Approaches to Surveillance in Contemporary British Television Comedy

Stephanie Clayton

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University of East Anglia

School of Art, Media and American Studies

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Abstract:

In 2001, the year David Lyon coined the term 'surveillance society', the study of surveillance was in its infancy. Visual and audio surveillance were well-established and digital and biometric surveillance were on the rise. Today, stories about digital surveillance and data-mining are often in the popular press. Despite the increased concern with digital surveillance and protecting one's data online, visual surveillance continues to be an area of concern. Although surveillance has often be linked to reality television and even drama, it has never been examined in comedy programmes. This thesis argues that like other popular genres, comedy programmes reveal cultural attitudes about visual surveillance. This thesis examines four British comedy programmes, *Scot Squad, People Just Do Nothing*, *Mrs Brown's Boys* and *Miranda* that, through their use of various surveillance aesthetics and themes, work through issues in living in a surveillance society. Examining the interplay between comedy and surveillance through textual analysis reveals that rather than just accepting the surveillance society and the visual surveillance that is a part of that, comedy allows for a space for resistance. Through parody*, Scot Squad* and *People Just Do Nothing* offer an imitation of non-fiction formats such as the reality crime genre and the docusoap that highlight the problems and limits of surveillance whilst also normalising surveillance procedures. *Mrs Brown's Boys* and *Miranda* also work through issues of surveillance with their direct address, attempting to control the mechanisms of surveillance. This thesis argues that comedy provides a space for resistance to the surveillance society and, as such, adds evidence to the idea that comedy has potential as radical opposition to power.

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Introduction

On January 22, 2019, Google was fined €50 million by France's Commission Nationale de l'Informatique et des Libertés (CNIL) for "violating GDPR by failing to tell its users how its data was collected and by declining to provide an option for users to consent to personalised ads" (Brennen, 22 January 2019, np). This was just the latest in a series of news stories about the degree to which personal digital data is collected and used without consent on the part of the individuals. Since January 2019, 24 million mortgage and bank loan statement details have been leaked online,[1] a hacker faces jail time after hacking into TalkTalk records[2] and obtaining 21,000 bank account numbers and sort codes, and Facebook is paying children as young as 13 to harvest their data through a social research application.[3]

These are stories that have become common after news broke in the US and Britain that data may have been used to swing the US election in Donald Trump's favour. On March 17th 2018, two newspapers simultaneously broke the news that Cambridge Analytica had harvested personal data from millions of Facebook users without their consent.[4] A former employee of Cambridge Analytica, Christopher Wylie, said that this data was then used to "psychologically profile people and deliver pro-Trump material to them" (BBC News, 2018, np). Cambridge Analytica has since been accused of using Facebook data to influence the outcome of the Brexit vote as well (Cadwalladr and Townsend, 24 March 2018, np).

It is clear from the examples I have highlighted here that issues of digital surveillance and data protection are topical and complex. Writing in 2007, David Lyon stressed the ambiguous nature of digital surveillance arguing, "Today's surveillance is a

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[1] Kearns, D.(January 24, 2019). "Millions of mortgage, loan documents were exposed online in massive security lapse" *Bankrate*, viewed 07 February, 2019, https://www.bankrate.com/mortgages/lender-document-data-breach/

[2] Martin, H. (28 January, 2019). "Computer hacker, 21, faces jail for stealing customer details from TalkTalk in massive data breach which cost the mobile network £77m" *MailOnline*, viewed 07 February, 2019 https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-6641315/Computer-hacker-faces-jail-stealing-customer-details-TalkTalk.html

[3] Bell, V. (30 January 2019). "Facebook kills off creepy 'research' app that paid kids as young as 13 to harvest their data after Apple bans it (but the Android version is still available)" *MailOnline*, viewed 7 February, 2019 https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-6647775/Facebook-admits-paying-users-web-activity.html

[4] *The Guardian, The New York Times* (17 March, 2018)

particularly ambiguous process in which digital technologies and personal data are fundamentally implicated and meet in software coding that classifies yet more groups in different ways" (2007, p. 5). Today, new EU regulations have been put in place to help individuals protect their 'data-doubles', (a term Lyon uses to refer to an individual's personal data), and to outline to companies and institutions how to responsibly collect and use data. The GDPR or General Data Protection Regulation was approved by the EU Parliament and enforced on 25th May 2018. The GDPR is an update to previous laws that govern how data is collected and used. The GDPR is meant to "harmonize data privacy laws across Europe, protect and empower all EU citizens' data privacy and reshape the way organizations across the region approach data privacy" (Eugdpr.org, 2019, np). Google is the first American company to be charged under its laws (Brennen, 22 January, 2019, np).

However, while digital surveillance has been grabbing the headlines for violations of privacy, stories about visual surveillance seem to be less about the problems or concerns about visual surveillance and more about how the police can use CCTV footage to catch criminals. Even though visual surveillance has been criticized in the past because of its potential to violate privacy and its dubious efficacy as a tool for the detection and prosecution of crime, there are stories that call for more CCTV cameras without any recognition of the contradictions and concerns that are still related to visual surveillance. For example, the *Mirror* reported that in 2019, the Department of Transport has ordered that all taxi drivers are going to be required to outfit their taxis with CCTV cameras with no mention of the efficacy of such a scheme (Lines, 10 February, 2019, np). Similarly, the *Eastern Daily Press* reports that CCTV cameras have yet to be installed after the sexual assault of a boy in Bungay not because of privacy issues or concerns about ethics but because of the town's aesthetics as a historic site (Carr, 9 February, 2019, np).

Modern visual surveillance in the UK began in the 1970s, when public spaces began being monitored by video surveillance equipment (Palmer, 2003, p. 25). Today, as the British public move in the public domain, there is little chance of not being seen by cameras. Indeed, according to a 2013 article in *The Telegraph*, the ratio of closed-circuit television cameras (CCTV) to people in Britain is now 1:11 (Barrett, 10 July, 2013, np). The implication is clear; when you leave your house, you are probably on camera. Due to ever-developing technology, visual, digital and bodily surveillance has become easier,

cheaper and more invasive. This increasing surveillance in many different areas has led David Lyon to describe our current society as one of surveillance (2001).

Concerns and anxieties about the ever-increasing amount of surveillance are 'worked through' (Ellis, 2000) in the media that Britain produces, specifically television media. Debates about surveillance are not only a subject of many television dramas and news programmes but a certain kind of surveillance aesthetic has become a style, used in comedies, dramas and reality programming. Reality programming has depicted aspects of surveillance with its observational shooting styles, CCTV footage usage and constructed environments in diverse programmes such as reality crime programmes like *Crimewatch* (BBC1, 1984-2017), gamedocs like *Big Brother* (Channel 4, 2000-2010; Channel 5, 2010-2018) and *I'm a Celebrity* (ITV, 2002-), and scripted reality programmes such as *The Only Way is Essex* (ITV2, 2010-2014; ITVBe 2014-) and *Made in Chelsea* (E4, 2011-). These reality programmes and others like them have been a staple of the television schedule proving the reality format, and its prevailing aspect of surveillance a popular and regular element of British television.

However, reality television is not the only genre that uses an observational shooting style and therefore should not be the only genre discussed in terms of its connection with surveillance. For example, certain comedy programming has also used an observational shooting style. In his discussion of the changing nature of television comedies, Brett Mills addresses how television is increasingly concerned with documentary effects. Mills has coined the term "comedy vérité" to describe the way television comedies like *The Office* (BBC2, BBC1 2001-2003) play with conventions of the observational style documentary (2004). This style incorporates not only the visual markers of the observational mode, such as the use of handheld cameras, but also includes in its structure, video diary-like interviews in first person address much like the reality programmes mentioned above. Examples of this type of programme currently being broadcast include *Borderline* (Channel 5, 2016-), *People Just Do Nothing* (BBC3, BBC2 2012-)*, and *Scot Squad* (BBC1 Scotland, 2014-).[5]

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[5] Much of these programmes that use the comedy vérité style have also been termed 'cringe comedy' for the unflinching way that they approach awkward social interactions. However, although the terms have been used interchangeably, not all of these programmes can be termed cringe comedy and not all cringe comedy uses comedy vérité.

Many contemporary comedies (*Miranda* [BBC2, 2009–10; BBC1, 2012–15], *Mrs. Brown's Boys* [RTE1 BBC1, 2011-]*, Fleabag* [BBC3, 2016-]*, Sunny D* [BBC3, 2016-]*)* use aspects of a documentary style with no narrative reason behind this. There is no narrative that explains how these characters have come to be on TV however, they are aware that they are being watched. Whereas in *The Office*, we are told that the office is being filmed for a documentary, the programmes mentioned above break the fourth wall and speak directly to an audience but it is never explained as to why. For the purpose of this thesis, these programmes will be grouped together by the term meta-sitcoms. Although the prefix meta has been used to describe things that change from their original form[6], I refer only to the aspect of the definition that refers to a self-referential quality about the text. Meta in this case means that the programme highlights its construction through a variety of aesthetics such as direct address. Indeed, sitcoms have routinely used direct address from the very beginning of the genre so these programmes are not a change from an original form. Additionally, many sitcoms can be described as meta for the simple fact that they contain a laugh track which in itself draws attention to the creation of a fictional narrative. *Peep Show* (Channel 4, 2003-2015) employs a unique POV shooting style where everything the audience sees is from a character's point of view. Mills argues that this series allows audiences to see and hear how an individual's thoughts contribute to their behaviour socially and as such is related to panoptic surveillance (Mills, 2008). As in the case of the above programmes, there is no suggestion that a documentary is being made in *Peep Show.* The characters in meta-sitcoms are simply living their lives under the gaze of a surveillance society, assuming that they are being watched constantly and engaging with that look. They acknowledge this 'surveillance gaze' as both natural and in the case of *Miranda* and *Mrs Brown's Boys,* welcome.

Research Questions

As the above brief summary would suggest, comedy has used surveillance aesthetics but it has not been discussed in terms of the connection to surveillance like the reality genre has. Therefore, this thesis looks at these types of comedy programmes, both the comedy vérité style as exemplified by *People Just Do Nothing* and *Scot Squad* and the

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[6] In the United States the prefix meta can be used to denote "Designating or characterized by a consciously sophisticated, self-referential, and often self-parodying style, whereby something (as a situation, person, etc.) reflects or represents the very characteristics it alludes to or depicts" (http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/117149?rskey=aKUpkF&result=3&isAdvanced=false#eid). As a prefix it also "Denot[es] change, transformation, permutation, or substitution" http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/117150?result=4&rskey=aKUpkF&).

meta-sitcom as exemplified by *Mrs Brown's Boys* and *Miranda* to ask the following questions:

- How does contemporary British television comedy work through issues of surveillance with respect to aesthetics and/or themes?
- What can examining contemporary British television comedy with respect to surveillance tell us about contemporary British society?
- What are the specificities of the interplay between surveillance and television comedy?

Gap/intervention

This project is concerned with two areas of intervention. The first is a cultural intervention. As I have shown, although the popular press continues to report about issues of data protection and digital surveillance, it largely represents visual surveillance as an accepted part of contemporary British society. Television, however, continues to work through issues surrounding visual surveillance which suggests that visual surveillance has not been just accepted as part of British society.

The second intervention this project is making is to think about issues of surveillance in comedy specifically. Unlike in the cases of drama and reality television, the influence of visual surveillance on comedy has largely been ignored. However, similar to both reality television and drama programmes, comedy programmes also work through issues like surveillance in a variety of different ways. Although the aesthetics of the mockumentary have been examined in the context of television comedy, its possible connection to visual surveillance is underexplored. In contrast, studies of both reality television and drama have demonstrated how concerns about the acts and effects of surveillance have been worked through in terms of narrative themes (Dovey, 2000; Roscoe, 2001; Couldry, 2002; Lyon, 2007) and also aesthetics of various programmes (Corner, 2004; Jermyn, 2004; Biressi and Nunn, 2005; Schaub, 2010; Dubrofsky, 2011; Tasker, 2012; Hausken 2014). Thus, the intervention I am making is to examine comedy with respect to surveillance to examine the potential links between the current surveillance society and the pervasiveness of surveillance aesthetics in contemporary British comedy. I argue that this pervasiveness is a direct result of a society that has developed to understand surveillance as necessary and natural. I also argue that certain elements of the surveillance aesthetic, like direct address, allow for the characters to speak back to surveillance and the power that it inflicts.

This work will contribute to discussions about comedy as a genre and add to the debate about the function of comedy as radical or conservative response to power. It will suggest new ways of thinking about particular kinds of comedy. It will expand on discussions about surveillance that have been had with respect to drama and reality television and offer an additional understanding of genre/comedy and surveillance. This work stands at the intersection of comedy and surveillance studies. Starting from the work already done on comedy vérité in terms of aesthetics, I will show the connection between both comedy vérité and meta-sitcoms and the concepts chewed over in the surveillance society – witness, power, disclosure and the relationship of surveillance and the body. The repeated use of these conventions suggests that they are understandable and I argue that this is in part as the result of the surveillance society and the pervasiveness of the ability to watch and be watched by others.

Time/Place Justification

This study is both timely, and in a way, overdue. Britain is the most heavily surveyed country in the world with the greatest amount of CCTV cameras per capita (1:11). This number was from a study done in 2013, 6 years ago now with the maximum estimated number of cameras around 5.9 million (Barrett, 10 July, 2013, np). This is a number that has steadily increased from the introduction of CCTV technology in the 1970s (Palmer, 2003, p. 25). Additionally, Britain has produced a number of comedy programmes that deal in some way with the act of looking or being watched. It has a history of comedy vérité television, cringe comedy and mockumentary programming. Indeed, there have been a number of comedy vérité and meta-sitcom programmes on British television since 2015 when I started my research. In addition to the four programmes I use for my case studies, there has also been *Hoff The Record* (Dave, 2015-2016)*, The Life of Rock with Brian Pern* (BBC4 2014-2017), *Borderline, Hospital People* (BBC1 2016-2017), *This Country* (BBC3 2017-)*, Chewing Gum* (E4, 2015-2017), *Sunny D, My Mad Fat Diary* (E4, 2013-2015)*, and *Fleabag*. It is clear for these reasons that this national context would be a potentially rich source of material for this study.

David Lyons argues that "because of the widespread, systematic and routine ways in which personal data are processed in the twenty first century", we are living in a surveillance society (2007, p. 7). The advent of the CCTV technology and its spread across the nation and the world, has contributed to many popular culture moments over the years. News programmes, current affairs programmes and reality crime shows have made liberal use of the footage captured through CCTV and other surveillance cameras

with increasing measure on British television screens. As Mike McCahill notes, images of panoptic surveillance are "beloved" by news media as spectacle and graphic imagery (2012, p. 249). I argue that the amount of television programming using visual surveillance footage has not only made the concept of surveillance more known but audiences have grown to understand its conventions and aesthetics through repeated exposure to it. Repeated exposure to surveillance footage and fictional narratives about visual surveillance in media such as novels, films and television has likely shaped "public perceptions of panoptic surveillance" (ibid). Despite warnings about privacy and control in relation to digital surveillance, the argument has been made that audiences have largely come to accept visual surveillance as an inevitable consequence of living in a modern society (Mathiesen, 1997, p. 231; Koskela, 2000, p. 244). Television, and specifically television comedy, challenges this idea through its working through of issues related to visual surveillance.

Justification of Programmes

Given the fact that there were many to choose from, for my case studies, I focused on programmes that were contemporary examples of comedy vérité or meta-sitcoms, airing on British television in the year this project began. I argue that it is the comedy vérité programme and meta-sitcom where the influence of the surveillance society is most readily seen. These programmes represent the breadth of comedies on television that utilize surveillance aesthetics in order to work through issues relating to a surveillance society. They range from critically acclaimed but little seen, to highly rated but critically maligned, programming. Starting out smaller on BBC3 and BBC Scotland, *People Just Do Nothing*[7] and *Scot Squad* are examples of comedy vérité whereas *Mrs. Brown's Boys*[8] and *Miranda* are examples of the meta-sitcom. However, all four programmes deal with the act of watching and being watched. And while the programmes do not address all aspects of surveillance, each one offers a unique case study for the major concepts in a surveillance society that I identify and they represent various ways of using surveillance as a way to deal with living in a surveillance society. These programmes respond to the surveillance society in different ways. The topics I address here are limited to the ones in the programmes. Issues of power relations in terms of surveillance are examined in *Scot Squad* as members of the police force –

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[7] *People Just Do Nothing* aired original episodes for each series on BBC 3 online before broadcasting on BBC 2 in 2016 and BBC 1 in 2017.
[8] Although the series ended in 2013, specials have been aired on Christmas and New Year's Day every year since.

traditionally the watchers – become the watched and subjects of a documentary about the newly formed Scottish Police. In *People Just Do Nothing*, BBC cameras follow a group of MCs and DJs running a pirate radio station to create a reality programme, witnessing their quest to become famous. This mockumentary format reveals to the audience that although the MCs and DJs believe they are controlling the message that is delivered from their programme, this is merely an illusion of control. Control and artifice are exposed through the surveillance aesthetic and its relationship to disclosure in *Mrs. Brown's Boys.* Agnes uses direct address to speak to the audience blurring lines between performance and authenticity. Finally, the relationship between surveillance and the body is examined through *Miranda*, specifically the effects it has on the non-normative female body possessed by the lead character. Miranda also uses direct address to speak back to a surveillance culture.

Methodology

Given that my research questions are focussed on the text itself, I use textual analysis as my primary research method. This thesis examines how these particular television programmes address the issue of surveillance and how they represent some of the key issues within a surveillance society. My intention in doing a close reading of the various programmes is to examine their aesthetics and style and their narrative structure to illustrate what messages can be read and how these are made intelligible. Textual analysis is a method of close reading of a text in order to examine its meanings. It involves reading both aesthetics and style, as well as narrative and structure.

Textual analysis can reveal not only the meanings that are created within a text but also how the reader is invited to those meanings through style. John Gibbs and Douglas Pye argue that style, "constitutes the medium of expression, giving access to the story, and simultaneously shaping in a variety of complex ways the film's relationship to its material, its audience and its traditions" (2005, p. 10). It is the role of the textual analyst to interpret the style and structure of a text and to suggest possible subject positions that the text might offer up. For Gibbs and Pye, "Interpretative criticism is, or has the possibility to be, a kind of conversation about what we find in, and what we make of films..." (2005, p. 3). Looking closely at a text gives you more than just the meanings that might be communicated by it, it also illustrates how meanings are suggested to a viewer through the construction of the text. So much of what suggests surveillance is in the aesthetics of the programme and textual analysis will allow me to focus on these as a significant element in the construction of meaning. My goal is to

suggest that these programmes work through the issues of surveillance in particular ways and offer up subject positions which can then be accepted or rejected by the audiences who view them.

My textual analysis will also focus on how a programme's narrative is constructed which can reveal attitudes about our surveillance society. Despite the fact that the four comedy programmes I have chosen do not always specifically address surveillance in their narratives,[9] these programmes demonstrate attitudes to surveillance and our culture more widely. A concern with the text though does not mean we ignore the context that these texts are made in, indeed, understanding the culture that a text is produced in greatly enhances our understanding of that text and the possible meanings that might come out it. As Glen Creeber argues, textual analysis, "when combined with the wider contextual or 'extra-textual' nature of the subject...can offer insight and inspiration" (2006, p. 84). Television is a product of the time and place it was made and as such should be examined as belonging to a particular culture and time.

In Christine Geraghty's article, "Aesthetics and quality in popular television drama", she advocates for an approach to evaluating television drama that would marry a discussion of aesthetics within "broader discussions of television's cultural and economic role" (2003, p. 26). She argues that television programmes should be evaluated based on a breakdown of their categorization within broad genres of melodrama and realism (2003, p. 32). It is her suggestion that if you compare programmes on a like for like basis, questions of quality are more relevant and useful. She also suggests a broadening of the way textual analysis has been approached in television studies. While traditionally primarily focused on narrative, Geraghty argues a closer attention needs to be paid to: audio/visual organization; writing and dialogue; performance and characterization; and innovation (2003, p. 33-34). Although she applies this method to television drama, this method can be applied across genres and will be the method I employ. She argues that this kind of textual analysis is more than simply interpretation by a single analyst but rather it can reveal why television is an important aspect of our culture (2003, p. 36). Geraghty's approach on the different areas for textual analysis, combined with my theoretical framework discussed below is the

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[9] *Miranda* (3.01) *and Mrs. Brown's Boys* (Mammy Christmas 2012) are individual episodes that specifically address surveillance.

method I will use for my analysis. Geraghty's approach will help me to answer my research questions. Specifically, it will enable me to understand how comedy works through issues of surveillance and suggest what comedy specifically has to say about surveillance that might not be said by drama and reality television. This approach will also enable me to illustrate how surveillance issues are presented through aesthetics and themes.

Textual analysis has undergone criticism as a method because of the argument that it can be seen as subjective (Creeber, 2006; Gibbs and Pye, 2005; Hartley, 2002). As Creeber explains, "If audiences can read a text in a number of ways, then what is the validity and relevance of one textual interpretation?" (Creeber, 2006, p. 82). Textual analysis is not a scientific method that one can repeat and achieve the same results as another. Textual analysis that does not acknowledge the fact that there can be a plurality of meanings ends up seeming prescriptive and loses its credibility. Instead textual analysis is "genre of discourse" in which participants could talk about issues of "power, subjectivity, identity and conflict" (Hartley, 2002, 31). It is textual analysis that can "elucidate the narrative structure, symbolic arrangements and ideological potential of media content (Fursich, 2009, p. 239). Textual analysis will be the tool that I use to examine the programmes I have chosen. British cultural studies is the lens from which I will approach the text.

Theoretical Framework

The study of television is a study of popular culture and as such I will be using elements of British cultural studies to frame my analysis. British cultural studies suggests that a text can be read to reveal something about the culture from which it was produced. Popular texts are a repository for cultural meaning and it is worth studying popular texts for what they have to say about the mass culture. According to Raymond Williams, "Every human society has its own shape, its own purposes, its own meanings. Every human society expresses these, in institutions, and in arts and learning" (2001, p. 11). The concept of what was considered culture has been debated since the beginnings of the cultural studies tradition.

Traditionally the culture that was studied and taught was high culture or what Matthew Arnold argued was "the best that has been thought and said in the world" (Storey, 2015, p. 19) but as the study of culture developed, other theorists began to see the importance of popular texts and practices in understanding a society. Popular texts had up to this point been considered "trivial, debased and deficient" and therefore not

worthy of study (Smith and Riley, 2008, p. 298). However, theorists such as Richard Hoggart and Raymond Williams argued that in order to understand a culture, theorists needed to study all aspects of the society. Williams argues that, "the meanings and values of all particular people and cultures have to be respected, with no prior selection of universal values" (1974, p. 16).

In examining cultural texts, the attitudes and ideas of a culture are made visible. The text is not benign. It comes from a particular place and time and from a creator or creators whose experience of the world would help to shape a text. An analysis of a text might reveal a particular ideology or way of thinking during the time of its creation. The field of cultural studies has been dominated by British cultural studies and is the basis from which I approach this project. British cultural studies centres around the idea "that by analysing the culture of a society – the textual forms and documented practices of a culture – it is possible to reconstitute the patterned behaviour and constellations of ideas shared by the men and women who produce and consume the texts and practices of that society" (Storey, 2015, p. 38). British cultural studies "explores culture as a site where power and resistance are played out" (Smith and Riley, 2008, p. 297). In order to examine the programmes, I rely heavily on Michel Foucault's ideas of power, disclosure and witness, feminist media theories relating to the body, David Lyon's theoretical underpinnings with respect to the issues of surveillance in our culture, and John Ellis' theoretical concept of television as 'working through'. Theories of comedy, specifically those related to genre – mockumentary, sitcom and comedian comedy – as well as those related to the study of humour also inform my approach.

Parameters/Limits

In addition to the parameters of textual analysis, my research findings are limited to the programmes themselves. Examining the four programmes I do here, should serve as an indicator of the rich potential of examining *comedy* as well as drama and reality television as affected by the surveillance society in Britain. For example, the comedy programmes I selected have incorporated the surveillance gaze – they are being watched by someone/thing else other than the camera that is creating the programme. How does this idea of working through concerns and ideas about surveillance in programmes that do not acknowledge this? How does the disavowal of the look change things? A future study might consider programmes that do not obviously deal with the act of looking and being watched.

I have chosen British television for the reasons stated above, however, visual surveillance is a feature of many places around the world. Although CCTV coverage is extensive in the UK, British television is not the only national television that is created within a surveillance society. Although there may be connections to other surveillance societies' television programming, my findings, may only apply to the British context. Additionally, in this thesis I use British as a broad term which encompasses programming created in Scotland, England, Wales and Ireland. Further work could look at the specificity of the individual countries.

Explanation of Chapters

The thesis is divided into five chapters comprising of a literature review and four case study chapters each focusing on a theme or topic related to the surveillance society: the representation of surveillance; surveillance as witness; surveillance as disclosure; and surveying the body. These topics were chosen because they each represent an aspect of society that is exploited as a result of increased surveillance. As already noted earlier in the justification of programmes, these programmes represent the way that comedy has used surveillance aesthetics and themes to expose, examine and/or critique, the power of the surveillance society.

In order to situate my study within the fields that it speaks to, the first chapter outlines the relevant literature of the broad topics associated with my topic. This chapter combines a lot of disparate material from surveillance studies and television studies, situating my research among those who study television comedy and television mockumentary specifically and the depiction of the act of watching and being watched more widely. In order to demonstrate the need to examine surveillance and how it is worked through in comedy, the representation of surveillance in non-fiction and fiction programming is outlined pointing out the lack of comedic representation. I examine the ways surveillance has been depicted visually in these kinds of programmes and suggest that by ignoring comedy programmes, we are potentially missing out on valuable material. Since much of what is depicted visually connects to observational documentary, an explanation of observational documentary aesthetics and documentary hybridity helps situate the mockumentary and meta-sitcoms in the field. The other component of the hybrid is the sitcom or comedy in general and therefore humour and comedy studies in the context of television comedy is necessary to describe how the pleasures in the comedic text differ from those in the non-fiction or dramatic texts. The following case study chapters will each include a smaller and more specific

literature review for their individual topics. They will outline how surveillance is depicted in the comedic text, what messages the audiences might be invited to receive from these depictions and what the programmes are suggesting about aspects of the British surveillance society.

Chapter two begins this study of the comedic text by examining the relationship of surveillance to power and focuses on the mockumentary sitcom *Scot Squad* as its case study. Looking at Foucault's idea about discipline and power, I argue that the surveillance aesthetics in the programme are used to reveal the contradictions and complications of visual surveillance use. The use of the surveillance aesthetic works to normalise visual surveillance in our society even as its suitability is being questioned by the programme. This chapter outlines the ways that visual surveillance has been worked through with the programme's aesthetics and themes.

Chapter three continues the examination of the mockumentary sitcom and focuses on the relationship of surveillance and witness through an investigation of *People Just Do Nothing*. In this chapter, I argue that through the surveillance gaze, the audience is positioned to witness the characters' quest for celebrity. In this programme, the characters attempt to use the surveillance gaze to their own end through their participation in a reality programme documenting their lives. This is an attempt to control the surveillance gaze for their own purpose. However, this surveillance gaze allows the audience to witness and judge what is on screen in a way that is not accounted for by the members of Kurupt FM. This chapter continues to outline that ways that visual surveillance is worked through with its aesthetics and themes. It also demonstrates how these can reveal attitudes about contemporary British society – in this case celebrity and celebrity culture.

Chapter four introduces the first meta-sitcom *Mrs. Brown's Boys* to examine the relationship between surveillance and disclosure. In this chapter, I argue that through the surveillance gaze, Agnes confesses to the audience and reveals who she really is. *Mrs Brown's Boys* reflects the degree to which society has become familiar and comfortable with watching when they are in control or able to speak back to the control. Like in the case with *People Just Do Nothing,* Agnes uses the surveillance case for her own purpose. In *Mrs Brown's Boys*, Agnes is able to speak back to the surveillance society through the use of direct address. This chapter continues the argument made in

chapter two that suggests that comedy complicates ideas about visual surveillance not being a concern in 2019.

One of the concerns raised in a surveillance society is the degree with which certain kinds of bodies are looked at disproportionally – in this case female bodies. Therefore, chapter five looks at *Miranda* and the issue of surveillance and its relationship to the body. In this chapter, I argue that the surveillance gaze here is used as an attempt to deal with the pressures of self-surveillance as explained by post-feminism. This chapter updates the concept of the unruly woman in the context of the current feminist zeitgeist (Gill, 2016, p. 615). Miranda's control of the camera is an updated extension of the unruly woman template outlined by Kathryn Rowe Karlyn and an attempt to control her own surveillance by others and herself. Again, this control of the camera and her unruly personality allow Miranda to speak back to a surveillance culture.

The following chapters clearly illustrate that television comedy illustrates concerns raised by visual surveillance that seem to have been forgotten by the popular press and their engagement with the problems and concerns of digital surveillance. In conclusion, I argue that by failing to examine television comedy in the context of surveillance, we disproportionally concentrate on digital surveillance as the most significant and concerning type of surveillance while accepting the rhetoric that visual surveillance is necessary, inevitable, and without concern. Additionally, the interplay between comedy and surveillance cultivates a space for exposing, examining and critiquing the surveillance society. I argue that each of the programmes has a unique relationship to this space demonstrating the tensions between a conservative and a radical approach to surveillance.

Chapter One: Reviewing the Literature

In order to examine the programmes I have chosen in regards to their representation of surveillance, the specificities of the relationship between surveillance and comedy, and what that might tell us about contemporary British society, a review of the relevant literature is required. This literature review focusses on areas that are pertinent to the topic as a whole while smaller literature reviews follow in each chapter which are more specific to that chapter's theme. As my case studies are comedy programmes, both mockumentary and meta-sitcoms, I examine literature with regards to comedy and humour studies with a particular concentration on television comedy. In the next section, I examine how surveillance has been studied in relation to television thus far. Finally, I engage with relevant literature that pertains specifically to the topics identified by my chapters: representation; witness; disclosure; and the body. However, as both of the forms of sitcom I examine have elements that have been most associated with documentary and its hybrid forms, I begin with a review of significant literature in documentary studies.

Documentary

Although it might seem as if it is becoming increasingly difficult to recognise and define non-fiction on television given the hybrid forms of many programmes, debates about what is considered non-fiction when it comes to visual material have been circulating in discussions about documentary for years (Winston, 2000; Nichols, 2001; Corner, 2002). Examination of this genre is important in identifying its legacies in the programmes I examine. Whereas Brian Winston suggests that documentary is no longer "a discrete and valued genre" (2000, p. 1), others (Ellis, 2012) argue that documentary is an unstable genre and that defining what is considered a documentary or more importantly, how we might define what a documentary is, has been a continuing exercise. Descriptions that are largely prescriptive (those that suggest a documentary should be thus), often fail to take into account documentary's varied approaches (Corner, 2006, p. 90). For example, in Bill Nichol's *Introduction to Documentary*, he dedicates 42 pages in an attempt to define documentary film (2001, pp. 6-48). He starts off with the most cited definition by John Grierson which states that documentary is 'the creative treatment of actuality' (2001, p. 6). At the most basic level, this definition makes clear the distinction between raw unedited footage and a documentary film (see also Winston, 2000). For example, CCTV footage (the actuality in Grierson's definition)

can be considered non-fiction but would not be considered a documentary film as it lacks the creative treatment – although as we shall see, CCTV footage can be used in creative ways. As much as Nichols admires Grierson's definition for its simplicity, he laments its ambiguity. Unsatisfied, he goes on to examine some common sense ideas that viewers might have about documentary. The three presumptions: that documentaries are about what actually happened (p. 7); about real people (p. 8); and tell stories about the real world (p. 10); are explored and complicated by Nichols, further muddying the definition's already murky waters (2001).

Nichols ultimately argues that a comprehensive definition of documentary involves four key areas. Documentaries, he argues are defined by: their institutional framework (p. 16); their community of practitioners (p. 19); their corpus of texts (p. 20); and the constituency of viewers (p. 33). Each of these areas change over time and with it, documentary changes as well. This definition of documentary is adopted as a template by Craig Hight to define mockumentary (2010, p. 17). How 'truthful' (i.e. how closely it adheres to the reality of the subject) a documentary is seen is often determined by the technology available at the time of recording (Corner, 2004, p. 337). For example, the fly-on-the-wall observational documentary, once enabled by the technology of lightweight cameras and synchronous sound recording, became seen as the most truthful mode in the 1960s in contrast to the expository mode, a style that was prevalent previous (Winston, 2000, p. 23). Winston states that as technology advanced, documentary's claim to the real became stronger (2000, p. 22). He explains that, "The handheld camera became the central mark of authenticity while older traditions of reconstructions, commentary, music and the rest were mostly vanquished" (2000, p. 23). Even today, the observational mode is often used as a marker of authenticity in a film or television programme. For example, television programmes that reconstruct a crime in order to capture a fugitive often employ CCTV footage alongside re-enactments and expository elements to add proof of the crime. Nichols' definition allows for the technological changes that would affect the kind of documentary that could be produced. But for both Nichols and Winston, the creative element is still paramount. According to Winston, "Documentary was not journalism; rather it claimed all the artistic licence of a fiction with the only constraints being that its images were not of actors and its stories were not the products of unfettered imaginings" (2000, p. 20). At the end of all this, there is a reason John Grierson's definition is repeated by Nichols. Although short and ambiguous, it seems to be the most encompassing of definitions in

that it allows for the creative aspect without taking away from documentary's relationship with the real.

Documentary Realism

Documentary's relationship to the real begins with the faith in the image based on the iconic and indexical properties of the film image. The image is revealed on the film strip through a process of light reflecting off the object being filmed (Bazin, 1960; Gunning, 2004). Therefore, the image is both an icon (a symbol of something) and an index of the object and suggests that without the object physically being there, the image would not exist. Although this is not always the case, this idea contributes greatly to a viewer's faith that whatever image we see on a screen is in some way, real. We can trust that it existed at least for that moment. Andre Bazin argues, "the photographic image is the object itself, the object freed from the conditions of time and space that govern it...it shares, by virtue of the very process of its becoming, the being of the model of which it is the reproduction; it is the model" (1960, p. 8). However, faith in the image is often misplaced. Although the visual image is often taken for real, the authenticity of that image is up to some debate. While the film image is an indexical one, a video recording or a digital image does not have to be. Additionally, all images are subject to all manner of manipulation (Koskela, 2003; Köse, Han and Bakan, 2010). Hüseyin Köse, Turgay Han, Uğur Bakan, state that "what we witness...is not the world reality in all its blatant existence, but a 'world optic'...it is an 'image' of the entire world fit into the diameter of an optical device" (2010, p. 543). Paradoxically, the surveillance image as captured by CCTV cameras is both representative of the real and highly expressive aesthetically. It is precisely the combination of the limited, robotic nature of the CCTV images (camera movements that are limited to pans and tilts if any movement at all), and the indexicality of the image that solicits the viewer's trust in the image (Dovey, 2000, p. 66-7). In the case of the CCTV image, the indexicality and accuracy of the surveillance image comes from its potentially disturbing imagery, its maintenance of social order and its mechanical qualities working in combination (ibid).

Beyond the faith in the image itself, documentary realism is constructed through style. Corner sees a turn in documentary style on television in three main areas: the intensity of events (2006, p. 90); the presence of a story (p. 92), and the attractions of character (p. 94). In terms of intensity of events, there is an appeal to drama without fabrication through the use of surveillance footage (2006, p. 91). Corner argues that is becoming increasingly expected on popular factual programming to have dramatic

footage and the surveillance footage, such as from a dash board camera, can provide that. While surveillance footage may be more common now as a method to provide dramatic footage, dramatic footage of other types has been used in television documentary. Storytelling has always been used in documentary even if the real footage cannot provide enough material from which to create one (2006, p. 92). In this case, an on-screen narrator or re-enactments help to fill in the gaps (ibid). Of course, re-enactments have their own problematic relationship to reality. The staging and styling of these re-enactments greatly affects their relationship to the real event. As Corner states, excessive dramatization "can bring the programme into the closest possible alignment with dramatic fiction, often thereby raising the familiar question concerning the viewer's ability to tell the difference" (2006, p. 93). This ability to tell the difference is important not only in distinguishing the real within a reality programme but also in determining when an entire programme might be merely using the conventions of documentary within a mockumentary programme. There are, of course, cases where viewers were fooled by a programme into thinking that it was real when it was fiction. In many of these cases, viewers were angry that they had been fooled and complained to broadcasters. For example, *Ghostwatch*, a mockumentary that aired on BBC in 1992, has never been aired again after over 20,000 people called the BBC to complain about its 9.15 start time and its misrepresentation as factual (Woods, 30 Oct 2017, np). To mitigate problems like this, there are rules about fictional aspects being presented in documentary programming on television (The Ofcom Broadcasting Code, 2013).

In terms of characters, Corner argues that there has been a move toward more everyday and individual subjects (*Embarrassing Bodies*, [Channel 4, 2007-2015] for example) rather than a focus on a homogenous group (the people with inadequate housing in *Housing Problems* [Arthur Elton & E.H. Anstey, 1935] (2006, p. 94). As a result, there is more focus on the confessional and other first-person media through an exploration of experience on the sober end and a self under pressure at the lighter end (Dovey, 2000; Biressi and Nunn, 2005; Corner, 2006). In the early 2000s both Corner and Gareth Palmer noted the change they saw happening with respect to documentary with Corner arguing that, "Documentary work is undergoing a slow aesthetic reconfiguration within the shifting generic profile of television at the same time as documentary methods are being adaptively applied to an expanded range of factual output" (2006, p. 95). Palmer suggested that documentary was changing "in a way that was previously unthinkable" and that "narrators have dropped the sober consistency of

tone which offered so much gravitas" (2003, p. 11). And while it is safe to say, given all the conflicting information around the ideas of documentary, that the less sober tone and aesthetic experimentation were always a part of documentary, the range of options might be more diverse now. Because of this, much of popular factual television should be given consideration as to being under the documentary umbrella given its pervasive output (2006, p. 90). Jelle Mast agrees, suggesting that reality programming 'profoundly redefines documentary practice" (2009, p. 231). The structure of broadcast television also influences the structure of the documentary programme itself which may affect its relationship to the real. For instance, because of the nature of commercial television, and its need for advertisements, "…the text has to develop turning points, cliff-hangers and even plot twists to ensure viewers return to their programme" (Roscoe & Hight, 2001, p. 17). These types of narrative devices make explicit a construction of the material that is often effaced in the documentary programme. Documentary programming needs to adapt to this structure when it is made for television.

Documentary's social purpose

Documentary's social purpose is also a part of its definition and partly why it fits so well as an element of public service broadcasting. Public service broadcasting in Britain began with creation of the BBC in the 1920s which would charge a license fee for use of the service, at this time, radio (Scannell, 1990, p. 12). According to Scannell,

> "the definition of broadcasting as a public utility, and the mandate to develop it as a national service in the public interest, came from the state. The interpretation of that definition, the effort to realize its meaning in the development of a broadcasting service guided by considerations of a national service and the public interest, came from the broadcasters and above all from John Reith, the managing director of the British Broadcasting Company from 1923 to 1926, and the first Director-General of the British Broadcasting Corporation from 1927 to 1938" (1990, p. 13).

Reith's mandate was that the BBC should educate the public and could be used as a tool for the creation of an enlightened democracy (Scannell, 1990, p. 14). Similarly, Grierson believed that the usefulness of documentary was the way it could be used for social good. This concept led to Nichols' contention that documentary is a "discourse of sobriety" like economics, science and others that are "vehicles of action and intervention, power and knowledge, desire and will, directed toward the world we inhabit and share" (2001, p. 37). The idea that documentary is a discourse of sobriety connotes a seriousness that might exclude some documentaries, or at least complicate their position. Such is the case with the position of reality TV as documentary as it could

be seen as 'fluff', contributing to the 'dumbing down' of the public and therefore not the kind of material that one might think of falling into the discourse of sobriety definition (Winston, 2000; Palmer, 2003). In this regard, it may be easier to consider the crime drama *Happy Valley* (BBC1, 2014-) as a discourse of sobriety than it would be reality programme *Ex on the Beach* (MTV International, 2014-) because it deals with serious issues in a serious manner. Documentary as a 'discourse of sobriety' suggests that documentary will represent the real world and "possess the capacity to intervene by shaping how we regard it" (Nichols, 2001, p. 38). In this way, *Ex on the Beach*, although not necessarily sober, certainly shapes how audiences view those within the programme and the conditions that surround them. The addition of the convention of the social purpose of documentary problematizes the way we might see popular factual programming as a type of documentary.

Documentary's social purpose is further highlighted when it is on television. Broadcast television has the potential to act as a public sphere. The public sphere is a place where people can come together and share opinions (Habermas, Lennox & Lennox, 1974; Bignell, 2005). According to John Corner, "The notion of the public sphere points to the requirement for democratic societies to sustain a space for the circulation of information, the exchange of opinion, and the conducting of debate" (1999, p. 21). Combining the social purpose of documentary and the function of television as a space for the public to engage, makes the social function of documentary on TV much more pronounced. Researchers have identified television as a contemporary construction of the public sphere (Habermas, Lennox and Lennox, 1974; Bondebjerg, 1996; Corner, 1999; Ellis, 2000; Bignell, 2005). It is John Ellis' idea of television as a contemporary public sphere in his argument about television as a means of "working through" that I will use in the examination of my case studies. Television, according to Ellis, "...enables its viewers to work through the major public and private concerns of their society (2000, p. 75), very much in a similar way that Jürgen Habermas's public sphere operated (1974). Ellis adopted the term 'working through' from psychoanalysis, a "process whereby material is continually worried over until it is exhausted" (2000, p. 79). For example, a story is presented on the news, bringing up an issue of concern or interest to the public. That issue will then be revisited in a soap, drama or comedy repeatedly, in different forms, being worked through until it is exhausted. Therefore, even if people do not watch a particular show or avoid the news, because television presents the issue in many forms, they are sure to have at least some exposure to it. As Ellis explains,

"television attempts definitions, tries out explanations, creates narratives, takes over, makes intelligible, tries to marginalize, harnesses speculation, tries to make fit, and, very occasionally, anathemizes" (ibid). The various aspects of surveillance are some of the issues that television attempts to work through. As I argue in my introduction, popular texts are a repository for cultural meaning and as such popular texts such as television comedies and dramas are vehicles through which attitudes, ideas and narratives about surveillance can be examined. As I will go on to demonstrate, non-fiction and some fiction programming has been examined in terms of how it has worked through some of the issues pertaining to our surveillance society. Ellis states that television does not come up with an answer or a conclusion to the issue merely keeps presenting it in different ways and a variety of genres. For Ellis, "Working through is a constant process of making and remaking meanings, and of exploring possibilities" (ibid). With a broad topic like surveillance, different aspects of the issue get 'worked through' at different times and with different genres.

The Legacy of Liveness

Historically broadcast television had been presented live. Almost all television genres were broadcast live apart from news (Ellis, 200, p. 31). Even if the shows are recorded, the act of transmission is live (broadcast). John Ellis states, "live performance gave television a direct and intimate link with its audience, and this link became one of the defining characteristics of broadcast television" (2000, p. 33). As Ellis argues even though television has not been primarily live in a long time, television's effect is one of immediacy (1982, p. 132). One of the ways it achieves that immediacy is through direct address. Television often addresses the viewers at home through onscreen narrators, advertisements and announcers (Ellis, 1982, p. 132-133). Corner describes direct address as "…the conventions of speech are joined by conventions of 'look'; the speaker engages the hearer in simulated eye-contact via the camera lens and, with variations as to formality, displays the facial behaviours associated with interpersonal exchange" (1999, p. 40). Direct address gives the suggestion that the person onscreen is talking and looking directly at the viewer and invites an intimacy between the two. Direct address has been called "television's most powerful discursive mode" because it creates a bond between the viewer and the person on screen (Corner, 1999, p. 40). Ellis argues that, "direct address, an exceptional and rarely successful event in cinema, was a commonplace of television" (2000, p. 31). Television has often been seen as a more intimate medium than film because, at least historically, television was viewed in the

privacy of the home whereas film was viewed in theatres with many people. It does not seem as unusual then for the television performer to directly address the television audience. The frequent use of direct address on television generally might signal why fictional television programmes, which tend to disavow the look of audiences, have used this technique. Ellis argues that because of the "rhetoric of liveness" of television, viewers willingly believe it is live even knowing that the programme is not (2000, p. 33). Television's liveness allows viewers to see the same thing at the same time which gives it a feeling of being witnessed which turns "witness into an intimate and domestic act" (Ellis, 2000, p. 32).

Documentary Hybridity

The documentary genre then, is a difficult one to define, especially given the many hybrid forms of documentary including mockumentary and docudrama/docufiction/docusoap and reality television. As Jelle Mast explains, "the difficulties in coming up with a comprehensive understanding of 'docufiction' and its constituent parts seems largely due to the inherent tendency of hybrids to resist a straightforward definition, and similarly to the variety of forms and practices that are covered by the categories of 'reality television', 'docudrama' and 'mockumentary' (2009, p. 233). Hight suggests that these hybrid forms are becoming an "increasingly incestuous playing field" (2010, p. 6). What is it that makes a mockumentary distinct from documentary? What is the ratio of reality to fiction in docufiction? According to Hight, "Hybrids build, and cater to, expectations of dramatic intensity, with a greater emphasis on aspects of storytelling such as the building of anticipation and episodic development, paired with suspensions of resolution and similar devices typical of fictional television genres" (2010, p. 114). Like the definition of reality television itself, docudrama, mockumentary and popular factual television all have their own connotations. In 2001's *Faking It: Mock-documentary and the Subversion of Factuality*, Craig Hight and Jane Roscoe suggest that mockumentary uses documentary codes and conventions to represent a fictional subject, however Hight has updated his argument to suggest that it might be more useful to conceptualize mockumentary as a discourse that has been integrated into a number of genres (2010, p. 27). This is a "discourse that has been naturalised within the televisual medium" (Hight, 2010, p. 73). Mast and Hight both suggest that mockumentaries on television are "fictional series adopting the look of the docusoap, like *The Office* and *Reno 911* (Comedy Central, 2003-2009), [that] draw on and expose the taken-for-granted conventions, claims and practices of this kind of

television programming" (2009, p. 233). Hight states that documentary hybrids are a mix of documentary discourses and fictional television genres (2010, p. 113). For Roscoe and Hight, mockumentary is not just about using the conventions in humorous ways. They write, "Mock-documentary looks to 'mock' central tenets of classical documentary; in particular, the beliefs in science (and scientific experts) and in the essential integrity of the referential image" (2001, p. 8). This suggests it has a purpose beyond aesthetics. Roscoe and Hight also suggest that reality television and mockumentary have similar attributes stating, "docu-soaps and reality TV are connected to mock-documentary because they too have developed in the spaces between fact and fiction (Roscoe and Hight, 2001, p. 39). Docusoaps and reality television often rely on amateurism which can be seen as more authentic (ibid). Mockumentaries, "parody the assumptions and expectations associated with factual discourse, to 'mock' the cultural status of documentary's codes and conventions" (Roscoe and Hight, 2001, p. 44). Mockumentary as a genre thrives when documentary does. Hight argues, "mockumentary has been a part of, and is responding to, a broadening of documentary-related media" (2010, p. 29).

According to Roscoe and Hight, "There is an assumption that audiences will recognize the text as spoof, and in this way, the filmmakers do not intentionally seek to confuse or misguide viewers" (2001, p. 47). The mockumentary text, at some point, reveals its status as fiction in often obvious but sometimes subtle ways. Audiences trust that the truth of the programme will be revealed and if we have been duped throughout most of the programme, at least by the end, we will know the truth. Roscoe and Hight claim that, "the mock-documentary addresses a knowing and media-literate viewer" (2001, p. 50). If the conventions, claims and practices of these kinds of programmes are at the point where they can be taken for granted and used to poke fun, then surely, despite the difficulty in defining the various terms associated with reality television, the conventions of popular factual programming are recognizable by audiences. As stated by Hight when discussing *Cops* (US, FOX, 1989-2013; Spike 2013-), "The familiarity and relative exhaustion of such hybrid patterns make them prime material for parody and satire" (2010, 235). If audiences were not familiar with the *Cops* formula, any parody of that formula would be less effective.

Further complicating the issue of identifying and defining reality television and mockumentary is the fact that, according to Mast, there are no formal or thematic characteristics that belong to only fiction or nonfiction (2009, p. 234). So what does it mean to say that something looks like a documentary? How can we say the conventions

are borrowed if they are not exclusively part of one genre? Despite this ambiguity, Corner states that, "extensive borrowing of the 'documentary look' by other kinds of program, and extensive borrowing of non-documentary kinds of look (the dramatic look, the look of advertising, the look of pop video) by documentary, have complicated the rules for recognizing a documentary" (2002, p. 263). Corner's use of scare quotes around 'documentary look' indicates the difficulty in identifying what that actually is. Both Mast (2012) and Corner (2002) imply that it is becoming more and more complicated to define documentary because of what they suggest is an increased hybridity of the form, however, given the nature of the debate that has surrounded documentary since the beginning of film, it is more likely that documentary has always been a slippery genre. It is contradictory to say in one sense that programmes are borrowing conventions from documentary and then say that there are no formal or thematic characteristics that belong to one or the other. Although Mast argues, "Most significantly, this shifting has entailed substantial measures of cross-fertilization between the codes and conventions of screen documentary and the formulas of 'popular entertainment' television genres (both factual and fictional)" (2012, p. 1).

The borrowing of the' documentary look' has also been suggested by Mast as a factor in the complication of categorization. This documentary look includes but is not limited to: sudden and shaky camera movements (as if caught on the fly), oblique, overlapping and seemingly improvised speech (Palmer, 2003, p. 51); and grainy, hand-held, accidental and partial perspectives from amateur photography (Hight, 2010, p. 30). For Mast, mockumentary has a lot in common with the popular factual television of today in terms of its exposition and observational styles (2009, p. 232). He suggests that in terms of text at least, the mockumentary is "a fiction that looks and sounds like a documentary" (2009, p. 234). Given the fact that documentary's definition is complicated, this definition is subject to all the concerns above.

Comedies and dramas often utilize the 'documentary look' to enhance their relationship to the real. Palmer suggests that because of the flow of television, police dramas that utilize the 'documentary look' that are followed by news reports of police corruption might contribute to a vision of the police as "susceptible to human frailty" (2003, p. 51). The implication here is that the flow of television, including fictional programming contributes to the viewer's understanding of the world, despite the fact that what it is presenting is fiction. This not only complicates but contradicts others' assertions that viewers almost always can distinguish fiction from nonfiction on

television or at least that the programmes themselves make an attempt to highlight their fictionality (Roscoe and Hight, 2001; Hight, 2010). The conventions and aesthetics of reality TV and mockumentary need to be examined in order to address how they might be utilized in a fictional context.

Just like documentary, the genre of reality television has a fluctuating and slippery definition. In their introduction to *Understanding Reality Television,* Su Holmes and Deborah Jermyn point out that even at the outset, in one of the first uses of the term, the concept of reality TV was a loose one and suggest that perhaps the only commonalities between the different forms of reality TV was their claim to be so (2004, p. 5). And also, like documentary, Holmes and Jermyn suggest that the definition of reality television involves several aspects. They argue that, "debates over definition, we suggest, are inextricably enmeshed with the concept of generic hybridity in Reality TV, its relationship with the history and status of the documentary form and, just as crucially, issues of theoretical, critical, and methodological approach involved in the study of this field" (2004, p. 2). Holmes and Jermyn also address debates about the concept of genre itself suggesting that the slippery nature of the reality television definition might reveal the wider issue of genre instability. They write, "Reality TV may well exemplify the arguments concerning the slippery and hybrid nature of television's use of the concept" (Holmes and Jermyn, 2004, p. 6). Much like Corner advocating for a broader definition of documentary, Holmes and Jermyn state, "…since these terms are always under 'reconstruction' and negotiation, our definitions of the relationship between television and realism, 'fact' and 'fiction', and 'factual' and 'entertainment' shows must also adapt" (Holmes and Jermyn, 2004, p. 11).

Mast sees the term, 'reality television', as an "unstable designation that covers a wide and hybrid array" of contemporary programming (2009, p. 231). Despite the difficulties in understanding the term, reality television accounts for a significant amount of the British television schedule. And realism itself is seen by Corner to be "television's defining aesthetic and social project" (1992, p. 98). The fact that reality television's definition is in flux, suggests that it might be one of those things that fall under 'we know it when we see it'. Mast, like Corner, also suggests that reality television reintroduces continuing issues with the definition of documentary. He states, "the formats' playfulness, both in terms of appeal and genre poignantly brings to the fore long-standing issues in documentary practice, like the authenticity of portrayed events, the tension between recording and the 'creative treatment of actuality (Grierson) and

questions of ethics" (2009, p. 232). Jon Dovey suggests that it is this instability that removes it from traditional ideas about documentary writing, "in short, an explosion of new formats and genres which have nothing whatsoever to do with an electronic public sphere and at best have a tenuous link to discourses of sobriety" (2000, p. 16). The programmes examined in this thesis employ elements associated with documentary but are sitcoms. Thus, understanding how they function as comedy is just as important with understanding their connections to documentary.

Theories of Humour and Comedy Studies

Philosophers and theorists have debated whether comedy/humour is largely conservative, in that it is disciplinary and acts as a form or release, or if it is radical, in that it allows for people to say and do things that are largely forbidden. Traditionally, the way that comedy and humour have been theorised have tended to fall into three categories. These categories have been used to explain why something is funny or meant to be funny even if the individual receiving the humour does not find it humorous. These categories account for much of the humour in my case studies, however, what is most important is how the interplay for surveillance and comedy functions and adds to the debate of comedy's conservative or radical potential.

The oldest of the traditional theories are grouped together under the category of superiority theories. These theories suggests that people find humour in ridiculing those we find inferior to us in some way (Morreall, 1983; Morreall, 2000; Palmer, 1994; Bardon, 2005; Billig, 2005). The object of the laughter is the 'butt of the joke' and "laughter results from feeling pleasure at seeing others suffer the misfortune of being deluded about their own wisdom" (Bardon, 2005, p. 463). This is a theory originally by Socrates and Plato and developed by Aristotle who argued that comedy is a "malicious or derisive enjoyment of others' shortcomings" (Bardon, 2005, p. 464; Morreall, 2000). The laughter that is elicited from this type of humour then suggests that the one who finds it funny is better than the object of the joke (Morreall, 1983; Palmer, 1994). It has been described as an affective theory because it suggests we laugh because we feel triumph over the butt of the joke (Morreall, 1983). This type of humour works as a disciplinary force. Thomas Hobbes, a developer of superiority theory believed that humans, left without discipline would be overcome by their selfish urges (Billig, 2005, p. 53). Laughter at the butt of the joke then works to teach, through ridicule and shame, both the butt and the audience the proper sort of behaviour (Billig, 2005, p. 53-55). In this way, comedy and humour are seen as conservative because they teach people to

adhere to the status quo in society. Although the oldest theory, it does not account for all types of humour. As will be demonstrated in subsequent chapters, the humour in *People Just Do Nothing,* and *Scot Squad* are evidence of this category of humour. Quite a number of comedic moments are embarrassing or cringe moments for the characters involved.

The second category of traditional theories is the incongruity theories which were developed as a reaction to Hobbes (Billig, 2005, p. 57). Theorists examining their own feelings during comedy moments professed not feel superior to another individual and therefore suggested that something else was happening to create the comic moment (Billig, 2005, p. 71). This theory states that amusement is found when there is an incongruity between an expectation of experiences or ideas given our experience of the world (Morreall, 1983; Palmer, 1994, Billig, 2005, p. 57). Many theorists, including Francis Hutcheson, Immanuel Kant, Arthur Schopenhauer, Søren Kierkegaard, and Luigi Pirandello have written about humour resulting from incongruity each adding their own particular take on it (Morreall, 2000). And more theorists have taken this theory as a basis to jump off of in coming up with their own theories (Morreall, 1983; Palmer, 1994). Primarily, incongruity theorists argue that the reason someone laughs is that they perceive a contradiction between what they expected to happen and what happened instead. In this regard, incongruity theories are cognitive theories and a direct response to the affective superiority theories (Morreall, 1983). Theorists in this category can also see comedy as both disciplinary and rebellious depending on their particular points of view. Incongruity theorists often distinguished between types of humour. For example, humour in the eighteenth century, when the theory was first presented, was often divided into two types: wit (or humour of the upper-class gentlemen) and; scabrous humour (humour by and from the lower classes). Scabrous humour may have been considered unworthy of philosophical attention, but it was this type of humour that contained any rebelliousness (Billig, 2005, p. 68). Ridicule, however, was still seen by many as operating to create social order. Theorists such as Mark Akenside, Dugald Stewart, and Francis Hutcheson argued that "the sense of ridicule is seen as an essential element for regulating human conduct in accord with the highest standards of morality" (Billig, 2005, p. 78). In this way, incongruity theories saw humour and comedy as both conservative and radical. This type of humour is seen across the case studies, a testament to the versatility of the theory.

The third category of traditional theories was developed in response to the incongruity theory and deals much more with the bodily response to comedy. The relief theories argue that laughter is the release of nervous excitement or emotional tension and it is only this release that is common to all humorous situations (Morreall, 1983; Bardon, 2005). This theory, like the incongruity theory has many variations although the basic idea is similar in each. Herbert Spencer suggests that laughter is the release of nervous energy that was built up by inappropriate feelings (Morreall, 1983; Morreall, 2000). For him, laughter is an individual process. Other theorists like Alexander Bain see laughter as a release from constraint that is often societal, like the release felt by children being let out of school (Billig, 2005, p. 97). In this way, humour acts as a pressure valve ensuring that once people release this pressure they will willingly go back to the status quo (Billig, 2005, p. 100). Humour in this case can be seen as a societal bonding agent because things that bring people pleasure often bring people together (Morreall, 1983; Bardon, 2005). This theory is both a biological and psychological one that attempts to account for the reasons we laugh and as such, is the hardest to prove exists in a textual analysis. Theorists who propose relief as a theory of humour are also divided about whether it can be seen as rebellious or conservative. If it merely allows people to release pent up energy in order to go back to the status quo then it is hard to argue that it is radical in any way. As Michael Billig points out, although James Sully believes in the rebellious nature of humour, he "displays the conservatism of a society in which apparent rebelliousness can function to preserve, rather than threaten, existing inequalities" (2005, p. 105). The same might be said for the sitcom genre itself. Because of the formulaic structure of the sitcom, any rebelliousness is largely dismissed by the end when everything goes back to normal.

Two other theorists are worth examining for their insights into comedy and humour. Sigmund Freud's theory of humour was based on psychoanalysis and largely followed his idea that in order to participate in society, we repress certain undesirable thoughts and feelings. For Freud, these repressions often return in the form of dreams, utterances and jokes (Billig, 2005, p. 145). Freud sees repression as a disciplinary agent, of which ridicule is one way to enforce. For example, Freud examines the way that parents will laugh at their children when they do something silly. Although Freud concentrates on the child's actions, Billig argues that the parent's laughter can indicate displeasure and the child will learn what is appropriate through this disciplinary act (2005, p. 149). Freud also identified types of jokes distinguishing between the pleasures

associated with different kinds of humour situations (Morreall, 1983; Morreall, 2000; Bardon, 2005, Billig, 2005, p. 153). Innocent jokes were jokes where pleasure was the main aim, whereas tendentious jokes were jokes that were against social conventions (Billig, 2005, p. 154). Freud argued that tendentious jokes allowed people to say what could not be said and in this way, humour "evade[s] the inevitable restrictions of social life, permitting brief moments of shared freedom" (Billig, 2005, p. 156).

This rebellious 'brief moments of shared freedom' is not unlike the other theorist's ideas about the role of comedy. Another theorist who has a connection to comedy is Mikhail Bakhtin and his ideas about the carnivalesque. The carnival is a celebration of all things improper, gaudy, dirty and comic. There is a power dynamic at work here too because the carnival allowed things to happen that were not normally allowed (Bakhtin, 1968, p. 7). Bakhtin argues that "...one might say that carnival celebrated temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order; it marked the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms and prohibitions" (1968, p. 10). For the time of the carnival the public would be allowed to participate in activities that outside of carnival time would be unlawful or amoral. In this way, carnival was seen as a pressure valve in that it allowed people a chance to indulge without reprisal and afterward, they would go back to their normal selves as good citizens. In this regard, carnival acts as a disciplinary agent. Bakhtin called the carnival a "temporary suspension of the entire official system with all its prohibitions and hierarchic barriers" and claimed that its very "brevity" was what increased "its fantastic nature and utopian radicalism" (1968, p. 89). A similar 'brief moments of shared freedom' is described by Michel Foucault in his discussion of the plague. He writes, "A whole literary fiction of the festival grew up around the plague: suspended laws, lifted prohibitions, the frenzy of passing time, bodies mingling together without respect, individuals unmasked, abandoning their statutory identity and the figure under which they had been recognized, allowing quite a different truth to appear" (1995, p. 197). Both Freud's tendentious jokes and the carnival can be seen as rebellious and radical as they upset the social order, at least for a time.

More contemporary theories of humour either combine or expand on these traditional categories. For Morreall, the incongruity theory is the closest to accounting for humour but stresses that the incongruous act must be enjoyable for it to elicit laughter as there are many things that are incongruous that are not humorous (1983; 1987). He argues that humour results from a "pleasant cognitive shift" (Morreall, 1983,

p. 39). Bardon argues that although Morreall's update on the incongruity theory is the most comprehensible explanation of humour, it is not complete as it fails to explain all the reasons we might find something humorous (2005, p. 479). Although Morreall (1983) argues that his new theory can account for all cases of laughter, Bardon suggests that perhaps no existing theory or combination of theories can explain all instances of humour (2005, p. 481). The case studies in this thesis rely on many forms of humour engaging in the tension between rebelliousness and discipline, radical and conservative.

Lastly, in addition to the traditional and contemporary theories of comedy and laughter, parody, as a form is something to consider given that two of my case studies are mockumentary and as such include this specific type of comedic form. Definition of comic parody includes two aspects: first that it imitates and then changes aspects of the form or content of a text; and second, that it produces a comic incongruity between the original and the new text (Rose, 1993). Linda Hutcheon critiques Margaret Rose in the way Rose links parody so closely to humour and specifically with the incongruity theory. For Hutcheon, parody does not have to be critical of, or negative about, the original text but rather the original text "is respected and used as a model" (2000, p. 103). She defines parody as "imitation with a crucial difference" a definition that allows for any theory of humour and indeed no humour at all (2000, p. 36). Although she argues that the meaning of parody has changed over time, she believes her definition takes into consideration all previous definitions and allows for the more modern forms of parody that earlier definitions have trouble accounting for (ibid).

Television Comedy

Television has embraced a variety of comedic forms. Comedy genres such as sketch comedy, stand up specials, and sitcoms are broadcast along with programmes that include comedic elements such as variety programmes, reality television and even drama. The television programmes I examine here I argue are sitcoms. Sitcom has been defined in many different ways combining conventions related to generic structure, narrative elements and aesthetics. Each one of these areas has been used to define the sitcom and has as many exceptions as it does examples. The structure of the sitcom has traditionally been seen to have a cast of regular characters (Mintz, 1985; Wagg, 1998), familiar scenery and sets (Wagg, 1998), a self-contained plot (Mintz, 1985; Wagg, 1998), and is either filmed in front of a live studio audience or the audience is represented by a laugh track (Mintz, 1985; Wagg, 1998; Bignell, 2012). The sitcom's self-contained plot allows for a happy or satisfied ending where all of the events in the programme are tied

up within the, usually half hour, programme (Mintz, 1985; Wagg, 1998). This formula has been seen as one of the reasons for thinking that sitcom is largely conservative. Brett Mills argues that the genre has also been criticized for its simplistic use of stereotypes, outmoded representations and an apparent failure to engage with social or political developments (2004, p. 63). Two of the programmes, *Scot Squad* and *People Just Do Nothing* do not have all the conventions of the sitcom identified here, although they are categorised as comedy programmes. These are filmed in a mockumentary style that Brett Mills has termed comedy vérité as stated in my introduction. Thus, these conventions contribute to, but are not the only ones in defining the sitcom as a genre.

Sitcoms have also been defined by their narratives as suggested by the fact that their plots are usually self-contained. As stated, sitcoms involve a regular group of characters, often friends or family. Usually the harmony of the group is threatened by an outside force, or a misunderstanding and after a series of attempts by the group members to solve the problem, one or all, finds a solution that involves communication within the group and harmony is restored (Jones, 1992). Sitcoms also tend to give the viewers access to private life of characters (Mills, 2009). Identifying a sitcom by its narrative conventions, as argued by Stephen Wagg, Gerald Mintz and Gerard Jones, and nothing else would not separate sitcom from other programmes that use this structure like drama. Therefore narrative conventions are not enough to define the sitcom.

In addition to narrative conventions, sitcoms can also be identified by their aesthetic conventions. Sitcoms look as if the events being filmed are taking place on a stage (Bignell, 2012; Mills, 2005). They are often filmed in front of a live studio audience and as a result often includes pauses by the actors when the audience laughs. They are often filmed with bright lights which allows the set to be seen clearly (Mills, 2005). Sitcom has traditionally been shot using the three-camera set up developed by Karl Freund, Desi Arnez and Lucile Ball on the set of *I Love Lucy* (CBS, 1951-1957) (Putterman, 1995; Bignell, 2012; Mills, 2005). This set up has one camera focused on the whole set or scene to take place while the other two cameras are focused on the individual characters in the scene. This set up allows for the character saying the funny thing and the reaction of the other character to be seen and thus enabling the programme to potentially get two laughs out of the same joke (Mills, 2005). In the chapters that look specifically at the individual case studies, I argue that the reaction shots are crucial to understanding what is meant to be seen as funny and when. This is especially in the case

of *People Just Do Nothing* where the reaction shot and different kinds of looks pay a significant role in connecting comedy and surveillance.

In the case studies selected, two (*Miranda* and *Mrs Brown's Boys*) fit comfortably using all of the conventions described above whereas the other two (*People Just Do Nothing* and *Scot Squad*) fit into some but not others. This suggests that the definition of sitcom is incomplete and evolving over time. Above all else though, sitcoms are supposed to be funny (Bignell, 2012, Mills, 2005) and it is their 'comic impetus' (their intention to be funny) that defines whether or not they are comedies more than any of the other conventions stated above (Mills, 2009, p. 40). Therefore, the programmes I selected can all be considered sitcom as they are "a form of programming that foregrounds its comic intent" and these conventions are what help to bring this comedy to the fore (Mills, 2009, p. 49). These programmes have also been created at a time when visual surveillance is part of everyday British life – a factor, I argue, that contributes to their construction.

Surveillance

Since the 1970s, the rapid proliferation of visual surveillance equipment in Britain has meant that much of what happens in public, happens in front of a camera. The first CCTV cameras in Britain were hidden cameras installed at the side of the road by police in the 1970s (Palmer, 2003, p. 25). Since then the amount of CCTV cameras has increased both in numbers and in scope, aided with the rise of digital and computer technology, to the point where Western contemporary society has been called a surveillance society. The term surveillance society was originally coined by Gary T. Marx in 1985 to refer to the danger of an "Orwellian situation" aided by computer technology (Lyon, 2001, p. 34). According to David Lyon, surveillance is "the focused, systematic and routine attention to personal details for purpose of influence, management, protection or direction" (2007, p. 14). Writing in 2001, Lyon identified surveillance as a key issue in the then contemporary society, which 15 years later, only seems to be more relevant. As the CCTV network grows, and as computer surveillance becomes more a part of Britons daily lives, more and more people are tracked and monitored. As Lyon explains, "Surveillance is not merely something exercised on us as workers, citizens or travellers, it is a set of processes in which we are all involved, both as watched and as watchers" (2007, p. 13). Although there is an increasing amount of digital and biometric surveillance that is significant in classifying contemporary British society as a surveillance society, my focus is on visual surveillance exemplified by the CCTV network. CCTV

cameras are used by a variety of agencies, and individuals to help control and identify populations, and to discourage, and when unable to discourage, solve crime. This footage has also become available for television programmes. For example, police agencies will release footage to news agencies in order to invite viewers to help police find people of interest in investigations. Both non-fiction and fiction programming have used surveillance footage or 'fauxtage'[10], have used the subject of surveillance as an element to their narratives, and/or have used what I call surveillance aesthetics. However, as I go on to explain, although many types of programmes engage with surveillance in some way, it is primarily non-fiction programming and the occasional drama programme that has been researched with surveillance in mind. As I will demonstrate, comedy programming, apart from a few examples, has not been researched in this way.

Surveillance in Non-Fiction programming

On television, surveillance and CCTV has been addressed most obviously through the reality television genre. In the case of reality crime programmes, "...the use of CCTV conspicuously enhances the programme's claims to authenticity..." (Jermyn, 2004, p. 83). As Palmer points out, "A large proportion of the new programmes about UK police work use footage supplied by the force, which, like CCTV footage, provides photographic evidence of wrong-doing. Such footage bears all the hallmarks of proof – after all, 'the camera never lies'" (2003, p. 64). Palmer suggests that in the case of non-fiction programming, "what we are unlikely to see on television is anything critical of CCTV" (2003, p. 38), however, programmes have included instances where CCTV was ineffective in helping police. Still, within reality television, "...the spectacle and promise of CCTV material is indeed one of the fundamental allures of crime-appeal programming" (Jermyn, 2004, p. 73).

Research in television studies about surveillance has been largely concentrated on non-fiction programming. These discussions are largely focussed around programmes that deal with crime or border control or on programmes that follow and record people as the basis for the programme such as *Big Brother*. Primarily, debates about surveillance with regards to these types of programmes are focussed around two main areas: the degree to which privacy is undermined for the sake of entertainment or

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[10] Fauxtage is a term I have coined that means fake CCTV footage constructed for a fictional programme.

public information; and the degree to which surveillance has enabled or impeded the authentic depiction of reality including the performance or authenticity of participants.

Debates about the degree to which privacy is undermined for the sake of entertainment or the public's right to know' is addressed in these types of non-fiction programmes. The ability of visual surveillance equipment to capture public activities gives non-fiction programming another element to broadcast. Although crime was already well-established on television as an element of both non-fiction and fiction programming, according to Anita Biressi and Heather Nunn, the 1990s saw a greater emphasis on amateur, and CCTV or police footage with "little claim to help prevent or solve crime" (2005, p. 120) in non-fiction programming. These types of programmes are concerned with the displaying of the crime and often the pursuit of the accused rather than the use of that footage to help solve crimes (Jermyn, 2004; Biressi and Nunn, 2005). The visual spectacle of the crime is displayed through CCTV footage often from a fixed vantage point such as a street camera or dash cam and/or live action shots using handheld cameras that follow the police as they attempt to apprehend the accused. In examining these non-fiction programmes, visual surveillance is largely seen as effective, at least in terms of solving crime (Dovey, 2004; Bignell, 2005; Biressi and Nunn, 2005) but in terms of preventing crime, its efficacy is unclear (Biressi and Nunn, 2005, p. 125).

Theorists argue that there are ethical concerns about the degree to which an individual's privacy is breached by the ability of the surveillance equipment to capture events but also by the programmes decision to broadcast these (Palmer, 2003; Dovey, 2004; Bignell, 2005; Gee, 2015). Many non-fiction programmes, particularly the ones in which individuals do not choose to appear, must negotiate this ethical dilemma by asking for permission from individuals to be identified as part of their programme, often after they have already been filmed. For example, the BBC divides participants into two categories: recruited, those who chose to appear; and unrecruited, those who are caught up in the act of filming something. In the case of unrecruited participants, consent is often given separately to film and then broadcast (bbc.co.uk, 2019, np). In the case of *Hospital* (BBC, 2017-), or *24 Hours in A&E* (Channel 4, 2011-), for example, patients who are in emergency situation are unrecruited by the programme makers and consent may be given after their treatment (bbc.co.uk, 2019, np). In fact, Charlie Gee calls for an increased examination by broadcasters of the privacy laws with regards to reality-type programmes, specifically those programmes that feature "hospital patients, average people on the street and suspected criminals" who do not choose to appear on

television over the ones in which reality contestants do (2015, p. 90). According to some theorists, filmed subjects seem unconcerned about being filmed by CCTV cameras (Biressi and Nunn, 2005; Lyon, 2007). Although whether they feel the same about their image being broadcast on television remains unclear. Certainly, the amount of people in non-fiction programming who are not identified by their image (they are obscured in some way) is less than the amount of people who are. However, this does not necessarily imply that people are generally unconcerned about appearing on camera, although it may give audiences that impression. This, along with the increased focus on digital surveillance as problematic, suggests that visual surveillance is an unavoidable and naturalised element of British society.

In addition to the issues of privacy and consent, research around non-fiction programming also investigates the relationship between surveillance and the performance or authenticity of the participants. Most of the research suggests that the more surveillance that participants are under is thought to increase the audience's impression of authenticity (Andrejevic, 2002; Corner, 2002; Hill, 2005; Gillan, 2004; Bignell, 2005; Dubrofsky, 2009, 2011). If the participant is constantly under surveillance and appears natural, the more authentic they are seen to be (Dubrofsky, 2011). Part of the pleasure of watching then comes from the viewer looking for the moments when a participant's real personality shines through (Roscoe, 2001; Couldry, 2002) a process John Corner terms as "selving" (2002, p. 261). One of these moments often results from the surveillance aspect of confession – the often direct to camera address of a participant to the viewer at home away from the rest of the participants in the programme (Holmes, 2004; Dubrofsky, 2011). Palmer disagrees with the idea that the authentic personality comes through with increased surveillance. He sees these moments of confession as just another opportunity for the participants to perform their "strategic game" (2003, p. 192). The programmes I examine here, although fictional, use moments of disclosure to appeal to the real, suggesting that what they say to the viewer through direct address is the truth. *Mrs Brown's Boys* and *Miranda's* main characters speak directly to camera under the guise that no one else in the programme can hear what they are saying, a process that is suggestive of the 'selving' process Corner describes because of its private nature. However, their motivation for 'confessing' their thoughts to the viewers would be a significant factor in whether it is a part of their 'strategic game' or not. In *Scot Squad* and *People Just Do Nothing* the mockumentary

interview is not always private and their motivations for saying what they do can change.

John Corner argues that "The 'reality offer' of a program is enriched through an expansion of its scopic offer" (2004, p. 338). Corner suggests here that the more that the programme can show (through visual evidence) that it is about the known world, the more likely it is to be seen as truthful which fits with the research mentioned above on the authenticity of reality television participants. This might be the reason why so many of the popular factual television programmes add surveillance footage and why fictional programmes mimic the style in their aesthetics. The presence of CCTV footage often lends a credibility to the truth claims of a particular programme. Jon Dovey agrees stating, "When we see the 'amateur video' caption on broadcast news we are meant to understand amateurishness as guarantor of truth, in the sense of being 'unmediated' raw data, 'captured' outside of the usual institutional procedures of news production (2000, p. 64). He suggests that this is the preferred reading however, it is not a guarantee that all viewers will see this footage as truth.

Surveillance in Fiction programming

When research has been done in regards to fictional representations of surveillance, it tends to focus on prestige or 'quality' television drama, most often crime drama (Schaub, 2010; Tasker, 2012; Hausken, 2014; Little 2014; Steenberg & Tasker, 2015) or the 'forensic pathology drama' such as *Waking The Dead* (BBC, 2000-2011) or *Bones* (FOX, 2005-2017) (Ridgman, 2012). Television programmes like *The Wire* (HBO, 2002-2008*), Homeland* (Showtime, 2011-)*, CSI* (CBS, 2000-2015)*, Law and Order* (NBC, 1990-2010), *Person of Interest (CBS, 2011-2016)* and *24* (FOX, 2001-2010, 2014) have been analysed as to their use of surveillance aesthetics and their treatment of the subject of surveillance. Although each of the programmes has their own representation of surveillance, it is more critical than Palmer alleges non-fiction depiction of CCTV is. Primary research has been done about the way surveillance is depicted in these programmes suggesting that surveillance is not always successful in either the solving or preventing of crime (Schaub, 2010, pessim) and different types of surveillance are more successful than others. Whereas Joseph Christopher Schaub argues that in *The Wire*, low tech surveillance such as physically watching is seen as more successful and legitimate than high tech surveillance (wire taps, CCTV), Lindsay Steenberg and Yvonne Tasker argue that low and high tech surveillance work together, "exploiting the authenticity of

the older models of detection and the sophistication and (transnational) mobility of newer information technologies" (2015, p. 135).

Surveillance is also often represented as something to reassure the viewer (Tasker, 2012), necessary (Lyon, 2007; Tasker, 2012; Negra and Lagerwey, 2015; Steenberg & Tasker, 2015) and efficient (Lyon, 2007; Hausken, 2014; Little, 2014). Surveillance, in these cases, is shown to be successful in apprehending criminals and keeping citizens protected from terrorists or other nefarious organisations. Most of the sacrifices made with regards to privacy are seen as appropriate given the level of protection needed. For example, in *Person of Interest*, surveillance is depicted as helping to prevent crimes from occurring with protection of innocent civilians worth any cost (Fernández Morales and Menéndez Menéndez, 2016, p. 14). The programme centres on an inventor of a surveillance system who is trying to make sure it does not fall into terrorist hands. *Person of Interest* promotes fear through a "post-9/11 precautionary logic" to justify the use of surveillance (Fernández Morales and Menéndez Menéndez, 2016, p.15). Because it focuses on preventing crime, rather than solving it, "the series is revealed as one element within a larger cultural script that is consolidating the ever-present fear, the need for constant precaution, and the mood of inevitability as integral to our current status quo" (ibid). *Person of Interest* suggests that anyone could be a terrorist and there is a feeling of inevitability about the next terrorist attack (Fernández Morales and Menéndez Menéndez, 2016, p. 16).

Researchers have argued that because surveillance is continuously depicted on television that it has become normalised (Lyon, 2007; Hausken, 2014; Fernández Morales and Menéndez Menéndez, 2016). Liv Hausken argues that the uncomplicated morality of *CSI* allows for the normalisation of surveillance. Without surveillance, the good guys would not be able to capture the bad guys and society would be full of criminals who got away with their behaviour (2014). She argues further that "the *invisibility* of ubiquitous surveillance in the extraordinary widespread fictional universe of *CSI* makes this particular fiction an important case in discussions of the normalization of surveillance in contemporary societies (Hausken, 2014, p. 10). This 'ubiquitous surveillance' on *CSI* and other programmes leads to an increased awareness of surveillance and an acceptance of its usage. Marta Fernández Morales and Maria Menéndez Menéndez argue, "In real life today, and ever since 9/11, the mainstream discourse encourages the sacrifice of civil liberties for the greater good, and is gradually consolidating a *status quo* in which surveillance in public spaces, control of private

activities such as internet searches, and mutual vigilance have been normalized" (2016, p. 19).

These drama programmes also engage with the some of the broad concepts addressed with my case studies. The fiction programmes analysed in relation to surveillance also demonstrate how surveillance systems act as witness and deny the need for a living witness (Hausken, 2014). They also focus on how the body and the way certain types of bodies have disproportionally become the focus for surveillance systems (Schaub, 2010, Ridgman, 2012). The suggestion that the mechanical image should be privileged over the eye-witness because the mechanical image is an unbiased witness is addressed in Chapter three with an examination of *People Just Do Nothin*g. In this chapter, I illustrate that the mechanical witness and the surveillance system at large are not unbiased at all. Indeed, as the focus on the body and certain minority and female bodies would suggest, what attracts attention in surveillance is often highly motivated, an area that is examined more closely in chapter five.

Surveillance Aesthetics

Researchers have also examined the aesthetics of surveillance in both fiction and non-fiction programming. Surveillance aesthetics are those filming techniques, mise en scene elements, and iconography that are suggestive of surveillance. In both non-fiction and fiction programming surveillance aesthetics help to reinforce surveillance themes and narratives and/ or suggest alternate readings. Elements in the credit and pre-credit sequences of programmes such as *Homeland* and *CSI* reference digital surveillance with repeated iconography associated with digital and visual surveillance and CCTV cameras (Jermyn, 2004; Schaub, 2010; Tasker, 2012). Like the trend identified by Deborah Jermyn and Anita Biressi and Heather Nunn in certain kinds of non-fiction programming, fiction programming also is invested in the spectacle of surveillance and surveillance footage. Jermyn and Biressi and Nunn argue that the use of CCTV footage in reality crime programming is more about displaying the crime rather than solving it which seems to mirror the attitude of news programs and the press. As McCahill argues "the key 'professional imperatives' of news reporters [who] tend to prioritize dramatic and violent crimes through the use of 'spectacle' and 'graphic imagery'" (2014. P.245). Palmer argues that in these types of programmes spectacle works to "expose the criminal to public scrutiny" (1998, p. 375). Witnessing the criminal in the act invites the judgement of the viewers which in turn works as a "disciplinary agent" to reinforce the viewer's self-control (ibid). Other common surveillance iconography throughout non-

fiction and fiction programming include items such as computers, cameras (Bignell, 2005; Tasker, 2012; Hausken, 2014), photographs (Hausken, 2014) surveillance vans that are capturing audio from wiretaps (Schaub, 2010), panoptic structures that encourage watching, like the *Big Brother* house (Jermyn, 2004; Bignell, 2005), displays of facial recognition technologies (Hausken, 2014; Little, 2014) and fingerprints, passports and other identification tools. Shots that include technology and equipment also become a spectacle as they "reveal[s] the seductive charms of the technology itself, while raising doubts about its actual effectiveness" (Schaub, 2010, p.125).

Schaub's investigation into *The Wire* also argues that surveillance is depicted as being vulnerable to the allure of spectacle through the programme's depiction of the press (2010, p. 123). Series five of the programme depicts a detective and a newspaper reporter colluding in inventing a serial killer through the tampering of crime scenes and fabricating phone calls. Having failed to convict a major drug kingpin over four series, the detective believes that the only way to convict him would be to invent a spectacle in order to procure a wiretap. In this way, "spectacle becomes the seductive target of an undisciplined surveillance" (Schaub, 2010, p. 125).

Particular filming techniques such as the use of handheld cameras (Biressi and Nunn, 2005; Schaub, 2010) overhead shots of the city (Tasker, 2012) night vision surveillance (Tasker, 2012), the use of low-grade video (Dovey, 2000; Jermyn, 2004), filming through viewfinders, date and time stamped greyscale footage (Schaub, 2010) are also indicative of surveillance and feature in fictional programming. Fictional programming will emulate the surveillance techniques culled from non-fiction programming and CCTV footage to suggest either a surveillance subject or theme but also to appeal to a sense of realism. The drama programmes mentioned thus far are American which is perhaps not surprising given that the post 9/11 American context lends itself well to a discussion of surveillance given the increased ability of the government to monitor American people. However, the UK, which has experienced its own terrorist incidents, has produced television programmes that make use of these same aesthetics in programmes such as *Line of Duty* (BBC2, 2012-2016; BBC1, 2017-), *Sherlock* (BBC1, 2012-), and *Luther* (BBC1 2012-)*.

As illustrated, research into surveillance with respect to drama programmes has been available for several years, and yet, research about surveillance and comedy programming is scare. Although there has been some research around the

representation of Muslims post 9/11 in comedies such as *Little Mosque on The Prairie* (Canas, 2008; Bilici, 2010; Matheson, 2012) and stand-up routines of Muslim comics (Bilici, 2010) in relation to wider issues of homeland security and being under the gaze of others, studies about particular sitcoms and their representations of surveillance, like the ones referenced above have been rare. Only *Peep Show* has been linked to surveillance and the acts of looking and watching through an examination of its first-person filming style (Mills, 2008).

The following sections of the literature review serve as an introduction to the concepts and theories each chapter will be engaging with. The case study chapters each focus on different aspects of surveillance: representation of surveillance; surveillance as witness; surveillance as disclosure and surveillance and the body.

The Representation of Surveillance

Discussions of surveillance often begin with a discussion of the panopticon and my discussion of *Scot Squad* in chapter two is no different. Several authors, in their discussion of surveillance refer to this concept (Foucault, 1995; Dubbled, 2003; Koskela, 2003; Lyon, 2007; Kietzmann & Angell, 2010; Kose, Han & Balkan, 2010). The panopticon is a model of a prison conceived by Jeremy Bentham in 1789. The plan called for a circular building with a tower in the centre that had a complete view into all the cells. The prisoners in the cells would know that they were being watched but the prison guard would be concealed from view so the prisoners never knew when, or indeed if, they were being watched at any given moment (Mack, 1969; Foucault, 1995; Lyon, 2007). In contrast to older prison constructions where prisoners were kept in the dark, the panopticon was fully lit. According to Foucault, "Full lighting and the eye of the supervisor capture better than darkness, which is ultimately protected. Visibility is a trap" (1995, p. 200). The goal was, through the threat of constant surveillance, to inspire a self-regulatory process whereby the prisoners amend their own behaviour. The internalization of this surveillance would ensure an "automatic functioning of power" (Foucault, 1995, p. 201). Foucault argues, "he who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection" (1995, p. 202). The prisoners will then be docile bodies able to be controlled. I argue in chapter two that *Scot Squad* explores the idea of the docile body through its observational camera and complicates the idea that being watched creates this kind of body.

In contemporary society, the CCTV network has been compared to the panoptic structure (Palmer, 2003; Lyon, 2007). According to Palmer, "...it can immediately be seen how CCTV offers a new way to police the darkness – to bring everything before the light of the cameras" (2003, p. 29). The CCTV camera works as a contemporary technological version of the panopticon enabling law enforcement to monitor the behaviours of those in its society on a mass scale. The difference between the CCTV network and the panoptic structure are many, however, one of the main differences is that the people and the space being observed are not inmates and prisons. The CCTV camera observes potential criminals in public spaces thereby capturing innocent people too. As Foucault explains, "We are neither in the amphitheatre, nor the stage, but in the panoptic machine, invested by its effects of power, which we bring to ourselves since we are part of its mechanism" (1995, p. 217). In *Scot Squad*, the panoptic structure is represented by the filming of a reality crime programme where the cameras are not just capturing the criminals, or members of the public who may turn out to be criminals, but the police themselves.

Palmer argues that since the 1980s, authorities have tried to send the message that "constant surveillance equates with good citizenship" (2003, p. 14). The argument being that if people think they are being watched, they will behave better. Whether that is true or not, it is the assumption of this as truth that enabled the expansion of the CCTV network. As Palmer explains, "CCTV promised to reassert control over urban environments where fear of crime was on the increase; and because industrial sources provided evidence that through CCTV fear of crime was decreasing it was allowed to grow unhindered by regulation" (2003, p. 27). According to Jan Kietzmann and Ian Angelll, the panopticon concept only works if people believe "that being caught red-handed on camera undoubtedly leads to punishment and perhaps prison sentences" (2010, p. 135). Kietzmann and Angell state that surveillance cameras do not actually inhibit crime but are best used as evidence after the fact, (although only one crime is solved for every 1000 cameras) (2010, p. 135). Other arguments have been that CCTV cameras merely displace crime into areas without the cameras and therefore contribute to the argument that every space should be monitored (Lyon, 2007). According to the British Security Industry report, Britons going about their everyday life "can expect to be captured on camera 300 times a day, every day" (as cited by Kietzmann & Angell, 2010, p. 135).

Hille Koskela uses Foucault's reading of Jeremy Bentham's panopticon to examine the state of surveillance in society (2003). Koskela states, "Obviously, the purpose of surveillance cameras is to exercise power: to control deviant behaviour; and, to reduce crime and keep cities secure" (2003, p. 295). There are inherent power relations between the ones on camera and the ones operating it (Dubbeld, 2003; Koskela, 2003). Koskela focuses on the lack of a returnable gaze as evidence of the unequal power relationship. She writes, "There is no 'mutual' gaze. It would feel ridiculous to try to flirt with a surveillance camera. Its objects are constantly seen but with no responsibility to 'respond' or 'oppose' the gaze (2003, p. 298). Again, by turning the cameras around to the police officers who patrol with the help of surveillance equipment, *Scot Squad* illustrates the problems with this assumption. As I will go on to explore in the next chapter, members of the public are depicted as rebelling against the idea that being watched creates docile bodies. Many times, members of the public are shown to be speaking back to the surveillance camera. Lynsey Dubbeld's examination of the power relations between the watched and the watcher, is more concerned with the lack of knowledge about the observer, illustrating that because the watched have no access to the watcher or the means by which they watch, "the freedom of choice and behaviour of an actor are to some extent decided for by others, or at least 'directed'" (2003, p. 157).

CCTV has been described as a cost effective and efficient way of maintaining order despite the fact that evidence of its efficacy is limited (Palmer, 2003; Lyon, 2007). One of the arguments cited in the promotion of the CCTV network was the fact that policing could be safer as it did not require a physical police presence (Koskela, 2003). If police could deter criminals without having to be there, there is less potential for violence against police. Both Koskela (2003, p. 297) and Kietzmann and Angell (2010, p. 135) describe surveillance cameras that are fitted with loudspeakers. Theoretically, potential criminals could be scared off before ever committing a crime. And even though force is not administered physically, force is still present by the very presence of the camera which affects the behaviour of those who are being watched.

In contemporary society, many of the surveillance practices are intended to make cities safer and are often welcomed (Lyon, 2001). Jermyn echoes this and argues, "on the whole it appeared that the opportunities the technology offered for crime reduction and detection outweighed the concerns" (2004, p. 77). Today, according to Lyon, "Apart from anything else, we tend to take for granted certain kinds of

surveillance, such as CCTV cameras or PINs for bank transactions, so that we think nothing of their presence" (2007, p. 164). But as Lyon asks, "is surveillance positive for all or just for some?" (2001, p. 53). There are, of course varying responses to the increased surveillance. People who are aware of it, can respond to it in different ways. Lyon argues that in a society's struggle with surveillance and its control, there is compliance, negotiation and resistance (2007). People can also be resistant by refusing to engage in surveillance apparatuses either through a personal act, like closing curtains or an organized group act like opposing a placement of CCTV cameras in a work place by workers (2007, p. 166). Although Palmer suggests that "CCTV seems clean and efficient, and not liable to human error" (2003, p. 29), *Scot Squad* demonstrates that CCTV, and surveillance more widely is subject to human error and its relationship to power needs examining more fully. As Palmer points out, "What is rarely examined is the decision-making of those doing the moving [of the camera] and the recording – the CCTV operatives who decide whether or not to call the police" (2003, p. 32).

Lyon argues that to theorize about surveillance requires us to look at other popular media and see how they have dealt with it. One way was film studies and its conceptualization of the gaze. Along with the male gaze and other gazes, the surveillance gaze is a way to discuss the way the surveillance aesthetic has been deployed in a variety of contemporary programming. Questions surrounding this issue have always been who gets to look? Why? What purpose does the gaze serve? What are the implications? (Lyon, 2007, p. 140-141). He also suggests that cultural analysis can be helpful to "understand the experience of being watched, or being a watcher, and also what sorts of values inform our understanding of surveillance technologies" (ibid). *Scot Squad* uses surveillance aesthetics to both normalise and critique surveillance culture.

Surveillance and Witness

The CCTV network of cameras and screens allows viewers of the images to witness events as they happen or when they are played back. The relationship between surveillance and witness is explored with the mockumentary programme *People Just Do Nothing* in chapter three. In non-fiction programming, surveillance footage is often used to demonstrate that something has happened. In fiction programming, constructed surveillance footage ('fauxtage'), even though fictional, can adopt the same function. According to Corner, "To watch any bit of business unfold on screen, whatever its duration, involves us in a relation of witness, even if a sceptical one" (2004, p. 338). Corner suggests that events on screen position us as viewers of the event, becoming

witnesses even though the event may be long past. Referring to the distinct ontology of the photographic image, Corner argues that the event on screen can be evidence of something having occurred (2004, p. 339). The event, because it was filmed, is always in the past.

From its early days, television has brought the world into the home. Television enabled the family sitting at home to witness other people not from their own communities. Joshua Meyrowitz states, "Television in its early decades cultivated its audiences into the 'normalcy' of people watching other people closely - yet anonymously and from afar" (2009, p. 36). The function of witness has been a feature of television from its inception. Television's early days of live programming gave viewers the feeling as if they were witnessing something that was actually taking place at the time when they were viewing it (Hight, 2010, p.). It had both a presence and liveness that other visual media did not. That legacy of liveness lives on in television even though there are many programmes that are not broadcast live. Ellis argues that television has a purer definition of witness, "because it makes an aesthetic promise that it is live, even though that promise is indifferently fulfilled" (2000, p. 10). Programmes that use direct address, like a mockumentary programme, can also be understood to have this aesthetic of liveness. This mode of address has been adopted by some fiction programming as well however it is not a new phenomenon. In *The George Burns and Gracie Allen Show,* (CBS, 1950-1958) George Burns frequently addressed the audience often commenting on the episode's plot. Although still an exception, as was the case then, you are more likely to see this style employed by a variety of programmes, primarily comedies. *People Just Do Nothing* uses the mockumentary form to depict the day to day activities of a group of pirate radio DJs and MCs, allowing the viewer to witness their desire for celebrity. Meyrowitz makes the claim that because most of us have been television watchers at some point in our lives we understand the desire and impulse to watch even when we are the target of that watching ourselves. The characters in the programme, actively engage with the camera and the camera operators. In fact, Meyrowitz also suggests that it is this familiarity with watching that makes some people actually feel more valued when being watched (2009, p. 37). As I argue in chapter three, the main character's desire for celebrity and fame is bound up with being watched, being witnessed. However, what the audience witnesses and what the characters wish to communicate is often at odds, a contradiction that is often the source of the humour.

Surveillance and Disclosure

Another issue bound up with the ideas of surveillance, power and crime is the idea of disclosure and confession. Disclosure and confession are modes of self-speaking evidenced in the case study programmes. Without visual proof of a person engaged in criminal activity, the criminal's confession is a significant proof of their transgressions. The history of confession as outlined by Foucault can be a lens from which to view the television confession, as demonstrated by the direct address mode. Agnes Brown's direct address to the audience of *Mrs Brown's Boys* discloses her thoughts and feelings about the episode's activities and at times, she confesses about things she has done in the past. Foucault explains that, "Since the Middle Ages at least, Western societies have established the confession as one of the main rituals we rely on for the production of truth" (1998, p. 58). The confession is proof. For Foucault, "Its veracity is not guaranteed by the lofty authority of the magistry, nor by the tradition it transmits, but by the bond, the basic intimacy in discourse, between the one who speaks and what he is speaking about" (1998, p. 62). That bond between speaker and listeners is evoked in the direct address mode where there is an intimacy created between the person on screen and the viewer (Dovey, 2000, p. 109). Confession, as stated by Foucault,

> "is a ritual of discourse in which the speaking subject is also the subject of the statement; it is also a ritual that unfolds within a power relationship, for one does not confess without the presence (or virtual presence) of a partner who is not simply the interlocutor but the authority who requires the disclosure, prescribes and appreciates it, and intervenes in order to judge, punish, forgive, console, and reconcile..." (1998, p. 61).

In the case of direct address, the authority is the virtual presence of the viewer who becomes the ultimate judge of the veracity and importance of the confession. Direct address allows characters to comment on actions taking place within the programme, almost giving the viewer inside information. Foucault writes,

> "The obligation to confess is now relayed through so many different points, is so deeply ingrained in us, that we no longer perceive it as the effect of a power that constrains us; on the contrary, it seems to us that truth, lodged in our most secret nature, 'demands' only to surface; that if it fails to do so, this is because a constraint holds it in place, the violence of a power weighs in down, and it can finally be articulated only at the price of a kind of liberation" (1998, p. 60).

Writing in 1976, his words are prophetic. The rise of social media, reality television and selfies seem to suggest that the desire to be seen is greater than ever, an argument Meyrowitz made earlier with regards to being watched and the value it has for some

(2009, p. 37). At the same time that we are under increased surveillance from outside sources, many of us participate in self-surveillance of which disclosure is a major part. In this way disclosure and confessional Facebook statuses and Instagram posts are the diaries of yesteryear.

The diary, according to Palmer, is "an enduring means of self-examination which has a variety of antecedents" (2003, p. 171). The diary, much like self-speaking, tells the secrets of its subject. The diary does not just reveal what happened, a chronology of events but also, like confession, it explains why things were done and what the motivation was for doing them. Foucault says that confession is not about merely confessing to the act itself but to "the thoughts that recapitulated it, the obsessions that accompanied it, the images, desires, modulations, and the quality of the pleasure that animated it" (Foucault, 1998, p. 63). In reality television, the confession is often set up in diary room segments. These are moments when, away from the rest of the cast, individual subjects can talk directly to the camera, revealing their 'private' feelings on the issues presented in the show. Agnes's diary room moments take place at her kitchen table. These are her oral versions of the traditional written diary. The video diary moments take the secret and private and make public (Dovey, 2000; Palmer, 2003). The degree to which audiences are actually getting the truth in these segments is unclear and complex. Dovey questions, "How far is the speaking subject speaking within the frame of somebody else's version of their biographical narrative and how far are they able to 'write themselves' in autobiographical mode?" (2000, p. 110). *Mrs Brown's Boys* represents Agnes is a willing participant in surveillance culture. Because she is the only one of the characters that possesses this ability to talk to the audience, she is complicit in surveillance culture.

Surveillance and the Body

How does surveillance deal with the bodies on the CCTV screen? And more importantly, what kinds of bodies are captured by the cameras? Lyon defines body surveillance as "the co-opting of the body itself as a means of identification and predicting behaviour or conditions" (Lyon, 2001, p. 70). The bodies focussed on by CCTV are those that are considered Other (Dubbeld, 2003; Palmer, 2003). The argument is that certain qualities (race, gender) stand out as abnormal and therefore these are the bodies that are focused on. Dubbeld argues that a study on 'monitoring personnel' indicates that the operation of the camera's gaze is based on the assessment, categorisation and evaluation of bodies" (2003, p. 153). The types of bodies are

evaluated in terms of their potential criminality which largely ends up targeting young urban males, racial minorities, and the working class. Koskela states, "Surveillance aims to 'normalise' urban space...The routine surveillance of urban space aims to ensure the exclusion of delinquency or deviance...It reflects the fears about population regarded as different" (Koskela, 2003, p. 300).

Women are often "invisible as suspects and also invisible as potential victims but clearly visible as objects of sexual interest" (Norris and Armstrong as cited by Koskela, 2003, p. 301). CCTV footage on television then, further targets those labelled as Other or different. Palmer argues, "Television which utilizes CCTV helps to create victims, most of whom have no right of reply. Thus individuals who are increasingly spatially remote now appear on our screens behaving in ways which would seem to justify their exclusion" (2003, p. 39). Miranda's direct address enables her to reply to surveillance culture, a culture she both resists and participates in. Permission to appear on camera does not need to be granted by people who are not central to the action (Palmer, 2003, p. 40). Therefore, those whose image has been caught in the filming of another of interest, have no recourse to protect their image from being shown - an issue that an episode of *Miranda* explores when she is recorded eating an ice cream at the end of an obesity segment on the news. Of course, surveillance of bodies is not a new phenomenon despite the rise of the surveillance society. Lyon points out that bodies have been in view and used for the purpose of identification and predictors of behaviour for hundreds of years (2001, p. 70). However, he argues that today, surveillance data can now be extracted from the body through DNA. He states, "the body need no longer merely be watched to track its behaviour or its whereabouts. Surveillance now goes under the skin to monitor, check and test in order to identify and to classify" (ibid). Additionally, I argue in chapter five, Miranda through her control of the camera, engages in self-surveillance a significant component of postfeminism. Her unruliness and control of the camera suggest the performativity of normative femininity and an attempt to control surveillance, once again calling into question the validity of the claim that surveillance creates docile bodies.

This literature review attempts to outline the key debates about the surveillance society and how it has been represented in television. It is clear that surveillance has been examined in both non-fiction and fiction programming but very little work has looked at surveillance in comedy programmes. Comedy programmes have used certain aesthetics, such as direct address, that have most often been used in non-fiction

programming and have been used to connote ideas of authenticity, truth and intimacy. The following chapters will examine how the specific programmes use aesthetics and themes to communicate attitudes about surveillance culture, with specific attention to what results from the interaction of comedy and surveillance.

Chapter Two: Representation and Normalisation of Surveillance in *Scot Squad*

Introduction

In the premiere episode of *Scot Squad*, Bobby, a young man who has lost his dog, comes into the local police station to put up missing posters. The poster, curiously, is not a picture of the dog but of Bobby himself. Sergeant Millar mentions this to Bobby, as well as the fact that he has not put his name or phone number on the poster. He replies, "That's why I'm on it, so they can get in... they know my face and can tell me in person." It is a funny scene, as Millar tries to understand the reason for Bobby's odd choice. By putting his own picture on the poster instead of a picture of his dog 'Fridge', Bobby is inviting other citizens of his community to look for, and at, him. He also assumes, through his statement, "They know my face", that this look is an activity that is already happening. He believes that it is just as easy for people to identify him and get in touch with him through his photo as it would be through a name and phone number. This small scene introduces a key aspect of surveillance: who looks and for what reason? It also suggests that visual surveillance is a common and even natural process giving credence to the suggestion that contemporary society is a surveillance society (Lyon, 2001).

This chapter looks at how surveillance is used to control and manage characters as represented in the BBC programme *Scot Squad* (BBC 2014-). David Lyon defines surveillance as "processes in which special note is taken of certain human behaviours that go well beyond idle curiosity" (2007, p. 13) and goes on to further explain that it is a "focused, systematic and routine attention to personal details for the purpose of influence, management, protection or direction but there are exceptions" (p. 14). Throughout history, a 'focused, systematic and routine attention' has been significantly advanced by technological developments. As new technologies are developed, the ability to view and record people has increased. Today, surveillance systems vary from digital footprints and fingerprints to passport control and biometric data, wire taps and closed-circuit television cameras (which will be the focus here). It is CCTV's relationship to the panopticon and its counterpart, the synopticon, which provides the theoretical underpinning to my examination of *Scot Squad*.

Scot Squad is a comedy mockumentary programme centered on the United Scottish Police Force (USPF) going about their daily duties. It focusses on 3 partnerships (PC Jack McLaren [Jordan Young] and PC Sarah Fletcher [Sally Reid], PC Charlie McIntosh

[Chris Forbes] and PC Jane MacKay [Ashley Smith], and PC Hugh McKirdy [Grado] and PC Surjit Singh [Manjot Sumal]), desk Sergeant Karen Anne Millar [Karen Bartke], 999 Operator Maggie LeBeau [M.L. Stone], Volunteer Officer Ken Beattie [James Allenby-Kirk] and the head of the USPF Chief Commissioner Cameron Miekelson [Jack Docherty]. Each of the characters is depicted in the course of performing their various roles by a camera crew that is very rarely shown on screen. Despite all working for the USPF, they rarely share scenes with, or refer to, each other. The only other recurring character is Bobby Muir [Darren Connell], a citizen who routinely comes to see Millar for various reasons. All the episodes are structurally similar, with multiple narrative strands of the various officers in their roles woven together, with interviews explaining the job in general or the incidents in the previous scene specifically. The officers are rarely seen outside of their established environments: Millar is always at the front desk, the PCs are always in public spaces (mostly outside), and LeBeau is always at the 999 call centre. Only Volunteer Officer Beattie and Chief Miekelson are seen in a variety of spaces and they are the only two to have shared scenes as Miekleson goes on patrol with Beattie in episode 1.5.

Scot Squad parodies the conventions of docusoap, specifically the reality crime variety through its surveillance aesthetics. As defined in the previous chapter, parody imitates the original text with a crucial difference (Hutcheon, 1985, p. 36). Through parody, Scot Squad questions the legitimacy of the confessional interview as a form of authenticity and demonstrates that the real or authentic is located in the surveillance gaze of the mockumentary format. It questions CCTV's usefulness as a power to reduce crime and acknowledges and contributes to the idea of CCTV footage as spectacle that was introduced in the research around reality crime programming in the previous chapter. How power and control are enhanced or undermined by surveillance is explored through the programme's aesthetics and themes. This chapter begins with a more detailed review of the literature relevant to the representation of surveillance with respect to Scot Squad.

Systems of Surveillance and the Construction of Power

Early systems of surveillance need to be examined in order to understand the reasons why contemporary systems of surveillance have been constructed the way they have and in order to understand how these systems construct systems of power. Central to understanding the relationship between surveillance (specifically of the visual kind as CCTV) and control is Michel Foucault's reading of Jeremy Bentham's concept of a

panopticon because he theorises how power is generated and maintained by its structure (1995, pessim). Foucault's description of the Panopticon mirrors in many ways the contemporary system of CCTV cameras, and how its panoptic schema is used to explain and justify the need for CCTV.

The Panopticon is an architectural structure created by Jeremy Bentham (Foucault, 1995). Although Bentham's original structure was envisioned to be used for all sorts of institutions, its usefulness as a prison was immediately apparent. The prisoners would each be in individual cells, clustered around a central tower which housed a prison guard. Because each prisoner is separated in the cells from one another, they cannot gang up or influence one anothers' behaviours (Foucault, 1995, p. 200). The prison guard can see into the cells of all the prisoners but because of a system of light, shadow and blinds, prisoners are not able to see into the tower. Therefore, because of the structure of the building, prisoners can assume that they are on display but are not able to know for certain if they are being watched or not. The central tower is visible but whether the guard is watching, or even present at all, is unverifiable. Once the idea of an omniscient guard is instilled in the prisoners, a physical guard is not even needed for the prisoners to follow the rules. They are controlled by the fear of being seen doing anything against the rules of the prison. The panopticon works in the service of creating a pure community, as explained by Foucault in his discussion of a more primitive system of surveillance during the time of the Plague.

Foucault describes how a system of quarantine was imposed in French villages in the seventeenth century during the plague. He describes a system where people, confined to their houses, were to appear at the window to prove that they were not ill (1995, p. 196). The thinking was if they were dead or too ill, they could not come to the window and for the ones who could appear, they needed to state whether they were ill or not. They were "compelled to speak the truth under pain of death" (ibid). This activity involves the surveillance activities of branding and exile of people through naming those with the disease and forcing them out of society, and identification and discipline of people through having people adopt 'surveillance behaviours' by checking others for the plague and punishing those who lie (Foucault, 1995, p. 198; Norris, 2002, p. 250). This idea is made manifest in the architectural form of the panopticon. In both cases, people are "perfectly individualized and constantly visible" (Foucault, 1995, p. 200) and the pure community is achieved.

The panoptic gaze therefore refers to the look from the guard to the prisoners (or the implied look from the tower to the cells). Foucault argues that the combination of being seen but not knowing when (panoptic schema), would cause the prisoners to be on their best behaviour all the time just in case they were being watched. He writes, "hence the major effect of the Panopticon: to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power" (1995, p. 201). Therefore, the goal of the Panopticon "is to use uncertainty as a means of subordination" (Lyon, 1994, p. 65). Not knowing if you are being watched at any given time "creates a desire to comply with whatever is the norm for the institution in question" (Lyon, 2007, p. 59). This internalization of surveillance creates docile bodies – prisoners who because they believe they may be watched at any time, conform to the rules and regulations asked of them – in a sense controlling themselves. As Foucault argues, "He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power...he becomes the principle of his own subjection" (1995, p. 202). In this way, it does not matter if the prisoner is being watched in reality, it is enough for the prisoner to believe that they are. As Foucault states, "Power has its principle not so much in a person as in certain concerted distribution of bodies, surfaces, lights, gazes; in an arrangement whose internal mechanisms produce the relation in which individuals are caught up" (ibid). For Foucault, this is the perfect exercise of power because "it can reduce the number of those who exercise it, while increasing the number on whom it is exercised" (1995, p. 206). The panoptic schema suggests that surveillance is built into a system and is not simply undertaken by individual people (Doyle, 2011, p. 289). In the panopticon prison, the prisoners are the ones who are being watched however, in *Scot Squad*, it is the guards (police) who are under surveillance via the mockumentary camera. In this case, the camera acts as the guard in the tower. The camera could be focused on a particular character at any given time and therefore the panoptic schema would suggest that any character would behave according to their societal and occupational roles. The characters in *Scot Squad* complicate this by displaying behaviour that does not conform to these roles.

As previously stated, the panopticon structure could be used for a variety of buildings such as schools and hospitals, not just prison. Foucault argues, "Whenever one is dealing with a multiplicity of individuals on whom a task or a particular form of behaviour must be imposed, the panoptic schema may be used" (1995, p. 205). Here

Foucault moves away from the concrete structure of the panopticon to how the panoptic schema might be applicable to other institutions and situations other than prison. The panoptic schema is one which has been adopted to explain a more contemporary system of surveillance, the CCTV network (Boyne, 2000; Koskela, 2000, 2003; Lyon, 2001, 2007; Norris, 2006; Kietzmann and Angell, 2010). It is clear from the description of the Panopticon that the guard's potential to see the prisoners is of primary import. As David Lyon explains, in the Panopticon, "the ocular is privileged over other kinds of knowing" (1994, p. 205). This privileging of the visual has been identified as one of the problems of applying the panoptic schema to understanding modern instances of surveillance (Lyon 1994; Elmer, 2003; Koskela, 2003; Caluya, 2010).

The Panoptic Schema of the CCTV network

Given that the panopticon is meant to induce prisoners to control themselves, the panoptic schema has become a useful model for the specific aspect of surveillance of CCTV cameras that populate our many of our public spaces. Lyon suggests that because TV and CCTV are both visual observational media that they "appear to be made for each other" (2006, p. 46). Since their introduction in the 1970s, CCTV systems have rapidly spread across the world. While, "The exact number of cameras in most countries is debateable, [...] the unassailable truth is that there are many cameras, their numbers grow daily, they are increasingly integrated, and their technological abilities to see are becoming more sophisticated" (Haggerty, 2012, p. 241). In 2007, it was believed that the UK had 1/5th of the world's CCTV cameras (Lyon, 2007, p. 39) and in 2013, it was reported that there was 1 CCTV camera for every 11 people in Britain (Barrett, 10 July 2013, np). These cameras are more likely to be located in urban spaces with higher populations rather than rural areas. Although the specific numbers have been debated, "CCTV has become a 'normalized' feature of British urban life" (Norris, 2012, p. 252).

The advantages of CCTV echo the advantages of the panoptic schema that Foucault outlined. He argued that police power, "in order to be exercised… had to be given the instrument of permanent, exhaustive, omnipresent surveillance; capable of making all visible as long as it could itself remain invisible" (Foucault, 1995, p. 214). Theoretically, people under the surveillance of the CCTV cameras would follow the rules of the space the camera was placed. This would not only limit the amount of crime but also limit the amount of police officers needed to patrol public spaces. It would also keep people (police and citizens) safer because there is no need for physical confrontation (Koskela, 2003, p. 303). And while most of the CCTV cameras in operation

merely record the visual, "It is, however, worth noting that many surveillance systems include loudspeakers which can mediate messages to the public" (Ainley, 1998, p. 88 as cited by Koskela, 2003, p. 297). This would allow messages from CCTV operatives to be delivered to citizens within ear shot of the loudspeaker and to possibly effect their behaviour in a positive way.

However, some studies have shown them to be ineffective (Palmer, 2003; Lyon, 2006; Norris, 2012) which makes their continued usage intriguing. Norris argues that despite its failure, CCTV has become a globally widespread phenomenon for three reasons: a general disillusionment with the ability of governments and justice systems to deal with crime (2012, p. 257); in areas with a lot of CCTV, it has been paid for by other government agencies and not the police (ibid); CCTV is more than just about policing, it's conservative and focused on the maintenance of the status quo (p. 258). The use of CCTV can be seen as a symbolic gesture of safety to the public. It communicates that an area is being looked after with relatively little involvement with the actual police. In the UK, Lyon cites the James Bulger case as "a symbolic moment of reassurance about the utility of CCTV" because the footage of him being led to his death helped capture the killers (2007, p. 39). Ironically, it is this incident that also led people to think about the futility of the CCTV system because it did not stop the murder from occurring (Palmer, 2003, p. 31).

The Limitations of the Panoptic Schema

Despite the fact that the Panopticon has been linked to the CCTV network in a variety of literature (Lyon, 1994, 2001, 2007; Boyne, 2000; Koskela, 2000, 2003; Norris, 2006; Kietzmann and Angell, 2010), there are limits to how well this schema fits all aspects of surveillance. The limits of the panoptic schema for understanding contemporary surveillance centre around three main issues: its privileging and centrality of the visual; the lack of resistance; and the reliance on the gaze being from the few to the many. The first area of criticism is that the panoptic schema does not consider other methods of surveillance not based on the gaze. Indeed, it has become more and more limiting as surveillance has become more advanced and less about just seeing (Doyle, 2011, p. 289). Modern surveillance is not only limited to watching but is often about listening and the monitoring of data (dataveillance) (Lyon, 2007, p. 16). It is mainly the widespread use of CCTV cameras, not the whole idea of surveillance itself that has been linked to a contemporary panoptic structure (Lyon, 1994). *Scot Squad's* tools of surveillance include a mix of low-tech surveillance strategies such as undercover

officers, and 999 calls, and high-tech surveillance equipment including CCTV cameras, dash and body cameras. *Scot Squad* also includes a scene about biometric data gathering with a retinal scanner and the difficulty in using such equipment.

The second area of criticism focusses on the idea of resistance and whether surveillance produces the kind of docile bodies Foucault argues. Indeed, Lyon argues that "The most panoptic circumstances do not necessarily produce the most docile bodies" citing a study by Rhodes in which she finds that while it might work in theory, in practice, not all prisoners 'behave' in the panoptic schema (2006, p. 6). He explains that prisoners who self-harmed did not stop self-harming rather they made themselves more visible when doing it as an act of rebellion (ibid). By not 'behaving' (self-harming), prisoners actively resist the panoptic schema. These prisoners invite the gaze by making a spectacle of themselves and therefore resist the panoptic schema that suggests that simply by being looked at, they will conform. Resistance can occur with CCTV. Besides hiding just outside of the view of the CCTV camera, people can disguise themselves with hats and masks. Some people can openly defy laws in full view of the camera such as in the case of 'streakers' at sporting events. *Scot Squad* represents the rebellion against CCTV through its acknowledgement of the CCTV's ubiquity and ineffectiveness. Several instances in the programme reveal that despite knowing that the camera is catching their behaviour, the characters continue to do what they want. In fact, as I shall go on to explain, in some cases the presence of a camera is an incitement to misbehave.

Finally, the third area of criticism focusses on the primary idea of the panopticon that the few (guard) watch the many (prisoners). As stated earlier, the prisoners are unable to see the guards and this lack of reciprocal gaze is part of what makes the panoptic schema work. In the case of *Scot Squad,* this dynamic is represented through an inversion with the police being the focus of the look. This sets up a dynamic in which the many viewers of the mockumentary are watching the few police officers of the USAF and the many viewers of *Scot Squad* watching the few actors. Indeed, in the case of the television, it is often the many (television viewers) who watch the few (celebrities and actors). In contemporary surveillance societies, rather than only a system of panoptic surveillance, there is a synoptic one as well.

The Synoptic Schema
Another system of surveillance to explore in the discussion of surveillance and television is the synoptic schema. According to Aaron Doyle, it has become one of the most prominent ways to theorise the role of the media in surveillance studies (2011, p.

289). In response to Foucault's panoptic schema, Thomas Mathiesen argues that with the development of modern mass media, not only have the few been able to see the many, like in the case of the panopticon, but the many have been able to see the few (1997, p. 219). Mass media enables many people to watch a select number of people. He is not arguing to replace panopticism with synopticism but rather insists that they have developed together and continue to work in unison therefore creating the viewer society (1997, pessim). Mathiesen argues that panopticism and synopticism have "developed on the basis of a joint technology" citing Big Brother in George Orwell's *1984* where "through a screen in your living room you saw Big Brother, just as Big Brother saw you" (1997, p. 223). While he recognizes that contemporary society is not as advanced as that, there are still surveillance systems that can be used both ways – synoptically and panoptically. For example, Mathiesen explains that, now television viewers can buy things that are advertised through the phone or internet (synoptic – the many looking at the few) while that the same time, those same viewers' transactions will be monitored to see who they are, and how, and if, they pay (panoptic – the few looking at the many) (1997, p. 223). In the synopticon, power is located both within the individuals who appear on screen but also the "broader hidden agenda of political or economic interests" (1997, p. 226). Media personalities have the ability to present and filter information, produce news and suggest and avoid topics thus having the power to control the discourse (ibid). In this regard, who is allowed access to the media to speak also reveals a power dimension. Those who have been allowed to speak through the mass media have traditionally been institutional elites. As Mathiesen argues, men from higher class backgrounds with power in areas such as politics, private industry or public bureaucracy tend to be allowed more access to the media then others (1997, p. 227). *Scot Squad* represents this limitation through who is allowed to speak directly to the camera. Although the members of the public featured in the police officer's interactions are heard, they are not given the opportunity to comment on the situations that arise like the officers are. This clearly identifies that the power is with the officers, only to be undermined by a variety of other factors. The fact that only certain characters are allowed to speak is reflection of the genre's conventions wherein the format allows the subjects of the programme to speak directly to the camera but not anyone with whom they come into contact. *Scot Squad's* generic influences, which will be examined later, privilege some voices over others. However, in scenes with Volunteer Officer Ken Beattie, the members of the public that he interacts with are often allowed to speak

direct to camera, thus symbolising his diminished power as only a volunteer and not a real officer.

The Issue of Spectacle

The major difference between the two theories or schemas is the degree to which they see spectacle as an element of contemporary society. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, spectacle is defined as, "a specially prepared or arranged display of a more or less public nature (esp. one on a large scale), forming an impressive or interesting show or entertainment for those viewing it" and "a thing seen or capable of being seen; something presented to the view, esp. of a striking or unusual character; a sight" (OED.com, 2017). It is Foucault's contention that, "Our society is one not of spectacle but of surveillance" (1995, p. 217). In his writing about the panopticon, Foucault describes how spectacle was tied to medieval punishment and was being replaced "by subtler means of social control, exemplified in the self-disciplining routines of the Panopticon" (Lyon, 2006, p. 40). The days of parading the convict through the streets and executing him in public were replaced with the prison system that therefore reduced the spectacle of punishment.

For Mathiesen and his synoptic schema, spectacle is a key aspect of a mass-mediated society and he "contends that Foucault fails to acknowledge the rise of the spectacle in mass mediated societies where the many watch the few" (Caluya, 2010, p. 623). For example, there are many demonstrations of political and military exercises broadcast that are designed to prove a country's power to the rest of the world (Doyle, 2011, p. 288). Recently, the beheadings done by ISIS have been filmed and broadcast to the rest of the world through the Internet in order to instill fear of their power. In this case, mass media can be seen as a return to the spectacle of punishment that Foucault describes. According to Lyon with television, "So far from displacing the spectacle with self-discipline, the spectacle returns decisively, once more parading the body before audiences" (2006, p. 8).

Spectacle on television has been defined as "programming which is designed to be stared at, to be ogled, contemplated and scrutinised, to be gaped and gawked at" (Wheatley, 2016, p. 1). The spectacle of surveillance systems and the images they create, which are then broadcast on television, are a type of spectacular television and these images help to reinforce CCTV's power and use. Lyon cites Mark Andrejevic's *Reality TV: The Work of Watching* that argues how *Big Brother* "serves to domesticate and justify surveillance to both watchers and the watched" (2006, p. 6). Lyon argues that

the use of CCTV footage on shows like *Crime Beat* (BBC, 1995-1999) and *Eye Spy* (ITV, 1995-1998) serves to reinforce its usage because it is seen to be helping to deter crime or helping to solve crimes and catch criminals (2006, p. 46). That may be justification for broadcasting such material, however, as I have already shown in the first chapter, more often than not the footage is used only for spectacle (Biressi and Nunn, 2005). Lyon argues that on these reality shows, "There is a reward for displaying your body and its activities. It is gratifying to be watched; close surveillance is destigmatized" (2006, p. 7). This destigmatisation has been helpful in the proliferation of CCTV (closed circuit television) cameras in major cities around the world. Paul Mason argues that this desire to be watched might actually be a reaction to the constant surveillance (2002, p. 7). However, while in the case of reality television like *Big Brother*, subjects have consented to being watched, public citizens may not have – at least explicitly. As Lyon explains, "Equally many who are under the panoptic gaze are not informed or have not consented to having their lives exposed to view" (2006, 46). Not every one who appears on television needs to consent to their image being shown. Consent is not required from members of the public who are caught on camera if they are not the focus. *Scot Squad* represents the use of the panoptic schema through the police characters who use CCTV and other surveillance equipment to encourage the proper behaviour of the masses. On the other hand, its mockumentary form operates like a synoptic schema allowing the masses, in this case the audiences of the programme, to watch the police.

The Generic Influences in Scot Squad

Scot Squad parodies previous reality crime and emergency service programmes (*Cops [Fox, Spike 1989 -], Traffic Cops [BBC, Channel 5 2003-], Brit Cops/Cop Squad [Bravo, Channel 1, Sky 2008-]*) and the docusoap format *(Driving School [BBC, 1997], Airport [BBC, 1996-2005])*. Reality crime programmes rely "heavily on amateur, CCTV or police footage to present a montage of criminality and emergency services drama and, unlike law and order programming, they make little claim to help prevent or solve crime" unlike the true crime television programming of the 1980s and 1990s (Biressi and Nunn, 2005, p. 120). Both types of programming can include first-person witness testimony, reconstructions, commentary from presenters, and expert statements from police or other emergency service personnel (Dovey, 2000). However, reality crime and emergency services programming, "constitute a new spectacle of criminality in which it is not the punishment [*as in the case of medieval punishment mine**] but the scene (seen) of the crime itself which is present and made highly visible in the public sphere"

(Biressi and Nunn, 2005, p. 120). Using Linda Hutcheon's definition of parody as "imitation with a crucial difference", *Scot Squad* can be seen as a parody of the reality crime genre through its imitation of police officers out on parole dealing with the public. The crucial difference here is not only the fact that *Scot Squad* is a fictional representation of that format but also that the nature of the crimes investigated are insignificant and fail to generate the spectacular images reality crime programmes often employ. Jon Dovey argues that these programmes are "strongly narrativized in ways that conform to conventional fictional police dramas or to the form of melodrama" (2000, p. 81) which links with *Scot's Squad's* other parodied format – docusoap.

Docusoaps are "a form in which traditional documentary shooting techniques are aligned with editing practices more associated with popular drama or soap opera" (Mills, 2004, p. 70). Docusoaps tend to focus on more entertaining subjects than might be found in traditional documentaries (ibid). Docusoaps incorporate the observational style of cinema vérité including handheld cameras, interviews, and actions captured 'on the fly' and "use the day-to-day chronology of popular drama" (Dovey, 2000, p. 133). Each narrative strand in *Scot Squad* is contained within the episode, with a closed end to the story. The police docusoaps include surveillance footage not filmed by the programme's camera crew including dashboard camera footage and CCTV footage. Like soap opera, docusoaps have multiple, character-led storylines and are usually set around one core location (ibid). *Scot Squad* parodies docusoaps through its imitation of the day in the life narrative with its crucial difference being the fact that it is filmed in mockumentary style.

Mockumentary television programmes are ones that are meant to look a documentary. At some point in the beginning of the series, the programme acknowledges the reason for the look of the programme, indicating that a documentary is being made about a typical office (*The Office* [BBC 2001-2003]), border security (*Borderline* [Channel 5, 2016-]) or in this case, a police squad. In *Scot Squad's* premiere episode, the voice over announces, "join us as we tail the teams trailing the many terrains of the tartan territory" to explain the reason for the cameras following this squad. Combined with the docusoap style, this voice over suggests the making of a documentary and that the footage we are going to see has been captured by documentary cameras. It is the voice-over's excessive use of alliteration that directs the viewer to see the programme as a mockumentary rather than a documentary.

Just like there are many types of documentaries, there are different types of mockumentaries. *Scot Squad* parodies the types of documentary called cinema vérité. Cinema vérité (film truth) is an observational style of documentary blended with more interactive elements such as interviews and/or voice-over (Bruzzi, 2006, p. 120). Cinema vérité is a more interactive mode of documentary than the more strictly observational direct cinema because of the intervention by the filmmaker in the filming process (Nichols, 1991; Beattie, 2004; Biressi and Nunn, 2005; Bruzzi, 2006). In any case, cinema vérité maintains the observational convention of "a sense of underlying spatial or temporal continuity" (Nichols, 1991, p. 40). Cinema vérité also relies on juxtaposition to make points and uses "speech overheard, synchronous sound and long takes" (Nichols, 1991, p. 38), it also includes direct address in the form of interviews, often uses voice over and occasionally acknowledges the production through reflexive elements. Practitioners of cinema vérité felt that it was a more truthful mode of documenting events (Biressi and Nunn, 2005, p. 41). Cinema vérité's reflexivity allowed the mode to question its relationship to the truth because it is upfront about the nature of its construction by showing elements of the production. Cinema vérité's reflexivity is a style that is easily exploited by the mockumentary.

In *Scot Squad*, the television sitcom meets the mockumentary to create a format termed by Brett Mills as comedy vérité (2004). Comedy vérité then is an "adoption of a vérité style for comedic purposes" (Hight, 2010, p. 181), but "it also indicates a use of television comedy to interrogate the processes and representations of media forms, in a manner similar to the aggressively involved characteristics of cinema vérité" (Mills, 2004, p. 75). According to Ethan Thompson, "comedy vérité combines the 'don'ts' of observational documentary (manipulation, interactivity, effects) with its claim to capturing reality as it unfolds in order to create a televisual masquerade with, at least in some cases, successful comic effects" (2007, p. 67). Comedy vérité comes into popularity in the UK after the docusoaps that were popular in the 1980s and 1990s. *The Office* is oft-cited as the epitome of this style although evidence of the style can be seen in earlier programmes in the US such as *The Larry Sanders Show* (HBO, 1992-1998), and *Marion and Geoff* (BBC, 2001-2002) in the UK. The mockumentary docusoap series continues to be shown on television. Since 2014, there have been several examples such as *W1A* (BBC, 2014-), *Borderline, People Just Do Nothing*, and *Hospital People*, to name a few. According to Craig Hight, "The emergence of these series, where a mockumentary premise is central to the aesthetics and agenda of a sequential and layered narrative,

suggests that the discourse has become naturalised within the mainstream of television narrative styles, rather than lapsing as an occasional gimmick or stunt style" (2010, p. 11). Hight sees comedy vérité and mockumentary series as overlapping as comedy vérité "is broad enough to apply to any number of television comedy series that do not qualify as mockumentaries, but in which production processes are still marked by hand-held camera work, naturalistic sound and lighting, and the absence of laugh tracks, and that escape the conventional stage-bound sitcom" (Hight, 2010, 182).

Scot Squad's Aesthetics

The episode I will examine is the third episode of the first series originally broadcast Monday November 10, 2014 on BBC Scotland. As is typical of docusoap, there are multiple narrative strands, woven together to create the episode. The episode opens and closes with Miekelson, who has four scenes in the episode, all of which are direct address to the camera or interviewer. His scenes centre on explanation of the crime statistics, creating a slogan for the police force, the benefits of the Scottish legal system and the difference between morality and legality. While most of the scenes involving the officers exhibit a classic narrative structure of introduction, climax, and resolution, Miekelson's scenes are often one-off scenes that could be shown in any order. Their juxtaposition with other scenes often result in a comedic comment made about the USPF. The second narrative strand involves Officers McLaren and Fletcher as they capture a drug dealer named 'Wee Turkey' (David Ireland) who tells them he is undercover, accompany him on a drug deal, have snacks and conversation in the patrol car, and finally admit to the camera that the undercover police officer was indeed a drug dealer who was arrested by other police officers the next day. The third, fifth and seventh strands (numbered for their location in the episode's timeline) are only one scene each and consist of the IT expert Katemo (Wayne Mazadza) testing out various surveillance technology, LeBeau offering advice on making 999 calls and Beattie trying out his new body camera. The fourth and sixth strands are two scenes each. The fourth strand begins with Millar taking a video messaging call from Bobby and finishes with Bobby coming into the station to tell her about his colonic irrigation. And the sixth comprises scenes of Singh and McKirdy stopping a car driving with a bike on the roof and a scene about posters on lampposts. The last narrative strand, the eighth follows rural cops, McIntosh and MacKay investigating a chicken theft and then staking out the farm and discovering the culprit. The classic structure of each of these narrative strands

suggests a day in the life for the episode, with scenes of Miekelson peppered throughout.

The aesthetics of surveillance combine with the aesthetics of comedy vérité to create the look of this mockumentary series. Surveillance aesthetics, as illustrated in the literature review, are the various elements that suggest surveillance visually. The title sequence features some of the surveillance aesthetics that will be used throughout the episodes. It includes time-stamped surveillance footage of youth fighting, shots of the members of the United Scottish Police Force apprehending criminals, pixelated images of suspects' faces and a naked man, and a voice-over introducing the squad and the things we are likely to see. The title sequence features a black and white checkered map of Scotland over which police caution tape and road pylons are placed. The map outlines the area that the USPF cover – the area they watch over. The title sequence introduces viewers to some of the surveillance aesthetics that are included in the programme which include: body and dash camera footage; surveillance iconography; pixelated images to protect identities and constructed CCTV footage (figures – screen grabs of the title sequence). The surveillance aesthetics testify to the programme's connection with the reality crime genre and to a surveillance society. Also helping to create the look of the series is comedy vérité aesthetics which include: obvious handheld camera use, interviews and an acknowledgement of its own production. In episode 1.3, the comedy vérité aesthetics and the surveillance aesthetics work together, creating the look of the episode and working through issues of surveillance, privacy and protection.

One of the most recognisable traits of the comedy vérité aesthetic is the use of the handheld camera. The handheld camera's invention allowed cinema vérité filmmakers to follow action rather than have the action take place in front of a stationary camera. Prior to this invention, there were places that a camera could not go because it was immobile or too large. Because of the lack of a tripod, images often appear shaky and roaming and because of the presumed fly on the wall shooting style, images are aggressively reframed through focus changes, and abrupt camera movements attempting to capture spontaneous action. In the reality crime and emergency services programmes, camera crews follow police officers in the pursuit of criminals. The camera operators, in trying to capture the action, will move quickly, either through movement of the camera or movement of the operator themselves. This movement is suggestive of capturing a spontaneous and unplanned action and works to suggest that the incident is real and immediate. *Scot Squad* includes this type of filming

in its parody of the reality crime genre. For example, in this episode, while on patrol, McLaren and Fletcher are on the lookout for a suspicious individual as a result of a tip-off. When they see the individual, 'Wee Turkey', they stop the car, get out and start walking. When 'Wee Turkey' starts running away from the officers, the image becomes shaky and jumpy as McLaren runs after him. This type of shot is a recurring one in many reality crime programmes and its representation here works to demonstrate its imitation of the genre, a necessary component of parody.

Some shots are obstructed by items in the frame, suggesting that the camera was unable to get a closer or better view of someone/something or that the camera was purposely obscured in order to hide its filming. Some shots in *Scot Squad* are obstructed by the corners of walls, or slightly closed doors. This happens in several instances in the episode. The obstructions give testimony to the immediacy and truth of the action implying that the action happened organically or quickly and that the camera operator had no time to set up an unobstructed shot. When Millar is introduced, she is shot from behind while she is typing on the computer through a grid-like wall. The behind the back shot indicates that the camera follows her as she goes about her job. The shot through the grid, centres Millar with masking on both sides suggesting either that the space itself is not conducive for filming or that Millar is unaware of the fact that she is being filmed, with the grid partially obscuring the camera from view. This shot also traps her between the two sides of the grid which is indicative of her entrapment behind the front desk of the station where she is always seen. This obstructed vision of the action reoccurs when she is talking to Bobby on the webcam. From the front, when the shot is of Millar's face, there is a white blur on the left side of the screen suggesting that something is in the way of the viewfinder. This 'imperfect' shot supports the idea that this incident is spontaneous giving the camera crew no time to set the shot up properly. This occurs again when MacKay and McIntosh visit the home of the man who is reporting a theft of a chicken with news from their stakeout. Their conversation in the kitchen is partially obscured by a wall, again suggesting that the space is not conducive for filming or that the camera crew wish to remain partially hidden.

The use of a handheld camera, especially one that is partially hidden, can be suggestive of an inquisitive or investigating camera. In Hight's discussion of the police mockumentary *Operation Good Guys*, he describes that some of the filming was obvious to the subjects but that other "surreptitious filming" was indicated by filming through glass walls, around corners and down stairwells which indicated that the subjects did not

know they were being filmed (2010, p. 237). This surreptitious filming can indicate that the subjects do not know they are being filmed, that they are being spied on, or that the camera is intending to get some sort of information that the subject does not necessarily want to be filmed. This is made clear with the single scene of the IT technician, Katemo testing out his many surveillance devices. The first shot of him and his team is through an office window, with the team not seeming to notice the camera in any way, an example of the surveillance gaze. The shots include close ups of equipment and scenes of Katemo demonstrating what looks to be virtual reality headgear. On the wall behind him is a sign that reads, "I am a ~~programmar~~. I am a ~~programmor~~. I write code." The surveillance gaze from outside of the office window reveals the misspelling and the lack of concern about matters other than computer code.

Because some of the shots are not through windows or glass walls, the fact that some are, gives the impression that the subject of the shot is unaware that they are being watched by this camera, at this moment, thus replicating the panoptic schema. In the case mentioned above with the theft of the chicken, although McIntosh and MacKay are aware that they are being filmed when they interview the farmer in his house, they may not be aware that another camera is filming them through a window from outside the house shown in subsequent shots. In this case, the additional camera with its surreptitious filming acts as the surveillance gaze. This gaze does not give the viewer any additional information about the scene or the characters within, bar the fact that the farmer keeps knickknacks on his window sill, however, what it does do, is stress the surveillance aesthetic which contributes to the acceptability of surveillance culture.

While not obstructions, long shots are also indicative of a camera crew that cannot get closer or waiting to film unobtrusively. The camera in *Scot Squad* is, at times, from across fields or roads capturing the officers in long shot rather than the usual medium shots. These shots allow the camera to remain apart from the action and thus able to capture incidents without it being obvious to the officers that they are being filmed. These long shots are also used for comedic purposes illustrated throughout the series. In episode 3.5, when Miekelson eats his lunch outside, the long shot of him sitting on the roundabout highlights just out of place he looks and how alone. A long shot here allows the camera to film this without drawing Miekelson's attention to the fact he is being watched. This long shot is another way, like most of his scenes where he is alone, to stress his distance from the rest of the officers and his public. Another

example occurs in episode 3.3, where McIntosh, in a long shot, chases a bakery thief across a field. The long shot preserves the distance between the thief and McIntosh and shows just how ridiculous the chase is. In this case, it could be argued that McIntosh is aware of being filmed as he continues chasing the thief. A police officer who is not being filmed might have long since given up but McIntosh is a very conscientious officer and is not likely to give up a suspected criminal.

Another element often present in comedy vérité, is the interview. Like cinema vérité, interviews are used to explain the narrative and add personal details and thoughts to the events. These questions are posed by someone usually off camera, although sometimes the voice of the interviewer is heard. During the interviews with the various members of the squad, their name and job title is put on screen with a small graphic underneath of police caution tape. The audience does not get to hear the questions asked by the camera crew but in some of the direct address to camera, it is obvious they have been asked a question. In the final scene with McLaren and Fletcher, McLaren explains that 'Wee Turkey' was a drug dealer and not an undercover cop as he had lead them to believe and was arrested by other officers. McLaren then says, "I don't feel foolish" which the audience can guess was an answer to a question about being tricked. In Beattie's interview about his new body camera, he starts the interview by saying, "Yes, your observation skills are correct" which indicates that he was responding to the interviewer noticing the camera on his chest. Responding to a presumed interviewer helps to stress the documentary style. Beattie's interview not only demonstrates his new camera, it also gives us insight into his personality. He says that his new camera is his best friend. In this way the interview acts as a sort of disclosure, which will be explored further in chapter four.

The last element of comedy vérité evidenced in *Scot Squad* is, like cinema vérité, *Scot Squad* includes references to its own production with glimpses of the camera crew or equipment used for filming in the shot. In episode 2.3, a camera operator is caught in the shot when Singh and McKirdy are escorting an aggressive suspect into the patrol car. There is a reflection of the camera in the window of the car when Singh and McKirdy arrest the man who is driving with a bike and rider on top of his car. Throughout the series, these moments do not happen very often and are usually quite subtle. These moments serve to give further evidence of its cinema vérité inspiration. The fact that these moments are few and far between go some way in presenting a relationship between the camera crew and the officers as a distant one. As

I shall go on to discuss later, the relationship between the programme makers and its subjects is an area that is explored in many mockumentaries.

These comedy vérité elements combine with the following surveillance aesthetics to create the look of the programme. One element of the surveillance aesthetic is footage from body and dash cameras identified with source and date stamp. In this episode, Beattie receives his own body camera and is seen in front of the mirror practicing acting tough, and singing. He tells the viewer that his 'Ken-eye' will see what he sees and we get a series of shots displaying that – mostly of him being belittled by the public. The shots from his body camera are indicated through the use of date, time and name stamps in the bottom right hand corner. This documentation provides contextual evidence for the images that the camera captures. Body and dashboard cameras are used as evidence should any of the citizen's interactions with the police need to be examined. The real-world use of these cameras are meant to protect the citizens as much as the police. The camera's placement on Beattie's chest also frames the things in its field of vision at a slightly low angle. As I mentioned in the section on the synoptic schema, generally only certain people are allowed to speak to the camera in reality crime programmes. *Scot Squad* parodies this aspect of the genre through 'imitation with a crucial difference' by having the body camera on a volunteer officer instead of an actual police officer. Beattie's body cam footage depicts members of the public speaking directly to camera and harassing him. As a result of the camera's placement, the various members of the public who harass him are seen as slightly bigger and more authoritarian than the actual police officer himself. This depiction clearly mocks the conventional usage of the body camera, highlighting its ineffectiveness in this instance. This fits into the narrative of the volunteer officer as he is repeatedly taken advantage of because of his lower status as an officer and helpful, sweet nature. A recurring theme is the special relationship he has with the prostitutes and homeless who use him for things that he has to pay for out of his own money.

Another element of the surveillance aesthetic is the incorporation of the iconography of surveillance in the mise en scene. Similar to the iconography found in drama programming, things like posters of CCTV cameras, CCTV cameras mounted on walls, glass office walls and windows that are easy to see through, and surveillance equipment like retinal scanners, and web cams. The interior of the station seems to be comprised of a several glass partitions instead of walls. Both Miekelson's office and LeBeau's area are separated by glass walls allowing them to look out and others to look

in. Miekelson is most often filmed in his office, often sitting at his desk, with a computer off to the side. This computer has a webcam prominently displayed on top of the monitor. The handheld camera often shoots LeBeau through the glass as an establishing shot to her scenes. In this episode, several police officers are working with surveillance technology. Katemo tests out a retinal scanner while a webcam records him. Bobby and Millar talk through a video messaging system. The recurring imagery of surveillance iconography serves to help normalize surveillance culture.

Pixilation is another example of the surveillance aesthetic used in *Scot Squad.* As I have shown in the literature review, those who do not give consent for their image to be used on television will often be pixelated if producers chose to broadcast the footage anyway. These can be people accused of a crime, witnesses or just citizens who wish not to be on television. Pixilation is also used to protect the viewer from potentially graphic or unsettling images. As mentioned earlier, a naked man being walked into the cells by Millar in the opening credit sequence is pixelated presumably because he is naked although it could be that he denied consent. This is a straightforward use of pixilation. A more complex instance of pixilation happens later in the episode. Miekelson's introductory scene opens with shots from around his office. In one, a picture in a frame behind his desk shows him standing next to someone who is pixelated. The implication is that whoever is standing beside him did not consent to being shown on camera. The reason for this is unclear. As it is often the case that innocent bystanders to crime would be less likely to want their image pixelated, it is likely that this picture of Miekelson is with a criminal. Is it more embarrassing to be a criminal and taking a picture with the Chief of police or the other way around? The pixilation here also illustrates the degree to which the aesthetics of surveillance have permeated television comedy. This aspect of the reality crime programming is parodied in *Scot Squad* through this unclear usage. It is an imitation of the pixilation that is usually done however, its use on this photograph in the Chief's office is a crucial difference to the way it is normally used in the reality crime genre. This pixilation highlights the use of pixilation in crime and emergency services programming and the extent that these shows must go to protect identities to film and broadcast what they want.

An obvious example of the surveillance aesthetic is the use of constructed CCTV footage. This footage, or what I term, 'fauxtage', is a fictional sequence that is constructed to resemble the look of other televised but real CCTV footage. It is usually black and white, grainy and is often date and time stamped. In the introductory

sequence before the credits, CCTV footage is used to show examples of violent behaviour across Scotland connecting the programme to its non-fiction equivalent. However, CCTV 'fauxtage' is not used very often in the programme beyond the occasional exterior establishing shots. In one episode, CCTV fauxtage shows McLaren and Fletcher approach bouncers outside of a nightclub through an overhead, slightly grainy shot with a time stamp, mimicking real CCTV footage. When Beattie apprehends a drug dealer in another episode, the dealer points out that "you know there's CCTV round here, mate, they'll see that" when he makes it look like Beattie has taken a bribe. Although CCTV fauxtage is used, most of the scenes contain images shot from the handheld mockumentary camera or made to look as if they are coming from dashboard and other cameras set up in the police cars.

Aesthetically, *Scot Squad* makes an effort to appear as a reality crime/police docusoap. However, there are times when this appeal to reality is sacrificed for the sake of comedy. For example, an observational documentary would be less likely to use montage editing techniques in favour of continuity editing to preserve the sense of real space and time. However, like other docusoaps, *Scot Squad* uses thematic montage to create humour. For example, when Beattie is trying on his body camera for the first time, we get a series of shots from the body camera that display the public's reaction to him, juxtaposed with shots of him 'rehearsing' in front of a bathroom mirror. The juxtaposition of these shots in a montage reveals the extreme difference between Beattie being tough and the way he is perceived by members of the public which is crucial for the scene's comedic purpose. These are edited into a montage rather than shown in the context of an ordinary day and thus do not conform to the cinema vérité ethos comedy vérité strives to maintain. In another episode, McLaren investigates a situation where home's garden is full of dinner rolls. He is shown being hit with rolls and donuts in a series of jump cuts highlighting his reactions to being hit which is done for comedic purposes. The juxtaposition between scenes is also often a source of humour. In the premiere episode, Millar has been left with a large bunch of balloons that are the property of a balloon seller at the front desk, making it difficult for her to manoeuvre around the area. The scene is farcical as she attempts to move behind the desk, answer the phone and do her job with the balloons in her way. Juxtaposed with this scene is a cut to Miekelson explaining, "it's dignified, the uniform". This edit clearly makes a joke about how undignified it can actually be in practice and highlights the gap between the higher ups and those on the front line.

One of the conventions of the mockumentary is its reflexivity, an element that is often foregrounded through the depiction of the relationship between those doing the filming and those being filmed. Hight argues, "A key aspect of any interpretation of a mockumentary series involves a series of issues associated with the nature of the film or television makers who play a role within the fiction itself, and how their relationship with other characters is constructed" (2010, p. 202). As mentioned earlier, although we do occasionally see shots of the equipment used to film, we never see the people who are supposed to be filming and interviewing the people. Hight explains, "A key aspect of mockumentary narrative is often the choices made in representing the nature of the fictional filmmakers' relationship with their apparent subjects, including the types of access that have been granted for the camera crew, or other types of evidence that they appear to have collated in order to construct an impression of their subject" (2010, p. 203). In terms of access, the camera crew following the various officers seems to have unlimited access to people's homes. The officers never ask the public if they mind the cameras coming into their home and the cameras are sometimes inside even before the officers themselves. When MacKay and McIntosh investigate the case of the missing chicken, they are invited into the farmer's home and the camera watches from inside the house as they enter suggesting that the camera had access to the interior of the home before the officers were granted that permission. In this way, the camera's placement suggests that the relationship between the camera crew is stronger with the public than it is with the officers. Similarly, in the premiere episode when Fletcher and McLaren are thrown out of a house from an elderly woman who they believed to be dead, the shot of them leaving is from inside the house suggesting that while she may have kicked out the cops, she allowed the camera crew to stay behind. These moments clearly speak to the constructed nature of this programme and, indeed, the non-fiction genre it is parodying. In this case, the placement of the camera works in service of the comedy. In order to capture McIntosh and MacKay's reactions as they enter the house, the camera must be in front of them. Similarly, the humour of having McLaren and Fletcher kicked out of the woman's house is enhanced by the placement of the camera on her side. It also makes the police officers seem that much more inept. It might be saying something about surveillance too. In this case, it seems as if the woman is more comfortable with the camera in her house (and its operators) than the police themselves.

Scot Squad's Themes

The themes relating to surveillance in *Scot Squad* centre around three main areas: how the police encourage surveillance behaviours and support surveillance culture; questions about who is watched and why; and the various failures of surveillance.

Out of the eight narrative strands in this episode, only Singh and McKirdy's story does not include any specific reference to surveillance culture. The USAF supports and encourages surveillance behaviours through various schemes to entice people to watch others and report on them, technologies to aid surveillance, and there are repeated references to the elements of surveillance culture (watching, looking, and reporting). The voice-over often makes remarks about how the Scot Squad are watching over the citizens of Scotland, with statements such as, "Millar keeps watch from the front line" (3.3). Miekelson often talks about policing and surveillance issues in his interviews. He discusses the judicial system in Scotland and how it compares to other justice systems. This interview is composed of shots from a few different angles suggesting that multiple cameras were filming. He states,

> I think the "not proven" is a very valuable plank in the justice system, because basically, guilty - fine we've got you, bang to rights. Not guilty - there's nothing on you. Not proven...we know, we know but we just can't prove it...this time. So that's what we're saying with "not proven." You know we're saying, "Fair play, fair play, mate, you've pulled the wool over our eyes this time".

Here, although talking about the benefits of the Scottish legal system over others, Miekelson still evokes the idea of watching and being watched as a crucial aspect of police work. This is evidenced by the 'I'm watching you' gesture he makes with his hands and the reference he makes to pulling the wool over his eyes. This comment also suggest that the legal system failed in some way because of their lack of surveillance; they would have had the requirements to prove guilt if they could have seen the offense. In addition to the various references to surveillance culture, surveillance technology is a key element in four of the narrative strands. Katemo demonstrating the retinal scanner, Millar and Bobby chatting over video-messaging, Ken and his body camera, and LeBeau in the 999 call centre, all use surveillance technology as part of their jobs. These technologies are meant to aid the police in their duties by allowing police to identify people, as in the case of the retinal scanner, while also encouraging citizens to adopt surveillance behaviours like reporting suspicious behaviour to 999. Again, the

repeated references, visual and narrative, to surveillance culture and technology help to normalise them as aspects of our present society.

In *Scot Squad*, it is not just the police watching the citizens but citizens are encouraged to watch each other. It is also a practice that the police wish to cultivate. In an interview with LeBeau, she encourages calls to 999 reporting crimes but only if you are not committing a crime yourself in the reporting of it saying "Report the crime, don't be the crime". The encouragement of calls to 999 turns everyone into watchers and can be seen in the real world as well. For example, recently the *Mail Online* included an article about a newly available mobile app that encourages users to look for vehicles that are parked illegally, take a picture of them and send it to the app in exchange for a small payment (Dunn, 3 Feb 2017, np). However, in *Scot Squad's* parody most of the calls to 999 are nuisance calls. Although nuisance calls are a real-life concern for 999 operators, the reality crime genre tends to highlight real crimes and as such, the focus on nuisance calls is a critical difference. For example, prior to LeBeau's interview, we watch her take a call reporting the sighting of zombies. Officers of the USPF are not immune to the surveillance gaze either. As stated earlier when Officer Beattie attempts to apprehend a suspected drug dealer, he is worried about it looking like he is taking a bribe on the CCTV camera. Similarly, in this episode, McLaren looks around for cameras or witnesses when 'Wee Turkey' drops to the pavement to avoid arrest.

The second theme relates to questions about who is watched and why, and what constitutes suspicious behaviour**.** Theoretically with CCTV, "the act of surveillance becomes more democratic: all become equally subject to the surveillance gaze – but in reality, categorical suspicion is intensified" (Norris, 2002, p. 263). The CCTV cameras are democratic in that if something is in view of the camera, it will be filmed. As Lyon states, "Surveillance is universal in the sense that no one is immune from the gaze" (2007, p. 56). However, while everything might be filmed, what gets looked at is selected footage, "not everyone is monitored in the same way or for the same purpose" (Haggerty & Ericson, 2006, p. 14). CCTV operatives are more focused on suspicious behaviour but what is considered as suspicious is vague and ill-defined. Individual CCTV operators must make choices about what they consider suspicious behaviour from a vast amount of footage. As a result, "selection for targeted surveillance is, at the outset, differentiated by the classic sociological variables of age, race and gender (Norris, 2002, p. 265). Suspicious behaviour is behaviour that can be summed up as being "out of place", "out of time" or orienting their behaviour away from the camera through avoidance or

masking (Norris, 2002, p. 265). McLaren and Fletcher see "a suspicious individual with a beard holding a holdall and acting well dodgy in a nice neighbourhood" according to the voice over. The voice over also indicates that the PCs' presence here was a result of a tip-off. The tip-off suggests that people have been watching this man. He is suspicious because he is acting 'well dodgy' and has a beard but what 'well dodgy' actually is, is never explained. His mere presence in the area (a clear example of being 'out of place') is enough to require that he is watched and approached by officers. The programme's slang description of the man acting 'well dodgy' instead of a detailed description of his actions continue the voice over as parody that has been seen since the credit sequence and signals the programme's comic intent. As McLaren approaches the man, he collapses, prompting McLaren to look around, look directly into the camera, hold his hands up and says, "I never touched him", obviously aware that he is being watched by the cameras either the ones filming the officers from the dashboard, the TV programme's cameras, or the CCTV cameras on the street.

The third theme is the various ways that the surveillance society can and does fail. *Scot Squad* suggests that there are many problems with surveillance in terms of how it is implemented and by whom. Surveillance can fail because of technology or human error but it can also be ineffective simply because it lacks the power to inspire the self-discipline, and docile bodies the panoptic structure of the CCTV network suggests.

The first source of these failures is the problems with technology. In this episode, IT expert, Samson Katemo tests out a retinal scanner. The voice-over claims, "Katemo's pioneering programming prowess permits police people to 'pace-ily' and punctually appease the apprehensive public" just before he demonstrates the scanner. Again, the alliteration here, even to the extent of having to create a word, is ridiculous enough to be seen as parody. As he starts to demonstrate the scanner, he puts his eyes up to the machine telling us how much simpler this is than logins and passwords. He activates the scanner and immediately jumps back. In a series of jump cuts, we see him clutch his eyes in pain and finally whisper, "It's too bright". The jump cuts indicate that time has passed before Katemo was able to speak. These jump cuts, another example of the manipulation of time and space which is antithetical to most observational formats, works in service of the comedy. Not only is the failure of the retinal scanner highlighted but the officers who work with and support surveillance technologies are mocked as well. In the following scene, Millar explains that the USPF is a forward-thinking organisation, keen to embrace new technologies before she receives a video call from

Bobby. Bobby's reason for calling Millar is to complain about the bins not being collected. When she informs him that that is council business, he attempts to show off his outfit but he is unable to find an appropriate distance from the camera in order to be seen clearly. In both cases, technology is shown to fail to do the job that it is supposed to do. In fact, all the surveillance technologies in this episode fail to some degree: the calls to 999 are not shown to be legitimate reporting of crimes, or asking for help; the retinal scanner is too bright; Bobby uses the video-messaging system to show off his outfit to Millar; and Beattie's body camera merely documents his antics in front of the mirror and his humiliation in public.

Human error also accounts for the many failures of surveillance. This is demonstrated clearly in the premiere episode as PCs McLaren and Fletcher break into an elderly woman's home believing her to be dead only to have her throw them out when she wakes up. They are shown outside of the house, looking inside the letter box and calling for the inhabitant. When they believe to be a smell coming from inside, McLaren attempts to break down the door only to be stopped by Fletcher who finds a key. Once inside, they locate a woman sitting in a chair and believe her to be dead. The dead woman finds the officers inside her kitchen, McLaren opening her cupboards and Fletcher writing down a recipe she finds, and orders them out of her house. Fletcher and McLaren make several mistakes in their assessment of people. In this episode, they easily believe the lies that 'Wee Turkey' tells simply because he is able to do flip between an Irish and Scottish accent. They actually end up going with 'Wee Turkey' to deal, thinking that they are helping in a sting operation. And while McLaren explains that he does not feel foolish even though he was duped, Fletcher chimes in to say she does.

The examination of human error and incompetency is common in mockumentary police shows. Hight discusses two mockumentary police shows *Operation Good Guys* (BBC2, 1997-2000) and *Reno 911!* which he argues, "both operate to subvert any suggestions of competency, impartiality and authority in their representations of law enforcement institutions" (2010, p. 235). In *Operation Good Guys*, "Instead of a highly professional, resourceful, intelligent, well-led and managed unit, the undercover squad reveal themselves to be more dangerous to innocent bystanders than are the criminals" (Hight, 2010, p. 239). The officers in *Scot Squad* are not more dangerous than the criminals they pursue however, all of the field operators seem unsure about the law at times**.** This seems to be because of the strange incidents they discover. While the voice-over makes it seem as if they are dealing with violent

crimes and aggressive criminals, often they are dealing with petty crime and nuisance calls or obscure situations that may not be crimes at all. For example, on patrol, Singh and McKirdy pull over a car that has a bike attached to the top of it with a rider on it. They both know it is wrong and unsafe, but McKirdy specifically does not know what law the rider is breaking and later in their interview they agree it is "a grey area". As mentioned earlier in episode 3.5, when McIntosh and MacKay give chase across an open field in pursuit of a bakery thief, both the criminal and the officers need to stop periodically to catch their breath. When a second suspect breaks free, McIntosh runs after him. In his interview, clearly out of breath, McIntosh states that it was easy and that he could have run after him all day. Both his breathless delivery of this statement and the visual evidence shot in long shot, as stated earlier, clearly demonstrate that this statement is not true. Not only did he have trouble apprehending the suspect, but his intense pursuit was perhaps overzealous given the nature of the crime.

The bureaucracy in the USPF is also shown to have its share of incompetence. Most of the scenes involving the Chief present him as incompetent and out of touch with his fellow officers. In episode 3.5, Miekelson says that goals of the USPF need to be achievable and exciting. He states, targets have to be "Something that's exciting enough to engage the public and excite them but something that's also achievable enough that we, as a force, can do it without that much effort." In the same episode, in the steering committee meeting, although stats show that crime is on the rise, he tries to explain them away arguing that they are only giving a *suggestion* that crime is higher. In an effort to spend his time more efficiently, the time and motion committee decide that Miekelson should have his hair cut in the office rather than spend his usual four hours doing it. The situation turns out to be impractical though because not only does he have trouble working around the hairdresser, he reveals confidential information to the hairdresser and the cameras. In this episode, Miekelson is trying to decide on a new slogan for the USAF. He shows the camera a series of cards, each with a slogan on it as he debates the merits of each one. His favourite, "We're there so you don't have to be there" is still not quite right – the repeating of the word there and the fact that you actually do have to be there if you call the police – being the main reasons why. He believes that they have settled on seven or eight of the words, just not the order that they should be in. These scenes depicts the incompetency of the USPF and ridiculousness of the bureaucracy in not just the fact that the slogans they have are terrible but also because Miekelson believes that they need to find 'this generation's

clunk, click' a campaign slogan designed to get people to wear their seatbelts in the 1970s, fronted by Jimmy Saville, which he believes, even after all we know about Saville, was a brilliant success.

The idea that seeing is not necessarily linked to self-discipline or the creation of docile bodies is also mocked. In episode 3.3 LeBeau is made team leader and is fine with the motivational aspects of the job but when she attempts to discipline someone with a messy desk, she realises that she actually has little power. She threatens to fire the employee but then confesses to the viewer in the interview that it turns out she has no power to fire people. Additionally, despite the fact that the employee was being watched, and very obviously by LeBeau, she does not amend her behaviour to fall in line. If the panoptic schema was working as it has been theorised to, the employee, because she was continually monitored, would not have had to be disciplined and would have kept her desk clean herself. In this case the schema does not work, it has failed to create the docile bodies that the USAF 999 call centre was after.

A common theme is that crimes that the officers are involved with are more likely to be petty crimes or strange occurrences rather than violent or high-stakes crimes. MacKay and McIntosh are more likely of the three field teams to encounter strange criminals or situations due to their rural placement. In this episode, they are called to a farm that has had a chicken stolen. The farmer believes it could be a large cat that has been cited in the area. MacKay and McIntosh stake out the farm and become spooked when they see what they believe to be the big cat. Coming in to speak to the farmer, and get away from being ravaged by a jaguar or panther, they are confronted by the farmer dressed up in a large cat suit. The farmer's goal was to increase sales of his farm's products by getting people interested in the story of the mysterious cat that terrorised the area. The farmer invites the gaze of the public and press while disguised because he believes it benefits him to do so. Tacked up on the farmer's kitchen bulletin board are various newspaper clippings of the mysterious cat, which not only illustrate the number of sightings, but also, parody the representation of mentally unbalanced criminals, usually serial killers, whose guilt and mental instability is proven by the shot of the wall of newspaper clippings.

Conclusion

Theorists argue that if people know that there is the potential that they are being watched, they will amend their behaviour to suit the situation they are in – the panoptic schema at work. Because of this, the (potential) gaze has been afforded power

to influence behaviour. In the panoptic schema, the gaze is from the few to the many. Prison guards, business managers, and CCTV operators are among the few who watch the many prisoners, employees and the public. The synoptic schema suggests the reverse – it is the many who watch the few – mainly through the mass media. The mass media, in this case television, allows the audience (the many) to watch the few (actors, celebrities, newscasters). In both cases, the gaze, or its potential helps to govern or discipline the watched.

This is the basis for the introduction, and continued use of, CCTV. The network of CCTV cameras mimics a panoptic structure where CCTV operators can watch the public in place of a physical police presence. These cameras not only allow operators to watch over places that could be areas in which crimes take place but their mere presence is meant to deter criminals from breaking the law in their vicinity. Hence, CCTV cameras are meant to stand in place for the tower of guards who have the ability to see into every cell of the panopticon structure.

CCTV is only one aspect of the surveillance society but it is one of the most visible aspects. The idea of watching and its association with discipline and behaviour is something that *Scot Squad* as a mockumentary police programme represents through parody. It uses surveillance aesthetics and the conventions of comedy vérité to illustrate themes about surveillance and the surveillance gaze. *Scot Squad's* response to the surveillance society then is to use the mechanisms of surveillance to expose, examine and critique it. It participates in the society that it parodies. This parody is one of "imitation with a crucial difference" based around homage rather than radical critique.

Scot Squad's use of surveillance aesthetics (pixilation, CCTV fauxtage, dash and body camera footage) combine with the conventions of comedy vérité (handheld camera, interview) to create the look of the programme. Even though it uses comedy to question the usefulness of surveillance and surveillance culture in general, its use of the surveillance gaze and surveillance aesthetics helps to normalise surveillance culture and encourage surveillance behaviours, and as such, *Scot Squad* is both critical and conservative in its response to the surveillance society. Critically, the programme demonstrates that the USPF takes the idea that people will change their behaviour if they might be watched as a given and then goes on to show the ways that this theory does not always work in practice. There are the inevitable problems with technology – as a recurring joke, Miekelsen can never get into his computer - human error and the

fact that surveillance itself does not bring power even though the USAF encourages citizens to watch each other. Surveillance is also shown not to produce the docile bodies that have be promised with the panoptic schema with members of the public harassing Beattie in full view of his body camera. However, the acceptance of the status quo by the police and their desire to adopt new surveillance behaviours indicate a conservative response to surveillance. In the example that opens this chapter, Bobby has subjected himself willingly to the gaze of his fellow citizens with his missing poster when the most useful action would be to include a picture of his dog. His willingness is suggestive of a person at ease with being looked at – his participation in the surveillance society suggests the degree to which it has been normalised. Bobby's frequent visits to Millar are evidence of his adoption of surveillance behaviours however, because Bobby invariably gets these wrong, the futility of this behaviour and perhaps the futility of the surveillance society is highlighted.

Chapter Three: Surveillance as Witness in *People Just Do Nothing*

Introduction

In the final episode of the third series of *People Just Do Nothing (*hereafter *People)* (BBC, 2012-) titled 'Valentimes', Steves, a DJ at Kurupt FM, goes to visit his Nan in a care home. This is a visit the viewers have seen Steves make before as he regularly visits Nan and she gives him her medication – Steves is a habitual drug user. This time, through a roving, handheld camera, the viewer witnesses Steves walk into the home and things are a bit is different than they have been before. One of the workers attempts to stop Steves from going into the common room, where Nan is always sitting in her chair. Steves disregards him, continuing to walk into the common room. As Steves starts chanting 'Nan, Nan, Nan', we notice, as he does, that Nan is not in her usual place. Although the viewer knows that Nan has most likely passed, the empty chair, the silence and the workers' looks of sympathy alluding to as much, it takes Steves longer to realise. The next shot is through a window with Steves sat in the home's office, being handed a box of his Nan's things. The viewer witnesses Steves's head is bowed in emotion as the care home worker tries to comfort him. The commotion and noise of Steves coming into the home is juxtaposed with the silence of this scene and the window ironically framed with party letters spelling out 'Happy Valentines'. As stated, this is not the first time the viewer has witnessed Steves's relationship with his Nan. It is her house that Kurupt FM run their station from. Steves goes to visit her on a regular basis and knows the names of the people in the home and their stories. This is evidenced in this episode as he points out Lorna got a new scooter on his way in to the care home suggesting knowledge of the people in the home and his frequent visits. Because the viewer has witnessed this relationship, Nan's death, and his reaction to it, the viewer is positioned to feel empathy for Steves. This is the first scene, in an episode with several of them, which invites the viewer to feel empathy with what they have witnessed. The scene and story arc for Steves in this episode is a departure from the usual light-hearted comedy presented in the rest of the series and serves as a useful starting point to examining how witness works in the context of *People.* Through the vérité aesthetics, the viewer witnesses Steves's reaction to his Nan's death. Combined with interviews, the vérité aesthetics invites the viewer to identify with Steves's feelings of bereavement and empathise with his suffering.

People is a television programme that sits at the intersections of mockumentary, rockumentary, sitcom and docusoap, following a group of DJs and MCs running a pirate radio station, Kurupt FM. The 'main ones' as MC Grindah (Allan 'Seapa' Mustafa) would say, are himself and his closest friend DJ Beats (Hugo Chegwin), their girlfriends, Miche (Lily Brazier) and Roche (Ruth Bratt), DJ Decoy (Daniel Sylvester Woolford) who may just be the father of Miche and Grindah's daughter Angel (Olivia Jasmine Edwards), and DJ Steves (Steve Stamp).[11] Finally, there is Chabuddy (Asim Chaudry), a local entrepreneur who runs an internet café and helps the crew out from time to time. Given the example of Nan's (Pamela Lyne) death, it may be hard to identify this as a comedy programme. However, although this is not a particularly funny scene, it sets up the episode's theme and works in service of the comedy later on. For example, one of the episode's themes is the juxtaposition of death and new life as at the same time as we find out about Steves' Nan, DJ Beats' partner Roche is giving birth to a baby girl. After being educated about the circle of life by Chabuddy, Steves goes to visit the new-born. He looks to the camera with a happy smile when he sees her for the first time. As he holds her, he talks to her as if she is Nan reincarnated. It is a touching moment as he promises to keep the ring that Nan left him for her when she gets older. In as much as this episode and this moment is bittersweet, it is also comedic as he has completely misunderstood Chabuddy's circle of life talk, taking it too literally. Adding to the comedy is the horrified and confused look Roche gives the camera as Steves talks to his dead Nan through her new-born daughter. In this scene, Roche's look acts as a comment on the action taking place before her. Her reaction indicates to the viewer that it is permissible to find this funny despite the dark tone. Implicit in this look is a request for the viewer to judge what they see, an idea I will return to later.

The viewer is invited by the programme to witness the follies of Kurupt FM while at the same time, the participants, especially Grindah, believe the 'viewer' is witnessing his rise to fame.[12] Grindah thinks that the programme being made, '*People Just Do Nothing*' is both indicative of his success and celebrity, *and* a way to achieve, and

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[11] There are a few other DJs (such as DJ Fantasy) who work at the station but are not that relevant to the programme which is why in this same episode when Grindah laments the fact that everyone has left him to work the station alone, and Fantasy says he is here, Grindah replies, 'I mean one of the main ones'.

[12] As both the programme itself and the programme in the show are both titled *People Just Do Nothing*, for the purpose of clarity in this chapter, I will refer to the audience and programme within the diegesis of *People Just Do Nothing* within quotation marks.

maintain it. Grindah thinks that he will be 'giving back to the fans' through *'People'* despite the fact that his fan base is rather limited to the station's reach which is not much further than the estate from where they are broadcasting. What the viewer witnesses in *People Just Do Nothing* is the use of the conventions of docusoap and rockumentary, an acknowledgement of, and comment on, the propensity of reality television to create celebrities, and a mocking of Grindah attempts to use *'People'* to further his celebrity. In mocking Grindah's desire for celebrity, the mechanisms of a modern celebrity culture are both critiqued and legitimised. Although the viewer is not meant to see Grindah as talentless, his lack of celebrity and disconnect between what he thinks he is and what he actually is, is the basis for much of the humour. However, the suggestion that Grindah does not meet the requirements for celebrity also presupposes that there are people who do, therefore legitimising celebrity culture as well. In the narrative Grindah and the boys of Kurupt FM are ordinary people who happen to be recorded for a docusoap. The rise of 'ordinary' people to celebrity status as a result of being on these docusoaps is also being mocked. The culture of the reality television celebrity suggests that becoming a celebrity has more to do with exposure than it does with talent. Grindah believes that exposure through this programme is a way to showcase his talent, although any fame that might result in the programme is less likely to be a result of any talent he might have and more likely to be a result of the mishaps and misadventures he is involved in. In witnessing Grindah's rise to fame, the viewer also witnesses the mocking of a modern celebrity culture. Building on the connections made in the last chapter with regards to surveillance aesthetics and comedy vérité, the idea of witnessing will be introduced to further interrogate how *People* mocks Grindah's delusions using the conventions of docusoap and rockumentary.

Witness

In the above example, the viewer witnesses Steves learning about the death of his Nan. I argue that witness is the appropriate term to be used here rather than simply see or watch. The concept of witness needs explanation in the context of this example and in order to argue that the viewers witness Grindah's desire for celebrity in *People*. The word can be both a *noun* (a person who sees an event take place; evidence; proof) or a *verb* (to see; to have knowledge of from observation or experience; to openly profess one's faith) (Oxford Dictionaries, English, 2018, np). These definitions clearly connect witness to surveillance through the act of seeing, however, witness implies a knowledge of something whereas seeing or looking does not assume knowledge. A

witness is therefore someone who has knowledge of something. In the case of Steves Nan's death, the audience gains the status of witness through their knowledge of the death which is communicated by the vérité aesthetic. Although surveillance is often more than visual, visual surveillance systems like CCTV give people access to events they would not otherwise have, thus enabling them to become witnesses. Both visual surveillance and witnessing privilege seeing something happen as a marker of authenticity (seeing is believing). Like disclosure (see chapter four), witnessing has been used historically as proof in legal and religious arenas. For example, CCTV footage, as a witnessing text, is often used as evidence in legal cases to prove a crime has been committed.

To examine how witness is represented in the context of *People,* it is useful to examine the way witness has been conceived historically. John Durham Peters suggests that the concept of witnessing carries with it heavy historical 'baggage' in the areas of law, theology and atrocity (2001, p. 708). Because "the cultural form of witnessing originated in both legal and religious practices and then moved into the media in journalistic, as well as, entertainment formats" (Thomas, 2009, p. 92), it is important to understand this 'baggage' in order to understand contemporary understandings of the term. In the case of law, the witness is seen as "a privileged source of information for judicial decisions" (Peters, 2001, p. 708). Witnesses provide testimony that helps jurors, or the judge evaluate an accused's guilt or innocence. Legal testimony is most valuable when it can be seen as beyond reproach and therefore the eye-witness is privileged because of their perceived authenticity (Jones, 2017, p. 136). The eye-witness has seen the accused commit the offence with his or her own eyes and therefore would presumably know as much or more about the offence as anyone else and can deliver impartial testimony to those who were not there. Second-hand testimony or hearsay, is testimony said outside of court, reported by another (Peters, 2001, p. 716). With hearsay, the potential for slippage in the translation from experience to discourse to experience and then back to discourse again is greater and therefore this material is not seen as reliable as the eye-witnesses account. This preference for eye-witness testimony over hearsay in witnessing is also suggestive of the hierarchy of the senses and the privileging of eyes over ears (ibid). What is seen is more valuable than what is heard. As Peters suggests, being present at the event matters. But of course, people cannot be at every event and the fallibility of humans means that testimony given by machines or 'dumb witnesses' like cameras and other recording devices are often seen

as the most objective and thus most truthful. The video camera acts as the most objective kind of witness, one who suggests a "disembodiment and passivity, a cold indifference to the story, offering 'just the facts'" (ibid). Scientific instruments were thought to be more credible because they were "thing-like" and were not subject to human fallibility (Peters, 2001, p. 715). As a result, cameras and microphones are often seen as the most credible witnesses in the eyes of the law. The mechanical witness can mitigate the loss in translation from direct sensory experience into discourse. Although the idea that the camera is inherently objective is naïve, the camera's connection to machinery and science privileged this idea of its objectivity. However, recording devices like the camera and microphone could get the viewer closer to the actual event than a passive witness could be with listening to eye-witness testimony. Such is the case with media witnessing. Media witnessing involves a direct sensory experience of the event as experienced through the media. It is not the same experience of being there, but neither is being there the same experience as watching through a television programme or other media.

Therefore, the historical conception of witness that informs contemporary understandings of the term is composed of the following: 1) the witness or witnessing text is proof; 2) human witnesses are fallible; and 3) mechanical witnesses are more objective.

Media Witnessing

The mechanical witness described above is often a recording of an event, a witnessing text. In legal cases that recording is often CCTV footage of the crime or incident under investigation. This footage can be broadcast live to audiences for a television programme or recorded and then broadcast at a later date, the difference of which will be discussed further later in this chapter. Peters suggests that, "Broadcasting is analogous to witnessing" because "the borrowed eyes and ears of the media become, however tentatively or dangerously, one's own" (2001, p. 717). Tentative and dangerous perhaps but experiencing things through media is often the only way people are able to witness events at all. Media witnessing allows viewers to see and hear events that took place in front of cameras and microphones (Ellis, 2012, p. 123). This recorded material becomes the evidence that proves the event took place. In this case, the viewer becomes the witness to whom testimony (the witnessing text) is directed (Ellis, 2008, p. 74). The camera itself, which was described earlier as a mechanical witness, witnesses the event and produces the witnessing text that is viewed by the human witness. The

problem with this scenario is that obviously only the things that are in front of the camera will be recorded which means that parts of the event, that for whatever reason are not in front of the camera, will not get recorded and then are not part of the evidence of that event for those witnesses who experienced the event through the recording. In Peters' discussion of witness, he creates a hierarchy of witness based on the witness' relation to the event (see fig. 1). As stated earlier, media witnessing is represented in the live transmission of an event and in the recording and broadcasting of it, both of which have a different relationship to the real event. The first degree of witness is 'being there', a witness who is present in both time and space. The second degree is 'live transmission', a witness who is present in time but not space, for example, a viewer watching a sporting event broadcast live on television. The third degree is 'historicity', a witness is present in the space but not in time. People who visit Auschwitz for example, are witnesses to the place of the atrocity that took place years ago. The final degree, and most removed from the event is 'recording', a witness not of time or space who experiences the event through recorded media (Peters, 2001, p. 721).

Being There – witness present in time and space	Historicity – witness present only in space
Live Transmission – witness present only in time	Recorded - witness present in neither time or space

Fig. 1 *The degrees of witness. The highlighted boxes show the two degrees of media witnessing according to Peters (2001).*

As shown in fig. 1, media witnessing has two degrees. In order to explain the effects of both, a useful example might be an Olympics opening ceremony. The audience in the stadium are eye-witnesses, present in time and space. Television viewers who are watching a live transmission, are the closest to eye-witnesses because they are watching at roughly the same time as someone who is there given the couple of seconds of time delay usually figured into a live broadcast. The viewer of a live broadcast is at least present in time although not in space. Although they are not at the event, they are

seeing it in 'real time' and thus may consider themselves to be experiencing much the same as people who are actually at an event and feel themselves to be a part of the communal experience. Peters's account of witnessing does not include the camera as a witness itself; it only produces the text that enables people to become witnesses.

A recorded event then stands at one degree removed from this "as a representation (replica) of events" (Peters, 2001, p. 720). In order for a recorded broadcast to seem as close to the experience of being there as possible, live aesthetics are often used to give an impression of being there in time and space. These aesthetics, which include direct address and vérité filming, give the impression of liveness and therefore seem closer to the authentic, lived experience of the event and therefore are more trustworthy and truthful as evidence. As Paul Frosh explains, "Recorded films can also achieve a kind of pseudo-witnessing through the deployment of a host of discursive and representational strategies that imply liveness, immediacy and co-presence" (2006, p. 268).

Witness then, works in multiple ways with regards to *People.* On one hand*, People* achieves its witnessing status through its representation of vérité filming and direct address that are indicative of the documentary formats. Its deployment of these strategies is representative of the attempts by docusoaps to bring the viewer a lived experience of its subjects. *People* utilises these techniques to suggest the lived experience of the Kurupt FM family to the diegetic audience and the audience at home. For Grindah, *'People'* enables the audience to witness the proof of his celebrity, the proof of his talent. This 'behind-the-scenes' programme offers, in his understanding, an authentic experience for the fans.

Media witnessing challenges the notion that the most authentic witness is the one who was there in time and space. Ultimately Frosh argues, "A witnessing text is one whose structure interacts with the viewer to create not just an imaginative experience regarding the subject of its discourse…but also the conjecture that *this* text is a witnessing text, that the event described really happened and that the text was designed to report it…" (2006, p. 275). In the case of *People*, the vérité filming style positions the viewer as someone who is looking in on the events rather than as an audience who is watching an event put on just for them, similar to the case of the surveillance footage from CCTV cameras. Even though the cameras have been given permission to record (or at least the viewer assumes so as the guys talk to the camera operators), filming from long distances, behind windows or around corners, and chasing

the action with the handheld camera give the impression of an event that would happen whether the audience was watching or not. Media witnessing is more than simply watching what is being shown on a screen. The witnessing text (recorded or live material) asks its viewer to participate in several complex processes. It asks viewers to examine and evaluate the material whilst knowing that it is a construction, designed for a particular purpose, and often from multiple points of view. The use of a vérité filming style in both fiction and non-fiction programming asks its viewers to do the same thing. Examining these processes further will help to demonstrate how witness, and witnessing, is constructed in *People*.

Firstly, the viewer knows that the witnessing text is a construction given that it has been broadcast on television and has to be constructed to fit required formats. At the same time, the viewer can experience the event as if they are there. Whether the event is broadcast live or recorded may not matter in terms of how viewers witness events. In both cases, John Ellis argues that "the photographic and the phonographic provide an immediate effect of 'thereness'" in viewers while at the same time, we are aware of it being a textual construction (2009, p. 68). Because the actions the viewer performs, (watching and listening) while watching a witnessing text on television are the same of those that they will use to witness something in real life, the witnessing text is both *textual and real* (Ellis, 2009, p. 68, *my emphasis*). He writes, "Media witnessing is not that of encountering the brute fact, the feeling of participation, of the actual experience. It is witnessing from a privileged position; documentary gives us a discursive construction of a totality of an event" (2012, p. 125). This privileged position is what distinguishes looking or watching from witnessing. From this privileged position the viewer is able to judge the event and place it in the context of its time and place. The viewer is therefore aware that an event has taken place, can see that event and get a sense of the mood or tone but does not actually know what it was like to be there at the event. In the attempt to convey the totality of an event, the programme can display different camera angles and shots, however, despite this, the viewer also knows that what we are seeing is a "partial seeing", a construction and interpretation of the event that can never be wholly witnessed (Ellis, 2012, p. 126).

This privileged position also allows the audience to evaluate not just the event and its broadcast, but also the eyewitnesses who speak about the event. While the camera filming the event acts as a "surrogate for an absent viewer", many programmes include eyewitness testimony of the event to help communicate the event to the

audience. In this case, as Paul Frosh and Amit Pinchevski suggest "every act of witnessing implies some kind of mediation, most fundamentally the putting of an experience into discourse for the benefit of those who were not there," (2014, p. 596). Audiences are aware that these eyewitnesses speak about their particular view on an event, shaping their experience and knowledge of that event through language. Audiences will judge the credibility of the eyewitnesses' testimony with their own experience of the event through the programme understanding that that programme is also only a "partial seeing". As Ellis summarises, "We are aware that we both know and do not know" (2008, p. 86). The sequence described in the introduction to this chapter illustrates how the camera both produces a sense of thereness for the viewer and also gives us a privileged position from which to see the event. As Steves is informed of his Nan's passing, the camera is positioned behind the window in the office positioning the viewer as witness but not experiencing the event directly because the camera and microphone are outside the office and thus, the viewer is not able to hear the conversation taking place. The bowing of Steves' head, the passing of a box of Nan's possessions, and the absence of Steves' Nan tell us all that we need to know.

Secondly, the viewer is being addressed for a purpose. Ellis explains, "Any material that claims a documentary status involves its viewers in two conjoined activities: that of witness and that of being addressed" (2009, p. 71). He says that we can ask of this address, what are we meant to feel? In the case of *People*, the viewer is meant to find humour in the Kurupt KM crew's foibles, a type of humour that is explained by the superiority theory in the literature review. The viewer is meant to laugh at Grindah's complete lack of self-awareness and his blind belief in his celebrity. In '*The Godfather*' Grindah and Miche have decide to get Angel Christened. It is not made clear why they have decided to do this as neither one is particularly religious. In an interview, Miche says she has Christian morals though because she likes Christmas and eating at the holidays. Grindah treats the ceremony like a show: he sets up his own microphone; rehearses where he wants people to stand; and waits until the middle of the ceremony to announce who he has chosen to be Angel's Godfather. For regular viewers, it comes as no surprise to learn that he does not actually know what a godfather is in the context of the Christian faith and in preparation for making the choice between Beats and Decoy, he watches The Godfather (Francis Ford Coppola, 1972) to learn. Because he believes that being a Godfather is about being the head of a crime family, he gives the job to himself, much to Beats's disappointment. The head of the family is a job that can

only go to Grindah as he sees himself as the head of the Kurupt family and the most important member. In this scene, Grindah's limited understanding of the Christian ceremony and role of the Godfather works in service of the comedy as the extent of his misunderstanding positions him as an object of ridicule. It is not his limited knowledge of the ritual but his spectacular misunderstanding and complete confidence in that misunderstanding that invites the viewer to laugh at him. But it is also about how the viewer is made aware of the extent to which he sees himself as a character in a programme and how he will use every opportunity to showcase his performing skills. As he is about to make the announcement, he looks to the camera, confident that he is making the right choice. The viewer is shown an unconventional Christening but what we witness is Grindah's unabashed desire to be the centre of attention.

Thirdly, media witnessing is often from multiple points of view and the viewer is meant to adopt several points of view to understand the event. Ellis argues that, "The position from which we witness is a mobile one, involving twists and turns of emotional empathy rather than one fixed position of identification or rejection" (2012, p. 129). Although Ellis is concerned with documentary witnessing, the act of witnessing can be represented similarly in fiction programming as well, especially in the case of a mockumentary that uses the documentary techniques. As stated above, although the viewer is meant to find humour in the activities of Kurupt FM through a feeling of superiority, viewers may also root for the guys at the station who represent the underdogs in the entertainment industry. Despite numerous comedic scenes, Chabuddy's fall from entrepreneur to retail employee who sleeps in his van may elicit sympathy from viewers in others. As the example about the Christening suggests, *People* positions the spectator to feel empathy with Beats through the camera's movement to his face, and superiority to Grindah in the same scene, which is similar to what Ellis suggests, when speaking about non-fiction programming, is "a complex to-and-fro between seeing, believing and feeling among today's active viewers" (2012, p. 130). In this example, the text positions the viewer to take up a variety of different subject positions. The handheld observational camera illustrates Beats trying to demonstrate his suitability to be Godfather in the background (he takes off the cap he has been wearing for the whole ceremony), while in the foreground Grindah is shown taking over the ceremony from the Priest. In this one shot, viewers are invited to experience multiple points of view in order to understand the totality of the event. The witnessing text, through the handheld camera and juxtaposition of the shots of Grindah and Beats with

shots of the Christening, invites the viewer to laugh at Grindah and even feel angry with him for the embarrassment and sadness he causes Beats. Indeed, at different times in the programme the viewer is invited *to laugh at,* and *identify with* Grindah, Beats, Chabuddy and Steves. Because Grindah is the most obvious in his desire for celebrity, he is often presented as the most deluded. The witnessing text works simultaneously to encourage the viewer to find Grindah comical and to humanise him, both in showing his delusion (by having things not work like he thinks they are going to) but also showing moments when he is vulnerable or unsure (such as any displays of physical intimacy with Miche) through its vérité filming.

Finally, the viewer is asked to analyse, evaluate and judge the witnessing text. Witnessing through media puts the viewer in the position of analysis. We do not experience the event like the eye-witness does but we still try to understand it (Ellis, 2012, p. 124). Unlike the eyewitness who is seeing something before their eyes, the media witness is distanced from the event and therefore may not feel that obligation to act. In the case of a fictional television programme, viewers are aware that they can do nothing to intervene in the action – short of turning the programme off. It is this inability to act that Ed Tan argues makes it easier to watch (1994, p. 18). Media witnesses are distanced from the event and that distance enables us to judge what we see and hear. This distance does not mean that the event is without affect "We still feel the imprint of reality in some of the footage that is presented to us" (2012, p. 128). Ellis argues that without this, there is no incentive to watch a particular programme. Frosh and Pinchevski agree, "That we are not there does not mean we are not affected, to the contrary: this could very well (be) happen (ing) to us" (2014, 606). Affective responses to the material enable viewers to analyse, evaluate and judge the witnessing text. In comedy programmes, the most likely affective response that should result would be laughter as a response to something that is funny. However, that is not the only affective response that certain comedy produces. The term 'cringe comedy' has been used to describe some contemporary comedy programmes that position a spectator to feel awkwardness or second-hand embarrassment for the characters (Wright, 2011; Detweiler, 2012; Middleton, 2014; Duncan, 2017).

Cringe Comedy and Empathy

Perhaps the most obvious and well-known example of this 'visceral wince' (Moore, 2007, np) is *The Office UK*. Although the term, cringe comedy has been used to describe quite a number of programmes with varying relationships to 'cringe' *(Peep*

Show [Channel 4, 2003-2015], *Curb Your Enthusiasm* [HBO, 2000-], *Seinfeld* [NBC, 1989-1998], *It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia* [FX 2005-2012, FXX 2013-], *Arrested Development* [FOX 2003-2006, Netflix 2013-], *The Office US* [NBC 2005-2013], *Flowers* [Channel 4, 2016-2018], *Chewing Gum* [E4, 2015-2017], *Borderline* [Channel 5, 2016-]), the term is useful for pointing out the affective response of comedic programmes that at times, do not elicit laughter but a 'visceral wince' or a cringe. According to Wright, "Cringe humor relies not on the execution of a gag but instead on the 'dead air' that accompanies unsuccessful social encounter (2011, p. 662). In his discussion of *The Office*, Middleton suggests that it is the filming style that helps to facilitate this response. He argues that cringe comedy is "sustained by its mockumentary framework, its exploitation of television's longstanding association with liveness, intimacy, and immediacy, and its realist depiction of the quotidian quality of its diegesis" (2014, p. 142). Indeed, Duncan argues that unlike the exaggeration and artifice used in most traditional forms of comedy, "cringe comedy relies on many of the aural and visual cues of cinema vérité to blur the boundaries between the comic and non-comic world" (2017, p. 38). These unsuccessful social encounters, filmed in the vérité style, are more likely to produce a feeling of awkwardness than of laughter. As Middleton argues, "Awkward moments can be understood in a sense as *documentary moments*. They are moments when an encounter feels *too* real: unscripted, unplanned and above all occurring in person"(2014, p. 2). Moments of confrontation, interruption or exposure that Middleton talks about in cringe comedy are what produce the awkwardness because they reveal to the viewer what "we knew was there but preferred to keep hidden under a carapace of play" (Duncan, 2017, p. 41). Several of Chabuddy's stories in *People* illustrate the lonely sad man underneath the comic bravado. In 'Competition', Chabuddy's 'girlfriend' has her 'brother' visit from Poland. Given the physical affection between the two of them, the brother is more likely a former lover. The episode includes several scenes of Aldona and her brother demonstrating their closeness juxtaposed with Chabuddy's obliviousness. One evening after dinner Aldona asks Chabuddy to get some beer and when he returns, she has locked him out of the trailer. The camera witnesses Chabuddy attempts to get Aldona to open the door with a series of cuts of him knocking on the door and attempting to look in the window. Finally, Chabuddy comes to accept that he is not going to be getting into his own trailer and walks to his van to sleep. Up until this point, the text has positioned the viewer to laugh at Chabuddy as the viewer knows what Chabuddy does not – his girlfriend is cheating on him. However, as the scene

progresses, the viewer is invited to feel empathy towards him as he gradually realises that things are not what they seem. Sniffling with the cold and drinking the beer he bought, he tells the camera crew "I'll probably just wait in the Merc, it's a bit warmer in here. They're obviously having some kind of dance-off tournament or something, you know. It's lucky I'm not involved, bro, I'd probably win every round. Probably... Probably call it a night, yeah, lads, yeah?" Through the window, the camera lingers for a few seconds after he has shut the door watching him open and drink from another beer staring forward. Chabuddy's direct address of the camera crew makes the comedic idea of him being locked out of his own place suddenly awkward; it's less comedic and more cringy. The lingering camera and Chabuddy's interaction with the camera crew in his request to stop evokes empathy and not laughter in the viewer.

The evocation of empathy is a result of the construction of the witnessing text. Frosh explains that, "Media witnessing is usually articulated through (mediated) encounters with individual others, and benefits from forms of address that individualize the viewer and create intimacy at a distance. It can therefore elicit some of the intense empathetic responses that are assumed to be necessary for the creation of moral concern" (2006, p. 279). In chapter one, direct address was argued to be one of the ways that intimacy was created between the viewer and the character on screen. This intimacy is a crucial aspect in the evocation of empathy. In the case of media witnessing, viewers are often invited to 'put themselves in someone else's shoes' and see the event from their point of view. Empathy is the ability "to experience the emotions of other's as one's own, of feeling as an other does" (Ellis, 2009, p. 72). This empathy is necessary for the cringe in cringe comedy. By putting themselves in the position of the character onscreen, the spectator can experience the second-hand embarrassment for any social gaffes or cringe moments the character is involved with. In addition to the connection to the character established in part through direct address, the verisimilitude of the situation, illustrated in vérité style, help facilitate the feeling of empathy. According to Ellis, in order for the viewer to experience empathy, we must first recognize their personhood and understand the other as like ourselves (2012, p. 131; 2009, p. 73). Empathy can be an immediate response or something that requires thought and consideration suggesting that it is complex with many stages (Ellis, 2009, p. 72). Frosh agrees explaining that media witnessing "creates a social space of uncommitted observation and impersonal witnessing in which people are sufficiently the same – sufficiently interchangeable and equivalent – for each person to be able to imagine what

it might be like to be in another's shoes" (Frosh, 2006, p. 281). How are these people everyday people or recognisable? Middleton suggests that by "exploiting our associations with televisual liveness and presence, the show can produce the sense that this painful scene is really happening, in the present, right in front of us" (2014, p. 145), linking the aesthetic form of cringe comedy with the theoretical construct of media witnessing.

Hybrids

Texts that mix conventions from different genres are often called hybrids. Documentary hybrids are programmes that, in some way, combine the conventions of non-fiction and fiction genres, such as mockumentary and docusoap. *People* sits at the intersection between mockumentary, rockumentary, sitcom and docusoaps mixing their conventions in a truly hybrid form. Examining their individual conventions and where they overlap will help to situate *People* as a hybrid form.

Docusoap is a documentary/soap hybrid that uses a 'fly on the wall' filming style, multiple, character-led storylines, one primary location and an everyday chronology (Dovey, 2000, p. 133; Roscoe and Hight, 2001). Typically, these programmes have multiple storylines about real life interwoven throughout the episode (Hight, 2010, p. 122). However, "Unlike the documentaries of Wiseman, for example *Hospital* (1970) in which intimate portrayals of institutions are used to raise broader ideological questions, docusoaps merely makes a spectacle out of the ordinary" (Roscoe and Hight, 2001, p. 37).The docusoap became popular in Britain in the 1980s and 1990s and were centred around an ordinary workplace, and chronicled the lives of the people who worked there such as, *Airport (BBC1 1996-2005, BBC2 2008) or Vets' School (BBC1, 1996*). These series, much like the reality programmes of today, often produce celebrity out of the people they observe, "transforming ordinary people into stars" (Dovey, 2000, 136). Several examples of this can be seen since the docusoap boom in the 1980s from Maureen Rees (*Driving School)*, Jeremy Spake (*Airport)* to Gemma Collins (*The Only Way is Essex [ITV2 20101-2014, ITVBe 2014-])* and Kim Kardashian (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians [E!, 2007-]*). Reality television "programmes explicitly make 'stars' out of ordinary people, with their experience rendered worthy of our scrutiny" (ibid). *People* both uses the conventions found in docusoaps, and is about, these elements. For example, the programme follows the DJs and MCs working at Kurupt FM and some of their families thus taking on the structure of docusoap with its focus on the workplace and the people working within it. However, Grindah is very aware of the road to

celebrity these programmes have facilitated. His decision to participate in this 'docusoap' is a way to showcase his talent as a MC and become the celebrity he wishes to be. It is perhaps ironic then that the actual breakout star in the real world seems to be the character of Chabuddy who has gone on to feature in other projects (most notably 'directing' the new British Airways safety video for *Comic Relief* 2017). Although it is clear that *People* has significant connections to docusoap, it is a fictional programme which therefore points to mockumentary as another element of its hybrid nature.

Another documentary hybrid whose conventions can be seen in *People* is the mockumentary. According to Roscoe and Hight, although all mockumentaries are fictional narratives told with techniques derived primarily from non-fiction, not all mockumentaries operate the same way. What is being mocked, how, and for what purpose differs across many programmes and films that one might call mockumentaries. Roscoe and Hight find it useful to outline three kinds of mockumentary based on their degree of distance from documentary proper. They argue, "We suggest an initial schema of three degrees, a model which approaches mock-documentaries according to the intersection between the intention of the filmmakers, the nature and degree of the text's appropriation of documentary codes and conventions, and the degree of reflexivity consequently encouraged for their viewer" (2001, p. 67). These three degrees, parodic, critique and deconstruction, are not meant to include all kinds of mockumentary but help to demonstrate the variety of difference among them. Much like Dovey's assessment of docusoap, the parodic mockumentary contains little argument or critique of the element being parodied. For example, Roscoe and Hight suggest that, "One key aspect of parody is that it often comments on cultural forms which are 'easy targets'" (2001, p. 68). Cultural forms that are easy targets tend to be ones with lower cultural capital or 'guilty pleasures' such as reality television, chick flicks or even certain types of comedy. Parodic mockumentaries "adopt a strong frame of nostalgia in their presentation of fictional representatives of an era or cultural idiom" (ibid). *People* participates in evoking the feeling of nostalgia by suggesting that the Kurupt FM crew are stuck in the recent past. The guys involved in Kurupt FM seem to be stuck in early age of grime. Grime is a genre of music originating in the early 2000s, played on pirate radio stations primarily in East London (McKinnon, 5 May 2005, np). According to McKinnon, many popular grime artists were teens who were raised in East London's low-income council estates (ibid). In the early 2000s, grime had "its own culture, one that is almost entirely self-sufficient and bypasses traditional avenues of

distribution and promotion" (Campion, 23 May 2004, np). Grindah and Beats's participation in, and nostalgia for, grime culture is presented as comedic. In 2018 grime is no longer an underground phenomenon and grime artists no longer have to resort to pirate radio to get their songs played on mainstream radio. Beats and Grindah know this and yet their actions suggest that they wish grime was is still in its infant stages. In 'Record Deal' Grindah and Beats explain to the camera that they have a meeting with a record company and clearly situate their music as one that fits better in an earlier era.

> Grindah: Let's just say they finally realised that we are the future of new music.
> Beats: We don't even like new music.
> Grindah: Yeah, exactly. It is like the future of music that still sounds like it's in 2002. Like, it's complicated. It's sort of industry sort of shit, you wouldn't understand.
> Beats: Yeah, you wouldn't get it.

Through direct address, Grindah and Beats explain what they are doing. In 'New Friends' Beats meets a man he met in parenting classes for a drink. Grindah is jealous of this new friendship as it takes Beats away from him. Grindah, who also comes to the pub, asks Darren about what kind of music he likes in attempt to show Beats that he is not the type of guy with whom Beats should be hanging out. This exchange highlights Grindah's jealousy and the fact that they are stuck in the past.

> Grindah: What's your standpoint on garage?
> Darren: Garage?
> Grindah: Yeah.
> Darren: Fuck, man, I haven't listened to that for years, I mean...Hang on a minute, it ain't 1998, is it?
> THEY LAUGH
> Grindah: No, it's not, mate. I mean, only an idiot would listen to garage now, wouldn't he?

The examples above illustrate that Grindah and Beats know their style of music, (grime/garage) is one associated with the past. Their participation in pirate radio and commitment to grime suggests a nostalgic desire for an earlier time. This is a desire that is echoed in other areas of their lives as well. In 'Secret Location' Beats tries to bond with his partner's son Craig by asking about the video game he is playing. Not knowing anything about the game, he says he is a FIFA 98 man himself. The programme makers have suggested this nostalgia as well in interviews.[13] At the same time, they seem to be

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[13] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UGtFG2eNzms

ignorant of some modern developments. In 'Record Deal, when Chabuddy suggests that they sell their records online, Grindah says he does not believe people sell things online ('how would you get the money?') and that the internet is not really going to take off. *People's* connection to time passing is demonstrated in the juxtaposition of grime culture in the late 1990s/early 2000s and celebrity culture of the 2010s. Even the title sequence is suggestive of the passage of time. The title sequence is a single shot of the estate with the fast-motion photography showing it in daylight and at night or vice versa depending on the scene prior. The use of the fast-motion photography indicates how quickly time passes while the estate stays largely the same.

In addition to its depiction of nostalgia, *People* parodies the conventions of a particular type of documentary - the rockumentary. Roscoe and Hight explain that rockumentaries "represent an effort to present the breadth of a musical artist's talent, comparatively uncritical portrayals of their performances and the nature of their appeal to viewers" (2001, p. 119). These documentary hybrids are most often in the cinema vérité/direct cinema mode (Roscoe and Hight, 2001, Beattie, 2005). Although not rock stars, the DJs and Grindah perform gigs, attempt to get a recording contract, record in the studio and meet 'fans' - all tropes of the rockumentary. The viewer follows the 'backstage' antics of the Kurupt FM crew and sees them perform on stage and in the studio. With rockumentaries, the viewer is meant to get a glimpse of a side of the performer that they do not usually see. The same exists in *People* where we see Grindah attempting to surprise a contest winner by jumping out of the back of a van. At the moment of the big reveal, the van door becomes stuck and Grindah is unable to make the surprise entrance he planned. For the viewers of rockumentaries and reality programming more largely, the "viewers derive gratification from such programs by locating the 'authentic' self within the performance" (Beattie, 2005, p. 26). There are several moments in the recording of *"People"* when Grindah gets annoyed with Beats because he fails to participate in the image that Grindah wants to portray. Grindah repeatedly addresses the camera crew, asking for things to be cut out or not filmed but the viewers of *People* and presumably *"People"* see them anyway. It is reasonable to assume that we see what the "makers" want to show and not Grindah's version as the one person who mentions seeing the show, the record executive, is surprised to know that they are actually serious about their music. Grindah is constantly trying to project an image of a MC much more successful and famous than he actually is. In 'Competition' he decides to run a competition on his station with the winner getting a

bottle of perfume presented to them by Grindah himself. Grindah believes that meeting him is the real prize and not the bottle of perfume which he and Beats have signed. The competition is to call up the station with the answer to the question 'what was Grindah's original MC name?' Predictably, it takes a long time before someone calls with the right answer, even though Grindah suggested that the question be about him because he is most popular. When the winner shows up to collect his prize, he requests another bottle because 'this one is written on'. Grindah pouts until Beats suggests signing the winner's shirt instead and the meet and greet is captured with a photo.

People Just Do Nothing as Mockusoap

People's inclusion of elements from docusoap, mockumentary and rockumentary suggest that it might be labelled as a mockusoap. Mockusoap includes many aspects of docusoap's aesthetics and structure. There is a focus on a select group of people within specific locations, however these people are characters in a fictitious setting (Hight, 2010, p. 253). In service of the comedic, less desirable aspects of human behaviour are often a focus, provoking a cringe comedy response (Hight, 2010, p. 253). Grindah's delusions of grandeur, Beats' desperation to be liked and included, and Chabuddy's failed enterprises, both in business and in romantic relationships are featured heavily. Returning to the announcement of Angel's Godfather during her Christening, as Grindah reveals his decision, he turns to address the two candidates behind him. The handheld camera focuses on Grindah with Beats and Decoy in the background. The viewer cannot see Grindah's face as he is turned to the two other men behind him and his body hides Decoy (most likely the actual biological father of Angel). The only face the camera can see is Beats who is nervous as Grindah starts the announcement. Beats has been campaigning for the position by demonstrating what a good guardian he is to Craig and doing little things for Grindah such as putting a pillow behind his back on the couch or opening the car door for him. As Grindah continues his speech about what it takes to make a good Godfather, Beats becomes more confident he will be the choice and starts to smile in agreement with Grindah's announcement. When Grindah finally turns to the audience in the church and says that he will be the Godfather, the camera cuts to a full shot and zooms in slightly to the disappointed face of Beats. The viewer is witness not only to Grindah's ignorance but also Beats's disappointment and embarrassment of thinking it was going to be him who has been given the role. The handheld camera captures both Beats's growing confidence and then embarrassment alongside Grindah's announcement.

Mockusoaps involve character studies and "use encounters with the crew as a basis for how they represent character and interrelationships" (Hight, 2010, p. 253). Unlike *Scot Squad*, a mockumentary I discuss in the second chapter, the characters in *People* acknowledge the crew behind the camera with regularity. We often hear the camera operator's voice asking questions and the characters refer to the programme "makers" often. Grindah and Beats begin the series by showing the crew and by extension, the viewers, spaces they inhabit. The camera crew are taken to the station, taken for a drive around Brentford and taken to Chabuddy's Worldwide Internet Cabin Café. Throughout the trip, Grindah and Beats talk to the camera crew; Grindah tells them what to film and edit out when he does not like something that was said or shown, assuming his celebrity allows him to dictate what will and will not be filmed. For instance, when driving around the city where they live, Beats reveals that they are in Brentford. While Grindah starts to admonish Beats for revealing their location and denies it, the camera focuses on a street sign that confirms Beats' claims. Grindah also asks the cameraman to lower the cameras when they get to the secret location of the radio station. The camera is lowered but it continues to follow the guys as they walk in. These initial interactions between the characters and the camera crew suggest that the programme makers will include what they wish to, despite what Grindah wants. While there is no indication of what is actually shown on '*People*', the crew on *People* seem to acquiesce to some of the characters demands about filming as suggested by the earlier example of Chabuddy asking the camera crew to finish filming. However, most of what Grindah asks to be edited out is shown on *People*.

Ultimately the codes and conventions of docusoap and rockumentary are being used in service of the comedy in this mockusoap. As stated earlier, what is being mocked is Grindah's desire for celebrity and the way he goes about it. As I mentioned earlier, docusoaps created celebrities out of some of the people featured in their programmes. Chris Rojek in his research into celebrity culture claims that docusoaps "explicitly label ordinary people as talentless, brainless, buffoons and morons" (2012, p. 163). He makes a distinction between celebrities and celetoids in his 2001 book *Celebrity* wherein he describes a celetoid as "the term for any compressed, concentrated, attributed celebrity" (Rojek, 2001, p. 20) including most reality TV stars whose celebrity fades over time. In a culture that has only increased its celebrity output, Rojek amends his definition of celetoids in 2012 to include short-life and long-life celetoids (2012, p. 165) both of which he sees as having no discernible talent. Linking the reality television

celebrity with the fool, he writes, "his clumsy ineptitude makes us feel a little bit superior" (Rojek, 2012, p. 172).

The Different Looks to Camera

Communicating this 'clumsy ineptitude' in *People* is the work of the comedy vérité aesthetic, described in chapter two, most specifically through the common convention of the look to camera or direct address. The look to the camera has been theorised throughout the history of film and television scholarship. Summarising the different looks in cinema, Marc Vernet defines the look at the camera as "an isolated shot or, at the very least, a shot that does not have a counterpart or a symmetrical response somewhere else in the film" (1989, p. 51). These looks to camera link the viewer and the character in the programme suggesting that we share the same life-world (Middleton, 2014, p. 150). This shot is often in close up and like a close up invites the viewer to identify with the character however, in this case, the look breaks through the fourth wall to look directly at the viewer. He argues that in film comedy, two different types of look at the camera have been demonstrated. The first "involves the turning of the public, by means of the actor's look and words, into a witness for an ironic commentary on the actions or attitudes of other characters" (Vernet, 1989, p. 52). According to Middleton this look "mixes knowingness, bemusement and a degree of helplessness" (Middleton, 2014, p. 149). In his discussion of *The Office US*, Eric Deitweiler suggests that Jim's looks to camera are often used as ironic commentary and take the place of a more traditional laugh track in cuing the viewer to find humour in the action (2012, 730). In this regard, the audience is asked to identify with Jim's look and judgement of the situation and witness the event in the same way as he does. In cases such as this, the look to camera aids in the mocking. Such is the case with many of Roche's looks to the camera. In the opening example, Roche looks to the camera as Steves talks to her new-born believing her to be his reincarnated Nan. Her bewildered expression cues the spectator to laugh in what could be a moment of melancholy but also reaffirms her position as one of 'us'. It can be read that her look to the camera asking the viewer if we are witnessing the same thing she is. This look to camera gives the viewer the permission to see Steves action as bizarre, just as she does. Throughout the series, the spectator comes to see her like Jim in *The Office US,* superior to many of those around him, more on the level of the spectator. For example, in 'Competition' Roche has an agreement with Beats that if he rides the moped while he is on a suspended license and she catches him, he will have to clean under Craig's bed. The bet

is revealed to us through Roche's insistence that Beats explain all the details of the deal to 'these lot' indicating the camera crew. Her insistence that he tell the camera crew and the prospective viewers of the bet, suggests she wants a witness to the bet in case she will have to enforce the punishment. As he offers up details of the deal, Roche keeps saying 'and...' until he reveals what his punishment will be if he drives. Repeating 'and' a second time, she looks to the camera setting up Beats' admission about his punishment. This look invites the viewer to take Roche's perspective. The way that she encourages Beats to reveal all, and her look of knowingness to the camera demonstrates her superiority over him in the scene.

The second type of look differs from the first in that it is "an empty look, a vain and centripetal form of begging for help" (Vernet, 1989, p. 53). In this case, rather than the character looking at the camera to make a statement or judgement on what is going on, this look to the camera indicates that the character does not understand what is happening and is asking the spectator for help. The futility of this look is what invites the humour as the viewer is unable to involve themselves in any action as demonstrated earlier. As Middleton argues, these looks either look to ensure the camera is catching the character's best bits or "at nervous moments when he worries that his ideal self-image may be unravelling" (Middleton, 2014, p. 149). In most cases, these types of look are attributed to Steves, whose drug-addled brain attempts to keep up with what is happening around him but largely fails. In 'The Godfather', Steves is found squatting in the church before Angel's Christening. He is on a comedown and when Beats informed him that the water he washed his face in was holy water, he begins to imagine that Jesus is talking to him through the statues. He looks the statue to his left and then back at the camera and then finally turns the statue to the wall. His look at the camera here is not like the look of Roche's above. There is no ironic commentary here. This look does not reaffirm his position as one of 'us'; it is a look of confusion and a plea for help. Here, the subject turns to the mechanical witness and the witnesses implied in the filming for help however, the camera, and the implied viewer cannot help and ultimately Steves has to be the one to turn the Jesus statue to the wall himself.

I argue that in *People*, one other look, a combination of the two is used. There are several looks to camera by Beats that seem to be a combination of the two. For example, in 'Competition', Grindah's plan to run a competition for a fan to win a prize and meet him runs into a series of problems. When the meet and greet finally takes place, Grindah's plan is to surprise the fan by jumping out of the back of a van.

Unfortunately, when the time comes for him to jump out, the door is stuck and the surprise is ruined. Grindah starts yelling and Beats looks to the camera. This look is not an ironic look, a look of knowingness but it does have an element of helplessness. He is unsure what to do to help the situation. On the other hand, in this look Beats acknowledges that Grindah's plan, and therefore his image is unravelling and his look demonstrates that he knows it is being caught on camera which prompts Beats to ask Grindah is he wants to do it again. This look is not the lost look that Steves portrays in the church and neither is it the knowing look that Roche displays in her dealings with Beats. This is a look of second-hand embarrassment – a look that communicates Beats' desire to fix the situation for the benefit of Grindah, not himself. This look suggests that maybe some things should not be captured on camera and broadcast for all to see. Although Beats suggests that they do it again, it is to erase the error that has already been filmed, with the hope that it will not be shown. This look suggests a resistance to the process of living on camera, which is in this same way, a resistance to the surveillance society, however small.

The celebrity narrative of starting from nothing and the (attempted) rise to fame is enacted in the narrative of *People*. The viewer is asked to see the boys as products of their environment. Much like Middleton's discussion of *The Office*, *People* "employs imagery that opens up its diegesis to the historical real" (Middleton, 2014, p. 146) with its repeated shots of the West London landscape. The fact that grime is seen to have come from the teens in the East London tower blocks and that is so often mentioned when the popular press talks about grime, the shots of the tower blocks could be both a demonstration of authenticity and a mocking of the fact that grime is so connected with the environment and that the Kurupt FM crew come from West London. The low angle shots of the buildings which often include shots of a plane flying by, suggest both Grindah's desire to rise to the dizzying heights of fame and his roots in the estate. Kurupt FM's connection to the urban environment is gently mocked in a scene where Grindah is describing how the music keeps him out of trouble.

> Camera Operator: So if you hadn't been in music, where would you be now, do you think?
> Grindah: Probably in a slammer, like, you know, the street life technology, like, do you know what I mean? When you're in that, life-street mentality, yeah, when you're raised in this, yeah, you've got either music or jail, like, do you know what I mean?
> Beats: Yeah. I'd probably work in Megabulb, Felton, cos my cousin's got a little job there, so...yeah...he'd probably hook me up with that.

The inclusion of the camera operator's question disrupts the idea that whatever is taking place would happen with or without the camera's presence but it does allow the audience to witness the construction of a narrative Grindah wishes to project. When Beats chimes in that he would just have worked with his cousin, he disrupts the street narrative that Grindah was trying to construct for Kurupt FM. By including Beats's statement, Kurupt FM's connection with legitimate grime artists and the way that their narratives are constructed is being mocked.

Conclusion

Like *Scot Squad* in the previous chapter, *People's* response to the surveillance society is to participate in it through the mockumentary format. Whereas *Scot Squad* represented visual surveillance as an unreliable tool of power, in that it did not create the docile bodies theorised and was subject to many errors, *People's* representation of surveillance demonstrates the effects of a living in a society very familiar with the act of looking. The Kurupt crew believe that they can use this to their advantage, by being a part of a television show that will bring them celebrity status.

People's construction as a witnessing text operates much the same way as the witnessing texts of the CCTV camera and the surveillance gaze illustrated in that chapter. In both mockumentary programmes, the vérité filming style and direct address position the viewer to adopt a perspective of a witness to the events on screen. In the case of *People*, the viewer is invited to witness Grindah's desire for celebrity through the proof offered up by the witnessing text of *'People'*. *People's* connection to surveillance is demonstrated through its representation as a witnessing text. The programme offers up footage of the lives of the Kurupt FM crew for the viewer to analyse, evaluate and judge. Its hybrid qualities, in this case, docusoap and rockumentary, and its comedy vérité aesthetics mock issues of ordinary celebrity such as the ordinary celebrity's desire for fame and the construction of a rise to fame narrative.

In examining the intersection between comedy and surveillance, specifically with respect to *People,* a new kind of look has been identified. This look, neither the empty or ironic look that has been identified in other mockumentaries, is a look of second-hand embarrassment. It is a look that is enabled by the comedy vérité style but exists because of the intersection between surveillance and comedy. It is a look that knows that whatever is happening is being seen by many and they have no power to

stop it. In this way, *People's* use of this type of look signals an attempt to critique surveillance society and surveillance culture much like *Scot Squad.* Although not a radical push back against the surveillance society and the celebrity culture it has a hand in producing, *People's* second-hand embarrassment look combined with its depiction of the ordinary celebrity suggest the beginnings of a resistance to it.

Chapter Four: Surveillance as Disclosure in *Mrs Brown's Boys*
Introduction

In the premiere episode of *Mrs Brown's Boys (*hereafter, *MBB)*, Agnes Brown attempts to find out what happened between her son Dermot and his girlfriend Maria who have seemingly broken up. Incensed at Agnes's meddling, Dermot angrily tells her to mind her own business. As he walks away Agnes replies, "But you are my business, I'm your mother" evoking a sentimental 'aww' from the studio audience. Hearing this, Brendan O'Carroll in his role as Agnes, turns to the camera and the audience in the studio and says, "It's a man in a fecking dress!" With this statement, which elicits laughter from the studio audience (and if the studio audience is any indication, from the audience at home), in the programme's very beginnings, Brendan O'Carroll discloses that he is Agnes, the man in the dress, and in so doing, the show reveals its artifice. And while the character of Agnes has already spoken to us at the beginning of the show, through direct address, this is the first time, but not the last, that we hear from O'Carroll. To what extent O'Carroll and Agnes are one in the same in the context of the show will be explored later, but O'Carroll's statement acts as a confession of his drag act. This is just one example of many moments where O'Carroll and Agnes speak to the audience(s)[14].

This chapter examines these ways of speaking - the kind of direct address speech directed to the audience in which the character or actor discloses something about themselves - and how it connects to surveillance in the context of *MBB*. *MBB* is a family sitcom centred on the life of the Brown family with Agnes as matriarch. The show revolves around Agnes, her grown sons, Mark (Pat 'Pepsi' Shields), Rory (Rory Cowan/Damien McKiernan), Trevor (Martin Delany) and Dermot (Paddy Houlihan and her grown daughter, Kathy (Jennifer Gibney) and their various friends, and partners. Agnes's best friend Winnie (Eilish O'Carroll), Granddad (Dermot O'Neill) and friend Buster Brady (Danny O'Carroll) complete the cast of main characters. In the previous chapter, the mockumentary format positioned the audience as witnesses and the material that was presented became a witnessing text. The fact that the characters in mockumentary programmes are being watched is not only suggested by their aesthetics but it is confirmed by the narrative of the programme. In this case, *MBB*, a meta-sitcom, relies on aesthetics only to suggest that Agnes is aware of being watched. Direct address

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[14] As there is a studio audience and an audience at home, in the instances when I am referring to both, I will refer to them as audience(s).

and the programme's reflexivity suggest an awareness of an audience. *MBB* reflects the degree to which society has become familiar with visual surveillance. Agnes responds to living in a surveillance society by using direct address to reveal her thoughts and feelings.

This chapter also examines moments of reflexivity in *MBB*. Again, as the first case studies indicate, moments of reflexivity are a convention of the mockumentary. As O'Carroll reveals himself to be Agnes, he also draws attention to the construction of the programme. He acknowledges that he is an actor, playing the role of Agnes. Moments of reflexivity are not often found in more conventional sitcom, however, in the meta-sitcom, references to the programme's construction are a key element. These moments of reflexivity in acknowledging their construction, also acknowledge the fact that the programme was created for an audience. In this way, reflexivity also suggests an awareness of being watched – of living in the surveillance society.

Self-Speaking

The way of speaking that is used in *MBB,* as illustrated by this example, is self-speaking. In his discussion of reality television, Jon Dovey uses the term to describe "highly personalised accounts of experience" that can be found in a variety of non-fiction programming (200, p. 108). This way of speaking covers a range of discourses from "exhibitionism, willing 'confessors' in light entertainment, therapeutic 'case study' confessions, witnessing, testifying, disclosing and coming out" (2000, p. 111). All of these ways of speaking are first person speech but there are subtle differences in their connotations. I argue that the type of self-speaking in *MBB* is, at times, confession and at others, disclosure.

Confession and Disclosure

In the case of the example above, O'Carroll's self-speaking can be seen as confessional. To understand how self-speaking acts as confession, the definition of confession is useful. Confessional self-speech might include:

I.   A formal statement admitting that one is guilty of a crime.

II. An acknowledgement that one has done something about which one is ashamed or embarrassed.

III. A formal admission of one's sins with repentance and desire of absolution, especially privately to a priest as a religious duty.

IV.   Humorous intimate personal revelations, especially as presented in a sensationalized form in a book, newspaper, or film (https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/confession).

Confession is the admission of something – an action, feeling or aspect of oneself that has been hidden because it is either illegal, embarrassing, or for whatever reason, it produces some guilt or shame. According to Gabrielle Helms, "Confession, whether religious or secular, describes a private discourse in which a person speaks in retrospect about a past experience that requires explanation, justification or atonement" (2005, p. 52). Given the fact that a number of theorists have used Michel Foucault's work on confession to discuss self-speaking (White, 1992; Renov, 1996; Shattuc, 1997; Dovey, 2000), it is useful to review his ideas here.

In his discussion about confession and sexuality Foucault writes, "…one confesses one's crimes, one's sins, one's thoughts and desires, one's illnesses and troubles; one goes about telling, with the greatest precision, whatever is most difficult to tell (1998, p. 59). It can be difficult to confess because of the shame in having committed the act, or the threat of retribution or punishment. One form of confession is the verbal confession, mainly found in the domains of religion or law. In many religions, such as Catholicism, members confess to sins that they have committed to a Priest, or another religious leader who in turn suggests ways of atonement. Members of the Church go into a private area (often called the confessional), to confess their sins to the Priest who is acting in the place of God. The Priest then delivers the penance that the sinner must complete to be forgiven. The threat of having to confess your sins was also supposed to prevent people from sinning in excessive amounts. Church members would think twice before committing any sin knowing that they would have to admit their wrongdoing. Although surveillance has been described as a contemporary issue, societies throughout history have used being seen by an authority (both the Priest and God) as a way to control their populations.

The criminal confession works in similar ways. In the criminal justice system, police work to obtain confessions from people they believe have committed a crime. The accused is moved to a private space to be interviewed by police. The police, and other law enforcement officials, make a decision to charge the accused or let them go based on the information they uncover. Without visual proof of a person engaged in criminal activity, the criminal's confession is a significant proof of their transgressions. As

such, "the confession became one of the West's most highly valued techniques for producing truth" (Foucault, 1998, p. 59).

Unlike the definition of confession, disclosure is not necessarily something that one should feel guilty or shameful about. Disclosure is "the action of making new or secret information known" (https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/disclosure). There is no element of asking for absolution or forgiveness. In this way, although disclosure and confession are similar, confessional self-speaking looks for absolution.

Foucault explains that, "Since the Middle Ages at least, Western societies have established the confession as one of the main rituals we rely on for the production of truth" (1998, p. 58). In the act of confessing to our misdeeds, we admit the truth of our actions, our reasons for doing so, and our thoughts about it. Foucault argues that "Western man is a confessing animal" (1998, p. 60). He compares the then contemporary society with that of the Middle Ages in the sheer number of places one feels the compulsion to confess. Whereas in the past, confession was confined to religious and legal arenas now Foucault believes that people confess in a multitude of spaces and to many different people. For example, people confess to professionals such as doctors and lawyers. I argue that television is one of the spaces in which people are compelled to confess. Although Foucault does not mention television, it is clear that certain television programming, primarily the talk show, is indeed a space where the subject is compelled to confess. He writes,

> The obligation to confess is now relayed through so many different points, is so deeply ingrained in us, that we no longer perceive it as the effect of a power that constrains us; on the contrary, it seems to us that truth, lodged in our most secret nature, 'demands' only to surface; that if it fails to do so, this is because a constraint holds it in place, the violence of a power weighs in down, and it can finally be articulated only at the price of a kind of liberation (1998, p. 60).

Far from acting as a deterrent then, in its modern configuration, confession almost seems to be freeing; that the truth of a situation, spoken and admitted is helpful rather than shameful. Indeed, Mimi White explains, "For Foucault, then, confession in itself constitutes a therapeutic process, promoting expiation, a release of tension, or the narrative constructions of the psychoanalytic talking cure" (2002, p. 313). This attitude is the basis for talk therapy. This is a kind of therapy that is evident in the talk show genre with many people confessing to their issues in front of an audience and a host

who acts as therapist and judge on shows such as *The Jeremy Kyle Show* (ITV, 2005-), *The Oprah Winfrey Show* (syndicated, 1986-2011)*, The Jerry Springer Show*, (syndicated, 1991-). The urge to disclose, if not confess, is also demonstrated daily by the millions of people who use social media. Here, "intimate personal revelations" form the basis of some of the statuses of a variety of different people across the globe. Indeed, there have even been cases where criminals have posted pictures of themselves implicating themselves in crimes.[15] The image acts as an admission of guilt.

In both cases, the legal or criminal confession, the act of committing a crime or sin is confessed to someone who has the power to absolve the criminal or sinner from their acts. As White states, "The confessional 'I' immediately implies an interlocutor, the 'you' to whom the statement is addressed, the authority who requires the confession, even if there is an internalized authoritative 'other'" (2002, p. 314). For the religious confession, it is the Priest standing in for God who has the authority. In the criminal confession, police and other legal professionals hear the confession. Both the Priest and the Judge have power over the confessor. They will determine what, if any, punishment will be handed out. In the case of social media, posts are often received and judged by the people who read them. If judged harshly, the punishment for these confessions is vilification and condemnation in the form of online, and in extreme cases, offline abuse and harassment. There are often several interlocutors in the televisual confession. In addition to the one who hears the confession within the programme itself, the studio and at home audiences hear it as well. All three have power to judge the confessor. Talk therapy is not only about the confessor's admission which makes the therapy work, it is the interaction between the confessor and the interlocutor. According to Foucault, "The truth did not reside solely in the subject who, by confessing, would reveal it wholly formed. It was constituted in two stages: present but incomplete, blind to itself, in the one who spoke, it could only reach completion in the one who assimilated and recorded it...the revelation of confession had to be coupled with the decipherment of what was said" (1998, p. 66). Therefore, the truth of the confession also resides with the person who hears the confession. It is in this way that the audience to the confession, both in

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[15] Daily Mail Reporter (8 August, 2011) 'Twit and Twitter: 'Looter' posts photo of himself and his booty online as police say tweets were used to co-ordinate riots' *Daily Mail Online,* viewed 26 April 2019 https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2023667/London-riots-Looter-posts-photo-booty-Facebook.html

the studio and at home, hold power in the confessional act. The audiences have the power of judgement and also helps to construct the truth as it is revealed.

Various non-fiction television programmes demonstrate the act of self-speaking, some confessional and some disclosure. The programme I examine in this chapter, *MBB,* is a fictional comedy programme that employs self-speaking as well as a number of other elements in its aesthetics and narrative to disclose and confess.

Representational Forms of Self-Speaking Prior to Television

Before the talk show and television in general, self-speaking took on several forms. The personal written diary, the memoir or autobiography act as forms of self-speaking/writing that reveal "highly personalised accounts of experience" about their subjects. Traditionally, the diary was a written record where people would write about their activities, thoughts and feelings. They may record things that had happened that day or dreams and hopes for the future. All three, diary, memoir and autobiography, are self-speaking/writing in that they have the possibility of revealing things about the writer that they may have previously kept hidden from others. This self-speaking may be confessional or it may be simply disclosure. However, unlike the memoir or autobiography, the diary is a safe place in which to speak about the self because it is usually kept private and thus all one's indiscretions can be told without fear of reprisal. Unlike in the case of the criminal or sinner, there is no interlocutor to hear the confession (unless of course if the diary is read or published). It is similar to the confessions of the sinner and criminal because of the admission of an act or feeling, but unlike the sinner or criminal, the diarist has not necessarily committed a *negative* act. Diarists are just as likely to admit to something unremarkable as to something illegal or amoral. The diary, according to Palmer, is "an enduring means of self-examination which has a variety of antecedents" (2003, p. 171). The diary, much like the confession, tells the secrets of its subject. According to Kylie Cardell, "the perceived 'privacy' of the diary is thus less about its status as withheld – as unpublished, kept under a pillow, or otherwise resistant to outside readers – than its relation to uncensored and unmediated self-narration (2014, p. 16). What is privileged about the diary is the access to the diarist's inner most thoughts and feelings. Although diaries are not often written with the intention of sharing with an audience, public diaries, memoirs and autobiographies are acts of self-speaking that reveal "highly personalised accounts of experience" about their subjects.

Another early example of self-speaking was letter writing. The letter, like the diary, was a recording of the events, thoughts and feeling of the time. Like the memoir and autobiography however, it presumed an audience where the diary would not. Besides face to face communication, letter writing was a key source for information between people. They were a means to record events and feelings about those events and to convey those to other people. Letter writing in the eighteenth century was considered "an imprint of the soul" (Habermas, 1992, p. 49). According to Habermas, the diary was a natural extension of this practice. He writes, "The diary became a letter addressed to the sender, and a first-person narrative became a conversation with one's self addressed to another person" (ibid). The emphasis here was not on the daily happenings but more on the feelings and thoughts that accompanied them. Diaries were also used as an early method of surveillance. According to Madan Sarup, "Diaries featured in Christian sects as a means of monitoring, examining and testing the individual, and as such they facilitate the split in the Protestant self 'between accuser and accused…confessing and examining becomes an entirely internalised dialogue between two facets of self – the observer and observed" (as cited by Palmer, 2003, p. 171). Two things here seem to be of note. One, the idea that diaries might be used as a tool of surveillance suggests that the first-person format was seen to be a reliable method of surveillance and truth finding. Two, that the individual acts as both an observer and observed which aligns itself with discussions of the panopticon illustrated in chapter two. In this way, diaries can act as self-surveillance (further discussed in chapter five) - a way of monitoring our own behaviour, thoughts, and feelings similar to the way the potential of being watched, causes the prisoners to behave in the panoptic structure. As Cardell states, the "expectation that surveillance will lead us closer to 'reality' in representation, that the confessional voice is authentic, and that our 'true self' is achieved through inwardness is key here, and these ideas are linked closely with diary practice, both historically, and in the present" (2014, p. 19).

The diary does not just reveal a simple chronology of events but also, like the confession, it explains why things were done and what the motivation was for doing them. Foucault says that it is not about merely confessing to the act itself but to "the thoughts that recapitulated it, the obsessions that accompanied it, the images, desires, modulations, and the quality of the pleasure that animated it" (1998, 63). In the case of many criminal confessions, confessors are encouraged to not only admit that they did the crime but to also explain why. All the reasons for committing the act must also be

unveiled. It is most often the motive that needs to be uncovered and dissected by police as they investigate the crime. The reasons for committing a crime are a way to make sense of the act.

Even if the idea of a handwritten personal diary seems outdated, the concept of a diary, or memoir has survived culturally in other forms and its connotations are widely known. According to Palmer, "The diary is a secret affair and still has considerable cultural force as a revealer of truth which enables us to understand the construction presented for consumption in everyday life (2003, p. 171). We see evidence of the survival of the memoir or diary in other forms such as status updates on social media collated in timeline form and personal blogs on the internet. And while these are public to be sure, given the "highly personalised accounts of experience" that some of these accts of self-speaking display, these posts closely resemble the content of a memoir or autobiography. Indeed, this form of confession is also seen on television. In addition to the talk shows that engage in talk therapy, the diary-like confession is found primarily in reality programming in shows such as *Big Brother* (Channel 4, Channel 5, 2000-), *America's Next Top Model* (UPN, The CW, VH1, 2003-), *I'm A Celebrity, Get Me Out of Here* (ITV, 2002-), and others. As I shall go on to explain, these programmes create a space where participants can speak privately in direct address to the audience.

Representations of the Confessional Space on Television

In some reality television programming, self-speaking is often set up in "diary room" segments. Here, the diary room substitutes for the written diary. The social actors in these programmes are often depicted in a separate room from the rest, talking directly to the camera, revealing their thoughts and feelings about the activities depicted in the programme. In this space, talking directly to the camera, the social actor is invited to disclose their inner most thoughts, not unlike the written diary. Also like the personal written diary, this is information that is not available to everyone. In the case of the diary room segments, the information that is revealed here is for the television audience only. The other social actors in the programme do not have access to this information, at least during the filming. At some point, the other participants will have access to these diary room thoughts, a fact that may influence the amount of truth-telling that takes place. It is with this convention that the spectator is made aware of the thoughts and motivations behind actions of the social actor, giving the spectator more information than the social actors. In this way, the visual diary can bring the spectator closer to the social actor. In learning more about the social actor, the spectator is

invited to bond with them. The reality television social actor is also often shown confessing to other social actors, such as in the case of *Big Brother* where pairs or smaller groups will go to other rooms and chat about other people in the house. Since not all programs make a specific diary room available, I use the term self-speaking space to refer to a place, away from the other characters (physically or otherwise) where they are able to reveal their private thoughts. The *Big Brother* diary room "shows that the conventional understanding of the diary as an intimate, secret and confessional genre ha[s] become fixed in popular culture" (Cardell, 2014, p. 6). In their discussion of the reality television confessional space, Minna Aslama and Mervi Pantii suggest that "...the confession is a self-induced examination of one's prior actions, and even more importantly of one's thoughts, feelings and relationships with others (2006, p. 176). The term 'self-induced' suggests that the social actor chooses to participate in the diary room and in some instances that is the case. However, participants are enticed to self-speak through the structure of the program. The programme's structure encourages participation in the diary room or other self-speaking spaces which mirrors the surveillance society's encouragement to self-speak on the internet, specifically social media. Unlike the personal diary, participants on the show are required to use the diary room and reveal their thoughts. These video diary moments take the secret and private and turn it into public (Palmer, 2003, p. 171). Echoing Foucault's thought about the degree to which modern society has become a confessing animal, Dovey writes "Now we have confession as an open discourse, de-ritualised, one in which intimate speaking is validated as a part of the quest for psychic health, as part of our 'right' to selfhood" (2000, p. 107).

The degree to which we are actually getting the 'truth' in these segments is unclear and complex. Dovey questions, "How far is the speaking subject speaking within the frame of somebody else's version of their biographical narrative and how far are they able to 'write themselves' in autobiographical mode?" (2000, p. 110). The representation of self has been examined by Erving Goffman who suggests that we perform our identities in everyday life. The self, Goffman argues "is not an organic thing that has a specific location, whose fundamental fate is to be born, to mature and to die; it is a dramatic effect arising diffusely from a scene that is presented, and the crucial issue, the crucial concern is whether it will be credited or discredited" (1959, p. 245). He argues that the self is performed in everyday life stating, "A performance may be defined as all the activity of a given participant on a given occasion which serves to

influence in any way any of the other participants" (1959, p. 26). Television programmes, whether reality programmes or not, are still subject to the framing and editorial practices necessary to make a narratively coherent television show. Whilst the self-speaking space segments are often seen as moments of truth telling, they are subject to as much manipulation as other moments. In the case of the reality programme, a social actor may perform an identity that they wish to project to the audience. Social actors may feel that despite their intentions of performing a specific personality that the edits were unfair or presented them in a different light. In many cases, "a performer tends to conceal or underplay those activities, facts, and motives which are incompatible with an idealized version of himself and his products" (Goffman, 1959, p. 56). In this regard the *Big Brother* diary room "allows the subject an opportunity to offer an authentic or 'truthful' interpretation of their behaviour within the staged context of the show" (Cardell, 2014, p. 6).

According to Dovey, confession always contains an element of guilt. The confessor should always feel badly or guilty for the act he or she has committed (or guilty because they do not feel guilty?). Self-speaking does not necessarily have that guilt aspect. In fact, some instances of self-speaking are even celebratory. He writes, "By no means all of the self-speaking which emerges from this matrix is confessional in the strictly Foucauldian sense. Whilst some of the 'identity' formations produced within the TV matrix *may* carry the mark of power as people are constructed as deviant, outsiders or marginal, it is possible to argue that there are other forms of self-speaking that slip the net of the confessional and become politically challenging, empowering statements not just for the individual speakers but for the social body" (Dovey, 2000, p. 107).

The diary and the criminal confession are acts of self-speaking often seen on reality television. The criminal confession is often seen in real crime programming. In real crime programmes, "programmes which either show filmed extracts of crime taking place or reconstruct real crimes" (Jermyn, 2007, p. 5), the social actor is often filmed in the act of confessing to the police in their investigation of a crime. In these programmes, confession can happen in a variety of ways, during a confrontation with police outside, in scenes of making statements to police after an incident, or once they have been cautioned and escorted to the station. In each of these situations, the social actor confesses their actions to an authority, usually a police officer. The police officer then has the power to decide what should be done with this information. Many times,

the social actor will be charged with a crime and taken to the police station or they will be instructed to behave differently in the future. Given that this incident is being filmed and will be broadcast on television, the social actor is also confessing to the television spectator who, as witness to their confession, has the power to judge them for their actions.

In both instances however, in diary room self-speaking or criminal confessions, the subject speaks about themselves to another. For example, the sinner confesses to a priest and the criminal to a police officer or judge. In the case *of Big Brother UK*, the social actor discloses to "big brother" a disembodied voice who asks questions and gives directions to people in the house. Given the placement of the camera and the diary room chair, social actors are positioned to look straight to camera, implying that the social actor is also disclosing to the spectator. In this way, the audience can receive the disclosure much like a Priest or police officer hears confession. In the case of the televisual disclosure, however, the participant and the audience are identified. However, Mimi White suggests that the viewer adopts both confessor and interlocutor roles while watching television. She suggests that the spectator can potentially identify with what is being disclosed and instead of feeling like the authority can feel as though they are confessing too via their screen surrogate. According to White, "viewers slide among a range of positions afforded, variously participating and judging, as confessor and interlocutor" (2002, p. 321). White goes on to say that the act of confession is a condition of television itself rather than something we see only on reality programmes. She writes, "The apparatus itself provides the terms for the therapeutic relationship initiated by a confessional transaction that becomes the appeal of the medium – the appeal to watch TV in the first place" (White, 2002, p. 316). Indeed, television's mode of address is structured to set up the confessor/ interlocutor dynamic. One of the primary ways that this is achieved is through its use of direct address.

Direct Address

For the most part, fictional television adopts an indirect mode of address. Mode of address, "refers to the way a text seems to 'speak to' its audience" (Branston and Stafford, 2003, p. 21). It is the way the text positions the audience to receive its message. Direct address involves the person speaking directly to the camera and addressing the viewer either in words or simply through their look into the camera at the audience. The theory is that, "In responding to the call, in recognizing that it is *us* being spoken to, we implicitly accept the discourse's definition of 'us', or to put it

another way, we adopt the subject position proposed for us by the discourse" (Fiske, 1987, p. 53). However, John Fiske writes, "the television viewer's response to interpellation is partial, not total: the power of the text to position the reading subject is much less than cinema's" (1987, p. 57). In so doing, the programme can suggest viewing positions for the spectator through its direct address but viewers will adopt different positions throughout as also suggested by White above. The theoretical history of confession as outlined by Foucault can be a lens from which to view the television confession which is often depicted by the direct address mode. There is a bond between speaker and listeners that is evoked in the direct address mode because of the intimacy created between the person on screen and the viewer. As Gabrielle Helms states, "Through the use of direct camera address, the confession creates the sense of immediacy and urgency needed to establish a special 'live' relationship between speaker and audience, one that remains unattainable in the written confession" (2005, p. 53). Ingrid Wassenaar argues that direct address "collapses the distinction between television apparatus and viewer" believing that when a social actor on television speaks directly to the camera, it is as if they are speaking directly to the spectator (2005, p. 74). The barrier of television has been removed and the spectator is invited to bond with the speaker. However, despite the increased intimacy with the speaker that the direct address can invite, the distinction between television representation and reality remains.

Confession, as stated by Foucault, "is a ritual of discourse in which the speaking subject is also the subject of the statement; it is also a ritual that unfolds within a power relationship, for one does not confess without the presence (or virtual presence) of a partner who is not simply the interlocutor but the authority who requires the confession, prescribes and appreciates it, and intervenes in order to judge, punish, forgive, console, and reconcile..." (1998, p. 61). In the case of direct address, the authority is the virtual presence of the viewer, the ultimate judge of the veracity and importance of the confession. The diary room confessions are shot in direct address. That, combined with the confessional act itself invites the spectator to bond with the person on screen. The direct address allows the social actor to comment on actions taking place within the programme which makes it seem like the viewer is getting inside information – a chance to see what they *really* think. Of course, this diary room confession may be just another opportunity for the social actor to perform another aspect of their selves – no more or less truthful than outside of the diary room.

Direct address is used by a variety of programmes such as news, game shows and talk shows, in addition to reality television. Indeed, Michelle Hilmes calls direct address the "most prevalent, and one of the fundamental characteristics of the network television discourse" (1985, p. 28). As I have demonstrated in the previous chapters on *Scot Squad* and *People Just Do Nothing*, direct address is also used in a variety of fictional programmes. The direct address self-speaking in the above programmes are contextualised as interviews in a mockumentary format. However, *MBB's* direct address moments cannot be explained in this way. As I have explained in the introduction, *MBB* is a meta-sitcom, a programme that breaks the fourth wall and refers to its own production with no narrative explanation as to why.

Metalepsis

Unlike the direct address in non-fiction or mockumentary, direct address in meta-sitcoms indicates a metalepsis, a term used in narratology that means "a transgression of narrative levels" (Thoss, 2015, p. 4). Narrative levels are the ways in which a reader participates in a text (Branigan, 1992, p.86). According to Edward Branigan, the first two levels are the storyworld or the diegetic and the non-diegetic or outside of the storyworld. The diegesis consists of all the elements of the imagined world of the programme. An example of a diegetic sound, for example, would include the voices of the characters, music played on a characters' radio or the sound of footsteps. Non-diegetic sounds then would be sounds that characters cannot hear, such as music that is played with no source in the programme. The imagined world of *MBB* is in large part a realist depiction of the world. It is a world that audience(s) recognise as one that exists in reality and not fantasy. In *MBB*, Agnes's moments of direct address are not heard by any of the characters in the programme so they would be considered non-diegetic. Metalepsis involves a breaking of the boundaries between the inside of the storyworld and the outside of the storyworld (Thoss, 2015, p. 4). According to Erwin Feyersinger, "while a fictional world is being established the audience gradually learns in what respect it differs from the actual world and in what respect it differs from other works of the same genre" (2011, p. 138). As I have shown at the beginning of this chapter, *MBB* transgresses the line between the two narrative levels of diegetic and non-diegetic with O'Carroll's line and thus establishes that it will include metalepsis.

MBB engages in two types of metalepsis: comments made by O'Carroll to the audience about the reality outside of the programme (storyworld-discourse metalepsis); and comments made by Agnes to the audience about her thoughts and feelings

(storyworld-reality) metalepsis. The storyworld-discourse metalepsis describes "transgressions in which a storyworld is entangled with the means of signification that create it as well as with a medium's paratexts or physical properties" (Thoss, 2015, p. 178). This is when characters perceive or manipulate their own medium such as noticing and reading subtitles on the screen. Because the subtitles are of our world in a realist narrative and the characters are of another world, they should not be able to read them (2015, p. 31). All references to the modes of production within the storyworld are an example of this kind of metalepsis. For example, Agnes has forgotten her purse at home when she is at Foley's. She then runs through the stage to the house set and retrieves it and runs back. The camera following her clearly shows the sets linked together in a studio space thus referring to the construction of the programme. The example that begins this chapter is also an example of a storyworld-discourse metalepsis as it refers to the fact that O'Carroll is dressed up to play the character of Agnes.

The second type of metalepsis, the storyworld-reality metalepsis, is the type that most often uses direct address. The storyworld-reality metalepsis "occur[s] when a medium claims that there is a continuity between its storyworld and our world, when entities of a storyworld apparently interact with reality or somehow perceive it" (2015, p. 28). This would include cases when characters allude to, or seemingly perceive, reality from inside the storyworld (2015, p. 30). When Agnes sits at her kitchen table and speaks to the audience(s), she is speaking from inside the storyworld (still in character) to the audience(s) who are outside of the storyworld. Complicating this idea of storyworld and reality is the studio audience, who, for the audience watching at home is a part of the programme. However, even though the studio audience is onscreen, they are not a part of the storyworld of the episode.

Type	Definition	Example
Storyworld-discourse metalepsis	Reference to a medium's properties by the medium itself	Agnes running through the studio to get her purse.
Storyworld-reality metalepsis	Reference to the real world by characters within the storyworld	Agnes speaking to the audience as Agnes

Fig. 2 Types of Metalepsis found in MBB

The effects and purposes of metalepsis have been debated. On the one hand, "metalepsis disrupts the reader imagining the fictional world and their immersion in it. Its effect, if not necessarily its intention, is therefore thought to be anti-illusionist" (Kukkonen, 2011, p. 10). Metalepsis has been thought to deny a spectator's willing suspension of disbelief (Sarkosh, 2011, p. 184). However, Karin Kukkonen points out that metalepsis can have either a disruptive or an illusionist effect depending on its usage. She writes, "metalepsis can have disruptive and deconstructive effects, if the immersion in the fictional world is ruptured, and that it can have illusionist effects if it successfully reproduces the basic interaction of the communicational situation of fiction" (2011, p. 11). The suspension of disbelief is different according to the genre. What the audience comes to expect from an action film might require them to suspend their disbelief more than a realist drama. Comedy, like the action film, can push the boundaries of what is considered believable in their programmes. Keyvan Sarkosh, in his analysis of comedy film argues, "They [metalepsis] no longer interrupt our willing suspension of disbelief, but have become a part of it; willingly we suspend our disbelief of the possibility of transgression of the boundaries between (supposedly) ontologically distinct worlds" (2011, p. 185). In *MBB*, the pattern was set so early in the premiere episode, it would be hard to argue that subsequent instances of metalepsis bring the audience out of the storyworld. However, given the fact that *MBB* is a television programme with multiple episodes, it might be the case that a viewer's first experience with metalepsis is initially anti-illusionist until they are aware of its use. If metalepsis is meant to disturb the viewer's immersion in the narrative, then it is often meant to "destabilize narrative structures" or to offer some ideological critique (Kukkonen, 2011, p. 15). When O'Carroll exclaims, "It's a man in a fecking dress!", that confession works to destabilize the viewer's immersion in the narrative. The studio audience's response indicates that they were immersed in the story of Agnes feeling left out of her son's life. However, as the rest of the episode continues in the same way, with Agnes and O'Carroll transgressing narrative levels, the metalepses eventually reinforces immersion in the narrative. The audience comes to learn, either in one episode or over a series of episodes, that metalepsis is a normal part of the world of this programme. By pushing the boundaries with their narrative transgressions, *MBB* embraces a spirit of resistance and rebellion.

Comedies such as *The Office, People Just Do Nothing,* and *Scot Squad*, all employ direct address, however, because they are set up as documentaries, their versions of direct address are part of their storyworld and therefore not metaleptic. The direct

address in the meta-sitcom *MBB*, where there is no documentary element is metaleptic. This transgression of narrative levels is where much of the humour is located. Sarkosh argues that in several comedy films, the comic effect of the metalepsis often comes from the reaction of the fictional characters to the transgression (2011, p. 183). Indeed, much of the humour of *MBB* comes from the actors around Agnes who try to not react to her direct address of the audience or her pointing out of mistakes. *MBB'*s studio audience is shown and as the example mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, are, at times, active participants. However, certainly in the case of much fictional television, "Television serves to implicate the viewer in the process of his own deception: the viewer becomes aware on one level that he constitutes the necessary conditions for the existence of the television image and hence is in some way responsible for that image; on another level his presence is denied" (Hilmes, 2005, p. 32). Much of fictional programming, although constructed for an audience, is filmed as if the audience is not there; it disavows their look. In these types of programmes, actors do not speak to or even look at the camera in order not to break that illusion. The characters who speak directly to the camera acknowledge that look. Direct address is the programme out of denial, fully aware of, and disclosing to, the audience.

MBB demonstrates the act of disclosure in three main ways: as part of its narrative; the disclosure of its construction (form); and acknowledging its audience. Disclosure and self-speaking is a symptom of a surveillance society and its depiction here, indicates the degree to which disclosure has become naturalised as a part of television discourse and by extension contemporary culture.

Narrative Disclosure

In fictional programming characters are often depicted in the act of disclosure. This is disclosure as part of the narrative of the programme. *MBB* demonstrates narrative disclosure in three different ways, some of which act as confession. The first is Agnes's direct address moments to the audience; the second is the confessions Agnes makes to other characters; and the last is the confessions that other characters make to us and Agnes in the role of therapist/judge/mother.

MBB uses storyworld-reality metalepsis through direct address. In MBB, Agnes talks to the audience(s) throughout the episode. In the second episode of the series, Agnes welcomes the audience with direct address. She is positioned in the kitchen looking through the pass through into the sitting room. She says, "hello, come in, come in" while gesturing to come into the kitchen. The next shot is still a direct address from

Agnes, but now the camera is in the kitchen. She proceeds to tell us what she is in the midst of doing, in this case, making brown bread from her mother's secret recipe. This kind of introductory salutation recurs several times over the course of the series. If it is not right at the start, it comes within the first 5 minutes. She usually waits until she is alone, most times in her kitchen. Agnes also ends the episode with a goodbye, sometimes including a recap about what happened in the episode.

Agnes speaks to the audiences throughout most episodes, usually times she is alone and is contemplating what has just happened or wondering out loud about what will happen in the future – sometimes giving out a little lecture on moral issues. At the conclusion of the episode mentioned above, Agnes talks about secrets,

> Agnes: Everyone has their little secret. Cathy and her secret boyfriend. And imagine Mark keeping that secret all those years. That's not right. 0h, there's some secrets it's all right to keep, like your age, or your weight. Or whether or not someone has a scar on their willy. But not Mark's secret, no. Or the recipe for brown bread. I must tell you some time! Goodbye!

Each one of these moments of direct address is an example of storyworld-reality metalepsis where the character of Agnes transgresses the boundary between her world and the spectator's. Agnes's glances at the camera make comments on what others have said and reveal her attitude about them. She is the only character who is granted the right to speak to the audience. As Aslama and Pantii state, "a monologue equals importance: the participant given the voice alone with the camera is empowered" (2006, p. 177). The stories are told through her point of view. Characters in *MBB* mostly do not seem to notice or care that Agnes is talking to the camera. If they notice that she is talking at all, they believe it to be nothing more than one of Agnes's strange behaviours. For example, in episode 3.02, Winnie asks Agnes if she is talking to herself again and in the 2016 Christmas special Kathy sits at the kitchen table in Agnes' spot and wonders aloud who her mother is talking to when she sits in the same spot in the mornings.

Rather than being an anti-illusionist force, the storyworld-reality metalepsis here works in service of the humour. In both the Christmas 2016 special and the Live episode Agnes ends the show with a lecture. In the Live episode, Agnes pulls out her earpiece, indicating her break from controlling producers and her transition to O'Carroll, and gives a speech about the state of the world and comedy's role in it. In this case, the

pulling out of the earpiece signals the transition from Agnes to O'Carroll and a storyworld-discourse metalepsis.

The second type of narrative disclosure in *MBB* is Agnes's confessions to others. Agnes tells many stories, some that are true in the context of the show and some she claims are just jokes. Many of the scenes between Winnie and Agnes are the two of them reminiscing about the old days or telling each other stories from their pasts. In episode 2.2, Agnes confesses to Winnie that she has never had an 'organism'. After Agnes asks Winnie what they are like, Winnie describes it for her. In episode 2.5 she confesses to Dermot that his pet turtle did not get taken to the farm but rather that their dog ate it. These examples of self-speaking are confessions rather than disclosures as Agnes feels a degree of shame and guilt with both. Each one of these confessions work in service of the comedy. At the time Agnes tells it, the audience is not always sure if these stories are narrative truths or just set ups for another joke. For example, in episode 1.4, she makes a joke about fellatio and then confesses that she does not know what it is.

Not all of Agnes's disclosures are verbal confessions. Sometimes Agnes will look to the camera to indicate her true feels on what is happening or being said in a non-verbal example of storyworld-reality metalepsis. In 1.1 Kathy tells her not to interfere in Dermot and Maria's relationship. She says, "me, interfere?" and then looks to the camera to indicate to the audience(s) that that is exactly what she will do. The glances and looks to the camera feel more truthful then some of the verbal confessions she makes because of the relationship she has built up with the spectator through her earlier direct addresses.

The third type of narrative disclosure is others' confessions to Agnes where Agnes acts as a surrogate judge or Priest. In the first series, Rory is desperate to come out to his mother as a gay man. In several episodes, Rory tries to tell Agnes that he is gay, only to be stopped or misunderstood. Finally, in episode 1.5, Kathy gives Agnes a book about homosexuals and asks her to look for signs. In the end, after Agnes guesses that everyone is gay, including herself, Kathy has to tell her it's Rory. Agnes's response is to tell Rory that she loves him, despite his 'illness'. Here, Agnes plays the role of interlocutor rather than confessor, a role she plays for her entire family. Agnes also plays this role for people outside of her own family. In episode 1.6, Father Quinn visits Agnes when he drops Grandad home. Agnes is in the kitchen scrubbing the floor and

notices that he is drinking from a flask. She asks if he is alright and he proceeds to explain how he is losing his faith. He is also worried about the missionaries who are canvassing for followers. Agnes is able to listen to his confession and his concerns in much the same manner as he may have listened to hers.

> Father Quinn: Mrs Brown, have they called here? Have they?
> Agnes: Who? Have who called?
> Father Quinn: The Missionaries, from the Church of Latter Day Saints.
> Agnes: Nobody's called here, Father.
> Father Quinn: You know, they have converted four families in the last six months.
> Agnes: Well, wait a minute, Father, these missionaries, do they believe in God?
> Father Quinn: Well, Yes.
> Agnes: Well, then what's the problem? We're all on the same bus, who gives a shite who the driver is?
> Father Quinn: I give a shite!
> Agnes: Father, you watch your fucking language in this house! Now, Father, look, what you need to do, you need to get into your car and drive home! Father, these things are sent to test us.
> Father Quinn: Do you think so?
> Agnes: Oh, yes! Come on. Now look, Father, what you need to do is, well, just keep the faith.
> Father Quinn: The faith! The faith! Yes, the faith.

In this case, Agnes acts as interlocutor to Father Quinn's confession. In this way, confession is turned on its head, as it is the Priest who is normally in that role. In this scenario, Agnes has the power over Father Quinn and uses words a Priest might say to solve the problem by evoking the idea of having faith.

Disclosure of Form

MBB also reveals its construction through storyworld-discourse metalepsis or disclosure of form. As stated in the introduction, *MBB* is a sitcom that includes references to its own production which I have termed meta-sitcom. In order to examine how MBB transgresses the boundaries between storyworld and discourse, an examination of the form of sitcom is necessary. According to Gerald Mintz,

> a sitcom is a half hour series focused on episodes involving recurring characters within the same premise. That is, each week we encounter the same people in essentially the same setting. The episodes are finite: what happens in a given episode is usually closed off, explained, reconciled, solved at the end of the half hour…sitcoms are generally performed before live audiences, whether broadcast live (the old days) or filmed or taped, and they usually have an element that might be almost metadrama in a sense that since the laughter is recorded (sometimes even augmented), the audience is aware of watching a play, a performance, a comedy incorporating comic activity (1985, p. 115).

MBB is set in Agnes's house and in Foley's, the bar. It has a closed narrative for the most part although there are recurring storylines that span several episodes or the entire series such as Dermot and Maria's wedding. What Mintz calls 'almost metadrama', and Jeff Thoss would call storyworld-discourse metalepsis, goes beyond the laugh track. The laugh track and the direct address are just two examples of the metadrama (storyworld-discourse metalepsis) contained in this programme. Mintz goes on to say that the most important feature of the sitcom is its equilibrium/chaos/equilibrium narrative structure (ibid). All of *MBB's* episodes demonstrate this structure in their storyworld. Although stories can continue throughout series, the main story line is concluded in each episode.

Mintz is largely concerned here with the narrative aspects of the genre rather than its aesthetics but as Brett Mills points out this definition of the sitcom can be applicable to other genres such as drama (2005, p. 27). It is aesthetics and intention, rather than just narrative, which helps to define the sitcom genre. The classic form of shooting a sitcom is as if it is taking place on a stage. Mills states, "Sitcom aesthetics usually require programs to be recorded under bright lights, with sets clear and full, again reminiscent of the theatre experience" (2005, p. 32). The sitcom is traditionally filmed with three cameras. Camera one will capture the entirety of the scene in a master shot. Cameras two and three will focus on each of the characters in the scene enabling the audience to see the character's reaction to what has been said or done (Mills, 2009, p. 39). The reaction shot is important in comedy for two main reasons: the first is that audiences seeing the reaction of a character in the scene will know that they are meant to find the behaviour or dialogue prompting the reaction shot as ridiculous and therefore funny; and secondly, the reaction shot generates two laughs out of one joke – the initial behaviour/dialogue and then the reaction to it (Mills, 2009, p. 40). The reaction shot is especially important in *MBB* because of Agnes's direct address glances and comments to the camera. Although in most cases the reaction shot is diegetic and existing in the storyworld, much of the comedy in *MBB* comes from Agnes's looks to 'us' and therefore operate non-diegetically. Additionally, these reaction shots help to build on the bond that have been established through the direct address introductions. Mills states that, "The look of sitcom, then, is one which foregrounds the aspect of its own performance, offering pleasure in the presentation of verbal and physical comic skill" (2004, p. 66). The three camera set up in *MBB* enables the shows to feature verbal and

physical comedy, primarily through its main star. Brendan O'Carroll often performs physical stunts in the service of his comedy. Camera one captures the physical comedy in a master or long shot and the verbal comedy is captured through the shot, reverse shot during conversations.

But what ultimately defines the sitcom can be boiled down to its comic impetus, that is sitcom is defined "as a form of programming which foregrounds its comic intent" (Mills, 2009, p. 49). The audience is meant to laugh at it and the programme works to signal that humourist intent with various elements such as the laugh track and the reaction shot. Mills states, "The nature of the sitcom, then, is one in which its texts and its text's intentions, are signalled as clearly and as often as possible" (2004, p. 68). These are the most traditional conventions of the sitcom genre however, just like with any genre, there are exceptions and hybrids. In recent years some of these traditional conventions of the sitcom have been challenged, manipulated and abandoned. Shows like *The Office*, *Twenty Twelve* (BBC4, 2011-2012; BBC2, 2012) and *Scot Squad* have adopted a documentary look, abandoning the laugh track in a hybrid genre form referred to as comedy vérité (Mills, 2004, Thompson, 2007). *MBB* also plays with the conventions of the traditional sitcom with its heightened display of their production, part of the metadrama mentioned earlier.

In *MBB*, what in many conventional sitcoms would be seen as mistakes, are left in the final edit and as a result the boundaries between their storyworld and the discourse of the medium are transgressed. Actors mess up their lines, cameramen walk into scenes, things on set break or do not work. Rather than repeat the scene and use the new take, *MBB* often leaves these moments in the final product. In episode 1.2, Kathy comes into the scene too early and has to go out and repeat her entry. In episode 2.4 Dermot's delivery of a tricky line has him repeating the line a few times and O'Carroll (dressed as Agnes) commenting that he bet he was not happy seeing the line in the script. S/he says, "I bet you were shitting yourself, seeing this line in the script." This seems to recall the variety show days when programmes were broadcast live and therefore they were not able to redo scenes until they were perfect. In fact, several aspects of the programme recall conventions from comedy throughout its history. The variety show would include "numerous acts by various musical and comic performers and lavish production values (Tueth, 2005, p. 20). Some of the early American sitcoms tried to blend the variety programmes and domestic sitcom from the radio which resulted in some interesting hybridity. According to Michael Tueth, "*The Jack Benny*

Show allowed the comedian to begin the show as the host with an opening monologue and conversations with his guest stars…and the transition into something akin to a backstage situation comedy" (2005, p. 49). Another sitcom of the time that uses metalepsis similar to *MBB* is *The George Burns and Gracie Allen Show*. Much like Agnes, "George's monologues, addressed directly to the television viewers, would often make self-referential comments" (Tueth, 2005, p. 55). Like the variety show, several episodes end with a musical number, where the entire cast will come on the set/stage and perform. In these cases, the master shot of the performance will include the entirety of the set and the studio audience watching, very much evoking a theatre like feel. The studio audience participates as well, clapping along. There are several times when the camera makes it into the shot as well. In the case of episode 1.5, when the camera man does not get out of the shot fast enough, Agnes uses it in the context of the narrative telling Dermot, "the man about the wedding video is here." Transitions between scenes are depicted through wipes rather than straight cuts which, like being filmed in front of a studio audience, is a style more often seen in the past.

  MBB also engages in self-reference. Jim Cook (1982) states that sitcoms have a 'dual reading focus' by which he means that the spectator believes in the norms presented by the programme but also that which deliberately disrupts those norms (as cited by Mills, 2009, p. 36). In this concept, these inside jokes or disruptions of the narrative become accepted as just part of the show. Commenting on their own celebrity is done in episode 3.2 when Mark and Betty decide they are going to move to Australia. When a suggestion is made that Agnes moves with them she says she cannot because no one knows her there. A glance and a smile to the camera suggests that the Australians might soon be introduced to the show on tour or on screen. Indeed, this episode aired in January 2013 just before *MBB* went on tour in Australia in 2014 (*Mrs Brown's Boys heading Down Under,* 11 April, 2013). The fact that *MBB* uses the multi-camera sitcom complete with laugh track might be a reaction to programs like the mockumentaries discussed earlier in this thesis. *MBB*'s pointing out of its obvious constructions seem to be saying 'yes, it's fake – see?' According to John Fagan, "O'Carroll taps directly into a public highly aware of the world as a media environment...[He] may be letting them in on the gag, but it's a gag they were already keenly aware of, and by acknowledging it, he also acknowledges their sophisticated understanding of how popular culture (in this case the TV sitcom) works" (2015, p. 206).

Acknowledging the Audience

Another aspect to the confession of form is the admission of the audience. The realist conventions of many fictional programmes is to deny that there is an audience watching. Although all programmes and films have credit sequences or opening titles, during the course of the narrative, the audience is, although assumed, unacknowledged. In comedy programmes, as well as having credit and title sequences, the audience is almost always acknowledged through the laugh track, or more obviously, by the strategies already discussed in this chapter. Although there are some, very few comedies, like the ones examined in previous chapters, do not employ a laugh track. The laugh track, whether manufactured (canned laughter) or recorded during a live performance of the show, indicates that an audience is present (in the studio) or will be at the time of airing (the audience at home). The laugh track is an invitation for the spectator at home to laugh at given comic moments but it also indicates that the show is aware of the audience. The laugh track performs the function of identifying the parts of the programme that the viewer should find funny. As Mills states, "Importantly, the laugh track is also a signal for the ways in which sitcom is intended to be understood" (2005, p. 51). The laugh track tells audiences what they should find funny and what is not supposed to be funny. The laugh track also makes evident that the programme is a complete fabrication, that it is a performance. The laugh track in sitcoms, "underlines the artificial, theatrical nature of the genre, and the fact that sitcom requires an audience for its existence to be at all meaningful" (Mills, 2005, p. 50).

MBB is filmed in front of a studio audience whose reactions can be heard. Audiences clap, sigh, groan and laugh at various times during the episode. This type of laugh track is often seen as more authentic than canned laughter that has been recorded at another time (Bore, 2011, p. 25). In *MBB*, the studio audience is visually identified after the opening credits with a wide shot of the inside of the studio that then zooms or cuts in to the first scene. During the closing credits, the cast take a bow interspersed with shots of the audience and wider shots of the set. The cast is lined up in the manner of a curtain call with the stage and audience on display. In the example I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, it is the studio audience's response to the scene that causes O'Carroll to comment on the fact that he is just playing a character and that the situation is not real. Coming in the very first episode, it invites the spectator to see the scene and the series in a specific way. It sets the audience's expectations of the entire series. It not only introduces the set and characters, it also introduces its

metaleptic style. The laugh track acts as a form of direct address like the diary room confession (Hilmes, 1985, p. 29). It is a direct invitation for the audience at home to join in and laugh as well. Foregrounding the audience works for humour as the communal experience results in more laughter than if alone (Mills, 2009, p. 38).

The impulse to disclose, although not a product of the surveillance society, is enhanced because of it. Programmes such as *MBB* rely on the familiarity with the surveillance culture in order to succeed as an alternative sitcom format. In this format, the revealing of the modes of production and the audience, do not exist outside of the narrative but are an element of it. In some cases, these self-reflexive moments would disrupt the narrative, taking the spectator out of the story and asking them to consider the construction. In his discussion of the apparatus of television and is commercial nature, Fiske suggests that "These interruptions of the narrative that fracture its diegetic world are characteristic of the apparatus of television…" (1987, p. 146). Here he is talking about advertisements, station breaks and news updates that interrupt the programme itself. Michelle Hilmes writes that television alternates direct address and narrative closure "with a rapidly and continuousness unprecedented in any other art form" which is a "disruption of the classic voyeuristic position of the cinema spectator" (1985, p. 30).

In *MBB*, self-reflexive moments become the story. Agnes has become a citizen of the surveillance society. In this way, she confesses to be part of the audience as well. Metalepsis may suggest that "reality and fiction [have] become indistinguishable – at least from an intra- or metadiegetic perspective" and that our real world may therefore turn out to be just a fictitious as the world of the intra- and metadiegetic characters" (Sarkosh, 2011, p. 191). In *MBB*, Agnes mentions various other television programmes and other events in the world. Her kitchen table hellos and introduction to the episode often finds her reading the paper with a front page that mocks the current issues of the day. For example, in the 2016 live episode, the paper she reads has the headline "FEXIT! Finglas wants to leave the EU" in an obvious allusion to Brexit.

Conclusion

Given that Dovey has suggested, "subjective, autobiographical and confessional modes of expression have proliferated during the 1990s" (2000, p. 1) and David Lyon's book, *The Electronic Eye: the rise of the surveillance society* was published in 1994, suggests that we can see confession as a significant aspect of the surveillance society. Indeed, Dovey asks a series of questions about confession in 1990s media that can be

asked of the media today and argues that "confession has become a central part of media cultures" (ibid). I argue that while the opportunities for self-speaking have grown, not all of this is confession of the sort described in the definition. Not all of these "highly personalised accounts of experience" can be considered confessional in that they do not produce shame or guilt by the speaker. Instead, there are moments of disclosure and confession that are represented in the programme. Today, in the surveillance society, rather than a few key areas for confession, like the church, people now disclose information on television, in the newspaper, on radio and on social media. Given the network of CCTV cameras and the mining of personal data online, disclosure can act as an attempt to control the personal information that goes out to the world. Perhaps it is a small way of trying to control what seems to be the uncontrollable – the amount of information about us that is available to others. If we know we are going to be caught out by the network of CCTV cameras, or cyber surveillance, why not just admit our actions ourselves?

Disclosure is a part of the surveillance society. Surveillance has become such a part of Western culture that it is not usual for people in society to be on camera. Self-speaking is a sort of self-surveillance in the way that it can act as evidence of something. Many citizens of the surveillance society willingly participate in self surveillance with social media, posting selfies and status updates that inform others of their thoughts, attitudes and behaviours. For some, what was once a private activity, the diary, has now been brought to the internet. The mobile phone and camera is just a modern-day tool of personal expression. *MBB* reflects the participation and pervasiveness of the surveillance society specifically when it comes to the act of disclosure through self-speaking. *MBB* approaches disclosure in three ways: narrative disclosure; disclosure of the sitcom form; and acknowledgement of the audience. *MBB* concentrates on the disclosure of form and acknowledgement of the audience through both storyworld-reality and storyworld-discourse metalepsis. Comedy's ability to not only transgress narrative boundaries but to incorporate transgressions as a part of the accepted storyworld of the programme indicate its potential for resistance to the status quo. The moments of transgression act as playful moments and are moments of rebellion against the sitcom form. These moments of rebellion become the form of *MBB* and in so doing, have the ability to demonstrate the importance of resistance.

The programme illustrates Foucault's contention that contemporary society is one obsessed with confession. Agnes reveals herself to 'us' with her relationship to

their surveillance camera – the studio's cameras. She speaks directly into the camera, revealing things that she does not reveal to others, admitting her true self and as such, the spectator is invited to bond with her. The audience becomes the interlocutor able to judge, or a kindred spirit finding relief in the confession made for us by our screen surrogate. The spectator might see themselves in their acts and speech. The acts of confession in *MBB* clearly acknowledge its pervasiveness in our current surveillance society.

Chapter Five: Surveying the Postfeminist Body in Miranda
Introduction

In the premiere episode of *Miranda*, Miranda (Miranda Hart), excited about the impending catch-up with her crush Gary (Tom Ellis), sits down on her sofa, faces the screen and starts talking to the audience. She is wondering what she will wear saying she will have to 'Trinny and Susannah herself' in order to look nice. This leads her to an aside, mentioning how she hates those "welcome to I'm okay, you're obese' type of shows. Cut to an insert of Miranda imagining herself carrying a microphone and walking with a cameraman, tracking down an unsuspecting woman walking down the street and asking her about her choice of clothing. This ambush style confrontation is similar to makeover shows like *What Not to Wear* (BBC2, 2001-2003; BBC1, 2004-2007) wherein candidates for a makeover are nominated by friends or family and are caught unaware in public by the show's presenters. However, Miranda's ambush goes a little differently. Miranda asks the woman if she likes her top, if she feels comfortable in it, and if she minds that some might not like it? When the woman answers that is not bothered if people do not like it because she does and she feels comfortable in it, instead of forcing her to submit to the make-over like the aforementioned programmes, Miranda simply says, "Well, wear that then" and walks away. This scene illustrates several things that this chapter will deal with. One is the constant pressure of surveillance to conform to normative values in this case, normative femininity. Two, this example draws attention to the aesthetics of the programme that allow for, and encourage, extrafictional elements such as direct address to camera and imagined inserts that work in concert with the narrative proper. Third, the focus on the body and specifically the size of the body and how it should be managed is referenced through Miranda's detest of these types of programmes and their focus on the body (I'm okay, you're obese). The premiere episode of the series is indicative of the issues that run throughout the series, and of the issues I will address in this chapter, and as such will be used as my primary example.

Like Mrs Brown's Boys, Miranda is a meta-sitcom which stars Miranda Hart as a lovelorn singleton pining for the love of her friend Gary. The programme primarily deals with her navigating the world of relationships, first as potential girlfriend to Gary, in a steady relationship with Mike (Bo Poraj), and finally in a relationship with Gary, eventually becoming his wife. Miranda owns a joke shop that her best friend Stevie (Sarah Hadland) manages. The other main characters include Miranda's mother, Penny

(Patricia Hodge) who is desperate for her daughter to get married, and cousin, Tilly (Sally Phillips). Issues of the body feature heavily in the series with Miranda's height and size[16] a constant source of humour and ridicule from others. Equally, the programme features Miranda Hart's ability to do physical comedy with pratfalls, inadvertently exposed body parts and embarrassing emittances. Although not always the object of ridicule, Miranda's body provides a key source of humour in the programme. The over-arching narrative in the three series and two specials is Miranda's relationship with Gary. At the beginning of the series, the viewer is told that Miranda has loved him for years but has never acted upon this desire. As the series progresses, Miranda and Gary admit their feelings to each other, overcome obstacles that include other romantic interests, and finally marry. Deriving its name from other chick forms, such as chick-lit, and chick flicks, *Miranda* is an example of what Kyra Hunting has termed, chick-lit television (2012).

Defining the Programme

Kyra Hunting, in her article, 'Woman's Talk: Chick Lit TV and the Dialogues of Feminism' describes a sub-genre of fictional programming called chick-lit television. Although this term, and indeed other forms of the term (i.e. chick flicks) have been used to 'other' women-focussed media forms by contextualising them as for women, chick-lit television, Hunting argues, "emphasizes dialogism (Bakhtin, 1981), gender performance (Butler, 1990), and play in its negotiations with elements of earlier feminist movements" (2012, p. 188). She outlines seven key attributes of chick-lit television, presented alone or in combination, that include: 1) programmes are comedies or dramas with a mix of humour and melodrama; 2) a focus on women and their close relationships; 3) narrative is told through conversation and dialogue; 4) familial relations and the workplace are subordinate to the female group; 5) male characters are transitory and operate in service to the female narrative; 6) target is a female audience; and 7) themes and aesthetics are drawn from other media associated with women (Hunting, 2012, p. 189). Miranda is a thirty-something woman who runs her own business with her best friend, Stevie. She is single, has lunches with her girlfriends, and complains about her mother. As already stated, the central narrative revolves around her on/off relationship with Gary, who works in the restaurant beside her joke shop. In this regard, *Miranda* can be defined as a chick-lit television programme.

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[16] Miranda Hart is 6ft1 and in the premiere episode, the character of Miranda says she is a size twenty. As such, she is a larger female body then is typically depicted in as a female lead in a sitcom.

However, Miranda is not the kind of woman one might have been expect to find in the traditional romantic comedy genre, at least not as the female lead. Since the success of *Bridget Jones's Diary* – the novel and the film of the same name, a certain kind of romantic heroine has emerged - a "thirty-something female who was unhappily single, appealingly neurotic and preoccupied with the shape, size and look of her body, and with finding a man" (Gill and Herdieckerhoff, 2006, p. 489). In the case of Bridget Jones and Miranda, in addition to the characteristics described by Gill and Herdieckerhoff, these women are also seen as excessive – excessive in size, excessive in attitude and speech and/or excessive in style. While Miranda is a single, working woman looking for love, she is also 'big and long' and extremely clumsy – both physically and verbally. She possesses little self-control in social situations often breaking out into song or telling ridiculous lies to impress. She constantly makes a spectacle of herself, drawing attention to her otherness and therefore she does not fit comfortably as the romantic female lead. Miranda's excessiveness makes her an unruly woman - a woman "too fat, too funny, too noisy, too old, too rebellious" (Karlyn, 1995, p. 19). Her unruliness challenges stereotypical representations of womanhood in the romantic comedy thus allowing for the kind of dialogue and engagement in feminisms that Hunting argues is a feature of chick-lit television.

Postfeminist Sensibility and Normative Femininity

In 2007, Rosalind Gill defined what she called the postfeminist sensibility which included these nine basic tenets: "the notion that femininity is a bodily property; the shift from objectification to subjectification; the emphasis upon self-surveillance, monitoring and discipline; a focus upon individualism, choice and empowerment; the dominance of a makeover paradigm; a resurgence in ideas of natural sexual difference; a marked sexualisation of culture; and an emphasis upon consumerism and the commodification of difference"(2007, p. 149). Gill's definition of a postfeminist sensibility fits in with the surveillance society that we are living in and *Miranda's* depiction of it. Much like the post-feminist sensibility, the CCTV network also monitors bodies that are "out of place" or "out of time" (Norris, 2002, p. 265) as was argued in chapter two. In chapter three and four, the characters of those programmes, like Miranda, chose to be filmed and to display their lives for public consumption. Like the previous programmes, *Miranda* also focuses on the body, self-surveillance and individualisation.

Normative femininity is that which women are supposed to be, look like and act like in a patriarchal society. What is understood as normative femininity changes with the times as femininity is "an artifice" (Bartky, 1990, p.97). According to Sandra Bartky, "today, massiveness, power or abundance in a women's body is met with distaste" (1990, p. 95). Although not a typical representative of normative femininity due to her size and personality, Miranda is able to try out feminine identities to see if they are right for her – an affordance gained through the efforts of feminist work through first and second wave feminism. Miranda's physical appearance and personality speak back to normative femininity in a number of ways. Despite the events of the series finale, several attempts to woo Gary actually fail because of the presence of that which we would associate with normative femininity – things that signal marriage and family. In two separate incidences in the premiere episode, Miranda's association with these constructs cause Gary to flee in horror. During their date, Miranda expresses to Gary her annoyance with her mother's demands that she get married. Gary agrees that his mother is the same. After, they go up to Miranda's flat to continue their conversation. Gary is shocked to find her flat full of baby items that Stevie has stored in there instead of the shop and leaves abruptly. After Miranda explains that she is not 'baby mad' and that the baby items were meant for the shop, Gary agrees to another date. At the end of the episode, he sees Miranda through the shop window trying on wedding dresses with Tilly and her friend Fanny and runs away from her whilst she chases him down the street. In both cases, it is not the idea of marriage and having children that is the problem and therefore the source of the humour, but rather that these desires are meant to be contained until the right moment, and expressed in the right conditions. Also at play here is the idea that for Miranda, these kinds of desires *are* funny as she is not the typical woman that audiences often see depicted in romantic comedies as desiring of these normative feminine roles.

In contrast to Miranda, Tilly and Fanny represent normative femininity and are depicted as engaging in traditionally gendered behaviour such as celebrating their respective engagements, and trying on wedding dresses. In this episode, Miranda meets them both for lunch. Although the gathering of the women invites laughter because of their squeals, the constructs of marriage are not made humorous when being participated in by Tilly and Fanny. At the lunch both Tilly and Fanny point to the rings on their fingers signalling their engagements and they make a date to go wedding dress shopping. Miranda also points to her ringless finger but gives an exaggerated

disappointed groan rather than the excited squeals voiced by the other two. The fact that Miranda is ringless but attempting to participate in the activity is the source of the humour. The comedic aspect of this storyline is heightened as Miranda is convinced to go wedding dress shopping with Tilly and Fanny and is even encouraged to try a dress on, thus providing a sight gag of Miranda in an unflattering poufy dress. It is at this point that Penny walks by the store window and sees Miranda in her dress. Penny's reaction is to faint in shock. Miranda holds Tilly and Fanny up as examples of normative femininity as well. When Gary asks Miranda for a date to catch up after his time away, Miranda asks herself 'what would the girls do?' to prepare. As with all the other women in the programme, Tilly and Fanny are shorter, thinner and more conventionally attractive than Miranda, a point driven home in the episode when Miranda asks for a size 'Ten-ty' wedding dress, a combination of ten (a desired and socially acceptable size) and twenty (her real size).

By failing in these attempts of normative femininity in this episode, Miranda draws attention to the fact that normative femininity is an act and not an innate biological construct. As Hole argues, "It is in the failure of an act that we recognize it as an act" (2003, p. 323). Miranda's failure to find a man to marry and to look beautiful in a wedding dress, demonstrate that being feminine is a disguise or costume that one puts on. The episode continues to demonstrate the ways Miranda fails at looking like a woman when both the store clerk at *Transformers* (a clothes shop), and the delivery man think she is a man. However, the series concludes with Miranda marrying Gary which would seem to put an end to any feminine identity play she has engaged in previously, as she accepts the traditional role of wife. This ending reveals the tensions between a progressive representation of a woman who resists normative femininity and the requirements of a serial narrative and the desire to end the programme with the unification of the couple.

Female Archetypes in Comedy – The trickster

The character of Miranda has a connection to two kinds of recurring female characters – the trickster and the unruly woman. There are a few over laps in the two definitions but examining some of the historical representations of the two is useful in helping to understand Miranda and *Miranda.* The female trickster in popular culture is described as, "the sly, resourceful woman who subverts the status quo and outwits her adversaries through deception and fast-thinking" (Mizejewski and Sturtevent, 2017, p. 17). The female trickster has traditionally been in seen as the female leads in screwball

comedies such as *Bringing up Baby* (Howard Hawks, 1938) and in television programmes such as *I Love Lucy* (CBS, 1951-1957)*.* The female trickster is a character that often shows up in comedy because she is witty and playful (Landay, 1998, p. 25; Mizejewski and Sturtevent, 2017, p. 17). The trickster is almost child-like in their behaviour and desire for play. This is a sentiment that Miranda herself invokes after the dinner party in episode 3.3 goes awry. She states,

> Right! That's it! I drop the gauntlet. For the last two days, I've tried to be a grown-up, but I have no interest in abiding by the adult rulebook. I want to do fun things that make me happy, which by the way, for the record, include making vegtapals. Meet Mr Butternut. You might call me a child. Good. For if adults had even the slightest in-the-moment joy of a child, then frankly, the world would be a better place.

Miranda's appeal to the 'in the moment joy of a child' combined with her creating and playing with vegtapals and fruit friends demonstrates a key aspect of the female trickster. Often, "A trickster gets what he or she wants through deception, tricks, disguise and cleverly breaking the rules" (Landay, 2017, p.149). Miranda uses deception and trickery to impress people. In this premiere episode, she lies continually to Gary to try and impress him. When she walks into his restaurant, he asks her what sport she does in reference to her lying that she goes to the gym. She tells him she is a gymnast and competed in the Olympics but he would not have seen her because the "busty" category was not televised. Later in the episode when he comes to ask her out for drinks, she panics and tells him she had two children who died on Mount Everest. Miranda explains herself by saying that she panics and lies to impress.

The Lucy character performed by Lucille Ball in a number of series is the quintessential trickster character. According to Lori Landay, "unwilling to accept either the status quo or the obvious, 'normal' way of behaving in the given situation, Lucy ends up doing something extraordinary, and Lucille Ball performs physical comedy" (2017, p. 139). A number of similarities can be drawn between the Lucy character and Miranda: they are both characters who create spectacle through their physical comedy; they act out; they desire that which they do not have (a show business career and a relationship with Gary, respectively); and they both attempt to outwit the other characters in their programmes. Although Lucy is normatively pretty, her physical comedy and her inability to control her body in the ideal feminine ways "characterize her contravention of the line between pretty and funny" (Landay, 2017, p.149). The idea that women can be

either funny or pretty but not both is something that Miranda also addresses through the various times Miranda tries to dress up as what she sees as a lady. Each time she does this, the clothes that she wears end up causing her harm, or fall, or get ripped off her. What is pretty, then, is shown to be a construction and a performative act. Landay argues that although Lucy is often a spectacle that the viewers laugh at, "we also recognize great vulnerability that is very human that the Lucy character exposes for us, and we laugh at ourselves, at our own foibles and misapprehensions" (2017, p. 140). I argue that it is this connection with the characters, Lucy and Miranda that allow space for women to negotiate their feelings around the pressures of a post-feminist sensibility. As Landay suggests, "The tactics of female trickery are represented as successful and necessary for women's survival; by flouting - and exploiting - social conventions of female behaviour and character, these characters articulate the power to hop over, slip through, wiggle under, and splinter the ideological and material fences surrounding woman's sphere" (1998, 46). Another character that 'flouts and exploits' social convention is the unruly woman.

Female Archetypes in Comedy - The Unruly Woman

Kathleen Rowe Karlyn's book *The Unruly Woman: Gender and the Genres of Laughter* argues that the unruly woman, "too fat, too funny, too noisy, too old, too rebellious" is a character who "unsettles social hierarchies" (1995, 19). She investigates two characters of popular culture, Miss Piggy and Roseanne to illustrate "the power of the female grotesques and female laughter to challenge the social and symbolic systems that would keep women in their place" (Karlyn, 1995, p. 3). Both characters draw attention to themselves and are therefore vulnerable to ridicule and trivialization but they also seem threatening and even demonic with their behaviour[17] (ibid). Although Karlyn acknowledges that "The tropes of unruliness are often coded with misogyny" she also believes that they can be a source of power (1995, p. 31). The unruly woman she argues, "can be seen as a prototype of woman as subject" because she acts on her own desire (ibid).

Karlyn has identified eight elements of the unruly woman. They are: 1) she creates disorder and is unable or unwilling to confine herself to her proper place; 2) her

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[17] Miss Piggy is known for her karate chops when she doesn't get her way. As Karlyn explains with Roseanne, her performance singing the National Anthem at a baseball game involved her spitting, grabbing her crotch and making an obscene gesture (1995, 3). However, Roseanne's recent firing from her rebooted Roseanne sitcom as a result of offensive tweets also demonstrate a threatening and demonic side.

body is excessive; 3) her speech is excessive; 4) she makes jokes, laughs at herself; 5) she may be androgynous; 6) she may be old, 7) her behaviour is associated with looseness, she may be pregnant; 8) she is associated with dirt, liminality and taboo (ibid). Miranda's makes a case for her unruliness early on. The opening titles depict Miranda's transformation from child to adult in a series of still photographs of Miranda Hart. These photos are largely awkward, focusing on awkward stages of development, awkward and unattractive fashion and hairstyles, and awkward facial expressions. In so doing, the programme attempts to construct a history of Miranda as awkward, excessive and unruly. As it is Miranda herself that holds these large photos in her hands, she seems to be offering these photos as proof of her unruliness. The pre-credit sequence suggests that her unruliness is a characteristic she might have inherited from her mother. Standing on a busy commercial street and holding a sign that says 'Bridal Sale', Penny says into a megaphone 'Someone please marry my daughter. I'm not asking for money, I'm literally giving her away'. With this, the camera pans to the left reveal Miranda standing there shaking her head in exasperation.

The concept of the unruly woman comes from Mikhail Bakhtin's grotesque body. According to Mary Russo, "The grotesque body is the open, protruding, extended, secreting body, the body of becoming, process and change" (1986, p. 218). This body is ambivalent because it symbolises both birth and death and is seen to have 'an uncanny affinity with women, particularly fat, pregnant and old women" (Stukator, 2001, p. 202). The female grotesque is a woman who is "well past her prime and youth is a prerequisite for female desirability…she is also coded as unattractive" (Porter, 1998, p. 84). Indeed, the grotesque body is one that is uncontrolled. Much of the humour in *Miranda* comes as a result of the 'grotesque' body being unable to control itself. The premiere episode introduces the viewer to this aspect of her personality in the first scene after the opening titles. Miranda, demonstrating that she can still be feminine despite being mistaken for a man by the delivery man, walks around the shop, swishing her coat around her shoulder. Her feet get tangled in the coat and she falls over the boxes that were delivered. That she quickly stands up, Stevie does not run over to help, and she is unhurt suggests this is a familiar activity for Miranda. Indeed, she is shown falling down several times in the series. In episode 3.3, Miranda's inability to control her body means she passes gas when an osteopath is working on her back and manages to blow out a candle. Coincidently, this osteopath turns out to be her new boyfriend's father causing Miranda extreme embarrassment.

Overweight women are seen as unable, and unwilling, to control their appetite and therefore their excessive bodies' become emblematic of the female grotesque. Anne Hole explains, "The fat female body is actually an excessive sign, a grotesque sign, which carries an overabundance of meanings that are themselves contradictory and opposed" (2003, p. 318). The grotesque body is conflicting because it is both positive and negative; positive because of its association with birth and renewal and negative in its association with death and decay (Collins, 2002, np). While Miranda Hart may not be considered fat by many, she does not fit comfortably into the definition of normative femininity. As Hartley explains, "the ideal feminine body [should] be small. A woman is taught early on to contain herself, to keep arms and legs close to her body and to take up as little space as possible" (2001, p. 61). Miranda is tall and larger than the average woman audiences have become used to seeing on television and her frequent physical comedy involves throwing herself around the space she inhabits. The fat woman stands out because of her size. She takes up more room than is normal and therefore "Even if a fat woman says or does nothing, her very appearance, especially in public space, can give offense" (Karlyn, 1995, p. 61). The offense, similar to the grotesque body, comes from the ambivalence of the figure; her femaleness draws the gaze while her fatness repels it. The fat female takes up the kind of space that is reserved for men. Hole suggests this quality allows fat women to go beyond traditional female representation. She writes, "The fat female body, then, is a figure embodying gender ambiguity, and instability. Its threshold position and refusal/inability to perform a consistent gender identity makes it a representation of female mobility and mutability, of the move away from traditional feminine pursuits, expectations and behaviours and into the male-structured world" (2003, 319).

It would seem, however, that a woman need not be fat, old or excessive to be considered a spectacle. Russo suggests that any woman could make a spectacle of herself if she is not careful (1986, p. 213). As in the cases of Miss Piggy and Roseanne, drawing attention to one's self, invites the judgement of others. The response to this judgement often manifests itself in masquerade; a performance of womanliness that could be worn like a mask (Doane, 1982, p. 766). Womanliness or femininity is a performance for every woman but how that is manifest is different in each case. As Hole notes, "Women, coming to realize that a particular feminine behaviour is not 'natural,' innate or biological could choose whether, or how, to continue performing it (2003, p. 317). For example, Miranda takes up and performs an assortment of what she believes

as feminine behaviours. As mentioned earlier, when she first sees Gary after he has been away, she pretends to be married with two children. When she finds out he is unattached, she discards that feminine identity claiming the children died climbing Mount Everest. However, Hole argues, "for the fat woman cannot "properly" carry on the masquerade—she cannot conceal her excessive body behind the feminine mask of make-up and costume—the body will always exceed and fail at the performance of femininity" (2003, p.323). In some ways this is suggested by the fact that Miranda is not able to keep clothes on. Her excessive body is often on display as the result of a mishap. In the premiere episode, Miranda and Gary are shown dancing, the last time she has seen him before he moved back to town[18]. As she dances, Miranda's trousers fall down exposing her underwear to everyone in the club. This is the first of many times where she is exposed. In episode 1.6, Tilly does not want to invite Miranda to the Henley Regatta for fear she will end up topless (again) and embarrass her.

For some women in real life, the masquerade involves a performance of excessive femininity, whereas others simply draw attention to themselves to invite the judgement in an attempt to control it. For example, stand-up comic and actor Jo Brand, "By acknowledging her bulk and adopting a self-mocking attitude, [she] anticipates and deflects a negative audience response to her size" (Porter, 1998, p. 80). Instead of a performance of excessive femininity, some female comedians will use ugliness as a comedic strategy (Wagner, 2011, p. 37). Miranda represents this through her dress-up and frequent inappropriate nakedness which signal her willingness to play with the ideas of normative femininity. As Bridget Boyle argues, "Miranda puts on the mask of beautiful/ugly/good/bad/lover/other, and by the very act of her 'disguise', stakes a claim for her own, undisguised body, as being worthy to be taken seriously and thus to be seriously funny (Boyle, 2015, p. 87). The fluidity in terms of feminine pursuits, expectations and behaviours coupled with the excessiveness displayed in these overweight (and tall) female bodies leads to Karlyn's discussion of the unruly woman.

The key characteristics of unruly women are their excessive bodies and behaviours and their refusal or inability to remain in their 'proper place'. The concern around women being contained to their proper place mirrors the evidence so far that those who monitor CCTV cameras and film, focus on individuals who are deemed "out of

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[18] The song they dance to is "Stop" by The Spice Girls, a band emblematic of the girl power trend of the late 1990s and the can do girl of post-feminism.

place" or "out of time" (Norris, 2002; Dubbeld, 2003). The unruly woman, too, is constantly out of place with her looks and behaviour. The bodies that CCTV considers out of place/time are based on looks that appear to be potentially criminal and actions that are not considered normal. The unruly female body then is subject to even more scrutiny than a woman who is not unruly. The 'proper place' functions on multiple levels. It represents a woman's proper place under the rules of patriarchy but it also refers back to the fact that fat women take up too much space and therefore spill out of their 'proper place'. In episode 1.2, Stevie has encouraged Miranda to come with her to a French class. The class takes place at a school where all the chairs are designed for children. Miranda, knowing she is too big to sit in the chair, sits down anyway, her body visibly squished in at the sides. When she goes to stand up, the chair comes with her and she resorts to making up a story about how this chair attached to her is part of a new clothing range. That Miranda feels she needs to make up a story about why the chair is attached to her and not admit that she is stuck demonstrates her embarrassment but also how internalised the standards of normative femininity are. Her excuse is also suggestive of the desire to appear 'normal' as fashion is an 'acceptable' interest for a woman.

In any case, whether fat or tall, the unruly woman is too big for the space assigned to 'normal women'. Any time women take up too much space, either because of their weight, height or failing arms and legs, they are excessive. Although not all of these traits apply to Miranda, there are enough commonalities for her to be considered an unruly woman. The size of her body is foregrounded in the show not just through dialogue that references her being mistaken for a man, and shopping at *Big and Long* but through the casting of the other principal characters. The excessiveness of Miranda's height is highlighted by the fact that every other cast member, except for Gary and Mike are shorter and smaller than Miranda Hart. Stevie's petite frame is also highlighted by frequent comments by Miranda calling her, "my little friend" and by knocking her over. In the premiere episode, Miranda teases her for not being able to go on to all the rides at Thorpe Park. However, despite being a source for humour, Stevie's height is not visually depicted as different from the others in the cast and it is only Miranda and occasionally Penny who comment on it. It is only in relation to Miranda that Stevie is seen to be small. For example, in the French class mentioned above, the rest of the class is able to sit in the chairs like Stevie with only Miranda looking out of place.

The Female Body in Comedy

Gender play and confusion is a source of humour in *Miranda*. In the first episode, Miranda's size means she is repeatedly seen as a man, a condition that Stevie sees as exasperated by the fact that she wears a hoodie instead of showing off her breasts. Then, in order for her to seem more feminine she tries to shop for a more feminine outfit only to come away with an outfit made for a transvestite. The result is her playing a man, playing a woman. According to Boyle, who studied female stand-up comics, the female body in comedy has already made a statement before the female comic even tells a joke, therefore in order to avoid this judgement or scrutiny, female stand-ups have often resorted to "unperform[ing] their gender" (2015, p. 79). In this way women have had to deny their femininity and display male characteristics in order for men to find them funny. Some female comics have gone one step further, using costume and makeup to exaggerate their femininity and end up being women, playing men playing women (Boyle, 2015, p. 80). Using the example of Phyllis Diller, she argues, "it seems that for these comedians, the noise of their gender is too loud to be ignored; to be taken seriously in their field, gender must be played with, mutated, re-presented in some way" (Boyle, 2015, p. 80). The final act of the episode sees her succeed in adopting a feminine style – the ultimate feminine style in the bridal gown – only for Gary to run from her. The joke here is of course that Gary is afraid that Miranda is obsessed with getting married and wants to marry him. However, by continually trying on different costumes, Miranda illustrates the difficulty is finding an appropriate identity with which to settle on.

The fact that Miranda is taller than most women is a theme that runs throughout the first episode. Miranda is mistaken for a man from a delivery man and by the male sales clerk working at *Transformers*. Miranda's female friends also comment on her height in a derogatory way calling her Queen Kong. Even Stevie makes her shamefully admit that she has to buy her clothes at *Big and Long* and jokes that rather than being an 'elegant girl' she is an 'elephant girl'. These links to animals recalls Karlyn's discussion of Miss Piggy and the ways in which women would be characterised as pigs, associated with dirt, filth and violations of taste (1995, p. 40). Although these comments do not seem to bother her greatly, she too has internalised the standards of normative femininity that elude her. In trying to appear what she describes as 'calm and composed', she makes herself shorter in an attempt to take up less space. She argues

that she can be feminine despite being the size she is and believes she could pull off an attractive look if she knew what clothes suited her.

The Unruly Woman in the Romantic Comedy

The romantic comedy is a hybrid genre comprised of elements from both genres "featuring a narrative that centres on the progress of a relationship, and, being a comedy, resulting in a happy ending" (Mortimer, 2010, p. 4). Although primarily a text that is meant to be comedic, "the narrative can be punctuated by tears and sadness, as the trajectory almost always involves the seeming loss of love and the beloved, when despair and disaster prevail" (Mortimer, 2010, p. 3). In her book on romantic comedies, Claire Mortimer identifies four different narratives in the romantic comedy: the comedy of remarriage; young lovers kept apart; unrequited love; and couples at war (2010, p. 5). *Miranda's* narrative follows the unrequited love trope in which "One half of the couple realises their love for the other early on, but the other half is slow to recognise and return their love, often having to lose the wrong partner in order to be ready for the right love" (Mortimer, 2010, p. 5). Many scenes in *Miranda* involve a heightened melodrama focusing around Miranda's desire for Gary. Over the three series, there are times when Miranda is close to getting what she wants before situations get in the way. In much the same way as melodrama, "Suffering is often part of the narrative process of self-discovery and transformation that characterises the genre" (Mortimer, 2010, p. 4). Miranda faces many setbacks in her journey to marrying Gary in the final episode of the series. Over the course of the three series, Miranda pines for Gary in secret, agrees with him to be friends, decide to start dating, agree to be friends again after finding out he is married, date other people and finally mutually declare their desire to be together. However, unlike melodrama that ends in tragedy, "Romantic comedy...takes the 'problem' of female desire to a different conclusion, creating a space for the desiring woman's resistance to male control and rewarding her, at least temporarily, for those very qualities that in melodrama lead to her pain" (Karlyn, 1995, p. 96).

Miranda's unruliness as demonstrated by her inability to remain in her 'proper place' can be mirrored in Miranda's position in the romantic comedy sitcom. Her size suggests that it is out of place for her to be the romantic female lead. The larger woman in comedy is often a spectacle because of her size, "the target of our laughter and the butt of the joke" (Stukator, 2001, p. 197). This is obviously the case here. Miranda's size is frequently part of the humour and she is often the butt of the joke as demonstrated by the examples already given. However, like Lucy, *Miranda* encourages its viewers to

see themselves in Miranda's mishaps. Through direct communication with the viewer, Miranda invites identification with her. These direct address moments suggest that Miranda also does not stay in her 'proper place' in terms of the conventional sitcom format – her asides and direct address exists outside the proper place of the usual fiction format.

Miranda is also a spectacle for the sheer fact that she is single and in her thirties. According to Diane Negra, "In postfeminist culture, the single woman stands as the most conspicuously time-beset example of contemporary femininity, her singlehood as a particularly temporal failure and a drifting off course from the normative stages of the female lifecycle" (2008, p. 61). When Miranda shows Tilly and Fanny her ringless finger, Tilly expresses concern and asks 'how's your mum?' to which Miranda replies that she is fine. Cut to an insert of Penny crying and replacing a picture of Miranda on the dresser with a picture of a goat – another animal representing Miranda – clearly demonstrating she is not fine with the fact that Miranda is not yet married. Deborah Chambers argues that "spinsterhood remains a deviant spectacle" (2005, p. 165); an idea of which Penny seems to be keenly aware. In addition to trying to give her away in the episode's pre-credit sequence, Penny asks if Miranda is engaged yet, having just spoken with her the previous evening, and tries to set her up with her cousin. Miranda is not settling for simply having a boyfriend and the show never suggests that she should just be happy with what she can get. Gary, despite being traditionally handsome, is not depicted as being unattainable and therefore the viewer sees Miranda's single status and even her relationship with Mike, as simply a precursor to her inevitable union with Gary. As Gray states, "While her family and inherited social circle construct Miranda's singleness as problematic, the viewer is aware that singleness is necessary to her struggle to emerge with her own 'voice'" (2012, 197). Despite this, the spectacle making unruly woman is often made over in order to better fit into the space that has been given to her under patriarchy.

The Makeover – genre/narrative

Central to the post-feminist focus on the body, the makeover narrative is a common trope found in the romantic comedy. In both the narrative and the genre, appearance "is depicted as requiring endless self-surveillance, monitoring, dieting, purging and work" (Gill and Herdieckerhoff, 2006, p. 497) and in order to successfully attract a man, or maintain the attraction of the man they already have, the unworthy body of the heroine must undergo a transformation into the right kind of body. As

Brenda Weber argues, in the makeover genre, "interventions become mandatory when the signifiers of a woman's gender, sex, and sexuality fail to emit signs of the normative"- with the direst "pathologies looking manly or tomboyish" (2009, p. 131). 'Manly' women are women whose heterosexuality has been established but who appear manly because of "their unwelcome masculine characteristics" (Weber, 2009, p. 147). Some of these unwelcome masculine characteristics, include "swearing, physically aggressive or grotesque behaviours like shoving, spitting or farting", behaviours Miranda is often depicted in doing, unlike the "truly feminine woman [who] cares about hygiene…she seeks the company of other women, she desires the attention of men, and she works hard to make herself attractive to the male gaze"(Weber, 2009, pp. 157–158). According to Weber, "The 'problem' of the manly woman is not her race, class, sex, or sexuality, it is that her outsides do not accurately reflect her insides and as a consequence the world misreads her as a man" (2009, p. 147). This tension is depicted early in the first episode as a delivery man calls Miranda sir. Whilst understanding that he may have noticed her height and assumed without looking at her, she is appalled to find out that he still thought she was a man *after* looking. Stevie suggests that by showing off her chest and embracing normative femininity, she would be less likely to be seen as a man. For Stevie, a simple makeover in terms of wardrobe is all that is required for Miranda to be seen as a woman – for the outside to match the inside.

Weber argues that "the makeover indicates that the femininity it bestows is grounded in female essence"(2009, p. 129). Stevie's suggestion that Miranda show off her chest indicates that she believes that Miranda's femininity is within her and simply needs to be revealed. Miranda herself tells the clerk at *Transformers* that she always knew she could pull off being feminine but she just did not know what would look good. This statement suggests that looking feminine is something all women can achieve. Indeed, a recurring sentiment in the series is Miranda finding someone who appreciates the real her despite her performativity.

Erving Goffman "argues that the meaning of a social situation can be radically altered by changing the frame in which it is perceived and that frames are most vulnerable at their margins" (Karlyn, 1995, 53). This makeover is meant to serve a narrative function beyond that of the transformation itself (Weber, 2009, p. 19). In the case of the romantic comedy, this transformation of the main female character is to help her to succeed in finding an appropriate partner. The makeover means she is good enough to attract the romantic attention of her desired partner. In most cases the

makeover is required to correct the problems of the female character's visual appearance or lack of social etiquette in order to secure the object of her affection. She may lose weight, dress in a more traditionally feminine way, learn to wear an appropriate amount of make-up, learn the rules of socially acceptable behaviour and, of course, take off her glasses. In many of these make-over narratives, the woman is at the mercy of a teacher, one who knows the right way to look and act in order to catch the eye of the men. This reinforces the traditional power dynamics wherein the woman is subordinate to another who makes her over (Weber, 2009, p. 17). By changing the frame of the romantic comedy, *Miranda* becomes a programme at the margins.

In the case of *Miranda*, this makeover narrative is often used and then rejected. *Miranda* and other narratives like this "suggest[s] the possibility of redeploying culture and pleasure by representing the unrepresented within a familiar and popular paradigm (Stukator, 2001, p. 207). By situating a woman who defies normative femininity at the centre of the typical romantic comedy, *Miranda* upsets the conventional narrative. While other 'ugly ducklings' can undergo their makeover transformations to get their man, Miranda's attempts at makeovers fail. The ugly duckling in this case does not transform into a swan – an aspect that the premiere episode makes clear with Miranda's attempt to buy an outfit for her date with Gary. Finding it difficult to find the appropriate outfit in *Big and Long*, she walks by a shop that advertises larger sizes in its store window. Intrigued, Miranda walks in, a full shot revealing to the audience that the shop is called *Transformers*, the name of which addresses the trope, and is also an indication of the type of shop it is, a clothing shop that caters to transvestites. Of course, Miranda is oblivious and asks the store clerk if he could help her find something more feminine. The store clerk examines Miranda's body, asking her questions and commenting on 'her shapely, lady-like curves'. Miranda is happy to find someone who can help as she believes she could always 'pull it off' (a feminine look) and the scene ends with the makeover scene taking place off screen. The reveal of the makeover is dramatic. Back in the joke shop, Stevie is on the phone with her back to the door. Miranda calls out for Stevie to look at new look and the camera cuts to a shot of Miranda wearing an over the top transvestite show costume. Not wishing to be distracted from her phone call, Stevie does not turn around, however, Miranda's entrance has caught the eye of a shopper who compliments her and says she could 'pass'. With this, Stevie ends her call, turns around and asks Miranda why she is dressed

like a transvestite and Miranda realises that the compliment paid to her was because he thought she was a man trying to pass as a woman.

Although Miranda's makeovers fail to transform her into a swan, these attempts indicate Miranda's post-feminist internalised self-surveillance. Miranda tries to make *herself* over constantly. She is always trying to find ways of improving herself. Although she sometimes enlists the help of another, like the clerk in *Transformers*, her makeovers are usually done of her own accord, although others' opinions of her lifestyle or look often drive her to it. The serial nature of the sitcom encourages a certain amount of repetition given the fact that rather than a single film, it needs to produce multiple episodes. However, the focus on the type of recurring narratives here, self-improvement and the body, and the makeover, are suggestive of a post-feminist sensibility. Although the example above involves primarily her physical appearance many of the makeovers she attempts involve her desire to be seen as a sophisticated, independent, career woman. These attempts have included: attempting to get a 'real job' (1.3); going on an impromptu holiday (1.4); trying to keep up with her younger friend (2.4); throwing a proper dinner party (3.3); and creating a bucket list (3.4). Very few makeovers directly involve the altering of her physical body but many involve dressing the body in a variety of ways. For example, getting a real job means wearing a pantsuit which she manages to get stuck in an elevator and ends up ripping off the lower half of one leg. All of these attempts fail to come off like they are supposed to. For example, Miranda gets the job only to lose it when her future boss sees her threaten to 'wee in the ball pool' at the gym and her holiday to Thailand amounts to her going around the corner and staying in a hotel. These failures serve to enable Miranda to try on different roles, emphasising self-discovery, a trope that is a recurring one in chick-lit television (Chambers, 2005, p. 171). Miranda's makeovers also fail to achieve their ultimate goal – to get her a partner. What is attractive about Miranda to both Gary and Mike is her default personality, the personality she already possesses. The fact that the make-overs are self-directed, end up in disasters and work against her getting a boyfriend are ways that the show disrupts the make-over narrative of the post-feminist chick-lit narrative.

Normative Femininity and Surveillance

Gill and Herdieckerhoff argue that "The chick-lit heroine's body is locked into a dynamic of desire/hatred, and a matrix of surveillance and discipline" (2006, p. 497). This system of self-surveillance internalises the process of monitoring very similar to the way Foucault argues works in controlling behaviour of prisoners in the Panopticon. As

Bartky argues, "a panoptical male connoisseur resides within the consciousness of most woman" (1990, p. 72). Where Foucault locates the disciplinary power within the panoptic schema that is created by a structure, women's bodies are disciplined through both institutional power and "an oppressive and inegalitarian system of subordination" (Bartky, 1990, p. 75). The societal structures in place control her behaviour much like the panopticon structure enforces control over its inhabitants. In surveying and constructing their bodies, "women feel the need to construct female bodies that are demonstrably smaller and weaker than men's bodies" because of the pervasiveness of self-surveillance and discipline (Hartley, 2001, p. 62). For the female body, the makeover narrative is an example of the performed nature of the female identity. It suggests that while there may be many female identities from which to choose, the right female identity to perform is the one that will result in attracting, and keeping, a man.

All of the episodes deal with Miranda's chaos and refusal to stay in her "proper place". She creates disorder for herself and those around her both in her private space and public spaces. Though she owns the joke shop, she very rarely gets involved in the business of running it. Although a capitalist enterprise, its commodities are toys and joke items that people do not need. This contradiction is evident in Stevie's and Miranda's attitudes about running the shop. While Miranda is content to play with the toys, Stevie has a plan to 'go global'. Interactions with customers are more likely to be about Miranda's issue of the day than they are about helping the costumer with a purchase. In Gary's restaurant, the other public space Miranda's most frequents, she is equally disruptive. She eats other customer's food, spills drinks on them, crashes into their tables and trips over the coat rack on almost every exit. In episode 3.3 alone, Miranda hurts her back going through the child's soft play centre, goes underwear free because her washing machine is broken, farts in the osteopath's office whilst he is adjusting her, and caters her own dinner party using M&S entrees that she passes off as her own. According to Stukator, "Within a network of interrelating and dependant hierarchies, unruliness gains its meaning from that which it is not: ordered, rule-bound, and restrained attributes associated with normative masculinity and femininity" (2001, p. 199). Miranda, although game to try anything, is ultimately not interested in following the rules of normative femininity – at least to some degree. This is not to say that she does not try out the roles that others might suggest for her. As stated earlier, she is constantly trying to reinvent herself but at the end of each episode is happily back to (her) normal. According to the definition supplied by Mintz in chapter four, this resetting

back to normal is a convention of the sitcom genre (1985, p. 115). However in the context of *Miranda*, this resetting also enables Miranda to try another identity in the next episode which helps to reinforce the idea that identity is performative.

The argument for Miranda's unruliness is both because of her excessive body and also her speech. Miranda's verbal incontinence in social situations results in her telling lies as mentioned earlier. She also becomes distracted by the sound of certain words, repeating them to her audience (those in the show and us at home) in the middle of conversations. Miranda's use of the double entendre is also excessive as she often laughs at her own innuendos and points them out to the viewers with a comment or glance at the camera. As Karlyn states, "That the unruly woman eats too much and speaks too much is no coincidence; both involve failure to control the mouth" (1995, p. 37). This inability to control the mouth extends to other parts of the body through farting, belching and nose-picking (Karlyn, 1995, p. 64) - the very opposite of the kinds of behaviour described by Weber in her assessment of the 'truly feminine woman'. Miranda's social faux pas often include scenes where she farts in the company of others surprising herself as well as the people she is with.

Just like the failed attempts of the makeover narrative to transform her into a beautiful patriarchal princess, Miranda's unruliness refuses to be contained. Although Stukator points out that while, "The female protagonist is often shown to challenge patriarchal 'truths' and assumptions through her words or actions…her unruliness merely marks the need for her transformation, which becomes the basis of the comedy (2001, p. 200), Miranda challenges the need for a transformation narrative at least until the last episode when she finally marries Gary displaying "ties to the socially acceptable and compliance with nonthreatening codes" (Stukator, 2001 p. 207). On the one hand, Miranda achieves her goal of being with Gary and therefore is successful by conventions of the romantic comedy. However, as this is the final episode of the series, the viewer is left to wonder about how, or if, Miranda's unruliness will become tamed as she tries on the role of wife.

Stukator suggests that the spectacle of the fat woman's power "is aborted by privileging the pervasive (patriarchal) discourse of female denial: of hunger, desire, indeed a socially sanctioned subjectivity" (2001, p. 202). However, Miranda neither accepts nor endorses this denial. Miranda's love of food is a repeating plot detail in the show and she refuses to deny herself that enjoyment simply because she is supposed to.

After her workout, Miranda goes to the restaurant for a snack, "so now I shall have a carrot and orange smoothie and a low-fat bagel, and what I mean by that is a hot chocolate and an enormous slice of cake" (1.3). This is a response to the constraints normative femininity has on women. Not only has she internalised that it is natural for her to be eating low fat food but also to be seen ordering it instead of what she really wants. This is also highlighted in episode 2.1 involving a girlie lunch when Tilly and Miranda meet for lunch with their former head girl. Both Tilly and Stinky only order a coffee after first mentioning what they would really like. Miranda identifies what she wants on the menu mirroring the others' behaviour but then does not change to another 'better' option. Commenting on the things she loves about Christmas, she lists food several times (2.6). Miranda's desire for food is rivalled only in her desire for Gary. In the premiere episode, when he goes to kiss her cheek in greeting, she manages to turn her head so he catches her mouth instead. In the second series, when Gary has left, Miranda is seen clutching a pillow with Gary's photo on it. Ultimately, in series three, Miranda has not only the pillow, but she had created a life-size Gary doll from broomsticks. Miranda's subjectivity, rather than being denied, is actually highlighted through the use of the camera and the confessional discourse.

Control of the Camera

Every episode is introduced by Miranda who acknowledges the viewer with a hello and inquiries into our wellbeing. In these 'previously in my life' segments, she does not merely recap the last week's show. In this sequence, Miranda is usually sitting alone on her couch, or at least in her flat, directly facing the camera. In a medium shot, she looks right into the camera as she inquiries into the viewer's well-being or makes some comment directly about, or to, the audience. For instance, in episode 2.4, she admonishes an imagined viewer who is late coming in with their cup of tea but then admits that she obviously can't see 'us'. In these opening sequences, Miranda gives us information about what has happened 'previously in [her] life'. These stories usually consist of footage of events from her life that the viewers have not seen but are meant to resemble flashbacks. The camera largely remains static but may increase to a close up shot after the various flashback segments. The direct address opening sequences introduce the spectator to Miranda and her thoughts. The direct address, combined with speech that constructs the audience as individuals supports Miranda's vision of her audience as 'us'. Every time she looks directly to the camera then, restates and reaffirms that relationship. She also uses this time to bring us up to date on her

relationships. While most of the confessional acts take place in her flat above the joke shop, Miranda will talk to 'us' throughout the episode as well. These are usually brief comments or glances in the context of conversations with other characters. When Miranda makes a joke she thinks is funny and no one laughs, she will look to the camera and try the joke on us. Repeatedly in the series, Miranda will repeat words to us that she enjoys and will glance at us when either she, or someone else, says something that might be taken as a double entendre. Frances Gray states, "Everything we see is with her consent: frequent looks to the camera remind us of this; she uses cameras like punctuation marks to fine-tune the comic structure to her satisfaction" (2012, p. 195). Miranda's direct address and her ownership of the camera suggest that she is the agent of her own life, giving her the subjectivity her spectacle as an unruly woman would seem to deny.

Miranda also controls what the viewer sees through the use of flashbacks and fantasy sequences such as the makeover television ambush described earlier. When Gary mentions that he was in the Royal Air Force, Miranda envisions him in uniform walking toward her. This is a fantasy that Gary engages in later when he comes into the restaurant and carries her out to the theme from *An Officer and A Gentleman* (1.3). Thinking about the fun she has alone in her apartment, the viewer is shown a flashback of her conducting a 'fruit friend' and 'vegta-pal' (fruit and vegetables she has put faces and clothes on) orchestra. These are privileged moments for the television audience only and suggest her level of control over the narrative. Gray agrees, "Rather than passively allowing herself to be recorded, Miranda gives more than is required through the constant access to her thoughts" (2012, p. 198). The surveillance camera allows the viewer to watch her every move. Shows such as *Big Brother* have made use of the surveillance camera and the direct address confessional camera in the diary room sequences. The irony of this total access is in its attempt to show everything, it actually stifles action. Gray explains, "The constant presence of the camera in *Big Brother* removed any possibility of engaging with a creative private space of play, or indeed any sense that one has a right to such a space" (2012, p. 194). Miranda's control of the camera works in the opposite way here. She invites us into her private space of play. She allows the viewer to see her fruit friends, her pillows with giant Gary faces on them, even her homemade Gary puppet made from brooms but when Gary or Mike come over, she hides them. Because we are allowed into her private space, the viewer tends

to develop an understanding of the real Miranda. We are invited to see both Miranda and ourselves as characters of performance.

For the most part, the other characters in *Miranda* either ignore, or do not realise, that Miranda is talking to the audience. There are a few instances where Miranda's behaviour is acknowledged by others if only in a small way. In episode 2.2, Miranda seems to be heard by the librarian when she is talking to us because he asks her to be quiet. The librarian does not seem to care that she is seemingly talking to herself, just that she is talking too loudly for a library. In episode 2.5, Penny, pretending to be Miranda for an exercise in therapy, mimics Miranda's walk and her address of the camera. The camera cuts from a wide shot to get Penny's movement and then to a close up to catch her direct address of the camera. This suggests that she is aware of Miranda's behaviour even if she does not know exactly what she is doing or why. Miranda's reaction is to look at us in shock but she does not say anything to Penny. Her only comment is about the 'lollop' Penny adopts as Miranda. Gary also seems to be at least partially aware of Miranda's relationship with the camera although he never comments on it directly. In episode 1.4, Miranda and Gary meet a woman whilst they are playing with toys in the shop. Both Gary and Stevie engage in Miranda's games but are able to reign it in while Miranda goes too far. Because they are embarrassed to be caught playing with the toys, they make up children who they spontaneously name after Cliff Richard. To demonstrate the fact that they are big fans and thus the reason for the naming their children after him, they begin to sing one of his songs. Miranda continues to sing after Gary stops, turning her body to face, and then walking to, the camera. Regular viewers will not be surprised by her inability to stop singing once she gets started (this happens repeatedly throughout the series). Gary pulls her back from the camera, stopping her continuing by saying "etc.". He can hear that she is continuing the song and pulls her back to the conversation they were having with the woman but makes no comment about who she was singing to. The people who know her best may simply attribute this as another of Miranda's idiosyncrasies. Performance is a recurring element of Miranda's personality and perhaps they think she is just performing as usual. Miranda is aware of her constantly being watched. Knowing she is on camera and can turn to us whenever she feels proves that she is aware of her being looked at. She has accepted, and even celebrates her surveillance as a condition of her existence and uses it when, and as, she wishes.

The subjects captured by CCTV cameras often have no way of looking of speaking back to the cameras. As Linsay Dubbeld points out, "the observed generally do not have the possibilities or capabilities to watch back at their watchers: they are made visible while their observants are able to remain out of sight" (2003, p. 154). In this case, Miranda is able to look and speak back at her watchers through her control of the camera. Despite not being able to control her own body, Miranda controls the way she is depicted. The power that this level of control offers is also a result of the control she has over her representation as a spectacle. Angela Stukator, in her discussion of Miss Piggy states that she "signifies the radical potential of the unruly fat woman to produce *herself* as spectacle: she puts on femininity with a vengeance that hints at the masquerade's ability to 'act out' dilemmas of femininity (2001, 204). Although demonstrating the degree to which "women have become complicit in their own surveillance", Miranda's control of the camera through her direct address suggests an attempt to deal with the constant surveillance of a contemporary surveillance culture. Miranda's attempts to make herself over suggest that she is trying on different personas much like Miss Piggy's use of over-the-top costume. Miranda's masquerades frequently involve dress-up. In episode 1.3, she dresses in a suit as befits a professional woman. Her and Stevie's favourite game, 'Where's Miranda?' involves Miranda dressing up like Wally and Stevie trying to find her in a crowded place.

Conclusion

Although the surveillance society is most often associated with the constant visual and digital surveillance citizens experience through CCTV cameras and data mining, self-surveillance, of the kind theorised by work on postfeminism, is another way the surveillance society influences, monitors and controls women's appearance and behaviour. According to John Berger, "A woman must continually watch herself…From earliest childhood she has been taught and persuaded to survey herself continually" (Berger, 1972, p. 46). Like the panopticon's technique for prisoners, women's bodies are also regulated through surveillance. In this case, it is not only architectural or institutional constructs that enable the gaze at women, but postfeminism's focus on the individual and an emphasis on self-surveillance, has made surveillance of women's bodies an inside job. Miranda has internalised this. She continually monitors her behaviour and appearance, trying on different identities in an attempt to find the one that is right for her.

According to Bartky, "The disciplinary techniques through which the 'docile bodies' of women are constructed aim at a regulation which is perpetual and exhaustive – a regulation of the body's size and contours, its appetite, posture, gestures and general comportment in space and the appearance of each of its visible parts" (1990, 80). Through Miranda's unruliness, *Miranda* demonstrates the performativity inherent in normative femininity suggesting even a docile body is a performed one.

If like other genres, film comedy has "used and abused women" (Stukator, 2001, 200), *Miranda* helps to adjust the balance. There is no doubt that Miranda is a comic spectacle. When a woman who is 6ft1 stands on top of a desk, signing "The Greatest Love of All" By Whitney Houston during a job interview, she is going to draw attention (1.3). Miranda, through her connection to the camera, attempt to control the spectacle that she creates. In the post-feminist world of chick-lit TV, her non-normative femininity sticks out. In attempting to fit in with other (imagined?) women, Miranda undergoes a variety of makeovers that she ultimately rejects. Not only is the makeover narrative challenged through its rejection but it is crucial that Miranda is the one who initiates and constructs the parameters of the makeover herself.

Miranda is a disruptive force both in her own home and in public spaces. This disruption is often of a physical nature, crashing into things, falling down, galloping and sweeping out of rooms, but it is also, at times, a disruption to the narrative proper, bringing the audience out of the story while she makes a comment. Through her speech and her desire for agency, Miranda is an unruly woman. Unable to be contained in her 'proper place' she acts on her own desires whether that desire be for food, fun or love. This control is also demonstrated in the relationship Miranda has with the camera. The way she uses the camera to invite the viewer into her world clearly illustrates her control and her performance. Even here, she disrupts the narrative flow of the program with comic asides to the camera. This direct address and the confessional moments she introduces the show with serve to identify all that we see as Miranda's point of view and with her permission. The result of these qualities gives Miranda a control that allows her to refuse a representation that tries to control and subdue the unruly woman. In this case, Miranda is able to push against a surveillance society that through postfeminism has encouraged self-surveillance, monitoring and discipline. Miranda's unruliness challenges assumptions about the docile bodies created by surveillance. Miranda's self-surveillance does little to control her unruly body which suggests there is room for resistance in postfeminism and indeed the surveillance society.

As I noted earlier, the series finale of *Miranda* has her marrying Gary. The audience is left to wonder then how or indeed if, this resistance continues. The serial nature of the televisual format, unlike that of a feature film, means that it pays narratively to continue to flaunt cultural norms and thus keep the programme running for more episodes and series. The end of the series provided an opportunity for the programme to finally unite Miranda and Gary, giving many viewers the resolution they wanted. The goal of coupling with Gary finally achieved, Miranda ultimately conforms to the traditional role of wife even though for most of the series, the constraints of normative femininity are acknowledged and challenged. Patricia Mellencamp argues that in *I Love Lucy*, "Lucy endured marriage and housewifery by transforming them into vaudeville: costumed performances and rehearsals which made staying home (a lack of choice and economic power) frustrating, yet tolerable" (Mellencamp, 1992, p. 323). I like to think that Miranda's marriage would be less frustrating endurance and more vaudeville, thus continuing her resistance to the norms and constraints of the surveillance society.

Conclusion

Technology has developed over the years to enable a variety of surveillance procedures from visual to digital to biometric. This thesis is concerned with visual surveillance and the way that it is represented and worked through on television. In 2019, the CCTV network in Britain is assumed to be vast. Although only an estimate, the last study of the number of CCTV cameras in the UK, undertaken by The British Security Industry Association in 2013, was up to 5.9 million (British Security Industry Association, 2013). Unfortunately, this is the last study to have attempted to count the cameras and its data is already six years old. Exact numbers would be difficult to obtain, however, it is interesting that the study has not been repeated in six years. The fact that the study has not been repeated suggests that it has not been seen as important. This supports the argument that visual surveillance is a largely accepted and normalised part of British society.

At the same time, stories about digital surveillance, in terms of things like data mining and targeted advertising, are extensive. The stories of impropriety with respect to personal data, like the ones that open this thesis, happen routinely. Social media advertising surveys an individual's internet usage and uses advertising that matches with whatever information it has about them – in some cases personalising the advert with their name. In fact, many people invite surveillance devices into their homes. Devices called digital assistants (Amazon Echo, Google and Apple's Siri) have been operating in homes, listening for a wake word (for example, saying Alexa) and then executing a command (Morgan, 4 February 2018, np). The concern for many people is that the device is always listening and if it can listen then the companies that manufacture the devices can listen too. According to one woman in Portland, Oregon, Alexa listened to a conversation between herself and her husband, recorded it and then sent it to a contact in their address book (Duke, 4 February 2019, p. 19). Because of incidents like this, a recent study of Britons finds that 53% have no plans to buy a digital assistant (ibid).

The sheer amount of, and different types of, surveillances mean that it is very unlikely for any individual to be free from surveillance – even before we account for self-surveillance. Today, wearable technology allows us to monitor our blood pressure, heart rate, insulin levels and sleep patterns. Social media encourages self-disclosure and in so doing fosters a constant search for appraisal of how we look and act, not just by others but by ourselves. We curate the images, words and deeds that we want to be seen by others, by examining them first through our own processes of surveillance. Whether

caught on a CCTV camera, overheard by a digital assistant, fingerprinted for an identification card or wearing a Fitbit that counts steps, surveillance is a part of most Britons everyday life. With surveillance impacting so much of contemporary life, it is not surprising to find its representation in popular media.

And yet, studies of popular media, specifically television, in regards to surveillance have been focused on non-fiction programming such as reality television and documentary or drama. With some reality television programming allowing cameras to capture every moment of participants' lives (bar trips to the toilet), such as *Big Brother*, examining the intersection between these types of programmes and surveillance makes sense. So too, with drama programmes that deal with issues of security, crime and terrorism. However, television works through issues of surveillance throughout its programming and one genre that has not been adequately examined is comedy.

Research Questions and Argument

My central argument is that comedy works through issues related to visual surveillance. To explore this, I began with three central questions. They are:

- How does contemporary British television comedy work through issues of surveillance with respect to aesthetics and/or themes?
- What can examining contemporary British television comedy with respect to surveillance tell us about contemporary British society?
- What are the specificities of the interplay between surveillance and television comedy?

Through an examination of how surveillance is approached within specific programmes, cultural attitudes about visual surveillance and also surveillance more widely are revealed. The programmes chosen for this project are two different types of contemporary sitcom – the mockumentary, and what I have termed, the meta-sitcom. Both types of programmes utilise elements of comedy vérité, from the handheld observation camera and interviews in the mockumentary to the direct address and reflexivity of the meta-sitcom. Given that visual surveillance is demonstrably being worked through on these comedy programmes, this suggests that visual surveillance is still a concern despite the recent focus on digital surveillance and data breaches. These programmes complicate the idea that visual surveillance is seen as a normalised and

inevitable condition of living in 2019. These programmes also explore the significance of the effects of surveillance on cultural attitudes about celebrity, feminism and body politics. My analysis of the interplay between comedy and surveillance demonstrates that comedy is a space that allows for resistance to surveillance culture. As I have argued throughout and will summarise below, the degree of this resistance is particular to each individual programme.

The Case Studies

The four programmes chosen as case studies represent different relationships between comedy and surveillance. The degree to which they interact with surveillance aesthetics and themes is unique to each one of them however they all explore, examine and critique some aspect of surveillance culture. Comedy, as demonstrated through these programmes allows for space to resist, and even challenge, surveillance society.

Scot Squad

In this chapter, I outlined the way visual surveillance, in the form of the CCTV network operates as a panoptic structure. It has been argued by Michel Foucault (1995) that people amend their behaviour based on the thought that they are being monitored. CCTV has been used for deterrence and for evidence purposes despite the fact that its effectiveness is unproven. I argue that *Scot Squad* uses surveillance and mockumentary aesthetics to create the look of the programme and that it both normalises and mocks surveillance culture. The programme suggests that there are problems with surveillance technology and its operators, however, the officers who work with this technology and who are being filmed as a part of the programme act at ease with the fact that they are on camera and are being looked at. It uses surveillance and comedy vérité aesthetics to speak about the issues surrounding surveillance society. Despite highlighting the problems with surveillance technologies and the fact that the panoptic schema does not always work, *Scot Squad* helps to normalise surveillance culture and encourage surveillance behaviours. In this way, *Scot Squad* is both a conservative parody in effect paying homage to the reality crime programme, and a more radical critique of surveillance culture.

People Just Do Nothing

Chapter three positions the viewer as witness as a result of the surveillance aesthetics used. The use of the mockumentary format invites audiences to watch, listen and judge the actions of the Kurupt FM crew. For the most part, the members of the crew are comfortable with the camera crew following their every move and thus

demonstrate an ease with being watched. The crew, specifically Grindah, believe that this kind of surveillance is a tool for them to achieve and maintain their celebrity. In this way, the surveillance aesthetics reveal attitudes about celebrity and celebrity culture – a culture that is facilitated by surveillance. Like *Scot Squad*, this programme uses aspects of the surveillance society to mock it and in so doing, it also mocks the celebrity culture that is in part produced as a result. *People's* aesthetics include a different type of look that I argue is facilitated by the interaction between comedy and surveillance. This look of second hand embarrassment indicates a slight resistance to a life lived on camera. This resistance is a critique of the surveillance culture.

Ms Brown's Boys

Similar to *People*, *MBB* represents the willingness of people to participate surveillance. However, unlike *Scot Squad* and *People*, *MBB* is not a mockumentary. It is a meta-sitcom that enables Agnes to speak to the viewer and at the same time allows for the programme to comment on its own construction. In *MBB*, surveillance is depicted by surveillance aesthetics that suggest disclosure and confession. *MBB's* construction of Agnes suggests that for her, certain surveillance behaviours have become internalised. Agnes reveals herself to the audience through direct address and metalepsis. In this way, Agnes literally speaks back to the camera. Agnes's attempts to control the surveillance technology, to direct when and what she will reveal, allows her to feel comfortable being watched. In this regard, Agnes participates in the culture of surveillance. *MBB's* transgressions of the narrative levels rebel against the conventional sitcom format and in so doing, creates a space for resistance and questioning of the status quo.

Miranda

The second example of a meta-sitcom is *Miranda*. In this chapter, I argued that Miranda's unruliness and control of the camera represent the performativity of normative femininity and an attempt to control her experience of surveillance. This unruliness is despite the fact that she experiences a double surveillance. First, Miranda's post-feminist internalisation of surveillance means that she is constantly surveying herself. Second, the camera also surveys her which Miranda uses to reveal her private self to us. That Miranda is represented as unruly despite these two levels of surveillance contradicts the assumption that the panoptic nature of surveillance creates docile bodies. In this way, Miranda not only resists being contained by the panoptic schema, she pushes against the surveillance society and the post-feminist culture of which it is a

part. This chapter demonstrates that visual surveillance is not just the CCTV network as demonstrated in chapter two but can be seen through a post-feminist lens of self-surveillance

Intervention

At the outset, this project identified two particular gaps in the literature about surveillance on television. The first gap related to the type of surveillance that was routinely seen as normal and natural in British society. Whereas people are often warned about the consequences of digital surveillance in the press, stories about visual surveillance focus on the benefits of having visual surveillance in our society. This thesis argues for the importance of continuing to analyse issues related to visual surveillance despite the recent news stories. Visual surveillance is often theorised as a normal part, and natural progression of society, but this thesis argues that visual surveillance is much more complex and contradictory than those theories would suggest, as is people's relationship to it. The aesthetics of surveillance, through their use in other observational forms, have been normalised to the extent that they are intelligible by most audiences. These aesthetics contribute to demonstrating that the concerns about visual surveillance itself are still being worked through on television.

The second gap that this project attempts to address is the fact that comedy had not been examined with respect to surveillance unlike other popular genres like drama and reality television. Within the genres of television, comedy is continually under-researched, and therefore it is unsurprising that though research has been done on reality television and drama and their relationship to surveillance, comedy's relationship to surveillance has, until now, been overlooked. This thesis specifically addresses how comedy represents issues of surveillance and what specificities come to light as a result of the interplay of the two. The examination of comedy programmes, reveals that like reality television and drama, comedy also engages in surveillance aesthetics which can be found in mockumentary sitcoms and meta-sitcoms. These programmes represent various ways that society continues to deal with the complexities of living in a surveillance society, with each programme using elements of surveillance to expose, examine and critique the surveillance society in varying degrees.

Surveillance is a serious subject about how power is executed and maintained. The panoptic schema suggests that people who are being watched or think that they are being watched become docile bodies. They have internalised the act of being watched and so behave whether they are being watched or not. This is an obvious benefit for

institutions and organisations who wish to control people, focussing on discipline rather than punishment. This is the basis for the argument for the proliferation of CCTV cameras in cities around the world.

The research that has been done about surveillance on television has concentrated on non-fiction programming and drama, leaving out other popular genres such as comedy. Surveillance in non-fiction programming was shown to assist in the apprehension of criminals whilst at the same time adding a spectacular visual element to the programme. Studies have also demonstrated that issues of privacy and consent are not addressed on the programmes themselves but are mitigated against through regulation, thus making the process of consent less visible. Drama programming has not always shown surveillance to be effective in solving crime but it is presented as a normalised aspect of contemporary culture. Although not without its problems, surveillance in drama is presented as a useful tool in preventing and solving crime. Some research into surveillance in drama illustrates the way visual surveillance focusses on particular bodies instead of others.

But surveillance in comedy has not been examined and therefore I argue that research about surveillance on television is just beginning. As I have argued, comedy offers a space to expose, examine and critique that power and offer a resistance to surveillance culture. Using textual analysis as outlined by Christine Geraghty, the programmes examined demonstrated the possibility for resistance to surveillance in their own ways. Through the use of comedy vérité techniques, surveillance aesthetics and metalepsis, comedy allows for, and encourages, play, resistance, and questioning.

This thesis explored the three major categories that theories of comedy fall into which repeatedly returned to the debate as to whether comedy is inherently radical or conservative or if indeed the two are mutually exclusive. Sitcom itself has largely been seen as conservative with any attempt for radical critique neatly tied up and contained by the episode format. This research adds to those debates with respect to surveillance culture. By arguing that these programmes offer space to resist the surveillance culture, I suggest that comedy, specifically sitcom, demonstrates a radical response to power.

Implications

So why does this matter? Why should the ways four comedy programmes in Britain represent, resist, or critique surveillance culture be of any significance? To answer that I might start by asking, why is it important to study any popular text? As I

explained in the introduction, in order to understand a culture, products of that culture are often examined. Any text can communicate something about the culture in which that text was made and popular texts are no different. British cultural studies, and Raymond Williams in particular, argued that it was not simply high culture that would allow people to learn about themselves. Popular culture and popular texts also communicated this kind of information and in fact, are more democratic, and less elitist. Unlike high culture, mass culture or popular culture reaches more people, is created by more people and thus can affect, and be affected, by more people.

Why television? And why television comedy?

Television is a space where society learns about itself. It is not a mirror that displays society's exact reflection, but it is a space that offers up various representations of society. Television, like all forms of culture, offers up opinions, constructions and debates, all of which inform our understanding of the world around us. As Ellis argues television offers up subjects that it works through (2000, pessim). By repeatedly working through issues and subjects, television offers audiences a chance to engage with materials, opinions and ideas they may never have heard. In this way, television offers up many subject positions which viewers can adopt, reject or negotiate with.

Comedy as a genre on television is not exempt from this endeavour simply because its intention is to make us laugh. It is no less important because it falls outside of the 'discourses of sobriety' Bill Nichols uses to discuss documentary. Comedy is crucial in informing our understanding of the world. Because of these programmes' willingness to push the boundaries of comedy, resistance and even rebellion, are in their spirit. Comedy of all types, through its own process of working through, has the potential to be a radical opposition to power. As Michael Billig argues, "This, too, points towards another dimension: the power of humour to disrupt social order. Even bad humour – whether its badness is moral, political or aesthetic – possesses this power" (2005, p. 180).

In the survey of literature in chapter one of this thesis, I summarise briefly some of the main categories that theories of humour and comedy fall into. Each of the major categories, superiority, relief and incongruity, can be used to argue for one side of the debate of whether comedy is inherently conservative or radical. For example, superiority theory would argue that comedy works to ridicule those who do not conform to social norms and in so doing, teaches people how to behave and thus maintains the status quo. Billig outlines two sorts of humour, disciplinary and rebellious. Disciplinary

humour mocks those who break social rules while rebellious humour mocks the rules themselves (2005, p. 202). Generally, disciplinary humour upholds the rules of society and the status quo and therefore this humour is seen as conservative whereas rebellious humour tends to mock the rules and rulers of society and therefore this humour is radical (Billig, 2005, p. 207-8). However, whilst these divisions might be useful in theory, in practice comedy is much more complicated than that and Billig cautions against simplistic definitions; a caution that this thesis supports. He argues that, "one needs to be cautious about describing disciplinary humour as being unambiguously conservative, and rebellious humour as being objectively radical" (Billig, 2005, p. 204). My examination of the programmes in this thesis reveals the complications between arguing for just one side of the radical/ conservative debate. Instead, these programmes demonstrate the tensions between the two. Additionally, the humour in the four programmes I examine is situated within sitcom, a generic construction with its own constraints and conventions. However, the programmes' use of comedy vérité, direct address and metalepsis, push the boundaries for the genre and as such create spaces for resistance.

A Case for Resistance

Why is resistance important? Surely the functioning of a productive society rests on the fact that in large part, we all agree to behave according to a set of mutually agreed on principles. Resistance, and definitely rebellion, threaten this fragile social contract with the potential for chaos. Why would we want to disrupt social order? Disruption of the social order in small and even large ways is sometimes necessary as this fragile social contract privileges some over others – patriarchy being a prime example. Questioning, resistance and even rebellion are crucial learning tools and without them, society risks blindly adopting, or continuing with policies, ideas and ideologies that no longer serve society – if they ever did.

Resistance in general, and in regards to surveillance specifically, is important. As technology develops more and more ways for individuals to be surveyed, it is important for questions to continue to be asked about who watches, for what purpose, and what the consequences are of this. Resistance is a chance to stop, to ask questions, to re-evaluate with new information, and to express doubt and fear. It is also a way to suggest new directions, and forge new paths. The history of Britain and indeed the whole world, would be greatly different than it is today if resistance and rebellion were not a part of it. The resistance and rebellion practiced by citizens working for civil rights, women's

suffrage and others, substantially changed British history and with it, our world today is significantly bettered. The intersection between comedy and surveillance allows the surveillance society to be exposed, explored and critiqued and in that critique a resistance is found.

Anita Biressi and Heather Nunn in their discussion of non-fiction programming argue that "rather than fear the omnipresent surveying gaze we embrace it"(2005, p. 101). While this is certainly true for some people, it is dangerous to just accept that people embrace the surveying gaze without continuing to ask questions about its effects. No doubt, these types of arguments are used to suggest that rather than having a problem with being surveyed, society wants more of it. Moments of resistance in these programmes represent the idea that actually people are much more ambivalent about visual surveillance than what is generally portrayed. These moments posit that rather than embracing visual surveillance and surveillance culture in general, there are people who negotiate their position in the surveillance society, some resisting and some rebelling.

There will be some who argue that these moments merely act as a pressure valve in that they offer up moments of resistance to the surveillance society so that viewers can feel rebellious but then safely contain that rebellion in a half-hour sitcom. I am not one of them. Even if these programmes act as a pressure valve, the release of the pressure does not necessarily returns things back to their default state. I argue that these moments of resistance, however subtle, affect us. We cannot 'unknow' these moments of resistance that have been offered to us. While it is possible that one mockumentary or meta-sitcom probably will not change the amount of surveillance or the kinds of surveillance with which British society is subjected, comedy can, and does, act as the start of a conversation, can and does, raise collective consciousness, and can and does, add to the debate. These spaces for resistance, enabled through these programme's aesthetics, speak back to surveillance culture. In this way, comedy is a radical response to power, to the status quo, and to the surveillance society.

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Teleography

24 (FOX, 2001-2010, 2014)

24 Hours in A&E (Channel 4, 2011-)

Airport (BBC, 1996-2005)

America's Next Top Model (UPN, The CW, VH1, 2003-)

Arrested Development (FOX 2003-2006, Netflix 2013-)

Big Brother (Channel 4, 2000-2010; Channel 5, 2010-2018)

Bones (FOX, 2005-2017)

Borderline (Channel 5, 2016-)

Brit Cops/Cop Squad (Bravo, Channel 1, Sky 2008-)

Britain's Got Talent (ITV 2007-)

Chewing Gum (E4, 2015-2017)

Cops (US, FOX, 1989-2013; Spike 2013-)

Crime Beat (BBC, 1995-1999)

Crimewatch (BBC1, 1984-2017)

CSI (CBS, 2000-2015)

Curb Your Enthusiasm (HBO, 2000-)

Driving School (BBC, 1997)

Embarrassing Bodies, (Channel 4, 2007-2015)

Ex On The Beach (MTV International, 2014-)

Eye Spy (ITV, 1995-1998)

*Fleabag (*BBC3, 2016-)

*Flowers (*Channel 4, 2016-2018)

Happy Valley (BBC1, 2014-)

Hoff The Record (Dave, 2015-2016)

Homeland (Showtime, 2011-)

Hospital (BBC, 2017-)

Hospital People (BBC1 2016-2017)

I Love Lucy (CBS, 1951-1957)

I'm a Celebrity, Get Me Out Of Here (ITV, 2002-)

It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia (FX 2005-2012, FXX 2013-)

Keeping Up with the Kardashians (E!, 2007-)

Law and Order (NBC, 1990-2010)

Line of Duty (BBC2, 2012-2016; BBC1, 2017-)

Luther (BBC1, 2010-)

Made in Chelsea (E4, 2011-)

Marion and Geoff (BBC, 2001-2002)

*Miranda (*BBC2, 2009–10; BBC1, 2012–15)

Mrs Brown's Boys (RTE1 BBC1, 2011-)

My Mad Fat Diary (E4, 2013-2015)

Operation Good Guys (BBC2, 1997-2000)

Peep Show (Channel 4, 2003-2015)

People Just Do Nothing (BBC3, BBC2 2012-)

Person of Interest (CBS, 2011-2016)

Reno 911 (Comedy Central, 2003-2009)

Scot Squad (BBC1 Scotland 2014-)

Seinfeld (NBC, 1989-1998)

Sherlock (BBC1, 2012-)

Strictly Come Dancing (BBC1, 2004-)

Sunny D (BBC3, 2016-)

The George Burns and Gracie Allen Show, (CBS, 1950-1958)

The Great British Bake-off (BBC2, 2010-2013; BBC1, 2014-2016; Channel 4 2017-)

The Jeremy Kyle Show (ITV, 2005-)

The Jerry Springer Show, (syndicated, 1991-)

The Larry Sanders Show (HBO, 1992-1998)

The Life of Rock with Brian Pern (BBC4 2014-2017)

The Oprah Winfrey Show (syndicated, 1986-2011)*,*

The Office (BBC2, BBC1 2001-2003)

*The Office US (*NBC 2005-2013)

The Only Way is Essex (ITV2, 2010-2014; ITVBe 2014-)

The Wire (HBO, 2002-2008)

This Country (BBC3 2017-)

Traffic Cops (BBC, Channel 5 2003-)

Twenty Twelve (BBC4, 2011-2012; BBC2, 2012)

Vets' School (BBC1, 1996)

W1A (BBC, 2014-)

Waking The Dead (BBC, 2000-2011)

What Not to Wear (BBC2, 2001-2003; BBC1, 2004-2007)

Filmography

Bringing Up Baby (Howard Hawks, 1938)

Housing Problems (Arthur Elton & E.H. Anstey, 1935)