Introduction

Creative and interpretive work demands concentration ... The effort is apparent when experienced actors are watched in rehearsal. Often the labour is a contradiction of the effortlessness that is eventually shown to the audience in performance. Indeed, at times, the rehearsal process may seem to be by far the most interesting part of the work.

(Barry 1992: 42)

Prior to the shooting period you don't get to meet the actors to rehearse anything ... Those few minutes before a take, that's all the time we have to quickly discover the moments we want to get out of the scene, work it through and let the crew see where we're at. Then, if we're lucky ... the director and actors will get maybe ten or maybe 15 minutes to hone it down and cover any other points.

(Harper 2007: 46)

The comments above represent extreme contrasts in approach to British television acting, from opposite ends of a fifty-year spectrum. Michael Barry, the first person to head the BBC's screen drama output,[1] describes the rigorous rehearsal process endemic to the world of live broadcasting; a template that survived, in one form or another, decades after pre-recording had become the norm. Director Graeme Harper's latter-day production diary, however, illustrates the rapidity with which television performances were evolved in the mid-2000s, by which time the rehearsal process had

been condensed to little more than a brief discussion before filming commenced.

Until recently, little work had been conducted on television acting per se, let alone the various coalescing factors that underpin and help shape it. *The Changing Spaces of Television Acting* aims to address that lack, utilising a selection of science fiction case studies from the world of BBC television drama to investigate how small screen performance and its various determinants have altered since the days of live production. Television science fiction provides a particularly useful starting point, this being a genre that is almost as old as the medium itself, and – as will be demonstrated – one that is arguably less inflected by genre-specific performance tropes than other styles such as crime drama or period adaptation. While a multi-genre analysis of television acting would doubtless prove fascinating, combining this approach with a historical overview would be well beyond the scope of a work of this length. *The Changing Spaces of Television Acting* instead focuses on science fiction case studies to provide a multi-perspectival examination of the historical development of acting in UK television drama, considering not only the performances ultimately seen on television screens, but also the ever-shifting factors that combine to shape them. In addition, it outlines broader developments within British television itself, its case studies offering a valuable index to the times in which they were produced.

One of the most notable contrasts between early television drama and the modern day is the shift from multi-camera studio (initially transmitted live, and later pre-recorded on videotape) to single camera location filming. The consequences of this were felt only gradually, and due to various other contributing factors were in a constant state of flux. However, studio and location provide a useful starting point for analysing both the changing determinants of British television acting (the cause) and the resulting screen performance (the effect). To this end, the terms 'studio realism' and 'location realism' have been developed here specifically to examine this shift. While these cannot be regarded as absolutes – audience reception of what is an acceptably 'realist' television performance can also be a determining factor – they represent an important first step towards a historical engagement with television acting.

Any use of the term 'realism' is potentially perilous, understandings being informed by time, place and medium; what is accepted as 'realistic' in one arena of performance does not necessarily transfer to another. Raymond Williams describes realism in the arts as 'a set of formal representations, in a particular medium to which we have become accustomed. The object is not *really* lifelike but by convention and repetition has been made to appear so' [original emphasis] (1983: 261). Roberta Pearson highlights the fact that any such representation of reality becomes 'a cultural construct, a matter of commonly held opinion rather than that which is presumed to have some objective existence outside the text' (1992: 28), while Jonathan Bignell offers a potential interpretation of television realism as '[a] representation of recognisable and often contemporary experience, such as in the representation of characters in whom the audience can believe' (2008: 190). Realism can therefore be understood as constantly changing in line with the world it seeks to represent; the realism of the 1950s television studio might be as distinct from that of the 1970s as it is from location realism in the 2000s. Utilising the analytical terms studio and location realism does not imply that physical sites alone were responsible for performance; rather, they are convenient prisms for tracing the journey from one to the other, through which a range of contributing factors are refracted.

The chief differences between studio and location realism are outlined in the table below, though it should be stressed that these are intended as general guidelines rather than an all-encompassing formula:

Studio realism	Location realism
Actors are working primarily in a constructed space, i.e. the studio set, providing a link with the traditional practices of theatre performance.	Actors are working primarily in a 'real' location, whether exterior or interior, as opposed to a performance space created for that purpose.[a]
Performances are prepared in advance, in a separate space such as the rehearsal room, before being transferred to the live broadcast/recording site.	Performances are evolved 'on site', with little or no prior preparation, allowing actors to respond to the environment in which they are working.
Scenes are performed in their entirety, with limited opportunity for re-takes.	Master shots aside, scenes are performed repeatedly, in segments, to accommodate different shot framings.

Studio realism	Location realism
Representation of reality is mediated by both space (typically an artificial, three-walled set) and technology.	Representation of reality, though mediated by technology, is less shaped by the use of an artificial or constructed performance space.
Use of voice and body are 'scaled down' from the level of projection required for the stage, but still feature a greater degree of projection than would be employed in real life.	Body and voice are used on a scale similar to that which would be employed in real life.
Physical movement is often designed to provide visual interest within the set, rather than deriving from character objectives.	Physical movement derives from the situation and character objectives; visual interest is produced by framings and editing.
Gesture is employed selectively to signify meaning and intent, though on a smaller scale than that used in the theatre.	Gesture to signify meaning and intent is minimal.
Clarity of diction is paramount.	Clarity of diction is not always required.[b]

[a] Although sets are employed in modern television drama, they are more likely to be soundstages of the type used in film-making, avoiding the 'three-walled' constructions traditionally associated with television studio drama. In addition, regular sets are often free-standing and semi-permanent, arguably becoming locations in their own right as opposed to temporarily erected artifices.

[b] This element has proved a bone of contention in recent years, the BBC's 2014 adaptation of *Jamaica Inn* receiving a storm of protests over the difficulty of understanding actor dialogue.

It would be limiting to offer this formulation as a simple binary; the likelihood is that examples in their purest forms are impossible to locate. As will be seen, a variety of performance styles co-exist at various points in British television history which would be difficult to categorise within these models. In addition, the selection of science fiction case studies potentially allows for the further proliferation of acting styles, as for example when performing the role of a non-human, or interacting with CGI imagery or special effects. However, such specific cases do not provide this book's central focus, and by identifying the key elements outlined above I believe it is possible to provide a useful starting point to consider at least the significant trends of change in acting style.

Until comparatively recently, few works existed to focus specifically on small screen acting in Britain. From 2015, Gary Cassidy and Simone Knox's series of blogs for *CST online* examining 'What Actors Do' evinced a growing interest in television performance. At the time of writing, Christopher Hogg and Tom Cantrell's forthcoming book *Acting in British Television* promises a rich exploration of contemporary style in popular genres including soap, comedy and police procedural via its use of original interview material, while their edited collection, *Exploring Television Acting*, will include my own chapter on studio and location realism in relation to television adaptations of Sherlock Holmes. Along with *The Changing Spaces of Television Acting*, such works demonstrate a growing awareness of the need for in-depth studies of British television acting. Previous case studies, such as *Crossroads: The Drama of a Soap Opera* (Hobson 1982), 'Rooms within Rooms: *Upstairs Downstairs* and the Studio Costume Drama of the 1970s' (Wheatley 2005) and 'The Quality of Intimacy: Revelation and Disguise in the Dramatic Monologue' (Goode 2006), have largely neglected acting to concentrate on narrative or visual style.[2] While performance is, refreshingly, considered in Lez Cooke's *Style in British Television Drama* (2013), which like this book chronicles the shift from multi-camera to single camera production, it is just one of several factors examined as part of *mise-en-scène*.[3] Cooke's work aside, the determinants of screen acting are usually ignored in television studies performance analysis, with John Caughie's 2000 reading of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (BBC, 1954) a typical example. For Caughie, the cast's delivery of lines is acted 'with a clarity of diction and a "scriptedness" which are usually characterized, pejoratively, as "theatrical"' (2000a: 48). Criticising what he perceives as Peter Cushing's 'emotional "signalling"' (*ibid*.: 49), Caughie reserves praise only for Andre Morell as O'Brien, the enigmatic party member who wins Smith's confidence before betraying and torturing him. Interestingly, Caughie sees Morell's contained performance as better adapted to the small screen than those of his colleagues, 'detailing his characterization with what actors call "business" (a little mannerism with his spectacles), but withholding expressiveness' (*ibid*.: 48–49). What Caughie neglects to mention is that, as Smith – the audience's primary point of identification – Cushing has few early scenes in which his character can give vent to his

feelings via dialogue; a degree of 'signalling' is therefore required for the spectator to fully comprehend the narrative thrust.

As one of the earliest surviving full-length British television dramas, it is perhaps unsurprising that *Nineteen Eighty-Four* has been utilised by several television historians, including Jason Jacobs (2000) and Lez Cooke (2003, 2013). However, Jacobs' attention to performance is tantalisingly brief, and while Cooke contextualises his reading via reference to the multi-camera set-up, non-technological determinants are largely ignored. Cooke and Jacobs do, however, offer a more positive take on Cushing's performance than Caughie, Jacobs providing a detailed analysis of the canteen scene, in which a pre-recorded voiceover of Smith's thoughts is heard over a close-up of Cushing's face, every twitch and glance signifying the character's fear of betraying his hatred of the regime.[4] However, while Cooke praises Cushing's skill in 'close up' acting (2003: 26), for Jacobs 'the gestural clarity of [his] performance does seem "theatrical", in the sense that even in close-up it seems to be "projecting"' (2000: 151). Although Jacobs is not employing the problematic term 'theatrical' in the pejorative sense pointed out by Caughie,[5] it seems a singularly inappropriate word to describe a facial performance which, if given in a theatre auditorium, would be impossible to read beyond the first few rows.[6]

In their individual ways, both Jacobs and Caughie fall into the analytical trap outlined by Roberta Pearson: 'While we cannot expect the average viewer ... to respond in the same manner as the original audience, we can expect a film critic or scholar not to use the aesthetic standards of his or her own time and culture in judging an artifact from another' (1990: 2). While it could be argued that what John Ellis has summarised as the tension between immanent reading and textual historicism (2007: 15–26) offers fruitful areas for comparison, Caughie's employment of terms such as 'stagey' and 'stilted' (2000a: 49) preclude a deeper understanding of this archive performance by failing to consider the factors that helped shape it – factors which form the basis of this book's analytical approach.

To date, a far greater amount of material has been published on cinema performance than television, with classical Hollywood typically (and perhaps understandably) providing the model for analysis. This has, however, often resulted in a concentration on the

concept of stardom; what actors signify, rather than what they do on the screen. Notable works include Richard Dyer's *Stars* (1979, revised 1998), Charles Affron's *Star Acting: Gish, Garbo, Davies* (1977), and Andrew Klevan's *Film Performance: From Achievement to Appreciation* (2005), while James Naremore's *Acting in the Cinema* (1988), though following the 'star' route, is also significant for its summation of various theories of acting and performance. However, many of these works are in part compromised by an absence of background contextualisation. More recently, Ken Miller's *More Than Fifteen Minutes of Fame* (2013), while avoiding the star studies perspective, focuses instead on the relationship between screen performances (including television and the internet alongside film) and audiences, largely ignoring the question of how what actors do is influenced by determining factors.

The first book to fully consider the historical, social and industrial factors that mould screen acting is Roberta Pearson's *Eloquent Gestures: The Transformation of Performance Style in the Griffith Biograph Films* (1992), which evolved the terms 'histrionic' and 'verisimilar' to describe distinct performance styles in Biograph silent films. Few have followed Pearson's lead, though Cynthia Baron and Sharon Marie Carnicke's *Reframing Screen Performance* (2008) employs some useful examples of historicisation, as when examining actor training in the Hollywood studio era (17–32), and is laudable for utilising textual analysis to illustrate various approaches to performance, rather than as a means to its own end. This approach in particular has helped inform *The Changing Spaces of Television Acting*; though textual analysis has an important part to play in evidencing the acting styles of different periods, these can only be partially comprehended if divorced from the underlying factors that combined to shape them. This book offers an unprecedented historical overview of the working conditions of the small screen, tracing the connections between actors' background environments and the resulting television performances.

Researching historical determinants is potentially problematic, however, in that they are not fixed, and fluctuate in importance over the years. Some develop at a faster rate than others, or are of greater or lesser significance than might be expected at separate points in time; others are almost impossible to quantify. A prime

determinant of any performance is the nature of the role being played, but this is so great a variable that it cannot be adequately considered in a historical overview of this type. The determinants examined herein are those that can be demonstrated to have changed over the period in question, and to have had a consequent impact on performance. When examined in individual chapters they will appear in descending order of relevance, though they are listed below in no specific order.

Technology is one of the prime factors affecting television acting. The impossibility of pre-recording in the medium's earliest years presented an entirely different set of pressures from those of the later filming process, multi-camera studio requiring a prior period of rehearsal which virtually disappeared when single camera film became the norm. However, as seen in Chapter 2, significant advances in technology did not always have the immediate impact on production practice that might have been expected.

Another key factor is actor training. Although television studies work in this field has thus far been limited, cinema academics have frequently highlighted the importance of drama theoretician Constantin Stanislavski's teachings on realism in performance,[7] Vsevolod Pudovkin (1953: 115–118, 147–148), Richard A. Blum (1984) and Sharon Marie Carnicke (1999: 75–87) each having demonstrated the Russian's relevance to film acting. A consideration of how and when Stanislavski's theories began to be taught in Britain is therefore necessary to any history of television performance, yet the paucity – until comparatively recently – of comprehensive screen training in British drama academies is arguably of equal importance, and this is highlighted in each chapter.

Actor experience is also relevant to television work, and is considered here in three ways: duration, amount and type. The chief distinction between duration and amount is length of experience as compared with the size and quantity of roles played in that time; technical considerations aside, the demands on a leading actor are very different from those on supporting players in terms of maintaining continuity of characterisation and performance. Equally relevant is the type of experience gained, which is divided here between stage, cinema, radio and television. The extent to which an actor is versed in these media can greatly inform their television

performance, and brief histories are therefore provided for the various actors featured.

Experience can, of course, also influence the direction that casts are given; directors' approaches will vary depending on the grounding they have received. Whether trained internally by the BBC or hired as freelancers, a director working at one point in time might well have a preference for working procedures which had fallen out of favour by another. The change in directors' working practices is another of the key determinants to feature in each chapter; however, other factors are included individually where relevant. Chapter 2, for example, examines social realism and its effects on television acting, while Chapter 4 features a section on generational differences between actors working in contemporary television drama.

Utilising the correct terminology for performance analysis is a complex issue, as highlighted by John Caughie: 'While we have a vocabulary that describes and understands the effect of a cut or a close-up, we lack a critical language to describe and understand an expression that flits across a face or a hesitation in the voice' (2000b: 163). Various authors have made attempts either to formulate their own terminology (Pearson 1992), or to appropriate and re-apply that evolved by others to provide an overall lexis (Baron and Carnicke 2008); the creation of studio and location realism for this book is an example of the former. While various terms have been adopted, adapted or created herein for the purpose of analysis, these do not include the adjectives 'naturalistic' and 'theatrical', both of which are problematic and open to misinterpretation. In his call-to-arms article 'Nats Go Home' (1964), Troy Kennedy Martin famously selected naturalism as the prime characteristic of an era which I believe would be better categorised as studio realism, while James Naremore's definition of 'theatrical' performance as involving 'a degree of ostensiveness which marks it off from quotidian behaviour' (1988: 17) ignores the fact that what can be considered 'ostensive' is dependent on both culture and chronology. The question of theatricality is a particularly complex one. Early television's live 'immediacy' has often caused it to be aligned with a stage model, Philip Auslander claiming that the linear, limited arrangement of studio cameras replicated the static theatrical front of house or 'fourth wall' (2008: 21). For Auslander, the later increased mobility of cameras resulted in a shift towards

a 'cinematic' style: 'Once [they] could enter the set and shoot from reverse angles, the syntax of televisual discourse became that of cinematic discourse' (*ibid*.). It should be noted that Auslander is writing of American television, which shifted to a single camera film model much earlier than Britain, where the process of studio multi-camera recording was retained decades after live drama had ceased. Rather than maintaining the stage-bound effect described by Auslander, however, this arrangement resulted in the development of an aesthetic which I shall argue – as others have before me[8] – was distinct both from theatre and cinema.

Given the problems relating to 'theatrical' performance, the term 'stage-derived' is used here to describe any use of voice and body in a manner or on a scale similar to that which might be seen in the theatre; a term that is not intended as in any way pejorative. I have also co-opted Jason Jacobs's term 'projected' (2000: 151) to describe both scale of physical gesture, posture, gait, etc., and the volume and articulation of voice; any employment of these greater than that required in real life is, by definition, an example of 'projection'. This can, however, be applied by degrees; the projection used in studio realism of the 1970s, for example, would be less than that seen in a stage production, but would have been significantly reduced by the time of location realism in the 2000s.

Projection aside, the consideration of voice raises another question. The period covered within these pages has seen a significant shift away from what was formerly known as Standard English, and is now commonly termed Received Pronunciation, or 'RP'; there has also been a marked increase in actors employing their own, original accents. In order to delineate between these different uses of voice, a brief taxonomy of terms has been evolved. A 'real' voice is the natural product of an actor's 'home' environment or background; that which they use in everyday life.[9] An 'adopted' voice is one that has been learned until it has become second nature, with the result that the actor's original accent has been abandoned; an example of adopted voice would be a regional actor who has studied Received Pronunciation at drama school and gone on to employ it on a daily basis. A 'recovered' voice is one which, though obliterated through the learning of an adopted voice, can be recalled and employed for any role that requires it. By contrast, a 'mimicked' voice is one temporarily employed by an actor for a

role that is not their real or recovered voice; such an accent can be produced 'by ear', as the result of a natural gift for imitation, or through study, for example using phonetics. The difference between the mimicked accent and the adopted is that the former is used only for a particular role, whereas the latter has replaced the real voice in daily life. Finally, the 'put on' voice is one the actor believes to be suitable for a particular role, but is produced without the depth of study or natural ability of the mimicked.

Given the extent of Constantin Stanislavski's influence, some of the Russian's original terminology, much of which has since become standard vocabulary in western drama schools, is employed here for the purpose of analysis. For example, the expression 'given circumstances' (also termed the 'magic if') describes the imaginary situation in which the actor is placed, forcing them to consider what they would do, how they would feel, etc. and thus acting as the initial stimulant to the development of any scene (1934: 46–53). 'Objective' describes the particular aim that a character wishes to achieve (*ibid.*: 111–126), while a 'unit' or 'beat' is a subdivision or section of action, perhaps signifying that an objective has been achieved or abandoned (*ibid.*).

These, then, are the terms to be employed when analysing case studies. However, the selection of texts for examination presents another potential problem. As highlighted by Jonathan Bignell, any such programme, once chosen:

> becomes an example representing a larger context and history. Yet such a programme must therefore exceed the range it represents, and be regarded as more than typical as soon as that example is cited instead of the others which could have been chosen. This duality between representativeness and exceptionalness is necessarily the case with any example, but it becomes especially problematic for teaching and writing about television because of the nature of television as a popular medium about which everyone has an opinion and a memory.
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> **(2006: 16)**

Other complicating factors include the perceived tension between 'serious' drama (traditionally exemplified by the single play) and 'popular' series and serials, and the difficulties attendant to the absence of developed work on broadcasters' production practices (Bignell 2007b: 37) – a lack this work takes steps to rectify.

Given the aims of this book, it is desirable that the texts used derive from demonstrably distinct 'eras'. Technology provides a useful delineator here, as television drama can be seen to have fallen loosely into four sections. Live studio drama was the norm from the inception of British television in 1936 until the early 1960s; however, the initial impossibility of recording transmitted output means that few complete examples exist prior to the early 1950s. The introduction of videotape in 1958 meant that it was now possible to pre-record programmes, though both the early difficulty and cost of editing tape meant that the majority of drama was recorded 'as live': performed continuously in story order, with a minimum of breaks. This remained common practice until the 1970s, when the increased manipulability of tape[10] – combined with a new agreement with actors' union Equity (McNaughton 2014: 16–18) – meant that it was possible to 'rehearse/record'[11] productions in segments which could then be edited together. The studio, however, remained the prime site of television drama until the early 1990s, by which time all-film – and latterly HD (High Definition) video – production had become the norm, utilising locations and soundstages of the type more traditionally employed on feature films.

With this consideration in mind, the case studies utilised are: *The Quatermass Experiment* (BBC, 1953; BBC, 2005), *Doctor Who* (BBC, 1963–89;[12] BBC, 2005–); and *Survivors* (BBC, 1975–77; BBC, 2008–10). Each fits the requirement of the original having evolved in a distinct production era, with the additional advantage that it was followed by a new version in the 2000s. While *The Quatermass Experiment* was broadcast as a live, six-part serial, *Doctor Who* was initially pre-recorded 'as live'. *Survivors* began as a multi-camera studio production with location film inserts, but from its seventh episode switched to an all Outside Broadcast (OB) location video model; an early precursor of location realism. The use of modern 're-makes' for each of these productions in the 2000s offers the perfect opportunity to illustrate changes in acting style over the period in question, providing both a chronological development and a then-and-now comparison.

The focus on BBC productions, as opposed to independent television, is one of pragmatism and accessibility, the Corporation's Written Archives Centre (WAC) offering a wealth of valuable

background information, including production files, shooting scripts and Viewer Research Reports. While a comparison with independent television would be of inestimable value, ITV companies' early lack of a centralised management structure and established production procedure – combined with the difficulty of locating archives for individual companies (Johnson and Turnock 2005: 5) – means that selecting representative texts for particular historical periods becomes extremely complicated.

The question of format also requires attention. The original versions of *The Quatermass Experiment* and *Doctor Who* were both technically serials,[13] yet the first had a finite run of just six weeks, while the latter continued for twenty-six years. Only the first two episodes of *The Quatermass Experiment* were preserved in the archives, meaning that a study of the entire production is not possible, while the prodigious length of *Doctor Who*'s initial run means that a comprehensive overview would require a book-length work of its own at the very least. By contrast, *Survivors* was produced as a series, though with a continuing narrative and story strands that stretched over several episodes. This potential complicating factor has been circumvented, however, by choosing to focus solely on the opening episodes of *The Quatermass Experiment* ('Contact has been Established') and *Doctor Who* ('An Unearthly Child'), while in the case of *Survivors* two episodes from the first series have been selected to represent the different production processes employed: series opener 'The Fourth Horseman' for filmed location inserts and multi-camera studio, and the later 'Law and Order' for the all-OB location model. It should be remembered here that these episodes have been selected in order to unpack the state of British television acting at the time they were made, and not necessarily as representative narrative samples of their respective productions. One of the few early episodes of *Doctor Who* to be set in contemporary London, rather than a historical time period or an alien planet, 'An Unearthly Child' is in many ways atypical of the style the series would later adopt, and the same could be said of 'The Fourth Horseman', which depicts an England that has yet to descend into the chaos that characterises subsequent episodes of *Survivors.*

Two of the modern productions are less problematic. While the 2008 version of *Survivors* is a loose re-make, *Doctor Who* is a

continuation of the original series; however, the latter avoids alienating viewers unfamiliar with the programme's history by making few explicit references in early episodes to past stories. Both *Doctor Who* and *Survivors* can be categorised as continuing series dramas which utilise the single camera film model, and so are dealt with together in a single chapter. Rather than focusing on one episode for each series, scenes from multiple episodes are utilised for analysis; a decision that is partially reflective of the fragmented nature of modern television drama, in which actors could be filming segments of different episodes on the same day.[14] Produced live as a single drama, the 2005 re-mount of *The Quatermass Experiment* is unrepresentative of modern production contexts, and therefore features in a separate chapter examining the renewed interest in live television drama in the 2000s.

The extent to which these texts are technologically representative of their time is a separate issue. While both *The Quatermass Experiment* and *Doctor Who* utilised then-current production processes, neither was allocated the latest technological facilities. The Emitron cameras used at Alexandra Palace for the former dated back to 1936, while *Doctor Who*'s early home of Lime Grove Studio B was similarly outmoded at a time when the BBC's new Television Centre was already in use. Conversely, the opening episode of *Doctor Who* could be seen as exceptional in that an initially un-transmitted 'pilot' was produced, only to be rejected for broadcast, and the move by *Survivors* to all-OB production was a similarly ground-breaking one for series drama.[15] These considerations would be significant were technology the sole determinant of studio realism, but this was demonstrably not the case. *The Quatermass Experiment* and *Doctor Who* were not the only television dramas being produced at their respectively 'old-fashioned' studios, and a range of other, intersecting factors were also at work.

While none of these programmes was shown after the 9 p.m. watershed, *The Quatermass Experiment* and *Survivors* were broadcast after 8 p.m., while *Doctor Who*'s earlier timeslot of 5.15 p.m. has often seen it categorised as a children's programme. However, Jonathan Bignell has made the case that it in fact addressed 'mixed family audiences of different age groups, sexes and social classes' (2007a: 43). It was produced under the auspices of the Drama Department, and according to Bignell represented the BBC's aim

'to continue the ... ethos of "quality" writing in terms of character, dramatic logic and thematic complexity' (2005b: 82).

Lastly – and perhaps most importantly – the point must be made that these case studies have not been selected in order to examine a particular generic style of acting. In *Genre and Performance*, actress-turned-academic Christine Cornea illustrates the extent to which the genre in which an actor is working can influence their performance, for example recognising and replicating 'familiar codes and conventions' when auditioning (successfully) for a role in a supernatural horror film (2010: 6). *The Quatermass Experiment*, *Doctor Who* and *Survivors* have frequently been grouped together as science fiction or 'telefantasy' (e.g. Cornell *et al*. 1996), genres which, as highlighted by Catherine Johnson (2007: 62–63) and Jonathan Bignell (2007b: 38–39), have until comparatively recently received scant attention as serious drama. The main exception here is *Doctor Who*, which in 1983 was the subject of a detailed study by John Tulloch and Manuel Alvarado, and since its 2005 relaunch has been examined extensively in monographs by Matt Hills (2010) and James Chapman (2013), in addition to edited collections from David Butler (2007) and Matt Hills *et al*. (2013). However, these works represent a case study-based approach, as opposed to a more general repositioning of telefantasy as a 'serious' television genre. The term 'telefantasy' is indeed a problematic one, borrowed as it is from fan discourse and comprising 'a wide range of fantasy, science fiction and horror' (Johnson 2005: 2). Johnson points out that the breadth of texts to which this can be applied makes it difficult to provide 'a clearly defined generic classification' (*ibid*.), and the texts used here are cases in point. While *The Quatermass Experiment* and *Doctor Who* both feature space travel and extra-terrestrial life, there is little obvious connection between either's narrative and that of *Survivors*, in which a virus wipes out 95 per cent of the Earth's population. Science fiction alone can clearly encompass any number of scenarios, with varying levels of realism and fantasy. However, what the episodes examined herein *do* have in common is the intrusion of the fantastic – the unknown or 'other' – into an environment which is presented at the outset as recognisably 'normal' and present day. This element, rather than resulting in 'fantastic' (i.e. unreal) performances – which might be the case for telefantasy series set in the future, or on alien worlds (as is the case in

other episodes of *Doctor Who*) – requires a grounding in realism as strong as that found in any other television genre.

This view contradicts that of Roberta Pearson, who claims that science fiction and fantasy require actors 'to suit their interpretations to the oft-times larger-than-life nature of the text' (2010: 182). Perceiving a 'general distinction between acting in science fiction/ fantasy and a realist drama' (181), Pearson cites *Star Trek* (NBC, 1966–69) as an example of television wherein 'the epic quality of some science fiction or fantasy programmes ... requires the greater intensity of a theatrical performance mode' (181), as opposed to the 'cool, low key, realist' performance style she associates with the intimate, close-up nature of most television drama. By way of illustration Pearson quotes from *Star Trek* lead William Shatner's autobiography, in which the actor retrospectively justified his heightened performance:

> There's actually a pretty valid reason for all that scenery chewing ... When you're an actor standing around in a cardboard-and-Christmas-light starship ... you can never be too sure that your scripted lines won't just seem completely ridiculous. It often seemed to me that *without* all of Kirk's emotion, and intensity and high-octane hand-wringing, our villains of the week might have seemed more ridiculous than frightening; the ship's crisis of the week might have seemed a lot less threatening were Kirk not up in arms. [Original emphasis]
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> **(Shatner with Kreski 1999: 166–167)**

Shatner's assertion that he adapted his acting style, in effect producing a 'fantastic' performance suited to the unreal nature of the narrative, supports Pearson's drawing of a line between fantasy acting and realistic acting only if we take *Star Trek* as representative of the science fiction/fantasy genre. And herein lies the problem; with a genre that defies the more limited and limiting definitional characteristics of other programme types, no single text can be taken as truly representative. *Star Trek* is *one* example of acting for television science fiction, but cannot be taken as 'typical' telefantasy because, comprised as it is of so many sub-genres, no one representative example can possibly exist.

The potential differences between the depiction of reality/ fantasy in a text such as *Star Trek* and the case studies utilised here are highlighted by the diversion between what narratologist

Marie-Laure Ryan has termed the Actual World (AW) and the Textual Actual World (TAW) (1991: 556).[16] Whereas the AW is that in which the viewer exists – the real world – the TAW is the one presented to the viewer in the text. Ryan provides a list of ways in which the TAW resembles or differs from the AW; a comparative exercise that she terms 'accessibility relations' (*ibid*.: 557). While the TAW presented in 'true fiction' contains all the same elements (physical, chronological, taxonomic, logical, linguistic, etc.) as the AW, science fiction and fantasy differ – or can differ – in a number of respects. For example, Ryan states that a science fiction TAW, even when observing the physical compatibility of natural laws, can differ chronologically; *Star Trek*'s temporal setting in the future means that the AW viewer is unable 'to contemplate the entire history of [its] TAW' (*ibid*.). The alien species endemic to *Star Trek*'s TAW are another differentiating element, Vulcans and Klingons not being part of our AW. Were it the purpose of this book to examine a 'fantastic' style of acting – which could perhaps be termed studio and location '*un*realism' – it would be fascinating to examine the development of the non-AW, futuristic cultures and scenarios presented and refined by a franchise such as *Star Trek* over its long television run. However, that is not our objective here; instead, *The Changing Spaces of Television Acting* focuses specifically on UK telefantasy case studies whose TAWs would have been perfectly accessible to their original viewers – at least until the fantastic intrudes upon them. If Bernard Quatermass's role as head of Britain's first manned space flight seems improbable to modern viewers, it is presented as credible and accepted within the TAW, while the characters initially introduced in *Doctor Who* and *Survivors* all have AW jobs (schoolteachers, housewives and office workers) and characteristics. It is only when a non-AW element enters the narrative of each that true disjunction occurs, and the texts enter the realm of the fantastic.[17] Were the acting of all science fiction characters heightened in the way that Shatner suggests is inevitable, whatever seemingly fantastic events occurred could only be perceived as endemic to the TAW, and therefore lose their effect of otherness.[18] However, the fantastic event, when it arrives, must be presented in such a way that the viewer can accept it as taking place within the TAW; too great a disjunction would simply result in ridicule. Overall, the text must possess a degree of

verisimilitude, defined by Steve Neale as that which is ' "probable", "plausible" or "likely" ' (2000: 32). What is accepted as 'probable' can be dependent on genre, yet 'all fiction to some extent involves what has traditionally been called "suspension of disbelief", by virtue of the fact that its agents and events are, by definition, unreal. In actual fact, while disbelief may well be involved, it is often knowledge and judgement that the spectator is required to suspend' (Neale 1990: 163).

For Catherine Johnson, socio-cultural verisimilitude is particularly important in rendering credible the worlds into which the fantastic intrudes:

> When depicting an alien landing on Earth, socio-cultural verisimilitude is essential to make the Earth seem plausible and believable despite the presence of an alien being. While these genres may represent fictional worlds that challenge culturally accepted notions of 'reality', they are also crucially engaged with explaining the rules that govern their particular fictional world, a process that is only possible through generic and socio-cultural verisimilitude.
>
> **(2005: 4)**

That *The Quatermass Experiment* achieves this despite the comparative crudity (when viewed today) of its special effects is a testament to the realism of its cast's acting: 'While giant vegetable aliens and spacecraft confound the socio-cultural verisimilitude of the 1950s viewer, the serial work[s] hard narratively and stylistically to reinforce the plausibility and believability of such fantastic elements' (*ibid*.: 27).

As always, it is important to place these programmes in historical context. At the time *The Quatermass Experiment* was transmitted there had been relatively few science fiction productions on British television;[19] there was, therefore, no established television performance mode for actors to imitate. Further *Quatermass* serials and *A for Andromeda* (BBC, 1961) aside, things had changed little by the time *Doctor Who* began a decade later, and as will be shown in Chapter 2 the programme's early serials display a similar commitment to verisimilitude. Such was the latter series' longevity that, over the course of its initial twenty-six-year transmission, a number of performance styles evolved over different periods, often associated with particular production teams (Tulloch and Alvarado

1983: 247–248). Guest actors joining the programme for a particular serial might well have styled their performance to fit with what they had already seen of transmitted episodes and so associated, even subconsciously, with a 'house style'. The selection of opening or early episodes as case studies therefore avoids the possible inclusion of any such series-specific style.

While some generically specific television dramas, produced to target certain audience segments, might well engender a particular performance style, the nebulous nature of science fiction in effect precludes such an overt influence. The common link between the episodes focused upon here, of the 'fantastic' intruding into the 'real' world, requires an acting style (for the human characters, at least) that grounds each case study, as far as possible, in contemporaneous realism. As such they provide robust models from which to extrapolate historically representative examples of television acting, offering a valuable window into the developing world of small screen performance. Rather than providing a study of 'fantastic' acting, this book utilises telefantasy case studies to trace the historical development of UK television acting as a whole.

In order to examine these texts a combination of methodologies is employed, comprised primarily of historical research, textual analysis and reception studies. The potential of textual analysis is well summarised by Charles Affron when he states that a screen performance is 'wedded to the text in a way it can never be on the stage. In its relationship to the viewer, the screen performance is indistinguishable from the text it is expressing' (1977: 5). Archive television programmes thus provide examples not only of acting style, but of the times in which they were produced. However, in the absence of contextualising information such analysis risks, to paraphrase Victor Turner, only partially understanding – and hence appreciating – the text it seeks to unpack: 'What we are looking for here is not so much the traditional preoccupation with text alone but text in context ... [It is] necessary to do some homework on the history ... of the "worlds" which encompass the dramatic traditions we are considering' (1986: 28). As Catherine Johnson points out: 'A programme that appears to be badly paced and poorly executed to contemporary eyes may well be understood as innovative when placed within its context of production and reception' (2007: 61). Johnson therefore recommends

seeking out historical reviews to help 'challenge our initial subjective response to an old television programme and provide part of the interpretive context through which we evaluate its function' (*ibid.*).

To this end, historical research here takes two forms: archival, sourcing original production material from the BBC's archives; and specially conducted interviews, putting specific questions to personnel involved in case studies and contemporaneous industry practitioners. The latter is not limited to actors, but also includes directors and producers able to offer insights into the environments in which performances were created. Such original interviews have helped form the basis for several recent television case studies, including Brett Mills' *The Sitcom* (2009) and Roberta Pearson and Maire Messenger Davies' *Star Trek and American Television* (2014). However, performance studies has usually kept interview materials separate from textual analysis, with the former either gathered into historical compendiums[20] or published as original collections.[21] These works are notable for their focus on Hollywood, and television acting is generally less discussed than stage and film.[22] While the interviews conducted for this book allow for specific focus on relevant issues, it is important to consider the potentially complicating issue of memory, whether this takes the form of inaccuracies engendered by the passage of time, or individuals' desire to best represent (and perhaps enhance) personal associations with programmes since acclaimed as landmark productions. As Kerwin Lee Klein highlights, while history is objective 'in the coldest, hardest sense of the word, memory is subjective in the warmest, most inviting sense' (2000: 130). What some might call hindsight can also distort recollection, and Nicola King has pointed out the paradox of knowing and not knowing when relating personal histories: 'any autobiographical narrator ... in the present moment of the narration, possesses the knowledge that she did not have "then", in the moment of the experience' (2000: 2): With specific regard to television history, John Caughie has cautioned against rose-tinted recollections of the so-called Golden Age in the 1960s and 1970s: 'Nostalgia creates a past without rough edges which only exist in fantasy and desire' (2000a: 57). Amy Holdsworth also points out that

what is remembered as 'golden' relates directly to the youth of the commentator during the period being recalled (2011: 121); interestingly, though many of the industry subjects featured here are reviewing their early careers in television, most are at pains to provide as de-romanticised a picture as possible. Nevertheless, any potential exaggerations or unwitting inaccuracies are balanced by the inclusion, wherever possible, of archive materials; immutable production records uninfluenced by the passage of time. The inclusion of reception indicators also provides a valuable index of the times in which these programmes were produced, Viewer Research Reports, *Radio Times* correspondence and press reviews demonstrating the extent to which the performances given were acceptable to contemporaneous audiences, and thus indicating their representativeness. While, for the more recent productions, Viewer Reports are no longer available, internet sites such as *Digital Spy* provide a similar barometer of what comprises acceptably realist performance. *Doctor Who* in particular has developed an active fan culture, and while Henry Jenkins (1992) has highlighted the ways in which such groups can shape discourses around television texts, Paul Rixon (2011) more recently pointing out the role played by the internet in these activities, fan responses will not be focused upon specifically here, if only for the reason that commercial magazines and fanzines do not necessarily represent a 'general' audience. In addition, as *The Quatermass Experiment* and *Survivors* arguably do not possess a fan following equal to that enjoyed by *Doctor Who*, examining fan reaction as an example of performance reception might risk skewing focus in favour of the latter.

The book is divided into five chapters. The first examines early studio realism in 'Contact has been Established', the debut episode of *The Quatermass Experiment* from 1953. Chapter 2 then illustrates the extent to which a greater uniformity of scale in terms of physical and vocal projection had emerged by the time of *Doctor Who*'s first episode, 'An Unearthly Child', in 1963. Chapter 3 examines nascent location realism in the 1970s, contrasting scenes from *Survivors*' largely studio-based debut, 'The Fourth Horseman', with the later 'Law and Order', produced entirely on location using OB. Chapter 4 then moves to the location realism which predominated

in the 2000s via the modern versions of *Doctor Who* and *Survivors*, while the 2005 re-mount of *The Quatermass Experiment* forms the foundation of Chapter 5, which examines the revival of interest in live drama in the 2000s, and the potential for studio realism's return.

The resulting journey is a fascinating and not always predictable one. We begin six decades in the past, investigating the earliest recorded stages of studio realism in the live era. Though a world aesthetically alien to modern audiences, its complex interplay of determinants must be unpacked and examined if we are to deepen our understanding of the developments that have taken place between then and the location realism of the present day; in brief, the changing spaces of British television acting.

Notes

1 Radio's Val Gielgud had been jointly responsible for sound and vision prior to Barry becoming BBC Television's Head of Drama in 1952.
2 Highlighting the fact that television studies has produced few sustained analyses of performance in serial television (2015: 27), Elliott Logan's examination of Claire Danes' performance as Carrie Mathison in *Homeland* (Showtime, 2011–) is simultaneously limited by his focus on a particular format, rather than television acting per se.
3 Jeremy Butler (2010) similarly considers performance as part of television's *mise-en-scène*, though his focus is on the United States. Butler earlier became one of the first academics to examine television acting when he discussed the impact of re-casting in ' "I'm Not a Doctor, But I Play One on TV" ' (1991).
4 Cooke has since challenged Jacobs' assumption that this was a 'live' performance, contending that Cushing probably pre-recorded the entire sequence on film (2013: 23–25).
5 Jacobs admits instead to the 'visual pleasure of seeing a skilled actor like Cushing in control of his performance' (2000: 151).
6 This recalls Vsevolod Pudovkin's observation on the unsuitability of Constantin Stanislavski's techniques for the stage, citing an example in which the latter's attempt to convey 'a series of thoughts and emotions' while seated on a bench during a theatre performance was 'lost on the audience because of the distance between. In close-up, however, the public would have been able to follow on the screen all the fine plays of eyes and features and thus take in everything Stanislavski wished to impart' (1953: 116).

7 Most notably *An Actor Prepares* (1934), *Building a Character* (1949) and *Creating a Role* (1961), all translated by Elizabeth Reynolds Hapgood.

8 In *The Intimate Screen* (2000), Jason Jacobs provides ample evidence to support his assertion that 'the development of television drama is not a story of the steady emancipation from theatrical values toward the cinematic, but one where producers were able to choose from a range of stylistic features' (117).

9 Each 'real' voice is of course unique, the strength or breadth of an individual's accent being dependent upon a range of variables impossible to categorise in a work of this scope. The subjectivity of individual responses to the credibility of actors' accents makes a comprehensive argument impossible to construct; rather, this work is concerned with overall historical trends concerning both the use and the acceptability of voice.

10 By this time the use of two videotape editing machines, working in unison, as opposed to the single machine used in the 1960s meant that editing became 'as flexible as film' (Sutton 1982: 124).

11 Rehearsed and performed in segments that are recorded separately, possibly not in story order.

12 Although considered part of the *Doctor Who* canon, the 1996 'television movie' is not included here as it was not solely a UK production.

13 In modern terms, the original version of *Doctor Who* would be better understood as a continuing series of serials.

14 This was not the case for the earlier iterations, where separate episodes would be produced on a week-by-week basis; hence the focus here on single episodes of *The Quatermass Experiment* and *Doctor Who*. Had *Survivors*' production model not altered mid-run, one episode of this series would also have sufficed for the purpose of analysis.

15 The OB process had, however, been used for stand-alone productions, having debuted four years earlier on *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (BBC, 1971) (Smart 2010: 313–314).

16 Although Ryan is writing from a literary perspective, her analytical framework can equally be applied to television.

17 It should be noted that the case studies selected represent, in terms of fantasy narratives, what Farah Mendlesohn terms 'the intrusion fantasy', in which 'the fantastic enters the fictional world' (2008: 1). Other narrative models listed by Mendlesohn include the portal-quest, the immersive (of which *Star Trek* would be an example) and the liminal. A study of telefantasy acting could perhaps compare and contrast examples of each, though that extends beyond the remit of this book.

18 This does not apply to characters that are not part of the 'real' TAW into which they intrude. There is no reason that an actor playing the 'fantastic' character of the Doctor in *Doctor Who* cannot

give a 'heightened' performance, as the Doctor manifestly does not belong to the world of twentieth or twenty-first century Earth. Captain Kirk and the crew of the *Enterprise*, conversely, *can* be seen to belong to their twenty-third century environment.

19 Interestingly, although producer Rudolph Cartier referred to *The Quatermass Experiment* as 'a science fiction serial' in private correspondence, writing to an Air Ministry official that he was 'anxious to lift [it] above the level of strip-cartoons' (BBC WAC T5/418, Letter to C. Moodie Esq.), the programme was ultimately listed as 'a thriller in six parts' in the *Radio Times*.

20 Examples include *Actors on Acting: The Theories, Techniques and Practices of the World's Great Actors, Told in Their Own Words* (Cole and Krich Chinoy 1970) and *Playing to the Camera: Film Actors Discuss Their Craft* (Cardullo *et al.* 1998).

21 Collections include Carole Zucker's *Figures of Light: Actors and Directors Illuminate the Art of Film Acting* (1995) and *In the Company of Actors: Reflections on the Craft of Acting* (1999a), Joanmarie Kalter's *Actors on Acting: Performing in Theatre and Film Today* (1979), and *The Player* (1962), by Helen and Lillian Ross.

22 Exceptions include Carole Zucker's 'An Interview with Ian Richardson: Making Friends with the Camera' (1999b), which features some interesting reflections on the actor's need for awareness of the lens being used (162), and Max Sexton's 'Philip Jackson: The Craft of Acting' (2015).