 2006: 3-4, Smith and Steemers 2007: 46, Johnson 2012: 73-74). This policy underlines *Lost in Austen*’s position within the genre cycle as what Nowell (2011: 52) names a ‘Carpetbagger Cash-In’:

a financially conservative model of ...production, ...Carpetbaggers employ a textual model associated with recent and consistent success ...[as] they may feel that they stand a reasonable chance of matching the ...success of the Trailblazer Hit and Reinforcing Hit(s).

Lost in Austen builds upon the established success of time travel motifs with audiences but offers novelty through combining these elements with the conventions of ‘costume drama’ – a televisual genre that traditionally attracts between eight and ten million viewers (Nelson 2001a: 38; Voigts-Virchow 2004: 17) and is primarily composed of women (see Higson 2004: 39). *Lost in Austen*’s ‘twist’ is that it strategically extends the appeal of time travel programmes by targeting audiences whose tastes have previously not been directly addressed by earlier entries to the cycle¹⁰².

Lost in Austen further intersects with ITV1’s institutional policies since it was produced for the network by the independent production company Mammoth Screen. Mammoth Screen was established in 2007 by Michele Buck, the former Controller of Drama at ITV Productions, and Damien Timmer, who also spent five years as the channel’s Head of Drama¹⁰³. Before founding Mammoth, Buck and Timmer had been responsible for commissioning multiple ITV dramas that correlate with ‘traditional’ understandings of ‘quality’ television (see Thomas 2002: 42) such as the *Poirot* (ITV/Carnival Films/London Weekend Television 1989-) and *Marple* (ITV/Granada International/WGBH 2004-) franchises as well as *Lewis* (Granada Television/ITV Studios/WGBH 2006-), a spin-off of the channel’s successful *Inspector Morse*¹⁰⁴. These three series are all characterised by lavish and ‘tasteful’ production values, established and recognisable acting talent, literary origins

¹⁰² Cartmell (2010: 103) also alludes to the genre cycle by noting how “Shakespeare had his TV time travelling episode in BBC’s *Doctor Who*..., Jane Austen gets hers in *Lost in Austen*”.

¹⁰³ <http://www.mammothscreen.com/team.html> [Accessed 08/08/09].

¹⁰⁴ Information obtained from <http://www.mammothscreen.com/company.html> [Accessed 08/08/09].

and, in the case of *Poirot* and *Marple*, period settings associated with ‘quality’ British TV drama (see Brunsdon 1997: 142-143, Thomas 2002: 4, Goode 2007: 119).

ITV1’s decision to commission *Lost in Austen* from Mammoth goes deeper than previous professional associations, though. Granada International, which forms a major part of ITV’s international distribution network ITV Global Entertainment¹⁰⁵, signed a deal with Mammoth in 2007 to own a 25% stake in the company and obtain first-look options on projects under development¹⁰⁶. Commissioning Mammoth to produce *Lost in Austen* for ITV1 represents a production strategy implemented by the network to increase its income due to the regulations surrounding how British commercial broadcasters negotiate intellectual property rights with independent producers. Since the 1990 Broadcasting Act¹⁰⁷, and later refinements in the 2003 Communications Act, legislation has stated that when commissioning an independent producer ITV “will normally acquire only the primary rights ...includ[ing] the transmission or broadcast on ITV1 on all platforms and delivery systems in the UK” (Equity 2007: 4). ITV thus obtains rights to the commissioned programme only for the duration of its first run on the channel. Following transmission, intellectual property rights return to the production company so that the independent is free to exploit the series in terms of repeats, international sales and secondary merchandise (including DVD sales – see Ibid: 1-2). Media analysts, alongside ITV itself, have recognised the constraint this regulatory framework places upon the network and, in light of its continuing decline in advertising revenue (see Bowden 2009, Midgley 2009), the channel has lobbied OFCOM for “an unwinding of its agreement with independent producers ...[so that the channel can] make money from selling repeats” (Garside 2008b: online). Whereas the American system allows the major networks “to invest billions of dollars in top-flight drama that will make a loss on its first airing but a fortune from repeats around the world” (Ibid), ITV is not afforded these opportunities since it loses the rights to repeats after a programme’s initial transmission. ITV’s deal with Mammoth challenges this; holding a 25% stake in the company means that ITV stands to benefit from *Lost in Austen*’s global (re)distribution and exploitation in secondary markets. *Lost in Austen* can therefore be understood as a product of its commercial context since it contributes towards ITV’s quota of output from independent producers¹⁰⁸ whilst also potentially generating extra revenue.

¹⁰⁵ Company website is found at <http://www.itvstudios.com/> [Accessed 28/06/12].

¹⁰⁶ See Bold (2007: online) and Ramsey (2008: online). See also <http://www.mammothscreen.com/company.html> [Accessed 08/08/09].

¹⁰⁷ See http://www.harbottle.com/hnl/pages/article_view_hnl/679.php [Accessed 09/08/09].

¹⁰⁸ http://www.harbottle.com/hnl/pages/article_view_hnl/679.php [Accessed 09/08/09]

These points provide a backdrop for *Lost in Austen*'s ensuing analysis which approaches the programme as "a syncretic product" (Voights-Virchow 2004: 24) designed to attract "an integrated audience" (Ibid) by encoding nostalgic discourses through layered polysemy. Firstly, the discussion re-engages with arguments outlined in this thesis' first chapter concerning the associations between production values and nostalgia in costume dramas to demonstrate how *Lost in Austen* appeals to certain areas of the imagined 'quality' audience through its *mise-en-scene*. The discussion extends these debates, though, by considering how *Lost in Austen* simultaneously appeals to tele-literate 'quality' niches by critically commenting on how generic conventions represent the 'past' in costume dramas. The second section analyses how *Lost in Austen* constructs 'nostalgia for the present' (cf. Jameson 1991, Grainge 1999b) via highlighting how many of the programme's 'past'-located characters are changed by Amanda's contemporary attitudes and then discusses these textual strategies in relation to 'popular' appeals such as the familiarity of seeing costume drama's conventions satisfied. Here it is argued that nostalgic discourses in *Lost in Austen* display additional polysemic layers through also targeting C1 and C2 demographics (Bignell 2004: 262). The arguments constructed across the chapter's first two sections may seem contradictory; the fact that *Lost in Austen*'s construction of *mise-en-scene* can be read through discourses surrounding middle-class 'quality' appeal contradicts the serial's adherence to genre conventions for costume dramas which provides 'popular' reassurance to viewers of the same social disposition. However, recalling arguments made on pages 107-114 of this thesis, these points reinforce quality popular's internal contradictions and so strengthen arguments regarding how layered polysemy arises from the institutional need to build coalition audiences. The chapter's final section further demonstrates how *Lost in Austen* encodes nostalgia via layered polysemy by analysing the construction of affective nostalgia and how this discourse targets a range of female audiences including fans, and high- and low-brow demographics. Finally, the chapter concludes by considering why *Lost in Austen* failed to find an audience and the genre cycle's subsequent winding down.

A Programme of Many Qualities: Production Values, Genre Hybridity and 'Quality' Audience Niches

Alice Ridout (2010a: 17) notes that "*Lost in Austen* ...gestures towards [generic] 'authenticity' and 'fidelity' via the meticulous recreation in costume and set of Regency England". Here she alludes to how *Lost in Austen*'s textual strategies draw upon the expected

genre conventions used for representing ‘past’ locations in costume dramas such as “sumptuous, beautiful, pictorial images” (Cardwell 2002: 80; see also Church Gibson 2004: 56) and “wide-angle establishing shots of magnificent parks and buildings” (Nelson 2001a: 39). The revelation of the exterior of Netherfield Park in episode one, alongside how Darcy’s estate at Pemberley is introduced in episode three, are both typical of costume drama’s *mise-en-scene*. The sequences focusing upon exposing exterior locations treat “the revelation of buildings as a dimension of narrative suspense” (Nelson 2001b: 40) since, on both occasions, diegetically-located characters introduce others (and the audience) to the houses; for Netherfield it is Mr. Bennet (Hugh Bonneville) who (very formally) introduces Amanda to the location she knows as Mr. Bingley’s home (see Figure 7.1), whereas for Pemberley it is the excited squeals of Mrs. Bennet (Alex Kingston) and Lydia (Peredita Weeks) that lead into Amanda’s/the audience’s gradual first glimpse of Darcy’s abode from behind the surrounding gardens. Both of these sequences are then interspersed with “lingering shots ...[that] beautify and romanticise the objects portrayed” (Cardwell 2002: 119; see also Street 2004: 102) and so fix the programme’s ‘past’ narrative world in “sleepy rural imagery” (Nelson 1997: 143) where exterior locations function “as metonymies of ‘Deep England’” (Voigts-Virchow 2004: 11).



Figure 7.7: Introducing Netherfield Park

This strategy is also repeated when the interior of Pemberley is seen by Amanda for the first time. In this sequence, the camera leisurely pans around the drawing room’s ornately-

decorated ceilings before cutting to a three-shot of Amanda, Lydia and Mrs. Bennet looking in awe at their surroundings and then back to another roaming point-of-view shot from the perspective of these characters (see Figure 7.2). Interior settings also contribute to the nostalgia associated with costume dramas through displaying “artefacts from ...times past..., a pre-obsolence culture where things were made to last” (Nelson 2001a: 39) that “infuse the audience with a sense of appreciation of and pleasure in these articles and a longing for the days for which they are referents” (Cardwell 2002: 119; see also Higson 1993)¹⁰⁹. Sarah Cardwell (2002: 141) expands upon these observations by arguing that sequences such as the introduction of Pemberley in *Lost in Austen* “establish a setting, and the combination of this shot with a preceding point-of-view shot also introduces a character and implies his or her relationship, or potential relationship, to that setting”. The awe that characters express provides “a significant source of the programme’s affective power” (Ibid: 140) since exterior and interior locations are set up as spectacles that audiences should admire. These sequences are also accompanied by non-diegetic music that “‘builds up’ to a climax ...peak[ing] at the full display of certain objects” (Ibid: 141) which “suggests that they should be regarded as emotional loci” (Ibid) by viewers. Netherfield’s first glimpse is accompanied by the sudden inclusion of a wistful, minor-key piece on the soundtrack that builds momentarily as Amanda recognises the house whilst Pemberley’s first appearance is audibly set-up through the roll of kettle drums and a small crescendo of music.

¹⁰⁹ Not all critics have read these aspects of *mise-en-scene* as simply contributing to constructing a discourse of nostalgia within a text. See Cardwell (2002: 57) and Borgmeier (2004: 65-74).



Figure 7.8: Surveying Pemberley's interiors.

These scenes create a specific mood for *Lost in Austen*'s audiences since costume drama:

works to 'prepare' us for nostalgia and break down any barriers to it. Using mood cues in style, working together with the narrative, it elicits a non-specific mood that is appreciative and open to the pleasures of viewing, and that is often wistful. It aims to conceal awkward historical realities and present the past favourably through the subtle manipulation of mise-en-scene and camera movement, to emphasise its ease, grace and simplicity. (Ibid: 149)

The construction and revelation of interior and exterior locations according to 'nostalgic' principles in *Lost in Austen* remain interpretable through Jameson's (1981, 1991, 1998) writings on *la mode retro* as they construct a glossy, idealised 'past' that can be understood as "an attractive heritage package of signifiers" (Nelson 2001a: 39). However, as argued throughout this thesis, a more nuanced interpretation of the programme's nostalgic discourse is provided through reading it as a production strategy exhibiting layered polysemy to simultaneously target multiple imagined audience niches. Firstly, *Lost in Austen*'s *mise-en-scene* can be seen as "[e]xtending ...the pleasures of sensual luxury in the spectacular" (Ibid) for middle-class audiences. Costume drama's production values construct a *mise-en-scene* which displays "the combination of restraint and uncommon spectacle" (Brunsdon 1997: 142) that appeals to "upper-middle-class taste codes" (Ibid; see also Nelson 2001a: 39) and so targets 'quality' demographics. Additionally, the pleasures of *mise-en-scene* in 'classic' novel adaptations represent an appeal to feminine aesthetic tastes (Dyer 1992, 1996, Caughie 2000a: 214, Thomas 2002: 35-36). The visual gratifications offered by 'classic' novel

adaptations are “pleasure[s] in detail, our engagement held not by the drive of the narrative but by the observation of everyday manners and the ornamental” (Caughie 2000a: 215). Appreciation of ‘details’ connects with cultural constructions of femininity since “the tradition of the detail” (Ibid: 221) is historically opposed to ‘the sublime’ and relates to “characteristics which are associated historically with the feminine” (Ibid). *Lost in Austen* therefore draws upon established generic conventions that target middle-class ‘quality’ and female audiences to construct a nostalgic mode through “appreciation and pleasure in aesthetic beauty, mixed with other diegetically motivated feelings such as regret and awe” (Cardwell 2002: 141). Further audience targeting strategies can also be identified by recalling that such production values assist *Lost in Austen*’s potential for international sales through offering “a particular version of heritage England ...presented as spectacle which tourists are encouraged to visit” (Higson 2004: 42; see also Lynch 2005: 116, Messenger Davies 2010: 45; cf. page 57 of this thesis). The programme’s aesthetic strategies therefore display layered polysemy that simultaneously targets “segments of a plural audience” (Nelson 2001a: 39) and unites these into a coalition audience within the UK whilst also aiding the programme’s saleability on the international stage.

The polysemic encoding of a discourse of societal nostalgia is constantly undercut in *Lost in Austen*, however, through the programme’s mixing of ‘costume drama’ and ‘time travel’ genres. Jason Mittell (2004a: 195) posits that “[w]ithin texts, genre mixing often leads to greater foregrounding of generic practices, as the combination of different assumptions makes often unspoken genre conventions more manifest and explicit”. *Lost in Austen* demonstrates this point as combining time travel elements with the conventions of costume drama means that the programme “burlesques Heritage films in general” (Kaplan 2008: 243) by questioning audience expectations for the genre. A scene in episode two, where Amanda has dinner with Darcy (Elliot Cowan) at Netherfield, showcases this point. The scene takes place in a dining room that is decorated lavishly, but subtly, by a large open fireplace, paintings of famous gentry on the walls, and silver platters and decorative candlesticks occupying the dining table. In the middle of the table, however, stands a large arrangement of flowers which, when seated, severely obstructs the view that Amanda and Darcy have of each other (at a few points in the sequence the audience is offered a shot of Darcy from Amanda’s point-of-view where clear sight of him is hampered by the large shrubbery occupying the foreground of the shot – see Figure 7.3). Darcy, in keeping with his characterisation at this

point in the novel as singularly proud (see Nelson 2001b: 40) and unable “to express himself verbally” (Nixon 2001: 24), abruptly moves the table decoration when engaged in conversation since being unable to uphold the conventions of polite conversation would be antithetical to the character’s expected high manners. The audience is allowed to gaze upon the period decorations but this discourse of societal nostalgia is undercut as viewers are aligned with Amanda’s comedically absurd and obstructed point-of-view within the scene.



Figure 7.9: The obscuring shrubbery.

Lost in Austen’s societal nostalgia for Regency England is further undermined through the sequence’s representation of food, suggesting overlaps between ‘science fiction’ and the programme’s source material as “in Austen’s novels and in time travel stories, clothes, hairdos, and food are the initial visual signal of cultures that clash” (Kaplan 2010: online). Amanda is quickly presented with two courses signifying period cuisine. The first - a plate of oysters - is immediately rejected by the character and quickly replaced by a plate of unpleasant-looking larks that prove impossible to eat for someone of a ‘modern day’ persuasion (see Figure 7.4). Once again, the discourse of societal nostalgia signified by the lavishness of the oysters is instantly undercut when replaced with the larks. It is hard to imagine the producers of *Lost in Austen* following the BBC’s public relations campaign for its 1995 version of *Pride and Prejudice*, where “articles in [the] *Radio Times* about the cuisine featured in the series” (Giddings and Selby 2001: 116) were published.



Figure 10: The unpleasant larks.

Commenting upon the societal nostalgia associated with the *mise-en-scene* of costume dramas is not an innovation belonging to *Lost in Austen* since Cardwell's (2002: 192-203) analysis of *The Tennant of Wildfell Hall* (BBC 1996) demonstrates that less idealised renderings occurred as adaptations of 'classic' novels proliferated on television in the mid-90s (see also Caughie 2000a: 218; alternatively, see Church Gibson 2004: 51-63 on filmic examples). If *Lost in Austen*'s critique of societal nostalgia is located within its institutional context, the effects of the programme's generic hybridity can be read as a production strategy designed to simultaneously target different audience segments through layered polysemy. On the one hand, this can be read in terms of providing wide-ranging 'popular' audience appeal (Wagg 1998: 1, Hartley 2001: 65; see also Mills 2005: 4-6) through employing conventions used for creating humour in TV sitcoms. Although all-out class subversion does not occur in sitcoms (Hartley 2001: 66-67; see also Wagg 1998, Feuer 2001: 69, Morgan-Russell 2004: 113), one convention of the genre concerns affirming specific class identities and behaviours through highlighting the social pretensions (and pretentiousness) of others¹¹⁰. In British sitcoms:

¹¹⁰ See also Wagg (1998: 28-29). Medhurst (2007: 61-86) also frequently alludes to this convention in his review of the ongoing impact of Music Hall conventions upon British comedy (see *Ibid*: 3 for provides an example of this convention). Mills (2005: 22-23), however, complicates some of these ideas and their indebtedness to Mikhail Bakhtin's (1984) work on carnival by discussing momentary acts of subversion within a televisual context.

The comic force of characters such as David Brent, Alan Partridge, Tony Hancock, Del Boy, Basil Fawlty, Captain Mainwaring and Harold Steptoe lies in the gap between how they wish to be seen by others, and how they actually appear. It is their lack of self-awareness that's funny. (Mills 2005: 42)

Lost in Austen's dinner sequence, as well as others (see below), overlaps with this tradition since aligning the audience with Amanda's perspective "offers pleasure in us laughing at" (Ibid; original emphasis) Society's stuffy behavioural norms and polite posturing. *Lost in Austen*'s humour arises from mapping the programme's juxtaposition between 'past' and 'present' spatiotemporal locations on to sitcom conventions regarding the clash between different social identities (Attallah 2003). As Kaplan (2008: 251) states about *Lost in Austen*'s humorous elements:

[c]ross-cultural comedy relies on the implicit and explicit discrepancies between life in two different centuries and environments. Houses, clothing, hairdos, transport, dating customs, medicine, singing as an evening's entertainment – these images and activities are radically different for Elizabeth and for Amanda.

In this scene, alongside others such as when Amanda is provided with twigs and chalk to clean her teeth, the normative ideal, represented by what Amanda (and the audience) has come to expect through costume drama's generic conventions, is rendered humorous by conflicting with the impracticalities of what life was like 'then' (Morgan-Russell 2004: 21; see also Mills 2005: 16-17 on humour as "a general tone"). Societal nostalgia is therefore undermined within *Lost in Austen* by mobilising sitcom conventions and so exhibiting popular appeal.

By "offering critiques of Regency England even as [audiences] nostalgically enjoy the... recreation of that world" (Ridout 2010a: 22), *Lost in Austen*'s mixture of genres also attempts to unite middle-class 'quality' viewers appreciating *mise-en-scene* alongside valuable (see Johnson 2012: 7 and 92) 'Generation Y' audiences. The programme's fusion of humour, costume drama and time travel discourses indicates that "in the frictions created in the play between one element and another, new ways of seeing may be mobilised" (Nelson 2007a: 22). Despite offering 'traditional' nostalgic pleasures to middle-class viewers through production values and settings, *Lost in Austen* also constructs 'new ways of seeing' by "violating traditional norms and well-rooted assumptions" (Mittell 2004a: 178) which costume dramas employ when representing 'the past'. Links between genre fusion and critique/innovation are frequently identified in analyses of television programmes

discursively positioned as ‘quality’. Whilst discussing *The Sopranos* and *Shameless* (Channel 4/Company Pictures 2004-), Nelson (2007a: 26) argues that:

Each develops in a new, sophisticated way the mixing of narrative form and genre characteristic of “high-end” drama in TV3. Each resonates with television culture and a broader moment in television history and displays a self-reflexive awareness of television codes and conventions to appeal to a contemporary media-savvy audience.

Lost in Austen’s knowing attitude towards its costume drama conventions engages this definition of ‘quality’ appeal, narrativising a clash between “the mythic or ideal and the actualities of everyday, lived life” (Cardwell 2007: 28) and so challenging how audiences think about fictional representations of the past in this instance (Nelson 2007a: 49). These tropes nevertheless address a different segment of the ‘quality’ audience to the middle-class viewers which enjoy sumptuous production values. Nelson (Ibid: 175) suggests this by stating that, on the one hand, middle-class aesthetics appeal to “middle-of-the-road traditionalists” such as the audience for *Inspector Morse*, whilst associating the ‘high-end’ audience for genre fusion and critical-ironic commentary with younger, college-educated and tele-literate viewers (see Ibid: 18). It is hard, when approached from the perspective of industry-imagined audience profiles, to posit that the same audience which enjoys *Inspector Morse* would also be regular viewers of *The Sopranos* due to the latter’s propensity for violence and strong language (Ibid: 27-35). Kaplan (2008: 244) supports this point by stating that whilst:

Lost in Austen is aimed at a large, cross-over ...viewing public ...[t]he primary audience is the twenty-somethings familiar with magical doors, time-travel tales, and cultural absurdities.

Yet, alongside *Lost in Austen* undercutting its societal nostalgia through humour, the programme’s juxtaposition of genres also generates further ‘quality’ appeals by providing serious social critique concerning how viewers engage with the ‘past’ in costume dramas:

The negative events in *Lost in Austen*’s new plot—Jane’s marriage to Mr Collins and Charlotte Lucas’ decision to go as a missionary to Africa—function to critique Austen’s idealised version of Regency England by making much more starkly clear the limited choices and financial pressures women faced in this period. (Ridout 2010a: 21; see also Cartmell 2010: 106)

Ridout develops this point by arguing that:

Some ...discomforts are trivial and amusing, like cleaning ...teeth with chalk and twigs. However, others, like the experiences of Jane and Charlotte, are more significant. When Amanda and Darcy travel to contemporary London, the series highlights via two references — Darcy’s racist comment on the bus and Amanda’s roommate Piranha’s response to her invitation to see Austen’s world for ten minutes — the serious and threatening discomfort experienced by people of colour in Austen’s world. (2010a: 21-22)

Through employing temporal contrast conventions, *Lost in Austen* demonstrates the differences between opportunities for women ‘then’ and ‘now’ and so constructs a ‘complex viewing’ position for audiences that overlaps with discourses concerning ‘quality’ appeal (see pages 167-168). Although some audience groups can enjoy societal nostalgia through *Lost in Austen*’s visual pleasures, the programme counters this discourse by highlighting the lack of opportunities that Regency England would offer to some viewers along axes of race and gender. This strategy offers a juxtaposing discourse of present-orientated nostalgia for audiences to consider as the desire that some viewers may have for returning to the ‘past’ is questioned. However, the serial’s inflection of present-orientated nostalgia also suggests *Lost in Austen*’s classification as ‘popular’ television in this instance since demonstrating that the ‘present’ is better than the ‘past’ supports how popular televisual forms attempt “to close down readings and contain them within a frame of normative social values” (Nelson 2007a: 33). This line of argument is returned to and developed further in the following section.

Lost in Austen complicates its classification as ‘popular’ television, though, by displaying ambivalence towards its representation of the ‘present’ also. Ridout explores this point in relation to the attitudes that male characters display towards constructions of femininity in both ‘past’ and ‘present’ narrative worlds:

the third episode disrupts Amanda’s nostalgia for the sexual conventions of Georgian England by having Darcy reject Amanda for not being ‘a maid’. Amanda’s equally dismayed reactions to, on the one hand, her ‘real’ contemporary boyfriend Michael’s extremely unromantic proposal and, on the other, to Darcy’s withdrawal of his proposal when he discovers she is not a virgin demonstrate that the sexual revolution has involved losses as well as gains for women. (2010a: 24)

This reading suggests the construction of another discourse of nostalgia, overlapping with Jameson’s (1997) arguments concerning ‘nostalgia for the present’, by gesturing towards how similarities between ‘past’ and ‘present’ are readable from the programme’s narrative strategies (see next section). Yet, through critiquing the attitudes that Amanda’s romantic

suitors display in both spatiotemporal worlds, *Lost in Austen* constructs a complex position towards both ‘past’ and ‘present’ by suggesting “that the prevailing social codes deaden the spirit and that the twenty-first-century language of “love” ...repels feelings of desire” (Kaplan 2008: 246; see also Cartmell 2010: 58). *Lost in Austen* therefore ‘twists’ *Life on Mars*’ ambivalent reading position towards both ‘past’ and ‘present’ by attempting to layer the programme’s appeal to ‘quality’ critical audiences whilst retaining its focus upon the gendered ‘popular’ audience for costume dramas in the UK. Through constructing-yet-critiquing its discourse of societal nostalgia, the programme’s *mise-en-scene* retains appeals to valuable middle-class audiences, but attempts to further the serial’s appeals to different ‘quality’ demographics by layering this with strategies designed to attract Generation-Y viewers through a knowing attitude and an additional ‘complex’ disposition towards both ‘past’ and ‘present’ worlds. Crucially, though, all of these reading positions are housed within costume drama’s appeal to female audiences since its visual pleasures are linked to culturally-feminised discourses whilst its social commentary is focused around the roles of women then and now. In line with the institutional requirement to amalgamate audience segments, and so maximise advertising revenue, *Lost in Austen*’s encoding of societal nostalgia displays layered polysemy through simultaneously targeting divergent interpretations of the imagined (in this case, predominantly female) ‘quality’ audience.

Through being constructed as a syncretic media text that targets different segments of the audience for ‘quality’ television in the UK, *Lost in Austen* implements production strategies to simultaneously target both conservative and radical notions of ‘quality’. Previous work frequently overlooks how different inflections of ‘quality’ discourse can be read as strategies designed to layer appeals to alternative viewing niches in line with a programme’s status as a broadcast product aiming for a coalition audience¹¹¹. Some work has gestured towards this point through recognising that claims to ‘quality’ status are discursive constructions (Hills 2004b: 64) articulated from subject positions in accordance with the demands of that cultural site (Ibid; see also Thomas 2002: 32). From this position, a commercial institution would conceive ‘quality’ appeal solely in terms of attracting affluent audience groups to the programme (see McCabe 2005: 211, Feuer 2007: 147, Johnson 2010b: 139-141). Yet, debates surrounding the ‘quality’ appeals of programmes tend to focus around examples emerging

¹¹¹ The absence of this kind of discussion can be seen in the work on ‘quality’ television undertaken by Thomas (2002), Akass and McCabe (2004, 2005), Cardwell (2007), Chamberlain and Ruston (2007), Nelson (2007a, 2007b, 2007c), Goode (2007), Feuer (2007), Knox (2007), McCabe and Akass (2007) and Turnbull (2007).

from the US and, aside from work on network series including *CSI* and *Lost*, also usually avoid the strategies that ‘mainstream’ or ‘network’ TV uses for layering appeals to ‘quality’ audiences through a programme’s formal elements¹¹². Even when references are made to these strategies, such mentions usually function as a point of comparison to ‘high-end’ HBO dramas¹¹³. Studying *Lost in Austen* suggests that different discourses of ‘quality’ have been encoded in the programme as part of ITV1’s institutional remit to maximise viewing figures and so address different segments of the quality audience simultaneously. Greater attention should therefore be paid to how programmes commissioned by ‘mainstream’, commercially-funded channels in different national contexts target ‘quality’ audiences. However, in line with *Lost in Austen*’s need to attract other segments into a coalition audience, other ways of reading the programme’s nostalgic discourses are observable as production strategies. The next section discusses these by outlining textual strategies designed to provide ‘popular’ appeal.

Satisfying Conventions: Nostalgia for the Present, Genre and Popular Appeal

In *Life on Mars* and *Ashes to Ashes*, present-orientated nostalgia is constructed at a narrative level to articulate the lead character’s desire to escape 1973/1981 and return ‘home’. *Lost in Austen* varies in its construction and mobilisation of this discourse. Sequences are included which denote Amanda’s wishes to return to the ‘present’ such as in episode two where she suggests ‘jacking the whole thing in’ and later seeks Elizabeth’s help in restoring *Pride and Prejudice*’s plot by making unheard pleas across the magic door. Additionally, Amanda “remain[s] blind to her own love for Darcy until well into the series” (Ridout 2010a: 21). However, although these sequences connote Amanda’s otherness in Regency England, such scenes do not foreground the character’s frustrations with the ‘past’ as they do in *Life on Mars* and *Ashes to Ashes*. Rather than viewing the ‘present’ as the ideal to return to, *Lost in Austen* constructs a gendered ambivalence towards this spatiotemporal location through Amanda’s construction as “a modern woman tired of being treated shabbily by an uncouth man who takes her for granted and who is clueless about the importance of manners, courtesy, and romance” (Kaplan 2008: 149). *Lost in Austen*’s incorporation of present-orientated nostalgia therefore serves specific generic and character functions. Amanda’s

¹¹² See Mittell (2009) on *Lost* or see Goode (2007), Jermyn (2007) and Turnbull (2007) on *CSI*.

¹¹³ See, for instance, the many comparisons that Nelson (2007a and 2007b) makes between *Desperate Housewives* (ABC/Cherry Alley Productions 2004-12) and its HBO predecessor *Sex and the City* (Darren Star Productions/Sex and the City Productions 1998-2004). See also Johnson (2010b: 149).

hostile relationship with Darcy connotes the plot's inclusion of romance fiction discourses (see next section) whilst the character's pleas to return remind audiences of her status as a Janeite (see below) and how "it is Amanda's love of [Austen's] novel that allows her through the portal in her bathroom" (Ridout 2010a: 20). Since her pleas to the 'present' concern restoring the fragmenting plot of the novel that she idealises rather than a desire for contemporary objects and relationships, *Lost in Austen's* encoding of present-orientated nostalgia differs to its construction in *Life on Mars* and *Ashes to Ashes* through downplaying the discourse. Instead, *Lost in Austen* encodes appeals to the attitudes of its viewers by dramatising a 'nostalgia for the present' that overlaps with Jameson's (1991: 21) use of the phrase to describe "the waning of our historicity, of our lived possibility of experiencing history in some active way". The serial overlaps with Jameson's (1998: 137) discussion of the subjective experience of schizophrenia in the postmodern age where:

the schizophrenic ...does not have ...experience of temporal continuity ...but is condemned to live in a perpetual present with which the various moments of his or her past have little connection and for which there is no conceivable future on the horizon ...schizophrenic experience is an experience of isolated, disconnected, discontinuous material signifiers, which fail to link up into a coherent sequence. (see also Jameson 1991: 26-28)

Criticisms regarding costume drama's "ahistorical" (Cooke 2003: 166) nature are not unfamiliar (see pages 54-55) despite approaches from other disciplinary areas, such as adaptation studies, positing alternative analytical frameworks that suggest "adaptations ...interpret the novel as a reflection on the present as much as the past" (Cartmell 2010: 22). Caughie nevertheless explains how discourses of postmodern schizophrenia apply to television costume dramas:

However much the classic serial may lovingly recreate the past with a profusion of detail, the body of the actor is stubborn: the furniture may be authentic nineteenth-century, but the body of the actor and its gestures are our contemporary. When Jennifer Ehle as Elizabeth Bennet runs down the hill in the opening scene of the 1994 *Pride and Prejudice*, her costume is nineteenth-century but her run *feels* like the present. (2000a: 224)

Nelson (1997: 145) links costume drama's dehistoricising tendencies to audience targeting strategies by stating that these form part of television drama's 'formulaic realism' where a "disposition to efface history to focus on decontextualised personal relationships in the present comes into play". Television drama's dominant codes, employed for constructing

'realistic' characters and relationships, require costume dramas to offer nostalgia for the present to make them relatable to viewers. Whereas these prior discussions of nostalgia for the present consider this discourse as an experiential effect of the programme's performances and aesthetics, *Lost in Austen* differs by combining a temporal contrast narrative with generic hybridisation of 'time travel' and 'costume drama' discourses. For example, the plot posits in relation to romantic opportunities for female characters that "the worlds of Elizabeth and Amanda are remarkably and depressingly similar" (Ridout 2010a: 24). Ridout (Ibid) expands upon this observation by first noting that:

In the twenty-first century, Amanda's divorced mother ironically tells her to accept her boyfriend's drunken marriage proposal as it may be her only hope to have someone to 'help her off with her coat' when she is old. This is despite the fact that her broken marriage has left her alone with no one to help her off with her coat, not to mention her serious addictions to decorating and smoking.

The dysfunctional relationships that *Lost in Austen* attaches to its representation of the 'present' are then echoed in its 'past' diegetic world since:

Mr Bennet removes himself from the marital bed and sleeps in his library when, after the wedding of Jane to Mr Collins, his wife continues to insist that he should be happy for the marriage she has imposed upon their daughter. Both mothers encourage their daughters to marry despite significant reasons to think the marriages will be unhappy and their own unhappy marital situations. (Ibid; see also Kaplan 2008: 245 and 2010: online)

Just as *Life on Mars* and *Ashes to Ashes* occasionally "suggest that good policing is ...something that is timeless and not fixed by its – or indeed any – context" (Willis 2012: 60), *Lost in Austen* erases differences between 'past' and 'present' by suggesting a universal experience of romantic relationships. Through focusing nostalgia for the present around issues concerning relationships and romance, this encoding suggests the implementation of a production strategy to target costume drama's female audience(s).

However, this is not the only way that *Lost in Austen* constructs nostalgia for the present through suggesting similarities between the serial's two spatiotemporal locations. It is noticeable that by the point of narrative closure all of the 'past'-located characters change through adopting some of Amanda's modern-day values. Darcy falls in love with Amanda; Mrs. Bennet rejects the constraints of Lady Catherine de Burgh (Lindsay Duncan); Mr. Bingley (Tom Mison) realises he cannot 'move backwards' in time and instead elopes with

Jane (Morven Christie) to America; Mr. Bennet accepts that he needs to abandon his childish behaviour; Elizabeth announces that she ‘was born out of place and out of time’ and returns to modern-day Hammersmith. Many of the characters from Austen’s novel become affected by, and respond to, contemporary values resulting in differences between ‘past’ and ‘present’ becoming largely erased by the narrative’s end. Through these character developments, the ‘past’ in *Lost in Austen* ultimately equates to the ‘present in costume’. Having all of *Lost in Austen*’s characters adopt contemporary values therefore validates contemporary discourses of “innovation and progress” (Adam and Groves 2007: 1) if read ideologically. These values drive and sustain modern Western capitalist countries (Ibid) and contemporary ideologies of the ‘self’ (see Giddens 1991), constructing a preferred reading position that (re)inscribes dominant socio-cultural ideas. Noting the conservative elements of *Lost in Austen*’s nostalgia for the present provides a way of reading this discourse beyond linking it to the postmodern *zeitgeist*, however. Instead, it can be analysed alongside context-specific production factors concerning targeting ‘popular’ audience niches through providing narrative reassurance.

Nelson (2007a: 175) discusses overlaps between “the relative predictability of TV genres”, dominant social values and appeals to ‘popular’ audience tastes when theorising quality popular drama. Through adhering to established genre frameworks ““quality popular drama” ...[seeks] to reassure” its audience(s) about the world through subscribing to ‘normative’ values¹¹⁴. Television drama’s ‘popularity’ partly arises from providing its audience(s) with ““ontological security”” (Ibid: 19) through offering narrative closure and reaffirming discourses that reflect the beliefs of imagined middle-class audiences. Nelson implies that ‘popular’ appeal constructs a dominant reading position that dovetails with middle-class tastes, suggesting that popular generic TV is reactionary since “[c]ritical scholars have, in this vein, argued that the media tend to express the ideological positions of those with power” (Casey *et al* 2008: 152; see also Thornham and Purvis 2005: 81). Nelson (2007a: 209) thus argues that ‘popular’ television drama produces ‘closed’ texts that mirror dominant (middle-class) beliefs (see also Reeves, Rodgers and Epstein 1996: 25-26, Thornham and Purvis 2005: 79). This is not to argue that audiences blindly take-up the programme’s preferred reading position; as Bernadette Casey *et al* (2008: 100) identify, the idea of a preferred reading is contestable with regard to where it is located and who constructs this reading. Nevertheless, since “[s]ocial subjects are *positioned* (with respect to themselves and others)

¹¹⁴ Alternatively, see Cardwell (2002: 196) on genre and conservatism.

in relation to particular discourses and practices” (Clarke Date Unknown: online, original emphasis; see also Thornham and Purvis 2005: 82, Casey *et al* 2008: 99-100), Nelson (2007a) asserts that ‘popular’ genre television drama provides reassurance through constructing a preferred reading position that conforms to genre conventions. These arguments, made primarily in relation to programmes utilising problem-resolution narratives such as police series (Thornham and Purvis 2005: 81-84), may seem detached from costume drama’s serialised narratives (Creeber 2001b: 38). However, applying these arguments to *Lost in Austen*’s adherence to genre conventions and/or dominant social values identifies a production strategy designed to target ‘popular’ audience tastes through a discourse of nostalgia.

Lost in Austen adheres strongly to costume drama’s narrative conventions. Despite including a time travel premise, the programme’s construction of nostalgia for the present satisfies audience expectations for both ‘costume drama’ and adaptations of *Pride and Prejudice*. Studies of television costume dramas have identified a recurring narrative opposition across these programmes between individual freedom and the period’s social constraints (see Nelson 1997, 2001a, 2001b and 2004). The BBC’s 1994 adaptation of *Middlemarch* is “concerned with social reforms in the name of liberation from a stagnant and stultifying tradition which offers itself as the natural way of life” (Nelson 1997: 126) whilst Raimund Borgmeier (2004: 71) comments that the 1995 *Pride and Prejudice* dramatises “the conflict between two ways of life, constraint vs. relative freedom” (see also Nelson 2001b: 40, Cardwell 2002: 200; Richards 2003: 125; Wallace 2003: 135; Church Gibson 2004: 51; Street 2004: 103) . A common trope in television costume drama is that the “major characters ...reflect oppositional strains of resistance” (Nelson 1997: 126) to the status quo by embodying ‘modern’ reforming values. This theme can then be adapted in accordance with the attributes of different characters read from the source text such as having female characters subvert social conventions by leaving loveless marriages (Nelson 2004: 122).

Lost in Austen follows this precedent by playing out clashes between society and the individual, and freedom and constraint, but maps these conventions on to the programme’s temporal contrast narrative and oppositions between ‘past’ and ‘present’. Amanda displays modern day attributes, especially towards romantic relationships, since in episode one the character informs the Bennet sisters that she has turned down Michael’s offer of marriage in

the present because she ‘didn’t believe he loved me’. The character thus represents the “strong leading female character” (Giddings and Selby 2001: 120) from television costume drama who “challenge[s] social conventions, political orthodoxies and habitual ways of seeing in the name of freedom” (Nelson 1997: 128). *Lost in Austen*’s crucial difference is that Amanda’s ‘contemporary’ attitudes arise from a post-feminist discourse positing that women are “free ...to grow up to be whoever [they] want... to be” (Collins 2001: 85). Rather than updating characters from ‘classic’ novels to display modern day sensibilities, *Lost in Austen* instead constructs nostalgia for the present through combining genre discourses and has ‘past’ characters adopt contemporary sensibilities after encountering a character from the viewer’s ‘present’. Generic pleasures for costume drama remain satisfied, but are nevertheless ‘twisted’ through generic hybridity.

Amanda’s post-feminist/individualist discourse means that the character takes on gender attributes associated with the ‘ladette’ (Cartmell 2010: 105). This modern construction of femininity embodies:

ways of acting ...more commonly associated with ‘lads’ rather than with girls or young women. In some ways then, ‘ladettes’ are transgressing gender boundaries and entering territories traditionally regarded as ‘masculine’. (Jackson 2006: 353)

Amanda transgresses many of the expected gender ‘norms’ for females in Georgian England: she drunkenly snogs Mr. Bingley in episode one and gets thrown out of the ball at Netherfield for kneeing Mr. Collins (Guy Henry) in the crotch in episode two. These characteristics position Amanda as an ‘Othered’ form of femininity within Georgian England but the character’s construction can be read as a strategy implemented to attract different viewing niches and so build a coalition audience. The character firstly retains appeals to middle-class audiences seeking the generic pleasures of costume drama through displaying resistance to social conventions and independence (Kaplan 2008: 249). Amanda also displays layered polysemy through acting as a point of identification for younger viewers by embodying the traits of a ‘ladette’ (Muncer *et al* 2001, Gauntlett 2002: 69). The character’s modernising influence, and the changes it brings to ‘past’-located characters, therefore intersects with multiple imagined audience discourses and provides reassurance to these groups by demonstrating the superiority of contemporary values. Given Mr. Collins’ odious characterisation, it is difficult not to delight in his comeuppance when encountering Amanda’s knee.

Amanda's attributes inevitably generate tension between her and some of the characters from Austen's novel. Darcy, for instance, angrily informs Amanda 'You repel me. You are an abomination, madam' at the end of episode two because of the 'mendacity, disorder and lewdness' she has brought into Society. The character's reproach comes about because Amanda's behaviour challenges the expectations that women of the time should be "educated or trained to attract worthwhile husbands. They must be beautiful, graceful, accomplished and pure" (Giddings and Selby 2001: 106). Incorporating "an entirely new, contemporary character into Austen's novel" (Ridout 2010b: 133) may however alienate some audiences such as fans (or Janeites) who find "something private and personal in their admiration" (Lynch 2005: 112; see also Kaplan 2008: 249) of Austen's *oeuvre*. This audience niche, who Kaplan (Ibid: 244) names *Lost in Austen's* "third segment of the target audience", may disregard the programme since previous research has identified that Janeites express hostility towards works "devaluing, dishonouring or trivialising Austen's narrative(s)" (Cartmell 2010: 95; see also Kaplan 2008: 242-243, Ridout 2010b: 133). *Lost in Austen* attempts to offset such concerns through establishing Amanda's status as a Janeite in the programme's opening scenes. During these sequences "even her cell phone rings with the identifiable music from the Colin Firth series" (Kaplan 2010: online) and these details are included to 'reassure' fan audiences that respect for the source material will be displayed¹¹⁵. Also, *Lost in Austen's* deviations do not wholly defamiliarise *Pride and Prejudice's* narrative progression:

Pride and Prejudice fans and Janeites will be amused or dismayed when the characters ...run amok. ...Amanda wants the plot to follow the Austenian lines; her wish is that all the correct matches will be made. But this modern tale gets more convoluted when she tries to intervene as matchmaker. Amanda's illtimed intervention results in the marriage of Jane and Collins, sends innocent Lydia running off with a drunken Mr. Bingley, and makes the match between Mr. Darcy and Caroline Bingley, even though Caroline has revealed to Amanda that she is a lesbian. Ultimately, however, it is a relief to learn not only that the Collins's marriage has not been consummated and that Lady Catherine will arrange a divorce. (Kaplan 2008: 247)

Although the possibility remains that some Janeites may feel alienated by *Lost in Austen's* plot, the serial retains some 'fidelity' to Austen's story through replaying character

¹¹⁵ Kaplan (2008: 243) notes further attempts to authenticate Amanda's character to Janeites through such signifiers as "[t]he name "Amanda Price" echo[ing] "Fanny Price," but the sensibilities of this character recall Marianne Dashwood, in that she often says and does the wrong thing".

relationships and clashes to mirror, yet ‘twist’, the source text. For example, Mrs. Bennet’s disapproval of Amanda stems from a fear that the time traveller’s ‘present day’ disposition may tarnish the reputation of her daughters by association. *Lost in Austen* therefore replays the “overwhelming problem” (Giddings and Selby 2001: 106) of Austen’s novel through having Mrs. Bennet desperately seek to marry her daughters to secure her (and their) future(s). However, this aspect of the plot becomes refocused on to the damaging influence that Amanda’s modern attitudes have on her daughters, as well as the effect of her low-cut tops on the men-folk of Meryton (see episode one). Mrs. Bennet’s character remains faithful to her representation in the novel as well versed in “[r]umour, gossip and lateral communication” (Ibid) but the source of her problems in *Lost in Austen* comes in this instance from the modernising influences of a present-day time traveller. Again, the series encodes ‘popular’ appeal through adhering to plot points and characterisations from the source text and so includes strategies designed to reassure viewers that they are watching a “loose adaptation” (Cartmell 2010: 95) of Austen.

Lady Catherine’s reappearance at Longbourn towards the end of episode four also displays how *Lost in Austen* retains, but recodes, plot points from *Pride and Prejudice* to construct nostalgia for the present and affirm contemporary values. The Lady’s visit is motivated by attempts to restore the fragmenting social structure (by this point Bingley has eloped to Hammersmith with Lydia, who Lady Catherine had intended to marry one of Mr. Collins’s ridiculously comic brothers) and warn Amanda away from both Society and Darcy’s continuing attraction to her. This sequence again mirrors Austen’s novel by recalling the final confrontation where “the lady wants Elizabeth to conform and obey, whereas the young woman claims the right to make her own decision” (Borgmeier 2004: 71). Although *Lost in Austen* resolves this sequence differently due to its time travel scenario - Amanda initially conforms to Lady Catherine’s demands through rejecting ‘the past’ in favour of the present (see below) – the programme still utilises narrative strategies to reassure costume drama audiences. Amanda’s apparent submission to the Lady’s demands by declaring that she ‘doesn’t want Darcy’ initially suggests that both genre expectations of a ‘happy ending’ (see Nelson 2001a: 38) and fidelity to the source material might be overlooked. Audiences are not, however, denied the subversive pleasure of Lady Catherine’s comeuppance and the individual rebelling against society. Instead this narrative act is retained but projected on to Mrs. Bennet’s character as, following Lady Catherine’s stern criticism of Longbourn’s

inhabitants, the mother defiantly informs the matriarch ‘You are a prig, madam. A pander. And a common bully. And you cheat at cards’. This moment is highly unexpected given Mrs. Bennet’s prior narrative positioning against Amanda and in favour of values associated with ‘the past’. It is not out-of-line with costume drama’s generic conventions, though, since Mrs. Bennet becomes the ‘strong woman’ (Giddings and Selby 2001: 120) by aligning herself with Amanda’s values and speaking out against the oppressive social structure. Kaplan (2008: 246) suggests that scenes where Amanda and Mrs Bennet clash “demonstrate that they [both] speak the same rather rude language” and so, by erasing the differences between ‘past’ and ‘present’, the resolution achieved in this scene (Mr. Bennet subsequently announces an end to his exile from the marital bed) foregrounds how change is achieved by adopting contemporary dispositions. This leads *Lost in Austen* towards classification as ‘popular’ television since, through bringing Austen’s characters up-to-date with ‘present-day’ beliefs, the programme offers costume drama’s imagined audience “reassur[ance] through not only narrative but also ideological closure” (Nelson 2007a: 176). By adopting Amanda’s modern attitudes, Mrs Bennet validates contemporary attitudes regarding the individual’s primacy over social conventions.

The programme’s appeal to a coalition audience is also extended in this sequence due to the lower-class connotations of Mrs Bennet’s behaviour. Lady Catherine’s rebuttal, alongside other scenes in *Lost in Austen* such as when Amanda’s violates social conventions by suddenly naming Caroline Bingley (Christina Cole) a ‘bumface’ (only to quickly counter the term as a colloquialism) whilst at dinner in episode three (see Kaplan 2008: 252 on this sequence), can be read as narrative strategies designed to increase *Lost in Austen*’s appeals to working-class audiences. Studies of media audiences have identified that instances of (minor) insubordination directed towards middle class characters provide pleasure for audiences occupying a subject position lower than that of the humiliated character(s) within the diegesis (see Buckingham 1987: 188-193). Relating this point to sequences from *Lost in Austen* suggests a production strategy to provide appeals to various imagined audience tastes via layered polysemy. Mrs. Bennet’s rebuttal to Lady Catherine displays ‘popular’ appeal by drawing upon costume drama’s convention of resolving the individual/society binary whilst also offering an alternative, yet familiar, resolution to *Pride and Prejudice*’s plot through having Lady Catherine humiliated. This humiliation, like Amanda’s humorous naming of Caroline, is directed towards a character coded as ‘upper class’ and so indicates the serial’s

targeting of working-class or lower-middle-class viewers by having Mrs. Bennet adopt Amanda's 'ladette' characteristics. Both middle-class genre/literature enthusiasts *and* working-/lower-middle class tastes are appealed to as parts of a coalition audience by collapsing narrative distinctions between 'past' and 'present' behaviours and articulating nostalgia for the present.

Alongside the appeals to various inflections of 'quality' and 'popular' imagined audiences discussed across this chapter, additional audience appeals can be read from *Lost in Austen*'s encodings of nostalgia. The programme's construction of affective nostalgia can also be analysed as a strategy targeting a range of female audience viewers, as the next section of this chapter demonstrates.

An All-Consuming Romance: Affective Nostalgia-as-Romance and Coalition Appeal

Lost in Austen's opening scenes locate Amanda in a representation of the 'present' where "twice during ...her journey home from work, she is physically pushed around by men—a man with a rucksack on the bus and then a man riding a bicycle on the pavement" (Ridout 2010a: 18). Present-day Hammersmith is therefore constructed as a bustling location defined by hostile masculine behaviour which, when coupled with fiancé Michael's infidelity (see Kaplan 2010: online), highlights "the contemporary tolerance of surliness, boorishness, and unkindness in everyday twenty-first-century public and private interactions" (Kaplan 2008: 245). Kaplan (2010: online) views this construction as a recognisable world for *Lost in Austen*'s younger 'Generation Y' viewers which legitimises Amanda's "nostalgia[a] for "Austenian" manners, clothes, language, codes of behavio[u]r, and courtesy" (Ibid). This nostalgic discourse remains with the character throughout the programme, despite the narrative's critique of women's opportunities in Regency England, resulting in a resolution where "Amanda ...choose[s] Austen's past over her own present" (Ridout 2010a: 22). The serial's validation of 'past' over 'present' suggests a conservative ideology since Amanda "is no longer the financially independent single woman of her twenty-first century incarnation but, instead, is ...poor and financially dependent on Darcy" (Ibid). However, rather than constructing societal nostalgia for all areas of Georgian England, *Lost in Austen*'s narrative closure values a discourse of 'affective nostalgia' (see pages 162-165) since, despite recognising the limitations of the programme's represented 'past', *Lost in Austen* values 'past' social and emotional relationships over contemporary equivalents.

Affective nostalgia – a discourse of nostalgia that values representations of ‘past’ spatiotemporal locations for the social norms and relationships associated with that diegetic world despite acknowledging its other negative associations – is evident throughout *Lost in Austen*. Episode one constructs this discourse when Amanda describes herself as a ‘pollutant’ to Bingley whilst drunk and smoking a cigarette outside the first ball. Attributes of the discourse are also articulated at the end of episode two during a pivotal clash between Amanda and Darcy (directly at the serial’s midpoint) which highlights the differences between “current notions of “romance” [and] late eighteenth-century understandings of “courtship”” (Nixon 2001: 25). In this sequence, Amanda criticises the “judgmental, arrogant, and humourlessly cruel” (Kaplan 2008: 246) Darcy for being a ‘disappointment’ when compared to the ideal Amanda associates with both the spatiotemporal location and Darcy’s character. Amanda’s outburst is motivated by the range of ways that affective nostalgia for the character has been challenged prior to this point: she has learnt that emotional relationships in the ‘past’ are just as dysfunctional as those in ‘the present’ (as signified by Mr. and Mrs. Bennet’s marriage) as well as being constrained by social conventions and, as the marriage of Jane and Mr. Collins demonstrates, undertaken for the sake of convenience. The serial’s ongoing critique of affective nostalgia targets ‘quality’ audiences by constructing a ‘complex viewing’ position where both narrative discourses of ‘past’ and ‘present’ are equally questioned:

the feminist politics of getting ‘lost in Austen’ are complex and contradictory. It can offer a nostalgic escape from the contemporary moment but it can also be an adventure into the past that encourages critical thinking about current gender relations and constructions of gendered identities. (Ridout 2010b: 142)

Alternatively, *Lost in Austen*’s encoding of affective nostalgia can be read through the genre conventions of romance fiction. Amanda and Darcy’s clash recalls the Alex/Gene relationship in *Ashes to Ashes* and its development from initial misunderstanding and distrust to mutual respect and affection (see pages 191-192). Moreover, ending the serial with Amanda’s decision to stay in the ‘past’ and in Darcy’s arms suggests the serial’s adherence to romance narrative’s conventions since “[i]n terms of wish fulfilment, Darcy tells Amanda everything women have always wanted to hear” (Kaplan 2008: 253). Since much work in Media and Cultural Studies recognises the appeal of romance narratives to female audiences (see, for example, Radway 1991; Giddings and Selby 2001: 104-123; Kaplan 2001: 177-187;

Macdonald and Macdonald 2003: 2; Margolis 2003: 22-43; Richards 2003: 111-126), *Lost in Austen*'s construction of affective nostalgia implies a strategy for targeting female audiences. Despite recognising the limited opportunities for women in Georgian England, *Lost in Austen* nevertheless values the forms of masculinity located in this 'past' spatiotemporal location over equivalents in the 'present' and so encodes affective-nostalgia-as-romance.

Lost in Austen's targeting of female viewers through affective-nostalgia-as-romance can be located alongside a range of ITV1's institutional policies. Firstly, this discursive construction underlines the channel's policy of favouring the 'tried and tested with a twist' (cf. Nelson 2007a: 70) since resolving the narrative through leaving its time travelling protagonist in the past displays *Lost in Austen*'s indebtedness to *Life on Mars* and *Ashes to Ashes*. Nowell (2011: 49) argues that "[c]ash-[i]ns draw material from other contemporaneous hits and/or commercially viable ...types" and so mirroring the resolution of a previously-successful entry in the cycle connotes *Lost in Austen*'s status as a 'Carpetbagger Cash-In' and ITV's use of these strategies for production and commissioning. *Lost in Austen*'s encoding of affective nostalgia to target female audiences (whose tastes have been previously-overlooked by the cycle) can also be demonstrated through comparing its final scenes with those of *Life on Mars*. The latter concludes with Sam Tyler being reunited first with Annie, suggesting a romantic resolution as Sam is "rewarded with [a] ...kiss" (Nelson 2012: 26), but this ending is then denied since Sam and Annie are interrupted by Hunt and the CID team. *Life on Mars*' reunion scene therefore indicates how:

"inferior" and "weak" characteristics of the feminine are repressed in the masculine psyche and *exscribed* from the masculine narrative. Exscription, the opposite of inscription, is the process whereby a discourse writes out of itself topics that are ideologically or psychologically discomfoting. (Fiske 1989: 204)

Life on Mars' closing scene symbolises how "[t]he exscription of women leads to ...male bonding" (Ibid: 213) since the sequence's dialogue is dominated by masculine posturing between Sam, Gene and his colleagues. Sam and Annie's romantic relationship becomes exscribed as *Life on Mars* favours a masculine coding of affective nostalgia where male friendships are prioritised. *Lost in Austen* instead foregrounds the culturally feminine narrative code of romance by ending with a medium shot circling around Darcy and Amanda kissing. Whereas *Life on Mars* encodes affective nostalgia through masculine discourses,

Lost in Austen overlaps with ITV's policy for 'twisting' previous successes through recoding established conventions of the genre cycle towards female audience tastes.

Lost in Austen's encoding of affective nostalgia towards female audiences is also readable through other ITV policies such as targeting 'popular' audience niches by adhering to dominant ideologies and genre conventions (see pages 96-97). The serial's narrative resolution confirms Deborah Kaplan's (2001: 181) criticism that "the mass-market romance is a very important "ghost" affecting the scripting and direction of [Jane Austen adaptation – RPG] films" since *Lost in Austen*'s narrative is heavily structured towards "that long-awaited kiss" (Collins 2001: 79) expected by female audiences for romance fiction (see Radway 1991, Richards 2003: 124). As Paulette Richards (Ibid: 115) expands:

this last-frame kiss corresponds effectively to the last-page kiss which was long the staple ending of the modern Regency romance novel, and indeed the whole plot builds inexorably to this denouement just as the classic Regency romance novel was paced to build to the final embrace.

Lez Cooke (2003: 168) similarly notes that TV costume drama regularly "boil[s] down to ...a good old-fashioned love story" whilst others (see Nelson 1997, 2001a, 2001b, 2004, Kaplan 2001, Richards 2003, Higson 2004) have recognised, with varying levels of hostility, that "romance is at the heart" (Nelson 2001a: 39) of how television adapts 'classic' literature. Through adhering to romance fiction's conventions, *Lost in Austen* satisfies generic and audience expectations for costume drama. However, relating *Lost in Austen* to its production specificities, the serial's resolution – encoding affective nostalgia via the conventions of romance fiction – constitutes a production strategy implemented to satisfy ITV's internal definition of 'popular' audience tastes. *Lost in Austen* reassures its audience(s) partly by offering "the familiarity of a happy ending" (Margolis 2003: 38) whilst also subscribing to dominant heterosexual and patriarchal values (Ibid: 24). Whereas *Life on Mars* expresses ambivalence in its closing scene, continuing to critique affective nostalgia as Sam remains critical of Gene's masculinity, *Lost in Austen* encodes affective nostalgia to close down meanings and so achieve popular appeal by validating dominant values.

Lost in Austen's encoding of affective-nostalgia-as-romance echoes other institutional requirements for ITV1 drama by intersecting with the channel's need to maximise advertising revenue by appealing to a wide range of viewers. The polysemy surrounding 'Jane Austen'

and her *oeuvre* partly helps to secure these appeals since Austen's name currently sustains both conservative and feminist readings (see Nixon 2001: 26; Cardwell 2002: 162; Macdonald and Macdonald 2003: 1-2; Wallace 2003: 140) whilst also signifying high levels of cultural capital through being sanctioned by middlebrow tastes (Margolis 2003: 28) and the British educational system (see Cardwell 2002: 2). However, whilst Austen's "stories manage to offer something that appeals" (Margolis 2003: 39) across audience niches, encoding affective nostalgia through romance discourses extends *Lost in Austen*'s appeal due to romance fiction's cross-demographic appeal. Despite cultural discourses positioning romance negatively as a repetitive and trashy form governed by commercial mass-market imperatives (Kaplan 2001: 178-180; Margolis 2003: 24; Richards 2003: 125-126), Harriet Margolis (2003: 23) identifies that "[i]t isn't even safe to generalise about such things as educational background, since Ph.Ds read romances". Romance narratives appeal to a "predominantly female" (Ibid) audience that cuts across regular markers of distinction such as cultural and educational capital, as well as such divisions as generational identity (Nixon 2001: 22). *Lost in Austen*'s construction of affective nostalgia is therefore readable as a production strategy that helps to maximise the programme's appeal to female viewers, and so increase the channel's advertising revenue at this point in the schedule, by aligning it with romance fiction's wide-ranging appeal.

Lost in Austen also structures layered polysemy into the intertextual references that occur across the programme's serialised romance plot. Again, intertextual appeals expand beyond the encoding of affective nostalgia since *Lost in Austen* can be read alongside trends in popular fiction hybridising classic literature with science fiction/fantasy conventions such as in Jasper Fforde's *The Eyre Affair* (2001 – see Bennett 2001, Holcombe 2007, Letissier 2012) or *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* (Austen and Grahame-Smith 2009). Regarding intertextual strategies for targeting female audiences through fusing romantic fiction's codes with affective nostalgia, the serial displays awareness of myriad:

retellings, sequels and adaptations of Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* ...the range of texts ...includ[es] Helen Fielding's loose adaptation of Austen's plot to contemporary times in *Bridget Jones's Diary* (1996). (Ridout 2010b: 123)

Lost in Austen acknowledges *Pride and Prejudice*'s increased cultural visibility since:

[t]his series is an adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*, which is as much about adaptation as it is about Austen's novel. ...It appropriates not only Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* but also Andrew Davies' 1995 television adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* for the BBC with Colin Firth as Darcy. (Ridout 2010a: 15)

Bridget Jones's Diary and the BBC's 1995 adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* are not the only contemporary texts that *Lost in Austen* directly references. Previous academic analyses of the serial have also noted that *Lost in Austen*'s replaying of *Pride and Prejudice*'s plot with a contemporary heroine intersects with 'chick-lit' novels such as *Me and Mr Darcy* (Potter 2007) and *Austenland* (Hale 2008; see Francus 2010: online). Additional allusions to the recent film of *Pride and Prejudice* (Wright 2005; see Kaplan 2008: 243) and "Emma Campbell Webster's *Lost in Austen: Create Your Own Jane Austen Adventure* (2007) ...[an] interactive book requir[ing] the readers to turn to different pages depending on their answers to certain questions" (Ridout 2010a: 15-16) have also been observed. Encoding the serialised romance narrative with intertextual allusions to contemporary appropriations of *Pride and Prejudice* targets various imagined audience niches: through adhering to "[t]he pull of Austen's romance narrative" (Francus 2010: online), *Lost in Austen* recognises *Pride and Prejudice*'s popular image that positions "the novel solely as a romance" (Ibid) via its appropriation in *Bridget Jones's Diary* and beyond (Cartmell 2010: 104). Thus, when *Lost in Austen* "self-consciously adapts 'chick lit'" (Ridout 2010a: 16) in its opening scenes "by installing several key characteristics of that genre ...the urban single girl with a female flatmate, divorced mother, and disappointing boyfriend" (Ibid), this outlines the programme's intertextual strategies for targeting romance fiction's cross-demographic readership. Additionally, recalling Chapter Five's discussion of intertextuality (see pages 143-150), *Lost in Austen* also addresses a knowledgeable fan audience for *Pride and Prejudice* adaptations by layering oblique references to other film and TV versions throughout its affective nostalgia/romance plot:

the tan Spencer Amanda wears for the journey to Hammersmith and the bonnet she wears at Longbourn were worn by Jennifer Ehle ...in *Pride and Prejudice* (1995) and the plaid Spencer worn by Gemma Arterton ...in Amanda's bathroom was worn by Susannah Harker (Jane Bennet) in the 1995 adaptation when she rode to Netherfield in the rain. (Cartmell 2010: 107)

These references are only meaningful if fan audiences "exercise their discriminatory powers and thus receive the honour of 'symbolic capital' along with the pleasures of recognition" (Hills 2005a: 170). However, audience segments not possessing the required subcultural

capital to decode these references are not alienated, since the costumes still denote ‘period dress’ and generic fidelity. *Lost in Austen*’s intertextual strategies therefore display layered polysemy through making references to *Pride and Prejudice*’s popular image as an early example of ‘chick lit’ whilst combining this with allusions to other contemporary adaptations that some fan viewers may recognise. These references assist in building a coalition audience as the programme’s affective-nostalgia-as-romance narrative is layered with multiple addresses to different audience niches.

Some fan audiences may nevertheless object to the audience targeting strategies arising from *Lost in Austen*’s intertextuality. Marilyn Francus (2010: online) argues that interpretations of *Pride and Prejudice* as primarily a love story “have perpetuated imbalanced readings ...by happily focusing on Darcy to the exclusion of the other aspects of the novel” such as “the socio-economic discourse and critique of Austen’s culture” (Ibid). Janeites may also reject *Lost in Austen* for its allusions to other screen-based adaptations of *Pride and Prejudice* as costume drama has been criticised for offering audiences “cultural capital with the greatest ease” (Nelson 2001a: 39) by appealing to those “who wanted a touch of the classics ...but who wanted them reduced into neat dollops of sweetness for easy consumption” (Giddings and Selby 2001: 122; see also Creeber 2001b: 38; Higson 2003: 153-154). These critiques may not account for all fan readings of *Lost in Austen*; as Kaplan (2008: 249) notes, “in terms of Janeite wish-fulfilment, to have Elizabeth Bennet appear in one’s bathroom is second only to winning the heart of Mr. Darcy”. Nevertheless, these objections replay ongoing oppositions between ‘reading’ and ‘watching television’ (see Margolis 2003: 23), and ‘highbrow’ art and ‘lowbrow’ commercial culture (Richards 2003: 111, Nelson 2001a: 39). By employing intertextual strategies to maximise *Lost in Austen*’s potential audience, the serial may alienate ‘highbrow’ fans of Austen’s writing.

Lost in Austen employs strategies to counter these objections by encoding appeals to economically valuable ‘high-brow’ reading positions into its affective-nostalgia-as-romance plot (Nelson 1997: 30, Bignell 2004: 262-263). Making the programme’s opening shot Amanda’s copy of the book works to reassure Janeites/highbrow viewers as this follows ‘authenticating’ strategies used by other costume dramas where including an early shot of the actual novel connotes that what follows displays sensitivity to the source material (see Margolis 2003: 26-27). Moreover, episode one’s opening ‘chick lit’ scenes not only attempt

to widen the programme's appeal by establishing genre frameworks, visualising Amanda's friends and family and positioning her away from "the fan-as-obsessed-weirdo stereotype" (Hills 2002: 9; the choice of actress also extratextually signifies this¹¹⁶). These scenes also clarify that Amanda is a fan of both Austen's novel *and* screen adaptations of *Pride and Prejudice*. Such representational strategies establish Amanda's construction as a point of identification for 'Generation Y' viewers as "today's 'Everygirl'" (Kaplan 2008: 249), rather than making her a 'bookish' English Literature student, but they also suggest that the character possesses the necessary cultural capital to enjoy Austen's novel.

Another strategy employed for targeting educated audiences is encoded elsewhere into the serial's affective nostalgia-as-romance plotline. A scene in episode three sees Amanda indulge in what the character calls 'a bit of a strange postmodern moment' by making the 'real' Darcy recreate Colin Firth's infamous scene in the lake at Pemberley from the BBC adaptation. This sequence (and its referent) is readable according to multiple imagined audience niches since the original scene has become iconic to a range of different class-based audiences (see Kaplan 2008: 248, Francus 2010: online, Ridout 2010b: 138). However, having Amanda's dialogue make a direct reference to Jean Baudrillard's (1994) writings on the collapse of 'reality' into the 'hyperreal' suggests an appeal to intellectual audiences through the character's apparent knowledge of cultural theory. The scene remains locatable in relation to both audience knowledge of recent adaptations of *Pride and Prejudice* and "conventions of setbacks" (Nelson 2001a: 39) characteristic of romance narratives (the characters will have separated by the end of this episode). Yet it is also indicative of a strategy implemented to layer appeals to intellectual (fan) audiences into *Lost in Austen*'s affective nostalgia-as-romance plot, including these 'valuable' viewers within a coalition audience for ITV1¹¹⁷.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated *Lost in Austen*'s status as a 'Carpetbagger Cash-In' within the time travel TV cycle. The serial draws upon some of the conventions established in prior

¹¹⁶ Jemima Rooper brings associations of 'contemporary' appeal, 'confidence', 'likeability' and 'edginess' to the character of Amanda through her previous roles in such dramas as *As If* (Channel 4/Carnival 2001-4), *Hex* (Sky One/Shine/Sony Pictures Television International 2004-5) and *Synchronicity* (BBC/Shine 2006) (<http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0740383/> [Accessed 17/07/09]).

¹¹⁷ See also Ridout's (2010a: 18) reading of *Lost in Austen*'s sexual politics for another high-brow readings of the serial.

cycle entries, especially *Life on Mars* and *Ashes to Ashes*, such as encoding appeals to ‘quality’ imagined audiences through constructing a ‘complex’ reading position that critiques both ‘past’ and ‘present’ worlds, and leaving the protagonist in the ‘past’. However, *Lost in Austen* ‘twists’ these borrowings in line with various institutional demands for ITV1 programming such as maximising the programme’s coalition appeal in an attempt to accrue advertising revenue. One example of such a strategy would be articulating affective nostalgia with the narrative conventions of romance fiction and ‘twisting’ an established discourse to target the female audience for costume drama and/or romance fiction in the UK. However, despite *Lost in Austen*’s strategies for targeting quality audiences, many of the programme’s nostalgic discourses appear to prioritise ‘popular’ audience tastes. The reassuring position constructed through the serial’s nostalgia for the present, combined with the narrative’s conservative resolution in terms of satisfying romantic codes and validating heterosexual relationships, suggest that this ITV1 drama leans more towards satisfying popular audience tastes than the range of ‘quality’ appeals seen in adult drama produced for BBC One. Despite the negative connotations this generates towards ITV1’s drama output (see Conclusion), analysing constructions of nostalgia within a genre cycle suggests that different broadcast institutions with differing channel remits may give alternate weightings to ‘quality’ and ‘popular’ tastes.

Whether the textual strategies employed in *Lost in Austen* can be evaluated as successful remains open to debate. The serial achieved an average audience of 3.59 million viewers across its four episodes¹¹⁸ which might be seen as disappointing given that television adaptations of classic novels usually attract more than double this figure (cf. Nelson 2001: 38; Voigts-Virchow 2004: 17). In terms of ‘ratings discourse’ (see Ang 1991), *Lost in Austen* supports Mittell’s (2004a: 178) assertion that “programs which are generically mixed, either through parody or fusion, ...face a particularly tumultuous cultural life, easily buffeted by competing contexts of reception”. Through trying to address the tastes of different segments of the conservative/progressive ‘quality’ audience, and combining these with a range of appeals to other imagined audience niches through the encoding of Amanda’s character and the serial’s romance narrative, *Lost in Austen* might well have deviated too far from audience expectations for costume drama and so failed to find its intended audience(s) (Higson 2004:

¹¹⁸ Figures available at BARB: <http://www.barb.co.uk/report/weeklyTopProgrammesOverview?> [Accessed 10/05/09].

48-49). ITV continues to pursue intellectual property rights on *Lost in Austen*, though; a film adaptation has been in development since shortly after the TV serial aired¹¹⁹. With regard to television production trends, *Lost in Austen*'s failure in the ratings, combined with Mammoth's other failed attempt to capitalise on the popularity of time travel themes (and cement its brand identity as a producer of 'quality' and 'historical' dramas) by co-producing *Bonekickers* (2008) for BBC One alongside Monastic Productions (the team behind *Ashes to Ashes*), led to the genre cycle's cessation. This winding down of the cycle confirms how "a string of hits will inevitably end sooner rather than later causing production of a ...type to drop to base level" (Nowell 2011: 53). Whilst *Doctor Who* continues to endure following its rebranding under executive-producer Steven Moffat, additional entries to the cycle fell away post-2008 as new commissions were unsuccessful in securing coalition audiences.

Having provided detailed case studies of three contributions to the genre cycle, the final chapter summarises my key arguments regarding nostalgia, television and genre cycles whilst also critically reflecting upon these and offering avenues for further research. The discussion also engages with some of this thesis' limitations, most notably its nostalgia for certain arguably 'past' paradigms within Television Studies including its textualist focus and retaining of elements associated with nationally-specific broadcast cultures.

¹¹⁹ Details of the forthcoming film version of *Lost in Austen* can be tracked at <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1379163/> [Accessed 07/09/12].

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION: NOSTALGIA AND TELEVISION STUDIES OR NOSTALGIA FOR TELEVISION STUDIES?

The preceding chapters have employed social constructionist theories to analyse various articulations of nostalgic discourse within a cycle of post-2005 British time travel dramas, linking these constructions to production contexts. This chapter selectively reviews the thesis' key arguments, focusing upon its contributions to existing academic debates and suggesting avenues for further research. The discussion is organised into three areas: first, contributions to studying nostalgia are summarised. Secondly, issues concerning television and genre cycles are critically reflected upon and a suggestion for challenging the potential devaluation of ITV drama in this thesis is provided. Finally, the thesis' 'nostalgia for Television Studies' is considered, given the centrality that has been afforded to a textualist focus and aspects of broadcast culture such as national production contexts and coalition audiences.

Nostalgia, Television and Beyond

Overlapping with wider theorisations of memory as a socio-cultural form (Keightley and Pickering 2006, Keightley 2010), and building upon allusions identifiable in some previous scholarly work on nostalgia (Boym 2001, Grainge 2002: 43, Pickering and Keightley 2006: 922, Sprengler 2011: 17 and 26), Chapter Two of this thesis proposed conceptualising nostalgia through social constructionist ideas. This approach is significant not only because it takes nostalgia seriously within a scholarly context. It also allows for an absence to be addressed within academic work by arguing for the need to relate individual constructions of nostalgia to a range of production discourses. Amy Holdsworth's (2011: 96-97) deployment of 'nostalgia' when analysing television series demonstrates the problems of using a decontextualised understanding of the term since, despite offering a summary understanding, she concedes that nostalgia "brings with it a long and contradictory history of critiques, uses and applications". Holdsworth (Ibid: 97) thus argues that she "do[es] not feel it is necessary to outline the history of nostalgia" before undertaking her analysis and so it becomes difficult to theoretically locate her understanding of nostalgia as "longing that does not seek restoration, ...balanced in the play between past and present, sameness and difference" (Ibid). The academic study of nostalgia may have "spawned the articulation of countless types and concepts of the term and ...made it nearly impossible to define in any concrete way" (Sprengler 2011: 1; see also Pickering and Keightley 2006: 922), but this shouldn't negate the

need to develop a theory that can recognise nostalgia's encyclopaedic meanings and account for similarities and differences between constructions of nostalgia across different social, cultural, historical and media contexts. Social constructionism permits such an approach to analysing specific nostalgic discourses by recognising that articulations of nostalgia are structured through historical, social, cultural, and in the case of mediatised forms, technological and industrial contexts (see Grainge 2002: 43). Rather than sidestepping such issues, this thesis argues that cases of nostalgic construction can be theorised by addressing the impact of contextually-rooted factors. Such an approach allows for different inflections of nostalgia to be identified and discussed, as the analyses of 'personal', 'societal' and affective nostalgia in Chapters Five, Six and Seven demonstrate, but the different encodings of these forms can only be brought out with nuance through a social constructionist framework.

Theorising nostalgia as a discourse has further advantages for its study within academia. Chapter Four demonstrates, for example, the reductionism of singular ideological readings of nostalgia. Recent work on nostalgia continues to settle upon ideological frameworks, despite alluding to production contexts, as Oren Meyers' (2009) analysis of nostalgia and TV commercials demonstrates. Despite addressing advertising's specific institutional requirements, Meyers concludes by stressing the role that representations of the 'past' have in performing ideological work concerning nationhood. This thesis has demonstrated that some articulations of televisual nostalgia discourse(s) are readable as ideologically conservative such as affective nostalgia in *Life on Mars*, *Ashes to Ashes* and *Lost in Austen* or the latter series' nostalgia for the present. Yet, these readings need to be complicated by addressing both competing discourses constructed by the text and how production factors such as channel remits, audience-targeting strategies and scheduling impact upon the encoding process.

Similar critiques can also be levelled at analyses of televisual nostalgia which prioritise socio-historical, industrial and/or, in the case of Paul Booth's (2012) research, technological *zeitgeist*(s) over more nuanced consideration of a range of production discourses. As Chapters Five to Seven demonstrate, post-2005 British time travel dramas were reacting to a wider set of circumstances than purely socio- or industrial-historical moods. These chapters instead argue that discourses of nostalgia in post-2005 British time travel dramas react to specific production contexts and so result in different codings of nostalgic discourses. Thus,

whilst I am not suggesting institutional determinism here (such an argument overlooks how nostalgic ‘moods’ and ‘modes’ are intertwined – cf. Grainge 2000a: 28-29, Grainge 2002: 21), Television Studies needs to display increased precision regarding the specificities of national-industrial practices when textually analysing individual series¹²⁰. As Grainge (2002: 43) states:

theories that reduce commodified nostalgia to a climate of enveloping decline and dislocation do not always account for the more particular technological, economic, and design histories behind specific nostalgia modes or for the economy of *pastness* that has developed within the textual and affective regimes of contemporary culture.

When studying televisual discourses of nostalgia, Holdsworth’s (2011: 5, original emphasis) call to analyse “*what* is called upon and *when*” is inadequate. This approach posits that objects constructed through nostalgia – whether specific television series in the case of ‘nostalgia networks’ or the representation of spatiotemporal locations in time travel TV – can be aligned with a prevailing cultural ‘need’. Instead, this thesis argues that studies of televisual nostalgia should consider *how* nostalgic discourses are constructed in accordance with *what* industrial requirements are in play since this approach provides more rounded accounts of specific case studies. Pursuing this argument opens up multiple avenues for future research regarding constructions of nostalgia in different national, institutional and media forms and contexts. Analysing *Lost*, *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles* (Fox/Warner Bros. Television/C-2 Pictures/Bartleby Productions 2008-9) or *Terra Nova* (Fox/20th Century Fox Television/Amblin Television 2011) would allow American TV time travel series to be considered alongside this thesis’ focus on the UK, whilst Chapter Four raised the possibility for nostalgia to be analysed in relation to other television genres such as soap opera or factual/reality television (see also Noonan 2011: 738-739). Any of these could be located according to differing production and generic contexts to further explore how television constructs discourses of nostalgia.

Foregrounding national production contexts has also allowed existing arguments surrounding genre, television and TVSF to be developed by focusing upon a genre cycle. The next section considers these points whilst also suggesting strategies for challenging Chapter Seven’s devaluation of ITV drama.

¹²⁰ Wetmore (2012: 192-200) avoids analysing production contexts issues in favour of *zeitgeist* explanations when discussing post 9/11 remakes of horror films.

Genre (Sub-)Cycles, Television and Repositioning ITV Drama

Booth's (2012: 94) argument that "*Doctor Who* relates to *Life on Mars* and *Ashes to Ashes* not just because they are all BBC shows, but also because they deal with memory as constituent of personality" alludes to one of this thesis' innovations. Despite recognising *Doctor Who* and *Life on Mars*' status as BBC One products and overlapping thematic elements, Booth's failure to consider these programmes as different stages within the development of a genre cycle highlights the paucity of research concerning this production model's relation to television. Moreover, approaching post-2005 British time travel dramas as a genre cycle has also developed existing approaches to science fiction TV: moving beyond the case study of either individual programmes or auteurs, this thesis' consideration of its corpus as a cycle has allowed for continuities and differences between series to be recognised. For example, almost all of the programmes discussed over the past four chapters construct forms of personal nostalgia, positioning this discourse as one of the cycle's recurring conventions. However, the encoding of personal nostalgia differs from case to case as a result of alternate institutional pressures. Personal nostalgia in *Doctor Who* relates to the imagined reading strategies of youth, cult, quality and popular viewing niches and so helps to satisfy the need for primetime Saturday evening BBC One shows to attract an audience comprising of myriad ages, classes and genders. *Life on Mars*' construction of personal nostalgia differs, however, as this is recoded as present-orientated nostalgia, filtered through the generic conventions of the police series and articulated with culturally masculinised discourses since its primary focus concerns public issues such as working practices. At the same time, present-orientated nostalgia in *Life on Mars* also contributes towards the programme's appeals to adult 'quality' audiences through its juxtaposition with the series' affective nostalgia for the 1970s and subsequent construction of a 'complex' viewing position for a range of imagined audiences, expressing ambivalence towards both of its narrative worlds. Such variations cannot be contained within commercially-rooted understandings of genre production "as balancing evocation of previous hits with differentiation" (Nowell 2011: 246). Instead, the variations between encodings of nostalgia in *Doctor Who* and *Life on Mars* arise from differing institutional requirements concerning 'weekend' or mid-week/post-watershed BBC One drama, their associated imagined audiences and the need for both to be evaluated as 'innovative' and 'quality', both internally and by audiences. Full exploration of

the intertextual borrowings and divergences between series can only be considered by moving beyond a singular case study approach and instead analysing thematically-similar programmes produced within a specific historical context.

At first glance, this thesis has also confirmed Richard Nowell's (Ibid) conception of how genre cycles develop from an industrial perspective by displaying how terms such as 'pioneer production', 'reinforcing hit' and 'carpetbagger cash-in' account for the development of post-2005 British time travel dramas. Although *Doctor Who*'s origins collapse together Nowell's 'pioneer' and 'speculator' productions, my research nevertheless confirms the suitability of these concepts for studying televisual genre cycles. Moreover, the upsurge in time travel British programmes post-*Life on Mars* adds credence to Nowell's (Ibid: 247) observation that for a successful template to progress into a genre cycle, requires "confirmation of ...commercial viability ...to be provided by at least one additional hit". *Life on Mars* constitutes the cycle's reinforcing hit that sanctions the popularity of time travel themes with historically-situated audiences and so proves the industrial viability of such programmes to producers. However, since Nowell's theorising of genre cycles relates solely to a commercialised production context, his model cannot account for how public service TV remits impact upon the contributions that specific television channels make towards instigating and developing genre cycles. For example, although offering later 'carpetbagger cash-ins' via *Ashes to Ashes* and *Bonekickers*, it is significant that two BBC productions occupy the instigating positions within the cycle of post-2005 British time travel television dramas. This can be related to BBC One's institutional requirement to be perceived as a producer of 'innovative' and 'original' programming by its audience¹²¹. Although the Corporation pursues practices associated with 'commercial' discourses by producing spin-offs of previous successes (*Torchwood*, *The Sarah Jane Adventures* (BBC 2007-11), *Ashes to Ashes*) and/or 'cash-ins' (*Bonekickers*), internal regulation nevertheless requires the BBC to take risks such as *Doctor Who* and *Life on Mars* and so play an active role in instigating programme cycles. Further work is therefore needed to develop Nowell's model by applying and critiquing it in accordance with different national and regulatory television contexts. Moreover, greater attention could also be paid to how independent production companies in the UK facilitate genre cycles. Kudos (*Life on Mars*, *Ashes to Ashes*), Mammoth Screen (*Lost*

¹²¹ Current branding campaigns for both BBC One and BBC Two foreground their production of 'Original British Drama' such as *Blackout* (BBC/Red Productions 2012) and *Line of Duty* (BBC/World Productions 2012).

in *Austen*, *Bonekickers*) and Impossible Pictures (*Primeval*, *Prehistoric Park*) provided multiple contributions to the cycle analysed in this thesis so greater consideration of independent production companies could also prove fruitful for future research on TV genre cycles.

At the same time, reflecting upon how Nowell's terms have been applied across the previous chapters, this thesis has positioned ITV drama on the devalued side of a binary between art and commerce. Whereas the BBC has been constructed as developing 'pioneering', 'trailblazing' and 'prospecting' programmes, ITV has been characterised as solely displaying 'carpetbagging' strategies (cf. Nelson 2007a: 70). Although Chapter Seven attempted to negate some of these associations by displaying the creative strategies employed by *Lost in Austen* to simultaneously address divergent understandings of 'quality' television, further research could be undertaken to reposition and revalue ITV drama output. For instance, Chapter Seven noted ITV's attempts to produce its own cycle of what Head of Drama Laura Mackie named "20th Century dramas" (in McMahon 2009: online) such as *Whitechapel* and *Married, Single, Other*. Further research could analyse ITV's development of a cycle of programming, allowing for terms such as 'carpetbagging' to be rethought, and so redressing the negative connotations ascribed to the channel in this thesis. Rather than purely analysing different genre cycles in different national production contexts, then, Nowell's model could also be developed further in relation to channel-specific contexts.

However, if post-structuralist theories of genre are applied to this thesis' construction of its corpus, further critiques of Nowell's model can be offered. Matt Hills (2010a: 92-93) argues that the appearance on British television of programmes such as *Primeval*, *Robin Hood* (BBC/Tiger Aspect 2006-9) and *Merlin* (BBC/Shine 2008-) provided "a renewed sense of 'British telefantasy' or 'Saturday night family drama' following *Doctor Who*'s success". Developing Hills' criteria of delineation further, the programmes discussed in Chapters Six and Seven could instead be considered as representing a separate sub-cycle emerging from *Doctor Who*'s position as 'trailblazer hit'. The instigation of a sub-cycle, targeted towards 'adult' audiences (including *Life on Mars*, *Ashes to Ashes*, *Lost in Austen* and *Bonekickers*) as a result of scheduling practices and textual strategies is something that Nowell's model cannot account for. This is because Nowell's (2011: 246) model focuses upon a cycle tailored solely towards "attracting ...teenagers and young adults". Applying this model to a different

institutional and media context, where public service responsibilities construct coalition audiences in accordance with differing scheduling practices such as the watershed, means that sub-cycles targeting different combinations of viewers may become instigated as a result of one ‘trailblazing’ success.

Hills’ positioning of *Doctor Who* as instigator for a separate genre cycle whose recurring characteristics derive from institutional concerns such as scheduling and target audience rather than recurring textual themes raises questions concerning where to locate the point of coherence in genre cycles. This overlaps with wider critiques of studying genre such as Rick Altman’s (1999: 48) argument that “institution after institution has used whatever product it produces as an act of criticism ...to define genres in a manner that suits its own institutional needs”. Jason Mittell (2004b: 176) echoes Altman by noting that “[a]t any given moment, a genre might appear quite stable, static and bounded; however that same genre might operate differently in another historical or cultural context”. Applying these calls for reflexivity to be displayed towards how genre categories are shaped demonstrates the constructedness of this thesis’ cycle by reminding us that “there are no uniform criteria for genre delimitation – some are defined by setting (westerns), some by actions (crime shows), some by audience effect (comedy), and some by narrative form (mysteries)” (Mittell 2004b: 173; see also Mills 2005: 26 on TV sitcoms). Thus, although this thesis has constructed its cycle of post-2005 British time travel dramas as a stable object of study, other scholars may contest its corpus and its construction by focusing upon different shared textual features. Alternatively, despite this thesis reading generic conventions through a range of production discourses, some scholars may oppose the research’s preference for “*textual generic criticism*” (Mittell 2004b: 176, original emphasis). An alternative approach would be to decentre the broadcast text as object of study and instead “understand ...genre in cultural practice” (Ibid) by examining “the categorical operation of a genre” (Ibid) through different points in the production and reception process. This critique alludes to a wider argument concerning this thesis’ possible nostalgia for elements of TV Studies such as textual analysis and national broadcast contexts. The next section addresses these criticisms once the advantages of analysing texts through a theory of layered polysemy have been summarised.

Layered Polysemy and Nostalgia for Television Studies

This thesis has foregrounded what Sharon Marie Ross (2008: 25) names “the “TV text proper”” by adopting a textualist focus throughout. One of the advantages of this method is that debates concerning the structured polysemy of media texts can be re-visited and the term’s inadequacy for capturing the layers of audience appeal encoded into nostalgic discourses demonstrated. Structured polysemy suggests that programmes construct a singular preferred reading position for audiences (cf. Morley 1992, 1995). As page 112 demonstrated, traces of this concept remain identifiable in recent Cultural Studies discussions of polysemy such as that of Cornel Sandvoss (2005). Sandvoss (Ibid: 125) initially rejects structured polysemy by emphasising that “the text presents the reader with a multiplicity of possible interpretations which are consciously realised by the reader”. This argument becomes problematic, though, when Sandvoss discusses how fans’ lack of proximity to official production contexts enables self-reflective readings. Although he argues that “the neutrosemic condition of fan texts aris[es] out of th[e] communicative distance” (Ibid: 138) between the fan and the official production context, discourses of structured polysemy are identifiable when this distance breaks down:

The importance of this communicative distance is most evident in those instances where it is eroded ...When Sting fan Chloe ...unexpectedly meets Sting in a London pub, her ...reading, fantasies and daydreams revolving around *The Police* do not correspond with the actual fan text from a close-up perspective. (Ibid: 139)

Despite fans’ many interpretations, a singular ‘preferred’ reading remains identifiable and this meaning gains authority over other readings as it is grounded in knowledge of day-to-day production realities (the strains of being a professional musician in the above example). Consequently, “the object of fandom loses its reflective surface the closer we come” (Ibid). However, this thesis rejects structured polysemy’s conceptualisation of a single preferred reading intentionally encoded into a television series by producers by instead proposing the concept of *layered polysemy*. Through analysing post-2005 British time travel dramas alongside production discourses, the imagined preferences of overlapping and contradicting audience niches can be identified, demonstrating that a range of divergent preferred readings are provided. Post-2005 British time travel dramas therefore constitute examples of coalition programming - series produced for ‘mainstream’ broadcast channels in the UK aiming for a wide range of diverse audiences by simultaneously layering multiple appeals to alternate viewing segments. Layered polysemy recognises media texts’ ‘openness’ by demonstrating

how singular preferred reading positions are unsustainable but it argues that multiple readings arise out of production contexts where mainstream UK broadcasters target multiple overlapping (and contradicting) audience niches. Layered polysemy therefore provides a midpoint between theories of textual determinacy (Morley 1992, 1995) on the one hand and post-structuralist concepts proposing ‘neutrosemy’ on the other (Sandvoss 2005: 123-152, McKee 2003: 10). Between these positions, layered polysemy posits that multiple preferred reading positions are possible from the discourses of nostalgia constructed by post-2005 British time travel dramas and these can be related to series’ institutional requirement to construct coalition audiences.

Layered polysemy therefore sits conceptually alongside recent engagements with television’s texts such as Ross’ (2008) and Johnson’s (2012: 159-165) discussions of an ‘aesthetics of multiplicity’. This approach posits that “the paradigmatic structure of many shows today is refracted in the paradigmatic structure of the Internet and individual websites – and ...this structuring prompts radical oscillation among viewers” (Ross 2008: 23) where “viewers can actively “take up” *various* positions of identification” (Ibid, original emphasis). Highlighting how textual strategies such as ensemble casts provide multiple perspectives within the narrative overlaps with the layered polysemy of coalition television discussed across this thesis (see pages 130-131 and 183-184). However, discussing an aesthetics of multiplicity tends to obfuscate the ‘broadcast programme’ as object of study. Ross (Ibid: 21) suggests this by defining an aesthetics of multiplicity as:

[a] web of interactions ...that encompasses myriad relationships: between viewers and creators, between viewers and originating texts, between creators and originating texts, between originating texts and the Internet, and between/among viewers, creators, promoters, the originating text and the Internet.

Johnson (2012: 164) also rejects solely studying *Top Gear*’s broadcast episodes when examining its aesthetics of multiplicity in terms of branding by arguing that “the multiplicity of the series ...facilitates the extension of the programme onto multiple media and to divergent audiences”. In both of these examples the ‘TV text proper’ is less centrally positioned since it is considered as just one of many “sites of discursive practice” (Mittell 2004b: 174) and so should not be privileged. Contrary to this position, discussing layered polysemy requires a strong textualist focus to be retained so that the nuances of how

programmes are shaped by specific production discourses such as channel remit, target audience and scheduling can be analysed.

By reinstating broadcast programmes as primary sites of analysis, and demonstrating that layered polysemy and coalition television are key terms for engaging with post-2005 British time travel dramas, this thesis' methodology could be accused of constructing its own discourse of 'nostalgia for television studies'. By focusing solely upon broadcast series, recent debates concerning what constitutes a televisual text have been overlooked. Jason Mittell (2004b: 174) raises this point by arguing for "decenter[ing] the text as the primary site of genre" and instead considering how other 'texts' such as audience talk assist in forming television genre categories (see Mittell 2004a: 56-93; see also Gray 2010a: 35-36).

Elsewhere, as page 80-82 implied, other arguments have suggested expanding post-structuralist methods of textual analysis to recognise individual programmes as 'dispersed texts', addressing industrial strategies such as branding and dissemination online (cf. Hills 2008; Kompare 2010: 82, Johnson 2012: 162-163). Partly building upon Will Brooker's (2001) discussion of textual 'overflow', Jonathan Gray (2010a: 2) summarises this latter understanding of the TV text by arguing for an analytical framework placing programme episodes alongside their accompanying paratexts (trailers, websites, promotional campaigns):

[g]iven their extended presence, any filmic or televisual text and its cultural impact, value, and meaning cannot be adequately analysed without taking into account the film or program[me]'s many proliferations. Each proliferation, after all, holds the potential to change the meaning of the text, even if only slightly.

From this perspective, "limit[ing] our understanding of ...television to ...television shows themselves risks drafting an insufficient picture of any given text..." (Ibid: 22) by ignoring "the processes of production and reception attached to that text" (Ibid). Overlooking branding strategies and paratextual material may therefore connote a discourse of nostalgia for broadcast television across this thesis by foregrounding 'the TV text proper' alongside national production contexts and coalition audiences.

Although not directly addressed across this thesis, issues regarding branding have been alluded to where relevant in the previous chapters. For example, *Lost in Austen* was partly located amongst ITV1's rebranding of its drama output in Chapter Seven whilst debates concerning branding practices were also invoked in Chapter Six by noting how *Life on Mars*

and *Ashes to Ashes* used Gene Hunt to target ‘new lad’ audiences through merchandising. The latter of these examples extends this thesis’ arguments concerning layered polysemy since it demonstrates how a nostalgic discourse constructed through the programme’s textual strategies becomes further mobilised in aid of extending (paratextual) appeals to male audiences. Additionally, though, references in Chapters Five and Six to BBC One’s institutional requirement to be perceived as ‘innovative’ and ‘quality’ by its audiences recall existing studies concerning the branding strategies of individual channels which articulate a set of core values to guide future productions and acquisitions (see Born 2003, Johnson 2007b, Johnson 2012: 68-74 and 87-96). This thesis therefore argues that, although branding strategies remain highly important (see Rogers, Epstein and Reeves 2002, Johnson 2007b) for the production of contemporary television series and the envisioning of imagined audiences, analysis of these practices needs to be balanced with factors arising from the *televisual* production context such as scheduling positions, public service responsibilities and/or deals with independent producers.

This thesis’ favouring of broadcast texts over paratextual material can also be located in relation to concerns regarding how the latter form of analysis installs TV fans as television’s dominant imagined viewers. Gray’s (2010a: 24) argument concerning how paratexts aid viewer movement through the televisual landscape by enabling “*selective consumption*, creating an idea of what pleasures any one text will provide” holds credence by identifying how exposure to promotional material may impact upon any audience member’s decision to view or avoid a series. Beyond this, though, many of the (para)texts that Gray studies constitute examples of either ‘cult’ TV or ‘cult’ audience engagement. Shows such as *The Simpsons* (Fox/Gracie Films 1989-), *Heroes* (NBC/Universal/Tailwind Productions 2006-10) and *Lost* have been analysed in relation to how they either attract, or develop strategies for targeting, ‘cult’ audiences despite appearing on ‘mainstream’ channels in the US¹²². Chapters Five and Six demonstrated that although ‘cult’ audiences were targeted through nostalgic discourses in *Doctor Who* and *Life on Mars*, these imagined audience appeals constituted only one layer amongst multiple others within these series. Post-2005 British time travel dramas are required to attract coalition audiences as a result of institutional priorities including public service remits, meaning that ‘cult’ audiences become one segment within the

¹²² See Gray (2010c) on *The Simpsons*, Stafford (2010) on *Heroes* and Lavery (2008), Ross (2008: 173-217) and Dolan (2010) on *Lost*.

overall viewing public. Gray (2008: 39) recognises these differences elsewhere, stating that the BBC “exhibits an interest in senior friendly programming that the advertising-driven, and hence youth-obsessed, American networks will never match”. Nevertheless, analysing paratexts such as online graphic novels (Gray 2010a: 210-214) or ARGs like ‘The *Lost Experience*’ (Gray 2008: 75-80, Johnson 2009) over programmes conceptualises contemporary television drama’s imagined viewer as the eager TV fan exploring the expanded hyperdiegesis¹²³. Booth (2012: 21) also demonstrates this issue by inserting fans as his assumed TV viewer via using *Heroes* and *Battlestar Galactica* as examples to argue that contemporary television audiences “piece together a transmediated franchise ... via multiple media outlets like the television program[me], graphic novels, mobisodes or webisodes”. This model problematically overlooks how:

incredibly large numbers of people still regularly engage in the cultural activity of watching the same television programme at the same time. Indeed, statistics in Britain show that watching television *as broadcast* is on the rise. (Mills 2010: 2; see also Kompare 2010: 79)

Whilst Mills (Ibid) argues that “rather than seeing DVDs, online catch-up services and file-sharing as evidence of a ‘post-broadcast’ era” the residual elements of broadcast culture should also be considered, this thesis goes further by arguing for the ongoing importance of broadcast ‘texts’ and nationally-specific television cultures. Hills (2010b: 104-105) raises an overlapping point by noting how certain UK television dramas:

demonstrate very little brand extension; one cannot engage in hyperdiegetic exploration ...in relation to *Midsomer Murders* (1997– present), *Heartbeat* (1992– present) or *Doc Martin* (2004–present). This is not to suggest that such shows do not have audiences who invest in their characters and diegetic worlds, and who return to watch them week after week. But such fans, as well as these types of television series, are rendered relatively invisible in contemporary television studies.

Doctor Who has played a prominent role in developing the BBC’s convergence practices (see Perryman 2008), and *Ashes to Ashes* has intersected with the Corporation’s archiving policies (see Smith and Steemers 2007: 51) by making *Top of the Pops* (BBC 1964-2006) performances by artists featured on the series’ soundtrack accessible through its website¹²⁴. However, although both series have developed paratexts, differences between these programmes’ strategies correlate with their alternate scheduling positions and imagined

¹²³ See Gray (2008: 89-90) for further evidence despite making later concessions to this model.

¹²⁴ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/ashestoashes/music/> [Accessed 13/05/12].

audiences. *Doctor Who* develops a range of paratexts across media forms to deepen its hyperdiegesis and target a range of generational audiences by providing games, trivia quizzes and clips linking its current and ‘classic’ incarnations. *Ashes to Ashes* instead extends the nostalgic pleasures of its past narrative world for adult viewers by offering the chance to reminisce about 1980s popular culture. This suggests that transmediality is perceived as less of a priority for adult audiences of post-watershed weekday evening BBC One drama than its Saturday evening pre-watershed ‘family entertainment’ equivalent. *Lost in Austen* also supports this point since, aside from a ‘making of’ DVD extra, the programme exemplifies Hills’ statement by offering no further paratextual material. *Lost in Austen*’s lack of additional content can be accounted for by locating the serial amongst ITV’s institutional policies for developing online resources. From its loss-making endeavours with social networking site Friends Reunited (Wray 2009) to the struggles its online ITV Player has experienced in sustaining traffic and attracting sought-after 18-34 users (Sweney 2007) (eventually resulting in its rebranding – Sweney 2008), ITV has struggled to develop adequate new media strategies across the period of *Lost in Austen*’s production. However, despite ITV’s institutional shortcomings, the small amount of paratextual material produced for *Lost in Austen* and *Ashes to Ashes* implies that the broadcast programme is the primary site of encounter for adult audiences¹²⁵. This thesis therefore supports Hills’ (2010b: 107) assertion that “television studies may benefit from less work on highly visible ‘event’ and (mainstreamed) ‘cult’ television and their fans” since, despite *Life on Mars* and *Ashes to Ashes* generating cult appeal, the post-watershed examples discussed here generate fewer paratexts than a Saturday evening pre-watershed series like *Doctor Who*. TV Studies should therefore not be too quick to move past studying actual programmes, problematically installing the preferences of an imagined ‘cult’ TV fan over other audiences. If “[i]ndividuals or communities ...construct different ideas of what that package [e.g. programme – RPG] entails, based ...on their own sense of its textual hierarchy” (Gray 2010a: 3), it is important not to insert a model of television viewing that overlooks both (sub)cultural viewing hierarchies and the (para)textual strategies employed in specific production contexts.

Addressing viewers’ textual hierarchies would require research on empirical audiences. As pages 82-84 discussed, this thesis has omitted looking at this cultural site by instead

¹²⁵ See also Gray (2008: 95).

considering imagined audiences. Further research addressing audiences could be advantageous, though, as audience studies are:

based on the premise that empirical audience work does have something significant to tell us about the place of media texts in contemporary culture, and that this ‘something’ is different from the insights created by academic analysis of texts. (Thomas 2002: 59)

Research concerning how different viewing groups identify and classify the nostalgic discourses discussed across this thesis could be undertaken to support and/or complicate its arguments. This research would develop existing studies of nostalgia, memory and television audiences since such work has focused upon how audiences’ memories of watching ‘past’ television shows assist in constructing generational (see Veith 2004, Keightley 2011, Nelson 2012) and/or gendered identities (see Hallam 2005, McElroy 2012). Studying audience responses to the nostalgic discourses identifiable in post-2005 British time travel dramas would instead focus upon contemporary series and provide insights into how different groups respond to television’s emotional content(s) (Thomas 2002: 80-83 and 96-99, Skuse 2002, Thomas 2011). Moreover, given these series’ targeting of coalition audiences, different viewing groups would need to be analysed allowing for debates concerning the interrelationship between nostalgia and taste to be discussed. Do, for example, ‘quality’ audiences find *Doctor Who*’s emotionality ‘trashy’ or instead appreciate its encoding and performance (see also Thomas 2002: 98-99)? One disadvantage of studying audiences would, however, be that the thesis’ textual corpus may have to be narrowed. Recent work has employed hybridised methodologies, including combinations of participant observation, interviews, focus groups and/or online research (see Thomas 2002, Wood 2009, McElroy and Williams 2011, Thomas 2011), and has tended to focus on one or two case studies. Applying these frameworks would mean that innovations concerning genre cycles could be lost. Comparing audiences for *Doctor Who* with *Primeval* would overlook how different scheduling and target audiences impact upon encodings of nostalgia, whilst using *Doctor Who* and *Life on Mars* as examples would reinstate a BBC-centric focus. Similarly, picking *Doctor Who* and *Lost in Austen* may be unhelpful given the different production contexts and imagined audiences these series target. Whilst audience research may validate this thesis’ textual analyses, and potentially extend its arguments by exploring intersections between nostalgia, television series and taste formations, it would also result in arguments exploring the industrial development of genre cycles in relation to TVSF being forsaken.

Alongside omitting empirical audiences, this thesis could also be critiqued for overlooking practical work on production contexts. Television production ethnographies have “framed producers’ practices in terms of structural forces that constrain... their presumed creativity” (Mayer 2011: 8). Such studies demonstrate how commercially-rooted requirements to increase ratings and/or attract alternate audience niches can affect story selections in soap operas (see Henderson 2007: 40-41) whilst also highlighting how “[a]udiences are ...at every turn envisaged through the production process” (Ibid: 49; see also Steemers 2010: 46-47). Imagined audiences are constructed by different industry personnel such as regulators (see Mayer 2011: 151-164) as well as producers ““speaking for the audience” in order to get their way” (Caldwell 2008: 335) during the creative process. Recent production studies have gestured towards layered polysemy within this cultural site, however, by demonstrating that reports constructed for the BBC’s child-centred news programme *Newsround* (BBC 1972-) envision two different, but overlapping, imagined audiences:

When news professionals discuss the news audience, they outline two competing understandings of young news consumers. A first view reflects a small imagined group of children who watch *Newsround* to satisfy a general interest in the world outside of their everyday experience. A second view considers a much larger group, who it is believed, do not share the same cultural resources and outlook as the first group. It follows that this second group takes a different approach to viewing, more in line with a consumerist tendency to surf channels in multichannel television homes for content that will entertain. Despite these children’s perceived indifference to the children’s news program, however, their large number persuades news professionals to keep them in mind when deciding on the most appropriate way to shape the BBC program. In this way, their preferences inform the practice to “sugar the pill” of unsavo[u]ry news with entertainment values (Matthews 2009: 552)

Caitriona Noonan (2011: 741) also alludes to layered polysemy’s potential usefulness as a concept to describe how television producers target disparate audience groups through conducting interviews with personnel working on BBC religious programming:

As the definition of religious broadcasting has broadened and producers have to balance other financial and strategic concerns, the aims of this output have become more ambiguous. This means that an increasingly vague representation emerges that blends a variety of perspectives into one, in the hope that no one audience group will be alienated.

Both of these statements suggest that layered polysemy’s simultaneous appeals to divergent audience niches are a priority for professionals working for ‘mainstream’ broadcasters like

the BBC, demonstrating that overlapping imagined audience appeals are actively encoded into a programme's textual strategies. Further research could therefore be undertaken by interviewing personnel working on coalition television dramas to discuss how institutional pressures impact upon audience targeting strategies, which imagined audiences become prioritised, and how this differs for alternative channel and scheduling contexts. Such research would expand this thesis' arguments by demonstrating how television producers discuss what I've termed layered polysemy when producing coalition television for BBC One and ITV1. However, similar to Sandvoss' (2005) problematic linking of production 'realities' to singular authorial readings, production studies should not be conducted in search of "an "authentic" reality "behind the scenes" – an empirical notion that tends to be naive about the ways that media industry realities are *always* constructed" (Caldwell 2008: 5; original emphasis). Data obtained through observational and/or interview methods regarding understandings of imagined audiences should not be taken as either an absolute verification or disproof of arguments arising from textual analysis. Instead, any information that is obtained needs to be contextualised and analysed as discursive constructions produced by subjects operating within the cultural site of TV production.

To conclude, this thesis has developed academic knowledge concerning nostalgia, televisual genre categories and cycles, and the interrelationship between polysemy, television programmes and production contexts. Throughout, arguments in favour of retaining, and returning to, discourses associated with a perceived 'past' era of broadcasting have also been made. Returning to 'old' paradigms such as national institutional systems, textual analysis and programmes as primary sites of meaning need not result in a 'present' altered for the worse and reminiscent of the example from *Primeval* with which this thesis began. Just as Claudia Brown was replaced in *Primeval*'s second series with an alternative version of the character – PR guru Jenny Lewis (also played by Lucy Brown) – this thesis' engagement with time travel TV argues that revisiting elements of TV Studies' past can produce an altered, adjusted and improved version of its 'present'.

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