

BBC Four as “A Place to Think”

Issues of Quality, Cultural Value and Television
Archive in the Digital, Multiplatform Age

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I hereby declare that all the work presented in this thesis is my own.

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Abstract

Public service broadcasting, central to British cultural life, is facing ongoing uncertainties brought about by digitisation, media convergence and broader political, social and economic shifts. By focusing on BBC Four, BBC's digital channel for arts, culture and ideas, this thesis examines how these transformations affect the institution's quality provision and cultural value. The central argument of the thesis is that the BBC's approach to cultural value has discursively and structurally changed in response to wider economic and ideological shifts.

The research takes a qualitative case study approach, which encompasses historical, discursive and textual analyses as well as interviews with the key BBC Four staff. It is divided into two sections. The first part of the research is based on the secondary literature and offers broad scholarly accounts about how the concept of culture has so far been approached, and addresses the lack of sustained academic debates about television's cultural value. It further situates the analysis of BBC Four within historical institutional and policy debates over the purpose and role of public service broadcasting, its quality and cultural standards. As the object of study is a contemporary phenomenon, the second section is empirical, largely based on interviews, and pays attention to the channel's organisation and texts. The quality of BBC Four's provision, the thesis argues, is articulated through an "internal cultural geography", a phrase coined to situate the channel relationally within multiple and complex institutional contexts, including the BBC's shift to multichannel, digital platforms; the formation of the BBC television portfolio; the branding and marketing of its channel identity; and the channel's prominent curatorial role within the BBC's digitisation of the television archive. The thesis concludes that the cultural value of BBC Four is conveyed relationally, with the channel being defined as a *place* where cultural programmes can be found.

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This thesis is dedicated to Jeff

Chapter I. Introduction

This thesis attends to questions of quality television and its value as a cultural form by focusing on one of the BBC's portfolio channels, BBC Four. A digital channel for arts, culture and ideas, BBC Four was initially an object of study for my MA dissertation that was completed two years after the channel's launch in 2002. Written during a time when public debates over the "dumbing down" of the BBC were rife, the dissertation proved to be the preliminary research that led to the PhD thesis. While perennial scrutiny of the moral and cultural purpose of public service broadcasting has been a customary practice since its inception, returning to questions of the BBC's cultural mission was becoming more urgent because of profound changes caused by media convergence, a multichannel environment and the overall shift to digital media.

Multiplatform broadcasting promised "the age of plenty" (Ellis, 2000a) and the proliferation of channels was often seen as incompatible with the public purpose of broadcasting. Serious concerns over the evident reduction of arts coverage on the terrestrial channels put this nascent digital channel at the heart of debates over television's contribution to contemporary culture. For example, there were a number of newspaper articles that viewed the disappearance of arts television on BBC terrestrial channels as a failure of public service provision, a "dereliction of the public duty", according to Melvyn Bragg (2001). On the other hand, the establishment of a dedicated digital channel for arts and culture as a part of the BBC "family" of channels was also seen as problematic, with commentary, such as that by Richard Hoggart, that BBC Four would serve as "a little caviar for the snobs" compared to the "rest" of the BBC offering what he defined as "buckets of rubbish for the masses" (2002). These two polemical positions by an established arts broadcaster on the one hand, and one of the most prominent cultural academics, on the other, symbolise two dominant critical discourses, and therefore two distinct and interconnected lines of inquiry, that this thesis aims to pursue (and hopefully refute) with BBC Four in mind. The first

account is based on the view that cultural and demanding programming that can only be consistently provided by a public service broadcaster is under a threat of disappearance. There are many questions arising out of this line of thinking, one of which is whether the emergence of a dedicated channel for arts and culture, such as BBC Four, can serve as a necessary resuscitator. But this is a continuous inquiry; for example, in 2009, Melvyn Bragg's own flagship arts programme on ITV, *The South Bank Show*, was axed after more than 30 years of operation (ITV, 1978 – 2010), although the programme was relaunched on Sky Arts, a digital channel, in May 2012. That this is not an isolated example is demonstrated by Ofcom's report in 2004, which stated that BBC Two's spending on arts fell "by roughly a fifth since 1998" (*The Economist*, 2004). More recent Ofcom figures also show that spending on arts and classical music content on terrestrial channels dramatically slumped in 2011, "from £72 million in 2006 to £44 million in 2011" (*BBC News*, 2012). The total reduced figure of £44 million on arts spending can be roughly matched with BBC Four's annual budget which was reported to be £54.3 million (BBC Trust, 2011a) in the same year, to be used to broadcast at least 100 hours of new arts and music programmes (*ibid.*, my emphasis). But what the figures also suggest is that there has been a general "migration" of arts and cultural content from terrestrial channels to the digital multiplatform environment. According to *The Guardian's* Maggie Brown, "neither ITV nor Channel Five are mandated to broadcast any arts" and digital channels "have many more hours to give over to such programmes" (2009:3).

The second line of inquiry is a broader one, relating to Hoggart's polemical commentary in which the launch of a separate channel is seen as a form of cultural (and social) segregation as well as indicating an overall decline in quality provision. This divisive act goes against the public service remit for the universality of appeal (e.g. Tracey, 1997¹). The early days of the channel, in particular, inspired concerns over the part BBC Four took in the ghettoization of culture. For example, John Tusa, another high profile name in

¹ Tracey argues that "universality of appeal" refers to "seeking to provide programmes for a wide range of tastes and interests" (1997:26). He further asserts that it is "an important element of this principle that public broadcasting serves not only tastes and interests which are readily apparent, but also those which are dormant and latent" (1997:27)

arts broadcasting, argued that BBC Four is not the solution to the decline in arts coverage, as the channel “looks like any other impoverished niche digital provider”, and wonders, “is that what the universal licence fee is for?” (Tusa, 2003). A dedicated digital channel for arts and culture could therefore be seen as a marginal, or “supplementary” service, a cultural “ghetto”². Indeed, two years into the channel’s operation, *Broadcast* magazine reported BBC Four as being “the broadcasting equivalent of James Joyce’s *Ulysses*: well-known, achingly highbrow but little visited” (2004). BBC Four was getting, according to BARB figures, “only a 0.5% share in multi-channel homes” (ibid.) with the article headline defining BBC Four as a cultural ghetto. And while ten years of its programming resulted in a very modest increase of the audience share (see Appendix 1)³, the public perception of the channel gradually changed from perceiving it as an arts television ghetto to that of a *sanctuary* for culture. That the channel has become a “symbolic battleground” (Hewlett, 2011) was saliently demonstrated by reactions to the BBC’s *Delivering Quality First* initiative in 2011, which revealed plans for harsh budget cuts which would prevent BBC Four’s investment in comedy, drama and entertainment (which are effectively the programmes getting the highest ratings on the channel⁴). The news provoked public protests, which clearly emphasised the channel’s uniqueness as the “home of arts and culture” (Burrell, 2011:9; my emphasis). *Radio Times*’s “biggest postbag in years” contained nearly 1,000 letters and emails protesting against the cuts and urging that BBC Four be safeguarded⁵. What became clear over the course of the channel’s eleven years of existence is that the low audience share is matched by “the highest appreciation figures of any BBC television service in

² Debates about ghettoisation of arts also, for example, lead to arguments about the need to rebrand BBC Four into BBC Arts (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/organgrinder/2010/mar/29/bbc4-question-of-the-week>)

³ The BARB reported monthly audience share of 0.9% for September and October 2012, which is a 0.4% increase, or else, a near doubling from 2004, <http://www.barb.co.uk/report/monthly-viewing/>

⁴ For example, *Broadcast* article lists *The Alan Clark Diaries*, the channel’s original drama fetching a “record 885,000 viewers, an 8.1% share in 2004 (12 March 2004);

⁵ Published letters demonstrate a passionate and protective stance of the channel’s cultural value; for example, “BBC Four is a haven of culture and sanity in an increasingly mad world” (Catherine Servante), “The proposed cuts to BBC Four would be disastrous for quality television (two words that are increasingly mutually exclusive)” (Cliff Orsi); “BBC Four provides more stimulating TV than is the norm these days.” (Sheila and Shirley Hickey); “The BBC needs to preserve its unique qualities. It tries too hard to compete with commercial channels. Original (and foreign) drama mixed with documentaries, arts and science are what makes BBC Four special” (John Daniel). (*Radio Times*, 15 – 21 October 2011:157)

audience surveys and the highest ranking for distinctiveness” (Butcher, 2011; my emphasis).

The two lines of inquiry – disappearance of arts television, and cultural hierarchy on television - are lodged in the broad consensus that arts and cultural programming have a fundamental public purpose and more centrally, treat the public as citizens as opposed to consumers. These kinds of programming are therefore indispensable in achieving a healthy public (and cultural) sphere. Both Bragg’s and Hoggart’s warnings are historically sensitive, informed by perceived threats that economic, political and technological shifts in broadcasting have contributed to the decline of its cultural output. In this context, understanding the nature and purpose of BBC Four - and why the emergence of an entire channel dedicated to cultural programming can be seen as a significant counterpoint (or, indeed, a “symbolic battleground”) to these debates – can shed a new light on how we define and evaluate cultural programming today.

Therefore, the central premise of this thesis is that the case study of BBC Four can serve as a means of re-examining issues of cultural value in general, and of the cultural value of television in particular. As a unique and contemporary phenomenon, this arts and culture digital channel can not only contribute to an overdue need for a sustained probing of key debates over the cultural mission of public service broadcasting, but has itself increasingly addressed issues of the cultural value of television through the programmes it produces. The case study of BBC Four was chosen to address the following broad research questions: How does the existence and behaviour of a dedicated channel for arts and culture represent continuities and changes to cultural value in general, and to television’s cultural value and public service ethos in particular? What are the features that characterise BBC Four’s relationship to the rest of the BBC channel portfolio? How are budget constraints for cultural programming affecting the quality of programme output on BBC Four? How does the digital, multiplatform environment shape BBC Four programming? And how does the increased prominence of the television archive redefine the cultural output of the channel?

The parameters of the research fall within the first decade of the channel's operation, the time characterised by a further proliferation of digital channels and platforms which led to the shift of television from being a "push" to becoming a "pull" medium (Ellis, 2000a; Gripsrud, 2010; Johnson, 2012). One of the (so far) underresearched consequences of this shift into multiplatform output specifically linked to the role of public service broadcasting is caused by the archival properties of the digital technologies which have unlocked many possibilities for broadcasters to offer public value by extending access to content (e.g. iPlayer) and allowing perpetual access, or "ever-present" programmes⁶ (O'Dwyer, interview, 9 May 2012). Despite this change, television is still broadly defined in scholarly research through its ephemerality (e.g. Grainge, 2012). As Tony Ageh, the BBC's controller of archive development, stressed, "things no longer 'need' to disappear after a certain period of time. Material that once would have flourished briefly before languishing under lock and key or even being thrown away – can now be available for ever" (2012:4). This emerging shift towards the lasting value of audiovisual content became crucial in refining research questions. For instance, according to some scholars, the choice of programmes considered culturally valuable and suitable for preservation, access and posterity were politically and ideologically framed (e.g. Ellis, 2007a, Messenger-Davies, 2007). However, the ongoing project of digitising the entire BBC archive requires further probing into whether this political and ideological framework is still in place; during the research, it became evident that asking what content is considered culturally valuable on BBC Four is no longer only about identifying *what* kind of programmes can be defined as culturally enriching or meeting specific (however relativised) cultural standards. Equally, the question of *why* a certain programme is considered to be of a better "quality" than another one, while central to addressing scholarly inconsistencies of aesthetic debates about taste and value (Johnson, 2007), can offer a myopic view when researching the whole channel; the rapid proliferation and the repetitive, cumulative nature of television content, and BBC Four's reflexive role as a curator and "custodian" of the BBC audiovisual archive meant that asking

⁶ Here I refer to the digitisation of the BBC archive, www.bbc.co.uk/archive, and BBC Four's role of creating a unique platform for archive collection <http://www.bbc.co.uk/bbcfour/collections>

questions about cultural value needed to be reframed in terms of *the space* in which it is located. For example, the channel was recently described by the BBC Trust (2012a),

... as a means to deliver its diverse and in-depth content to those who might not otherwise seek it out. It should encourage people to enter the digital world by offering unique and high quality content not available to analogue viewers.

In other words, quality television, this thesis argues, is increasingly defined by *where* it is positioned: as the *place* where cultural programmes can be found. This evaluation of BBC Four as a cultural *space* also allowed me to explore the notion of quality as provision rather than as individual programmes; as cultural content that is increasingly understood through its relation to, or association with other content within the channel, portfolio of channels, or different platforms.

Television channels, as well as television and its cultural value, have not, so far, received sustained academic attention. According to Jim McGuigan, the British cultural studies project, while resulting in a progressive way of thinking about popular culture, was nevertheless reluctant “to pose questions about values” (2010:2; also see Chapter 2). While it can be argued that “a great deal of what has been written about British television takes the form of describing and analysing the history of institutions” (Buscombe, 2000:2), and that questions of quality television have been implicitly addressed (e.g. Born, 2004) as well as explicitly defined and/or problematised (Corner, 1995a, Frith, 2000), the majority of research on quality television, however, pays attention to either specific programmes, genres or to audiences (e.g. Brunsdon, 1997; Geraghty, 2003; McCabe and Akass, 2007). Television scholarship has so far paid little attention to a *channel* as a central organising unit of the medium (Light, 2004, Johnson, 2012). As the essential carrier of television’s content, a channel provides an architecture that structures this content (including that of quality television) into a flow or sequence (Williams, 1974; Ellis, 1982; 2000a and 2000b). From 2000 onwards, the BBC’s television offering was distributed through a portfolio of channels, which became an “important part of the strategy for defining and organising

the delivery of public service broadcasting” (Light, 2004:7). Crucially for this research, BBC channels became increasingly designed with a particular purpose, identity and coherence (ibid.:81, see Chapter 5). In this context, BBC Four’s identity provides a fertile ground for studying how quality television is distributed across channels; as a “place to think”, the channel is defined by quality content contained within a specific *place*, offering “an ambitious range of innovative, *high-quality output* that is intellectually and culturally enriching” (BBC Trust, 2012a; my emphasis). In its relational value to the rest of the portfolio, BBC Four can be seen as a carrier of cultural value, and this manifestation can be observed through the specific dynamics of its commissioning, scheduling and production practices (see Chapter 5).

At this point it might be relevant to make a detour and mention that my interest in the case of BBC Four arose out of my fascination, as a first generation migrant to the UK, with the complexities of British culture and an interest in the academic research of public service broadcasting, which more often than not, starkly scrutinises this globally successful institution. As a (once-upon-a-time) journalist and producer of arts programmes in the former Yugoslavia, I was captivated by the urgency with which the BBC’s public service responsibility was arbitrated, and continually mystified by the fervour of the often-simultaneous elevation of television’s importance as a cultural form while at the same time frequently condemning the value of most of its programmes⁷. The ongoing effort to redefine public service broadcasting for the digital, multiplatform age seemed to heighten these arguments, adding a new layer to a sediment of debates over the public role of this cultural institution. Its qualities of liveness, ubiquity and ephemerality continue to be punctuated by avoidance, on the one hand, and revival, on the other, of issues of cultural hierarchy. Questions of class, and a complex

⁷ For example, in addition to Richard Hoggart’s criticism at the beginning of the introduction, John Humphry’s MacTaggart Lecture directly condemns television as the “vast majority being “simply mediocre... You watch it (“consume” might be better) because it’s there. After an hour or two you feel as if you’ve wasted your time. (...) The good television of today is better than the best television of the old days. The bad television is worse. It is not only bad, it is damaging. Meretricious. Seedy. Cynical. (...) Good television does not balance the bad. Not if it coarsens and brutalises and turns us into voyeurs. The good cannot pay the dues of the bad when the bad is indefensible. And some of our worst television is indefensible. It does harm.” (*MacTaggart Lecture*, 28 August 2004, in Franklin, 2005:267)

spectrum of sentiments and tastes ranging from elitist to populist, and to those that are anti-intellectual, are all at play when talking about television. Untangling this discursive mesh was a major task in the course of the research. While facing the ontological complexity of these debates might be less of a challenge for a native scholar, my marginal position as a “non-native” or “naturalised” British citizen may have presented me with a degree of detachment, not unlike Simmel’s category of “the stranger”, a form of intellectual freedom constituting “a positive and specific kind of participation” composed of “distance and nearness, indifference and involvement” (in Wolff, 1950:2) which allows additional scrutiny. As someone who has not belonged to British culture from birth, I hope to offer a “specific attitude of ‘objectivity’”, a “bird’s eye view” (ibid.) to the otherwise very subjective question of cultural values.

Another issue, possibly arising out of the realisation that there are multiple layers in the historical sediment of cultural meanings, was the lack of adequate terminology to describe the phenomenon studied. Tracking the changes in cultural value is, in part, about following shifts in discursive frameworks. The medium of television has had a long history of challenging and problematising “taste cultures and social lines of division” (Jensen, 2002:17). One of the outcomes of this challenge was the plethora of terminologies used to define cultural taste and describe its value. With the case study of a new phenomenon, that of BBC Four, it became increasingly clear that the new terminology has not caught up with recent technological and cultural changes and that our ability to talk about cultural taste was currently undergoing a discursive shift (see methodology, Chapter 3). I therefore found myself writing simultaneously about “quality”, “highbrow”, “serious” and “culturally enriching” programmes, with the most recent term being “intelligent” television. The task of identifying the right vocabulary with which to discuss these issues was particularly challenging. Adopting the terminology used to define the channel’s identity, such as “intelligent” television, requires a continuous reference to previous terminology, in order to give historical contextualisation to what appears to be a recent shift in discourse, as well as acknowledging that the use of the term might equally be

seen as taking an active part in the production of a new ideology. On the other hand, confirming the co-existence of all labels – or opting for the old ones such as “highbrow” television – would seem contextually inappropriate at best, or imply a value judgement that gives priority to cultural hierarchy and acknowledges its potency in the debates. Both choices would lead the research astray.

Given these difficulties, these terms are used descriptively and contextually and I prefer instead to focus on two other terms: “cultural value”, which I consider to be an umbrella concept suitable for discussing a “sum of programmes”, pointing towards programmes being part of television as a cultural form; and “quality television”, a term that became a “buzzword” in the 1990s (Smith, 1990:1; also, see Chapter 2 and Chapter 4), and which is still used for the overall “branding” of public service provision, as well as to describe individual programmes. “Quality” remains the most pervasive, agile and arguably, the most frequently mobilised term to define cultural value in television, and yet it is also problematised throughout this thesis. The problems are particularly clear in the instances where the term “quality” is mobilised for governing and economic purposes, in other words, when the term is used econometrically, confirming Giroux’s assertion that public value is disappearing under the weight of a “market fundamentalism” that is inscribing public services with “instrumental purposes and measurable paradigms” (2010:2). The Public Value Test (PVT, see Chapter 4), implemented since 2007 to measure “public value” and the “market impact” of the BBC, has become a “key governing component”. Quality, in this context, is a quantitative category alongside Reach, Impact, and Value for Money (RIQV). How the term “quality” has been extended as a measure is possibly best illustrated in the inaugural interview by the short-lived Director General of the BBC, George Entwistle (2012), where he stated that he had set himself the task of increasing the BBC’s programme quality by 20% (in Preston, 2012; See Chapter 4). The added quantitative “layer” to the term “quality” is examined in the thesis (see Chapter 4 and Chapter 5), and the adjectival use of quality in this research, unless otherwise stated, takes into account the term as historically and culturally defined.

David Hendy, the author of a piece of scholarly research on the subject of Radio Four, *Life on Air* (2007), has argued that it was possible to write *a* history of Radio Four, not *the* history (ibid.:vii; original emphasis). In the case of a young digital channel, like BBC Four, used as a case study to engage with relatively substantial research questions, adding the adjective “brief” or “incomplete” after the indefinite article would not be an understatement in my appropriation of Hendy’s remark. In the tenth year of its operation, BBC Four is still a young channel with a budding character, which continues its journey after the thesis ends, so the avenues not taken in the research may seem like glaring omissions. The study focuses on what defines the channel’s identity, resulting in an observation of the relationship between the channel’s cultural processes and its cultural products – or, how production, commissioning, branding and scheduling practices shape a selection of its programmes. The focus on the channel as a space of production, however, meant that other lines of inquiry, equally valid, could not be pursued; for example, the study of the channel did not involve the perspective of its audiences even though the research does pay attention to how audiences are imagined and understood by the channel’s controllers, producers and schedulers.

BBC Four’s remit is to “create space in peaktime to do things that mainstream channels find difficult, such as exploring a single theme in great detail, offering a forum for debate and opinion, and broadcasting subtitled foreign-language output or programming for a long duration” (BBC Trust, 2012a:4). My interest is in evaluating how the channel “creates space” that mainstream channels find difficult to do. Challenging peaktime output has received considerable scholarly attention, for example in historical accounts of current affairs programmes (e.g. Holland, 2006), serious drama (Caughie, 2000) or arts television (Walker, 1993; Wyver, 2007). How specific genres are evaluated is crucial, however, in the context of the thesis. My focus on the “whole” of the channel meant that different BBC Four genres were understood contextually, as well as selectively. Equally, the breadth and range of programmes shown on the channel required a process of selection, and limitation, out of necessity, to a handful of programmes studied in this

research. As the channel represented a new space for “quality”, the thesis also prioritises identification of the ways in which its content is organised relationally to other channels in the portfolio. As a result, the thesis examines a selection of seasons and scheduling patterns. It also examines the role of repeats, as well as highlighting key examples that illustrate the channel’s relationship to the rest of the BBC and beyond. It is thus partly fortunate that this is an historical account of a relatively young, contemporary phenomena, a channel that airs only in the evening and relies to an extent on repeats, especially when compared to, for example, the (or “a”) history of Radio Four, a radio channel which produces “some 13,000 or so separate programmes a year, every year, for forty years” (Hendy, 2007:vii).

Finally, that this is *a* history of BBC Four can be illustrated by the thought that different tangents of research which were at some point considered, could have been further prioritised. For example, the research into BBC Four comedy in the first years of the channel would offer a unique exploration of quality and innovative programming in understanding how low budget creativity goes hand in hand with a genre that has been historically seen as “lowbrow” (e.g. *Lead Balloon*, *The Thick of It*). Indeed, some of the more recent research coming from the US focuses on the emerging trend of the “single-camera” sitcoms being increasingly considered as culturally validated (e.g. Newman and Levine, 2012), some of which were shown on BBC Four (e.g. *Arrested Development*, *Curb Your Enthusiasm*, *Parks and Recreation*). But instead of rethinking the cultural value shifts in comedy, I opted to use *The Thick of It* and *Lead Balloon* as examples illustrating the early role of BBC Four as an incubator of low budget, innovative comedy especially in relation to BBC Two⁸ (see Chapter 5). Another line of inquiry might have been in understanding how BBC Four’s identity is defined by foreign films and a cosmopolitan outlook. During the course of the research, BBC Four has been particularly praised for its boldness in broadcasting foreign language

⁸ This role of the channel has changed in 2011 following the *Delivering Quality First* document, which limited BBC Four programme output to arts and culture programming. Indeed, Armando Iannucci, who created BBC Four’s most successful low budget comedy, *The Thick of It*, was at the helm of the “Save BBC Four” initiative, with a Twitter campaign to protect the channel from budget cuts, expressing that “the channel’s relatively low budget had helped shape the fast “shooting style” and “improvisation” that made *The Thick of It* so distinctive” (in Burrell, 2011:9)

dramas, such as the cult detective series *The Killing* and *Wallander*, or the German *Heimat*. The requirement to premiere “at least 20 new international film titles each year” (BBC Trust, 2012a:4), the perceived “worldliness” of the channel (e.g. BBC Four’s *World News Today*), as well as challenging “the belief long cherished in this country, that anything in a language other than English must be obscure, intellectual and forbidding” (Danielsen, 2003:16), all point to a clear linkage between the concept of cosmopolitanism and the notion of quality on television. Indeed, this was one of the lines of inquiry in my MA dissertation, and was initially planned as a chapter of this thesis. The issue with pursuing this line of inquiry became problematic as BBC Four gradually distanced itself from the original remit to be “outward-looking and global-minded” (Keating in BBC Press Office, 2002). Furthermore, these quality dramas are in fact TV imports, a fact that would redirect the object of study to the process of *importing* cultural value, which would effectively lessen the attention on BBC Four as a new kind of public service channel, which offers *space* for validating national culture.

Indeed, BBC Four and its role in legitimising television as a generator of national culture became a particularly fertile ground to explore, as what emerged during the course of the research is that the process of digitising the BBC’s vast archive has become a major and ongoing institutional project, putting questions of television history, public and cultural value at the forefront of consideration. BBC Four has become increasingly defined as a “custodian of archives” (Das, interview, 12 March 2010), a prominent platform for representing Britain’s past and the role of television in recording British social history. The channel’s identity has been shaped by its central role in reproducing and exhibiting the BBC’s growing audiovisual archive, and its public service purpose, as the thesis will uncover, is inextricably linked with this new-found and indispensable role.

1.1 The Thesis Structure

This thesis is divided into two interlocking parts. The first part offers a theoretical framework that includes the review of the literature, research

methodology and an historical overview of how questions of cultural value have been framed in debates over public service broadcasting in Britain. The literature review, Chapter 2, introduces the key theoretical debates around the historical and contemporary concepts of culture and cultural value. It pays particular attention to how “dominant” culture has been conceptualised by referring back to different, yet interconnected, scholarly traditions, from the Frankfurt School, to culture and civilisation traditions (Leavis, 1930; and Arnold, 1966; both in Storey, 1998), culturalism (Williams, 1961, 1988; Hoggart, 1957; Hall and Whannel, 1964; Hall, 1980), postmodernism and populism and its critique (e.g. Fiske, 1989; McGuigan, 1992, 2004). The lack of a working taxonomy to address questions of cultural value on television is identified, problematised, and demonstrated through the review of scholarly debates over quality television. The chapter further problematises the concept of quality as a textual category and looks into how the “integrated approach” to television (Corner, 1995b), that pays particular attention to its institutional history, policy debates, production culture and technological changes, allows for a more adequate framework to understand questions of cultural value in the analysis of BBC Four.

Chapter 3 examines the methodologies that can be used to study the “behaviour” of a contemporary phenomenon such as a television channel. It argues that the changing nature of quality television and cultural programming are unquantifiable concepts and therefore require a qualitative multi-methodological approach. It justifies the choice of a qualitative case study method, and details the rationale behind the selection of historical and textual analysis, and the choice of qualitative semi-structured interviews. Chapter 4 sets the scene and provides an historical context for the case study of BBC Four. It goes back to the origins of the Reithian BBC and identifies five distinct moments in broadcasting history in which concepts of cultural standards were debated and changed, and in which discursive shifts and new cultural dichotomies were forged. Arriving at BBC Four as the last distinct moment of the cultural debates, the chapter assesses how cultural standards on television, as a complex and cumulative process rather than a cyclical one, involve an ongoing reinterpretation of a Reithian ethos.

The second part of the thesis focuses on the case study of BBC Four and identifies its distinct qualities and its broadcasting practices. Each chapter in this section looks into a different aspect of the channel, with Chapter 5, for example, addressing its “geopolitics”: BBC Four’s place in relation to the other television channels within the portfolio. Chapter 5 pays particular attention to the tensions between economic and cultural values through the practices of channel branding, commissioning and producing, and looks at how the digital multiplatform presence offers new rearticulations of cultural value. The chapter argues that the new spatio-temporal frameworks offer a shift from the ephemeral to the permanent quality of programmes, the consequences of which are further explored in Chapter 6. This is another empirical chapter, based on interviews, that aims to illuminate how the channel’s scheduling of repeats and archive-based programmes reframes our thinking about the cultural value of television. By identifying new editorial and curatorial practices, the chapter argues that a programme’s permanence and thematic scheduling require new frameworks for thinking about the cultural value of television in terms of how it is spatially organised. Chapter 6 identifies archive programmes and repeats as the core of the channel’s content innovation, while Chapter 7 assesses the new creative practices that shape them, in particular how the notion of audiovisual preservation and the interpretation of the past play a central part in current production practices. Using predominantly textual analysis, the chapter identifies three distinctive self-reflexive critical practices that are involved in programme making and television’s “pastness”: evaluative, in which the aesthetics of the archive is self-reflexively addressed within the programme itself; interventional, in which the archive not only serves as a site of “maintaining memories” but is also involved in the production of new social aesthetics; and finally, imaginative, where archive footage is aesthetically repurposed to create innovative and ambient television. Chapter 8 synthesises all the findings and returns to the specific policies, economic contexts and technological shifts that contribute to the redefinition of the cultural value of a public service channel such as BBC Four. It concludes that the category of space is becoming an increasingly important determinant of the public service’s cultural output. This “spatial

turn” of cultural programming is characterised by the prominence and emphasis on television as a permanent artefact and the proactive process of preservation, which creates new thematic determinants of programmes and which is an essential part of programme production, creating new spaces of cultural meanings.

Chapter 2. Review of Literature: Cultural Value, Analysis of Culture and Issues of Quality, Historiography and Television Production

“The study of culture is nothing if it is not about values”
(Jim McGuigan, 1992:173)

In this chapter I explore the term “culture” as an analytical category, how it has been thought of, studied and conceptualised so far, using the disciplinary framework of cultural studies. I begin with two general assumptions: firstly, that it is difficult to understand the term “culture” without paying attention to questions of cultural value; and secondly, that the distinction between high and low culture, seemingly lost in the postmodern turn (Gripsrud, 1989:195) is still very much in circulation, even if the relationship between these two categories has been considerably transformed. In looking specifically into scholarly research that has paid attention to the tension between binary opposites of “high” and “popular” culture, “highbrow” and “lowbrow” television, “elitism” and “populism”, I accept the binary system as necessary to construct a platform for understanding questions of cultural value and public service broadcasting. However, I see this only as a starting point, given that any such term is “defined by the difference from its opposite rather than by some essential property” (McGuigan, 2004:115). In particular, the “essential property” that the notions of “highbrow” and “high culture” are deemed to possess is problematic, as the negative connotation of the terms leads to an evacuation of a productive meaning that can contribute to analysis of BBC Four and its texts. This is important, as the channel has often been defined by those particular terms in public discourses⁹. Moreover, constructive attempts to classify and define BBC Four’s cultural output are further complicated by the nature of the television medium, which, as Scannell aptly points out, involves

⁹ BBC Four as a channel was defined with “a highbrow slant” (*Broadcast*, 26 January 2001); a range of programmes have been defined as highbrow, for example, the BBC Four’s flagship news programme *The World* (*The Guardian*, 13 October 2004) or Andrew Marr’s BBC Four programme *Age of Genius* (*The Guardian*, 1 April 2007), to name but a few examples.

“ordinariness” and “obviousness” as “*precisely* the intended, achieved and accomplished effect” (1996:6). Television’s complex nature as a medium is partly why the channel lends itself equally to “highbrow”, “quality” or “popular” as well as being interested in “low” culture; the “highbrow” adjective mostly indicating its positioning in a multichannel environment, while the “quality”, “popular” and “low” ones rely on many of the programmes’ thematic approaches (e.g. *Pop on Trial*, BBC Four, TX November 2009; *B Movies Weekend*, TX August 2008). While this classifying conundrum may be rationalised through specifying, for example, whether “highbrow” refers to a “set of institutions, certain types of media and texts, [or] to discourses on these and other social phenomena” (Gripsrud, 1989:197), the key issue relates to the term’s acute lack of analytical properties. Furthermore, the distancing of BBC Four’s brand and identity from the category of “highbrow” has been equally consistent, fittingly illustrated by the comment made by the former channel controller, Janice Hadlow (BBC Four, 2004 – 2008; acting channel controller, 2013 - present): “I don’t mind when people call us highbrow because it’s an indication of some of the stuff we do, but I don’t think we get tagged as much as we used to with the epithet that ‘It’s all about Tolstoy’” (Gilbert, 2007). The operative dichotomy, in other words, not only indicates the need for the discursive distance from what the term connotes, but also, claims not to be useful to justify BBC Four’s mixed programme schedule.

With all these discursive shifts in mind and dichotomies at play in public and institutional discussions about the channel, the first part of this chapter explores the meaning of the “present/absent *other*” (Storey, 1993:1) in the binary process. This is done in order to understand whether categories such as “highbrow” and “high culture”, and the significance of those terms, can be restored without residual negative properties (McGuigan, 1992). In that light, revisiting the foundations of cultural analysis, such as the culture and civilization tradition and the critical theory of Frankfurt School and in particular, Theodor Adorno (1991) provides a constructive historical framework to revisit the genealogy of cultural analysis, in order to establish the “missing links” in continuity and connection with the later, culturalist

paradigm (Hall et al., 1980), exemplified by Raymond Williams (1961; 1988), Richard Hoggart (1957), as well as Stuart Hall and Paddy Whannel (1964). In the focus on the culturalist tradition, I pay particular attention to the discriminatory framework, which has since been marginalised to give way to an anthropological understanding of culture as a way of life. While “culture is ordinary” is a central part of Williams’s definition, I argue that discrimination and evaluation are not incompatible with an inclusive understanding of culture, as summed up by Couldry’s observation that Williams was arguing for “analysing works of so-called ‘high’ culture, but from a new perspective. In fact, the point was to hold *both* notions of culture – as specific works and as ongoing life process – *in tension*” (2000:23, original emphasis). The loss of this tension is evident throughout the populist and revisionist approach, to which I also pay due attention, as they create an important context for later scholarly efforts to return to the question of television aesthetics in television studies.

Moving closer to the object of the study, I pay attention to the notion of “quality television” and how it coincided with the “cultural turn” tendencies to celebrate popular and mass culture in the accounts of established cultural canons and to voice anti-intellectual and anti-elitist attitudes. I argue that the term “quality television” was initially a critical response to the populist abandonment of critical evaluation in cultural studies, as well as questioning the old cultural hierarchies. For example, Brunsdon’s essay “Problems with Quality” (1990/1997) can be seen as an early attempt to “*practice* using [the term]: to see what [that] entailed and whether ‘quality’ was redeemable from the strong sense of class, gender and ethnic privilege which had traditionally informed the making of legitimate aesthetic judgement.” (1997:108). Quality television receives sustained attention because it represents, it will be demonstrated, a complex reconfiguration of dichotomising processes, while also drawing attention to issues of cultural value and television closer to home. As BBC Four has been defined as a “benchmark of quality television”, it is even more crucial to understand what the notion of quality television is assigned to, and whether a television studies approach, which emphasises the textual and genre-specific

definition of quality television (e.g. Geraghty, 2003; McCabe and Akass, 2007), is a useful framework for understanding the quality and cultural value of a digital public service channel.

Issues of cultural value and aesthetics inevitably bring up questions of taste judgement, privilege, access, class and cultural capital, and the sociology of culture would have been a clear tangent on which to explore these queries. Pierre Bourdieu's *Distinction* (1979/2002) in particular provides invaluable insight into the sociological mapping of taste and judgement in connection with class and struggles of positions of power in the field of culture, which would potentially provide interesting trajectories through continuities with critical theory, or the culture and civilisation tradition¹⁰ and the case study's concentrated interest in cultural value as a production practice. However, Bourdieu's sociology of cultural production distances itself from culture as a discursive category, which is of central importance in this research. The issue here is that Bourdieu's relationship between class and culture, bears a certain "structure of a linear hierarchy... which no longer seems generally applicable" (Frow, 1995:5). This linear hierarchy is particularly problematic when the relationship between cultural value and taste is observed vis a vis television viewing. Public service broadcasting in Britain has been, in particular, associated with addressing the nation and the public, and therefore serving a broad "range of tastes". This includes the openness to "new tastes, net interests, new potentialities" (Tracey, 1997:27), and a mixed schedule provision designed towards "widening of the brow", which, as explained in Chapter 4, was particularly evident from both Reithian conceptualisation of broadcasting but also increasingly practiced from the 1960s onwards¹¹. For example, David Attenborough, then BBC Two controller (1965 – 1969) expressed that "very few of us are exclusively "high-brow" or "low-brow". Nearly all of us are complex amalgams with tastes that span the whole intellectual range." (1966:7), an utterance that largely

¹⁰ Bourdieu's distinction between "pure" taste and "barbaric" taste, for example, resonates with Arnold's distinction of approaches to culture through a class segregated society: Barbarians, Philistines and Populace; also, the idea of "pure" taste demanding detachment, distancing and reflection, resonate with Adorno's aesthetic category of high art

¹¹ See Chapter 4 and in particular, the section 4.3.1 "BBC Two: From "Intellectual Ghetto" Towards "a Complex Amalgam of Tastes"

corresponds to findings by Peterson (e.g. Peterson and Kern. 1996; Peterson, 2005), who, although setting his analysis in the realm of the tastes of high-status Americans, notes that “highbrowness” has been steadily declining, increasingly replaced by “omnivorousness” as a marker of social status (1996:900). This type of empirical sociological research is useful as it observes a qualitative change away from hierarchy and “snobbish exclusion” towards a broader appreciation of culture and therefore allows for the conceptualisation of a viewer with mixed, eclectic tastes. It also tolerates distancing from “highbrowness” as a negative, or empty category as, according to Born, Bourdieu essentially “balked at the problem of developing positive analysis of cultural value, as well as a positive conception of the aesthetic as a realm of experience and intellectual life.” (2000:406). And finally, as BBC Four as the case study determines that a large part of the cultural analysis is directed towards addressing how cultural value is negotiated and articulated through its texts and their producers, Bourdieu’s concept of *cultural capital* is again problematic in that, as Jacobs observes, its focus on sociocultural-educational background determining professional ideologies lacks human agency, as it “renders important issues of authenticity, innovation, creativity and integrity effectively inert because it sees their provenance as merely a matter of birth, education and (mechanistically determined) ideology” (2001:432). As this research prioritises discourses of innovation and creativity in production processes in an attempt to determine how cultural meanings and values are reflected through broadcasting activities and the channel, the categories of birth and education are a tangent too far as a contribution to the analysis of culture as a process and a product.

2.1 From Culture and Civilisation to Culture and Society: High Culture from Arnold to Williams and Adorno

Culture as an analytical concept owes much to the “culture and civilisation” tradition in Britain that was steeped in aesthetic and ethical principles. For its founding advocate, Matthew Arnold, culture was tantamount to what was later to be defined as a cultural canon, or a version

of “high culture”, “the best that has been thought and said in the world” (1966:6). Arnold’s definition of culture was a productive category involving a process of *culturing* and *civilising* action. According to Wilson, Arnold rooted culture in liberal education (1966:1), and positioned it against “vulgar provincialism”, a negative category as it could potentially lead to social instability, and in essence, “responded to the *political* problem of social disorder by redefining it as a *cultural* problem” (Bennett, Curran et al., 1982:35). Interestingly, his idea of “culturing” as a process was not contingent on class structure: “within each of these classes there are a certain number of *aliens*... persons who are mainly led, not by their class spirit, but by a general *humane* spirit, by the love of human perfection” (in Storey, 1998:11). Arnold saw culture as a continuous process of education, acquisition of knowledge, an intellectual endeavour bringing about a higher conscience; by aspiring towards perfection, social and cultural authority is achieved. This idea of culture was juxtaposed with “anarchy”, whose conceptual equivalent today, according to Storey, is “popular culture” (1993:25). But it was the notion of aspirational culture which seeped into the instituting fabric of British public service broadcasting; in particular, the cultural authority and moral responsibility that comes with it. The notion of individual improvement through culture was an essential component of Reithian values, as illustrated by Reith himself in his early publication *Broadcast over Britain*, in which he outlines that the mission of broadcasting is to uplift the national palate: “it should be remembered that for the acquiring of knowledge, the upbuilding of experience and the formation of taste, there are two distinct and fundamental requirements. Inclination is one; opportunity is the other.” (Reith, 1924:112)

Reith materialised Arnold’s concept of culture into the responsibility of broadcasting; for him, one of the BBC’s primary roles is in enabling access to high culture, as a vital substance of public service provision. But the Arnoldian concept of culture also bifurcated into a more direct mission to maintain a firm “elitist” view of culture for another of his prominent and influential disciples, F. R. Leavis. In his work *Mass Civilisation and Minority Culture* (1930; in Storey, 1998), Leavis states: “having started by saying that

culture has always been in minority keeping, I am asked what I mean by “culture”, I might (and do) refer the reader to [Arnold’s] *Culture and Anarchy*; but I know that something more is required” (1998:13). While echoing Arnold’s view of culture as a form of improvement, Leavis’s notion of the culturing project wasn’t as forward-looking as Arnold’s, but was more of an elevation of the great cultural legacy that became a subject of decline brought about by the Industrial Revolution and “mass civilization”. Leavis emphasised the need to preserve knowledge of the existence of a better past, a sort of golden age that was not shaped by commercial interests. With cultural currency being decayed by a range of experiences shaped by mass production and standardisation processes, Leavis argues for a type of engagement which is about recognising and preserving the cultural canon. This engagement is elevated to a form of a cultural privilege: it is in the minority keeping.

Leavis’s largely authoritarian approach to culture is also evident in his attitude towards the cultural mission of broadcasting, which much resembles the Frankfurt School’s pessimistic view of the culture industry: “it will not be disputed that broadcasting, like the films, is in practice mainly a means of passive diversion, and that it tends to make active recreation, especially the active use of the mind, more difficult” (1998:15). However, unlike the Frankfurt School’s view that the culture industry (i.e. broadcasting) was unrelated to the auratic arts, the Leavisites supported the supposedly “aura-less” public service in the form of the post war Third Programme, founded in 1946 as a channel dedicated exclusively to “high culture”, and consciously aimed at minority listeners. Some of the discourses around the radio channel are intriguingly resonant of the debates about the role of the BBC’s cultural provision over sixty years later; for example, in a passionate contribution to the Leavisite tradition, the poet T. S. Eliot, who, as a prominent member of The Sound Broadcasting Defence Society¹², shared his cultural pessimism in his fear of the loss of the minority channel:

[T]his seems to me a plan to pander to the more moronic elements in our society, and to drive the minority further into its corner at a time

¹² An organisation of intellectuals that included Sir Laurence Olivier and Vaughan Williams, that emerged as a direct response to the threat of cuts of The Third broadcast hours and service in 1957 (Carpenter, 1997:174)

when, as never before, there is an opportunity to increase the numbers of the minority. The day of bread and circuses is over; the BBC should provide more and more leaven (in Carpenter, 1996:175).

Eliot's response to the threat of cuts to The Third Programme's broadcast service, while fundamentally elitist in his reference to "moronic elements in our society" is nevertheless comparable to Hoggart's argument of likening of television content devoid of ambitious programmes to "buckets of rubbish for the masses" (2002; see Chapter 1). Most crucially, this quote reveals Eliot's elevation of minority culture not as a segregated, separate and elitist category but one that is integral part of a much broader cultural framework, as being a "leaven" to "bread" – a small yet active, indispensable and deeply embedded ingredient that enriches broad cultural tastes.

2.2 The Frankfurt School and the Evaluation of High Culture

Concerned with the emergence of the culture industry, the Frankfurt School's body of work revolves around commodification, and the binary opposition between mass and high culture and its negative consequences (Adorno, 1991; Witkin, 2003). Theodor Adorno's contribution to aesthetic theory applied to the field of classical music went along with his pessimistic critique of capitalist society's standardization of mass culture. Adorno's approach to cultural value was formed through a need to negate both blandness and society's reliance on the homogeneity of the capitalist "affirmative" culture, with its planned, formulaic rationality. Concurrently, his aesthetic theories argued that the unique role of high art was in its potential to bring individual freedom, in antinomy with societal constraint, and in negation to mass culture, the latter becoming the intrusion of Enlightenment rationality, the "common-sense and the logic of commodification into the very core of the cultural field and the aesthetic" (Caughie, 1991:129). But both concerns indicate that Adorno took the impact of culture on the formation of the individual extremely seriously and that "the arts, both serious' and popular, are constitutive elements in the formation of mind and spirit" (Witkin, 2003:7). It was a transcendental value to provide a spiritual knowledge of the self, complimenting Arnold's view of culture's formative

potential for growth, the distinction that can be traced also to the eighteenth century German philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder's categories of "learned culture" and "popular culture" (McGuigan, 1992:10). Adorno paid little attention to the issue of access to high art, but his focus on aesthetics, while tending to be dismissed, did not go as far as making claims about the lowering of standards like Leavis did. Caughie similarly observes that the Adornian approach marked the rise of interest in "the ways in which meaning was produced [rather] than with the ranking of works on the scale of value" (2000:21). Indeed, his sophisticated contribution towards cultural evaluation could offer means for a disassociation between categories of "high culture" and that of the "dominant culture", with his view of "high culture" being a radical, rather than an exclusive, elitist category. In Kellner's view, the Frankfurt School was closer to Raymond Williams's conceptualisation of culture in the view of high culture as a mobilising, democratic force and a form of resistance to capitalist modernity (1997:17). But the issue with Adorno's conceptualisation of high culture is that it is deeply lodged in the twentieth century avant-garde movement, with Born questioning the usefulness of Adorno's approach as it is "lifted out of its essentially modernist context and applied to popular culture, as though it might hold the key to contemporary critical practice" (Born, 1993:226). Indeed, certain arguments are far removed from the realities of contemporary debates over cultural value, such as Adorno's concern about the appropriation of "high culture" by the culture industry. Adorno's category of pseudo-culture would stretch to incorporate, for example, a broadcasted symphony by Brahms (Witkin, 2003:22), and if the same criteria were applied to the "highbrow" programmes of BBC Four, they would inevitably belong to the same category.

Essentially, Adorno had a problem with the concept of *mediated* culture, or what Frow sees as the undermining of both popular (as opposed to mass) *and* high culture into commodity production (1995:17). Nevertheless, the usefulness of the Frankfurt School lies in its raising important questions about the level of engagement with culture. Therefore, contextual adjustments are needed as they can lead to some more

constructive arguments, such as that of Adorno's ideas living on through a Reithian belief in the benefits of a full engagement with art, and in his view that high culture is an important part of personal development. Adornian, as well as Arnoldian and Leavisite legacies, can all be recognised as implicitly informing conceptual frameworks out of which the identity of a channel such as BBC Four materialised. In particular, the channel's discursive framework that articulates its mission as being "a place to think", and a source of intellectual stimulation "defined against 'sensationism' that impacts upon and 'manipulates' the consciousness of the subject, thereby reinforcing egoism and narcissism in modern society" (Witkin, 2003:7). The Adornian concept of mass culture as an ideology, "imposed from above" (Dwight Macdonald in Storey, 1998:23) has been taken on in American post-war debates, and is seen by some theorists as threatening to both high culture and folk culture. Macdonald, for example, saw fabricated culture extracting and circulating kitsch and argued that the homogenization process "destroys all values, since value judgements imply discrimination" (1998:25). Macdonald goes further to distinguish two different versions of "high culture" in modernism: "Academism, or an attempt to compete by imitation; and Avant-gardism, or a withdrawal from competition" (1998:26). According to Macdonald, it is avant-gardism that "created a new compartmentalisation of culture, on the basis of an *intellectual* rather than a *social elite*" (1998:26; my emphasis).

While the Frankfurt School and Leavis have been seen so far as having an "elitist" approach to culture, which, according to Lusted, fits television as a cultural form in "the category of low culture, perhaps even "despised culture" (1998:175), some of the "high culture" definitions need to be rethought. In particular, Adorno's theory can be put to use as a critical ground in order to examine the aftermath of the cultural turn and "authoritarian populism" (Hall, 1985; Jessop et al., 1984, 1985), Thatcherism and the repercussion of its inversion of values and its focus on the instrumental value of culture (more on that in Chapter 4). In summary, Adorno and the Frankfurt School critics "have persuasively urged attention to the relations between texts or pictures, the social power they exercise, and the aesthetic systems that govern judgment." (Mukerji, Schudson, 1991:43)

What is shared between culturalism and a Frankfurt School perspective is a sense of cultural pessimism that permeates both. However, as McGuigan proposes, the Frankfurt school insights “inaugurated lines of enquiry into the relations between culture and business that are vital to understanding the cultural field now” (2010:12).

2.3 Culturalism: From Expanding Access to Culture towards Expanding the Definition of Culture

The culturalist tradition has been seen as offering a sharp break from the culture and civilization tradition in its resistance to culture with a capital “C”. Instead, it viewed culture as a category inclusive of everyday practices. Nonetheless, it is useful to think about certain continuities between the two traditions. Raymond Williams’s phrase “culture is ordinary” (1989) is seen as a definitive shift from a notion of culture as individual cultivation, towards the “anthropological concept” that looks at culture as a lived experience. In similar vein, Richard Hoggart (1957), as well as Stuart Hall and Paddy Whannel (1964) shift their focus towards working class culture and popular culture, in essence, culture in a much broader, social, contextual and essentially *lived* framework. Still, it is of crucial importance that “high culture” is not a category outside of “the ordinary” culture; on the contrary, it is inclusive of, in particular, the critical dialogue with Leavisite and Arnoldian concepts. As McGuigan critically sees, it was “the ‘conjunction’ of ‘the most ordinary common meanings’ and ‘the finest individual meanings’ [of culture] that mattered” (1992:23). Essentially, culture has continued to be viewed in this highly influential tradition as a discriminatory value system; Raymond Williams criticised “both commercial, mass communicated culture, as presently constituted, and the received, downright snobbish culture” (McGuigan, 1992:22). This continuity is best exemplified through Richard Hoggart’s seminal work *The Uses of Literacy* (1957), which, in examining working class culture, in fact explicitly relied on a Leavisite belief in a cultural fall, “from healthy culture to a corrupt and corrupting mass culture”, (Storey,

1998:39), and implicitly constructed a binary opposition between “pure past” and “bad present”.

In his influential work *The Long Revolution* (1961), Raymond Williams groups culture into three analytical categories, consciously expanding on the Arnoldian idea of culture. Firstly, the “ideal” of culture containing universal, timeless values, as a “process of human perfection” (1961:57). Secondly, “documentary” culture in which a critical analysis is possible as culture is defined as “the body of intellectual and imaginative work, in which, in a detailed way, human thought and experience are variously recorded” (ibid.), and within which the Arnoldian definition of culture as “the best that has been thought and written in the world” is possible as a kind of historical criticism. Finally, the third definition of culture is social, and refers to a “description of a particular way of life, which expresses certain meanings and values not only in art and learning but also in institutions and ordinary behaviour” (ibid.). It is the inclusive view of culture that is particularly interesting here. Couldry notes that Williams was not “simply arguing that we pay more attention to ‘popular’ culture at the expense of elite culture. To do that would simply invert the high/low hierarchy without challenging it” (2000:25). In fact, Williams was interested in the “mode of change” of culture, as well as human agency. He proposed a different positioning in the approach to culture as an analytical term, which is inclusive of the canon as well as social process. While he found it very difficult to see the end result of the Arnoldian definition of culture as the discovery of “absolute” values (1961:58), Williams highly rates the body of intellectual and imaginative work, which, according to him, “has retained its major communicative power” (1961:58). The scholarly foci on Williams’ legacy have been mainly concerned with reinterpretations of his sensitivity to historical and social context and lived culture, and the somewhat diminishing complexity of the inclusiveness of the term which, amongst others, “downplayed middlebrow cultural experience [and] made the assumption that cultural experience of the elites hasn’t changed at all” (Couldry, 2000:4).

2.4 From *Popular Arts* to Uncritical Populism: Cultural Studies, the Crisis of Authority and the Emergence of Anti-Intellectualism

2.4.1 Hall and Whannel: *Popular Arts* and the Analysis of Culture

In order to position the cultural value of BBC Four's programming within the broader concept of popular culture and how it was historically conceptualised, revisiting Stuart Hall and Paddy Whannel's largely overlooked examination of it in *Popular Arts* (1964) offered a much needed conceptual structure, a missing link between the culture and civilisation tradition and populism, as it was one of the first attempts to build a case for popular culture's admission as a worthy and necessary object of study within the British education system. Hall and Whannel's work carries on the tradition of Leavisite cultural conservatism, but their central thesis departs from Leavis's elitism by arguing for the importance of expanding the mode of discrimination from the art canon towards popular art, in order to guard it against the commodification. For example, it suggests the need for paying attention to popular culture as a "training for a greater awareness, for a sharper attention to subtle meanings... in this sense it should be distinguished from 'raising the level of taste'. Taste-changing goes on all the time" (1964:38). However, the departure from the Leavisite approach is not only in the inclusivity of popular culture in the discriminatory process, but also, in understanding the experiential, lived aspect of culture that makes culture less of a rigid category. The importance of an aesthetic discrimination of popular tastes is still possible which in many ways extends on Hoggart and Williams' culturalist perspective.

Hall and Whannel offer a thoughtful distinction between high, folk and popular culture, paying a particular attention to historical context and social change, but also, as Graeme Turner notes, they depart from the culture and civilisation tradition in that they "explicitly reject the conventional contrast between the "organic culture of pre-industrial England with the mass-produced culture of today" (1992:73). Their main aim is to define what is

meant by popular arts, or “define popular cultural forms on their own terms” (Turner, 1992:73), and they do it in detail, seeing popular arts as sharing “with folk art the genuine contact between audience and performer: but it differs from folk art in that it is an individualised art, the art of the known performer... The turning point is the emergence of the artist” (1964:66). They list Shakespeare and Dickens, alongside music hall star Marie Lloyd and the television programme *Z Cars* as possible case studies for popular art, which they sharply distinguish from mass culture, the latter not representing “continuity from, but a *corruption of*, popular art” (Hall, Whannel, 1964:68; original emphasis). Unlike popular arts, mass art often “destroys all trace of individuality and idiosyncrasy which makes work compelling and living, and assumes a sort of de-personalised quality, a no-style” (ibid.), a distinction which represents an interesting continuity with Adorno’s theory of mass culture. Although *Popular Arts* predates Hall’s research on culture and hegemony at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS), it is an early example of overcoming some limitations of Frankfurt school theory by, in Kellner’s words “systematically rejecting high/low culture distinction and taking seriously the artefacts of the media culture.” (1997:27). In fact, Hall and Whannel see the popular arts in continuity and dialogue with high art, as both share the elements of artistic engagement and the capacity of artists to lose themselves in their material. However, compared to highbrow and avant-garde art, popular artists are more aware of their audience, engaging with it and responding to it by furthering their creative process. This is contrasted with the mass artist who, according to Hall and Whannel, “seems to be in total subjection to his audience, nervously aware of it, desperately afraid of losing touch” (1964:70). Applying Hall and Whannel’s distinctions to the medium of television, there is a clear analogy with the dominance of the ratings culture that has proliferated with increasing multichannel television competition. Its discriminatory frameworks can even be even applied to the specific design of certain television genres such as reality television. However, within the triumvirate of mass/popular/high art, a channel such as BBC Four can be seen as distinguishing itself from “mass” art only on the basis of the ratings track record; it is the channel that has one of the lowest share of the

audience compared to other BBC channels (see Appendix 1 and Appendix 2), while in terms of the awareness of the audience the channel positions itself firmly within the category of popular, rather than high art¹³. At any rate, if the distinction between the two categories still stands in relation to the themes found in BBC Four programmes, they are often scheduled, in Reithian, mixed-programme tradition, side by side, with *Eugene Onegin from the Royal Opera House* (BBC Four, TX 12 April 2013) scheduled prior to *Tom Jones at the BBC* (BBC Four, TX 12 April 2013). Hall and Whannel's *Popular Arts* reapplies an Arnoldian vision of culture onto the popular, as a central and important means to understand the human condition and changes in society:

... in the way popular work helps the serious artist to focus on the actual world, to draw upon common types, to sharpen his observation and to detect the large but hidden movements of society. New art forms frequently arise when profound modifications are taking place in social life and in the 'structure of feeling' in the society. Often this change is first recorded in popular work, and new popular themes and conventions are devised to deal with them, or to express them (1963:83).

Hall and Whannel come closest to the development of evaluative, discriminatory templates of cultural forms which were previously invisible. This break from the culture and civilization tradition is represented through the refusal to see the mass media of television as being automatically low in value, reflecting Williams' view that, "[mass media] techniques, in my view, are at worst neutral... It is not relevant to contrast an evening spent watching television with an evening spent in conversation, although this is often done. There is, I believe, no form of social activity which the use of these techniques has replaced" (1961:290). However, while it might be worth observing that Williams pre-empts Hall and Whannel in his view that although it is difficult to "express a simple and definite judgement of value about all these very varied products, they are all things that need to be valued" (1961:290), Hall and Whannel's *Popular Arts* could be seen as one of the rare early examples of cultural evaluation, as *inclusive* of television as a cultural form. This is, admittedly, done not by prioritising the aesthetic, but

¹³ Admittedly, at the launch of BBC Four, the channel's first controller, Roly Keating, said that the channel's key job "is to keep quality up; we are not intending to be driven by ratings" (Roly Keating, *Guardian Unlimited* live talk, 6 March 2002)

rather, the ethical dimension of the popular. Nonetheless, their scholarly research still needs to be situated as being sensitive to the times in which it was written, especially in relation to how they define the concept of *mass art*. For example, they name the classics hits such as the Broadway musical *South Pacific*, or the Hollywood take on a Biblical story *King of Kings* (1961) as examples of mass rather than popular art, which due to their “banal, routine treatments of well-worn formulae” (1964:77), can be seen in hindsight as being potentially dismissive of television genres, which also thrive on repetition, familiarity and/or mass popularity. The allocation of aesthetic quality as an inherent property of texts still points to the intellectual tradition of Arnold and Leavis, in that there is an implication of normative, or objective measures, within which judgements of taste are made. This normativity and objectivity of value would be increasingly questioned in studies of culture and critical theory, the accounts of which would unsettle the key discursive categories of high art and popular art, resulting in the increase of scholarly positions that would eventually lead to populism and anti-intellectualism.

2.4.2 Cultural Populism, Anti-Intellectualism and Inversion of Values: Towards New Binary Positions?

It has been broadly acknowledged that *cultural* populism, as a scholarly position in Britain in the 1980s and 1990s¹⁴, emerged out of the discipline of cultural studies. Jim McGuigan (1992) proposes a narrowed down conceptual category of cultural populism defining it as “the intellectual assumption, made by some students of popular culture, that the symbolic experiences and practices of ordinary people are much more important analytically and politically than Culture with a capital C.” (1992:4) Most scholars concur that populism is an unforeseen outcome of the intellectual orientation of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS), which championed an interdisciplinary approach to popular culture, framed by neo-Marxism, Althusser’s dominant ideology thesis and the neo-Gramscian category of

¹⁴ Here I wish to distinguish cultural populism from the broader meaning of the concept of populism, which in scholarly literature often refers to an ideological construction associated with neoliberal politics, and in particular, Thatcherism and Reganism (see, for example, Lusted, 1998:176)

hegemony, as well as semiotics, post-structuralism, feminism and critical theory (e.g. Brunson, 1997, Geraghty, 2003, Curran, 2002, McGuigan, 1992). Emerging, new directions of the analysis of popular culture through cultural consumption, identity, audience empowerment and textual analyses lead, according to John Corner, to the entrapment of “populist descriptivism” (1994:145). Alongside this process, the scholarly focus on dominant, official, or canonised culture was marginalised and devalued as a field of inquiry due to its ties to and origins out of elitist academic practices. For example, some of cultural studies’ scholarly trends, such as questions of redemptive reading and pleasure, increasingly facilitated the obsolescence of evaluative or educational directions of research. As McGuigan observes, what was prevailing was the “curious conception of ‘the dominant’ in the cultural field that confines it to the official terms of ‘high or bourgeois art’” (1992:75). The equation between elitism and discriminatory practices was perhaps most aptly illustrated by John Carey who, in his *Intellectuals and the Masses* (1992), builds up an argument against the idea of intellectual authority, through isolated instances of contempt for the masses by the British upper classes and intelligentsia.

Although a scholarly example of the populist interpretation of British cultural history (Curran, 2002), Carey’s attack on intellectual snobbery does not necessarily marginalise high culture as such, but points to a broader antagonism towards cultural elitism and represents a direct critique of the Leavisite idea of culture being in the “minority keeping”. But the idea of “elite culture” can also be identified as a problem of the social distribution of culture; a matter of access or indeed, as Corner pointed out, of “the cultural dispositions and competencies by which cultural goodness can be accessed, appreciated and ‘used’.” (1994:142). Indeed, populist prioritising of the “common” properties of culture departs from the culturalist idea of the inclusiveness of both elite and popular culture, resulting in the emergence of new orthodoxies. For example, Williams’s vision of cultural “commonness” became the grounds for the abandonment of discriminatory positions. Indeed, one of the consequences of populism that Richard Hoggart identifies refers to a distaste for any kind of value judgement, the feature that was mistakenly

considered as a great social leveller: “It is highly unfashionable today to use any language of judgment. If you do, you are accused of being elitist or, once again, ‘southern, white, middle class and well educated’. But this is sound bite sloganising” (Hoggart, 2002). Cultural populism, in some factions, also became a source of the uncritical celebration of popular culture (Mukerji, Schudson, 1991:36; Frith, Savage, 1993; McGuigan, 1992:5; Ferguson, Golding, 1997). According to McGuigan, Williams himself,

...looked back with horror at some of those twists and turns because, in his opinion, they had led cultural studies away from its popular educational project... what Williams considered to be idealist theorising... resulting in specialised academicism and loss of historical imagination. Williams claimed that such ‘theory’ was elitist even when applied to the study of popular culture (McGuigan, 1992:27).

The crisis of value that is associated with populism (McGuigan, 1992; Brunson, 1990/1997; Caughie, 2000), was accompanied by “a crisis of critical language”, according to Frith and Savage (1993:108), which is certainly posing challenges in the analysis of contemporary television - in particular, of those channels which broadcast both popular and “high culture” content, such as Sky Arts or BBC Four.

McGuigan further identifies methodological and ideological problems with what he terms “consumptionist cultural studies” (2012:429), which essentially prioritises the study of culture that is mass consumed, and emphasises the agency it gives to the consumption of texts. This is what John Corner identifies as a “market democracy” or,

... a political order based on consumer power and committed to relativizing taste in relation to consumer demand (implicitly classifying all objections to this as “elitist”). This tendency has worked to displace the essentially critical notion of cultural inequality and to substitute the potentially complacent notions of cultural “difference” and of cultural “choice” (Corner, 1994:145).

John Fiske, according to McGuigan, is one of the foremost scholarly representatives of the uncritical celebration of commodity culture (1992), which leads to “a curious homology” between the cultural studies of popular consumption and neoliberal market ideology (2005:234). Fiske, for example, argues for the centrality of everyday life experiences to our cultural texture,

“for it minimises the difference between text and life, between the aesthetic and everyday that is so central to process and practice-based culture” (1989:6). Fiske argues that commodity is at the core of culture (1989:5), and that the process of consumption is a part of meaning making, an empowering cultural practice that is essential for the formation of identity and individuality. Fiske rejects the idea that profit and creativity are incompatible, and argues that they are

...two romantic fantasies that originate at opposite ends of the cultural spectrum – at one end that of the penniless artist, dedicated only to the purity and aesthetic transcendence of his (for the vision is a patriarchal one) art, and the other that of a folk art in which all members of the tribe participate equally in producing and circulating their culture, free of any commercial taint (Fiske, 1989:4/5).

Fiske’s key arguments represent the exact inversion of a so-called “elitist” thesis, oriented as they are against those made by the Frankfurt School, or the culture and civilization tradition (especially the ideas of Leavis). Notwithstanding Fiske’s unquestioning endorsement of cultural consumption and the “popular”, the definite break from older approaches to cultural analysis also needs to be credited for opening up avenues for the analysis of popular cultural forms such as television. It has also been useful for addressing the view that popular culture is inherently political. According to Newcomb, “Fiske never lost sight of the applied power afforded by access to production, control of discursive systems and political policies. Rather, his work reminds us that the results of such power is always uneven in its effectivity, couched in multiple and varying contexts, and significant to individuals and groups in very different ways.” (2010:22)

While these are some of the problematic intellectual inclinations which seemingly acted as a launchpad for television studies, the real cultural change took place both within academia and within the television industry itself. The BBC, perennially charged as an elitist organisation, has been scrutinised through populist rhetoric, which was at its peak during Thatcher’s government (see Chapter 4). Within the BBC, populism entered production culture. John Ellis, for example, reflects on how populism migrated from scholarly to programming practice, where “a generation of students, many in

the expanding field of media studies, was given the distinct impression that anything was now OK. Off they went to become researchers on *The Late Show*. A subtle shift had been wrought: instead of opinions, you had readings; instead of values you had favourites” (1991:61)¹⁵. Ellis’s polemic further suggests that the dismissal of critical evaluation is linked to a crisis in educational authority, a view shared by Frank Furedi (2004)¹⁶. But McGuigan finds that academising popular culture is not a sufficient reason for the emergence of widespread “populism” (1992:4), and it is perhaps important to identify that populism in the discipline of cultural studies is only a symptom of a much larger scale phenomenon. McGuigan’s concern regarding cultural studies’ focus on cultural consumption practices is their easy conflation with some aspects of neoliberal doctrine (2012:429), in particular, the conjoining of “free market” with “free consumer”, and its focus on what makes a text seductive rather than what makes it valuable to the reader.

According to Giroux, cultural studies’ emphasis on populism was fostered in response to a broader crisis in educational authority: “The emergence of the electronic media coupled with a diminishing faith in the power of human agency has undermined the traditional visions of schooling and the meaning of pedagogy” (in Couldry, 2000:41). Frank Furedi’s argument (2004) resonates with Giroux’s. Furedi identifies the rapid rise of an instrumental approach to culture and knowledge, which leads to an avoidance of engaging with the more demanding aspects of culture and a philistine tendency in the educational system.

The legacy of cultural populism is conflicted, referring at once to a much needed demotic turn (Turner, 2009) in cultural analysis, while also normativising cultural relativism and anti-intellectualism. As an ideological position it can be identified within, as well as outside of, academic practice. BBC Four’s focus on educational cultural programmes may be seemingly

¹⁵ *The Late Show* was also problematised by Frith and Savage (1993). They argued that “it hasn’t thought through the implications of its new eclectic account of culture – its assumptions about the high are as limited as its assumptions about the low. (...) The programme does not really challenge high/low distinctions between aesthetic transcendence (real art) and social function (the popular).” (1993:114)

¹⁶ A more recent account of this ongoing issue is debated by James Curran in his paper “Mickey Mouse Squeaks Back: Defending Media Studies”, published in 3D, MECCSA, January 2013
<http://www.meccsa.org.uk/news/mickey-mouse-squeaks-back-defending-media-studies/>

exempt from populist debates, but the entertainment modality of some of its programmes, as well as the ability of the channel's educational programmes "to convey enthusiasm rather than knowledge" (Tusa, 2005), can arguably be seen as one of the direct legacies of cultural populism. While the channel nurtures a broad and diverse range of cultural themes, BBC Four's controller Richard Klein (2008 – 2013) identifies the channel's arts, culture and science themes as undisputedly entertaining; for the channel's tenth year anniversary he announced that "people understand now that Four is an entertainment channel, only we entertain differently, thinking outside the box, through discourse, wit and proposition" (Klein, 2012). In other words, BBC Four's public service duty of universality of appeal is carefully framed through populist attributes, especially in distancing itself from an elitist tone and a Reithian approach to education (see Chapter 4).

While some aspects of the populist turn in cultural studies are undoubtedly progressive in their contribution to opening up more democratic cultural spaces inclusive of margins and minorities, the populist framework has not genuinely removed, but rather, inverted value judgements, leaving the power relations in place (Brunsdon, 1997:114). Paradoxically, by its ideological opposition to elitism, populism continues to remind us of the existence of a cultural hierarchy precisely through the denial of it, confirming that it is far from being a value free category. It is, according to McGuigan, essentialist as it uses elitism as a "convenient shorthand for ideological positions that are disrespectful of ordinary people's tastes, whilst also recognising, however, that 'elitist' itself erases important differences and nuances of intellectual standpoint when applied too casually" (1992:2). Returning, therefore, to Raymond Williams' concept of "ordinary" culture is more useful as an *inclusive* approach to culture. As Corner observes, Williams' concept of culture, unlike the populist one, has "broadened out from [a culture] exclusively based on an 'arts and learning' definition" within which the starting, narrow definition of culture "remains active as a core, giving the new usage a duality and even ambiguity" (1994:142). It is safe to argue that, despite the aforementioned populist attributes of BBC Four, it

remains a service aspiring to offer a whole range of cultural positions, evoking a resilient legacy and offering an analytical strength to culturalist perspectives.

2.5 BBC Four and Quality Television: Issues of Text, Aesthetics and Historiography

According to Georgina Born, one of the ways of asking how to conceive of value is therefore trying to define quality in television (2004:304). Extending on the culturalist tradition, and in dialogue with the populist direction of cultural studies, the focus of more recent scholarly explorations of cultural value and television aesthetics in the UK has been through the notion of quality television. The concept initially entered academic debate at the height of the commercialization of television in the late 1980s and beginning of the 1990s, emerging out of policy discourse, in particular, the 1990 White Paper, *Broadcasting in the '90s: Competition, Choice and Quality*¹⁷ (Brunsdon, 1997; Corner, 1995a). More than two decades later, the issue of quality continues to be at the centre of the BBC programme policy; the BBC 2010 strategy review's title is *Putting Quality First* (BBC Trust, 2010) and BBC Four programmes are defined as “offering an ambitious range of innovative, *high-quality output* that is intellectually and culturally enriching” (BBC, 2013a). Suggesting overall provision rather than individual programmes (Brunsdon, 1997:134), the category of quality is still “the most commonly used evaluative term in British television debate” (Frith, 2000:39), and has been used extensively and diversely to represent the “status” of cultural value on television and has been assigned to many different things, including individual television texts, the quality of production, institutional practices, as well as audience response (e.g. Mulgan, 1994, Brunsdon, 1997; Frith, 2000; Born, 2000). The term's complex and shifting paradigm also marked a symbolic beginning of a new stage of broadcasting, “the age of plenty” (Ellis, 2000a), as quality television positions itself within the tension between aesthetic and commercial values which, particularly for the BBC, can be sourced through the pressure between its public role of being a beacon for innovation and

¹⁷ I expand on policy debates over the term “quality television” in the Chapter 4

excellence, while at the same time being cost-effective and responsive to its audiences as consumers. According to Frith, the term “quality” has “become a way of dealing with the contradiction at the heart of public service broadcasting in the digital age: how to ‘give value to all licence payers’ when you attract less than thirty per cent of the television audience; how to meet the needs of the public without ‘pursuing’ them” (2000:41). In fact, Frith aptly points out that “quality does not describe good television as such, but the ideological framework within which judgements of good television are made” (ibid.). He suggests that there is a complex dimension to the idea of investment in consumption but not necessarily consumption itself - what we watch is not necessarily what we apply value to, and vice versa; in Frith’s example of *Newsnight*, viewers may consider it valuable while rarely watching it. In this light, defining BBC Four, with its slim audience share (see Appendix 1 and 2) as “an acid test for putting quality first” (Toynbee, 2002) means that it has a very specific ideological role to play on behalf of the whole broadcasting corporation. In summary, Frith approaches the “confusions of judgement” through the contradictory nature of the notion of quality, always in between aesthetic assessment and commercial value.

In scholarly discourses, the term has been equally problematic to define, best demonstrated by Robert J. Thompson: “Quality TV is best defined by what it is not. It is not “regular” TV” (1996:13). Still, at the heart of any debate about quality television, as Corner notes, is the issue of taste formation and the idea of “cultural vulnerability” (1995a) which partly explains why responses to British quality television in television studies have not been very prolific until fairly recently, with scholarly preoccupations steering away from discriminatory practices¹⁸. Initial academic attention to the term has been given in communication theory and policy studies¹⁹ but the study of quality television has been principally – if cautiously and self-

¹⁸ The recent revival of interest is channeled mainly through the interest in television drama; see, for example, the *American Quality Television Conference* held in 2004 in Trinity College, Dublin; “Good Television”, a *Journal of British Cinema and Television* issue edited by Sarah Cardwell and Steven Peacock (2006), or McCabe, J. and Akass, K. (eds.) (2007) *Quality TV*

¹⁹ Here I would highlight several key texts, such as Mulgan, G. (ed.) (1990), *The Question of Quality*, London: BFI; Blumler, J. (ed.) (1992) *Television and the Public Interest: Vulnerable Values in West European Broadcasting*, London: Sage; Stevenson, W. (ed) (1993) *All Our Futures*, The BBC Charter Review Series, London: BFI.

reflexively – developed within the field of critical television studies. Cautiously, as the term is often given attention vis a vis disciplinary concerns and the critique of populism (see the section 2.4.2 in this chapter) for marginalising issues of aesthetic evaluation of popular culture. Moving closer into the field of television studies, a populist academic focus on semiotic analysis was a dominant and preferred approach to television texts, according to Geraghty (2003:27), as any engagement with evaluation or aesthetics would potentially be seen as the undoing of what had been achieved so far in studies of popular culture, or worse, a sign of siding with the dominant ideology and/or established hierarchy. In this light, the beginnings of the exploration of the concept of quality are wrought with concerns over the disciplinary direction of television studies (Brunsdon, 1997; Geraghty, 2003) going through a period of “intellectual settling down” (Brunsdon, 1997:105). Brunsdon’s essays “Problems with Quality” (1989/1997) and “Aesthetic and Audiences” (1989/1997) are the first to initiate and define conceptual frameworks for studying quality television. She identifies key concerns in studying quality television: the effects and consequences of Thatcher’s deregulation of broadcasting (expanded further in Chapter 4); situating quality television in relation to television aesthetics through rethinking the old cultural hierarchy; and exploring television’s relationship to other cultural forms and the possibilities of canonicity (ibid.).

2.5.1 Quality Television, Aesthetics and the Issue of Text

The central problem with aesthetics in television studies, according to Brunsdon, is the “rapidly disappearing television text” (1997:115). Williams’s concept of television “flow” (1974/2003; equally, Ellis’s “segment” (1982) and Horace Newcomb’s “viewing strip” (1994)) contribute to the marginalisation of studying “texts”, and evaluative criticism, further problematised by the growing interactivity of the viewing experience, so that Gripsrud suggests that flow is getting too big a metaphor and may survive “as a name for the endless stream of sounds and images from 500 channels from which each of us (...) can compose our individual subflows” (1998:31). Brunsdon crucially

argues for the analytical necessity of retaining the category of text in the face of its erosion, which is brought on by the elevation of the act of reading and reception, a problem that is not specific to cultural studies only²⁰. Brunsdon's argument is supported by Caughie (2000), for whom aesthetic evaluations "provide the conditions of possibility of meaning and value, and they make some meanings more possible than others – and analysis can show how this works" (2000:8). Jacobs further argues for the "necessity of making distinctions as a first step in enabling effective criticism" (2001:430). Geraghty (2003) concurs with Jacobs that aesthetic criticism needs to be generically specific. Drawing attention to the lack of critical openness in evaluating television forms and genres, and in particular, soap opera, Geraghty calls for a disciplinary shift away from "one set of television aesthetics, as Williams, Ellis and other have done" (2003:26) and towards evaluating television by focusing on a specific genre. As Brunsdon resolves, it is important "how we organise our perception of these issues rather than self-evident, textual destruction that some have found" (1997:119). In other words, acknowledging the importance and interruptions of variations of modes of viewing does not cancel the category of television text.

Many debates over television quality focused on how to conceptualise evaluative criticism in relation to the medium of television, and the acknowledgement that television aesthetics was largely formed via validation from the outside cultural forms, such as literature or film (Caughie, 2000; Brunsdon, 1997; Geraghty, 2003). Brunsdon reminds us that the television aesthetic is borrowed from older cultural forms, such as literature or visual arts (1997:112), which continues to have residual influence. This could be illustrated by Janice Hadlow, the controller of BBC Four (2004 – 2008), who in her attempt to describe the cultural range of BBC Four's output also suggests the lingering weight of old cultural hierarchies:

There are lots of different ways of being intelligent or serious. There are things that are easily recognisable as television with a serious purpose, such as *The Proms* or world cinema. But other things are just as valuable. Last week we ran a fantastic programme called *Hotel*

²⁰ It is also commonly found in literary studies, subcultural studies, postmodernity, feminist methodologies and the method of textual analysis

California which featured music from The Byrds to The Eagles. It was about music but it was also about culture, social history, politics, the feeling of the time. Our audience adored that (in Burrell, 2007).

The aesthetics of television is precisely its ability to move from “easily recognisable seriousness” to “ordinariness” (Scannell, 1996:6). Some modalities, however, are more televisual than others; Caughie lists relays of live events, archive footage, current affairs and breaking news and their elements of “naturalism”, “realism” and “immediacy” as constitutive components of television aesthetics (2000:99). In this context, quality television, Brunsdon observes, “within which television is allowed to be good, poses a privileged relation to ‘the real’” (1997:113). Indeed, that “quality” as a concept is not commonly used as an adjective attached to other cultural forms and texts – literature, visual arts, theatre or film – may be a clear indicator that its use is to curb the aesthetic criteria and accept that the popular, the familiar, the real, and the ordinary remain the key determinants of “good” television.

While the conceptual framework of the early scholarly concerns over “quality television” largely focused on defining the object of study (Brunsdon, 1997; Geraghty, 2003), the attempts to practice critical evaluation²¹ within the framework of quality television settled on the notion of “quality” television texts and in particular, television drama (e.g. Caughie, 2000), a focus that sparked two distinct and national-specific (British and American) scholarly trajectories. On the one hand, British quality television has been imbued within the ideology of public service broadcasting, and framed by the impact of the 1990s deregulatory shifts in broadcasting as conditions that contributed to the destabilising of cultural hierarchy systems, and on the other, the American definition of quality TV emerges out of the study of the aesthetic change in commercial television drama series in the 80s and 90s (e.g. Thompson, 1997; Feuer, 1984), which has more recently become redefined as “an HBO-style series” (Thompson in McCabe and Akass, 2007:xvii). According to McCabe and Akass, the US approach is useful

²¹ The conference on *American Quality Television* organised at Trinity College, Dublin in April 2004 was one of the attempts to understand the importance of the new wave of American television drama, with the outcome of the conference resulting in more resolute criteria of what the term “quality television” is

because of “the lingering tradition of evaluative criticism” (2007:4) which side-steps aforementioned struggles that British academics had with the term, through “either identifying it with having a privileged relationship with the real, or annexing it to traditional high cultural forms like theatre or literature” (ibid.), an approach to television-specific aesthetics and style that Caldwell elsewhere termed as “televisuality” (1995), a “new aesthetic sensibility” on American television that emerged in the late 80s²². McCabe and Akass’s effort to clarify and unify the definition of “quality television” is certainly effective and productive in their evaluative analysis of American quality drama series (e.g. *Reading Six Feet Under* collection of essays, 2005), which “has given a renewed impetus to discourses and evaluation and criticism” (2007:4), as texts worthy of close scrutiny, “not only as ‘artefacts of popular culture’ but also ‘rich, complex artworks’”(McCabe and Akass, 2007: 4). However, the research has so far almost entirely focused on television drama as a paradigmatic form of quality television, “a super-genre formula” with a “quality TV aesthetic” (Thompson in McCabe and Akass, 2007:xvii). With a rare exception, such as Wheatley’s focus on the BBC natural history documentary *The Blue Planet*²³ (2004), the practice of evaluating quality documentary television has not been prolific. Although regularly broadcasting what could be defined as quality television (*The Thick of It, Mad Men, Lead Balloon, The Killing*), BBC Four programming is dominated by factual and documentary programmes.

John Corner (2003a) attempts to establish aesthetic criteria for evaluating documentaries. He follows on Brunsdon’s (1997) and Caughie’s (2000) problematisation of the privileged “real” and “liveness” qualities in documentaries, and in particular, the format’s pursuit of the strength of content rather than style. The crux value of a documentary is in the appeal of the *knowledge* that it generates (the “truth” rating), and its quality is more effectively defined as a social rather than aesthetic category, but Karen Lury points out that the documentary as an idiomatic television text “may then act

²² Although Caldwell refers here to the aesthetic quality of the US television specifically, the term may be applicable to British television, especially in the 1990s

²³ Wheatley notes that the programme can be seen as “antithetical to a public service broadcasting remit, given its special “stand alone” status.” (2004:326)

as a lever in the process of ‘unblocking’ television aesthetic as an area of critical investigation” (2003:102). Indeed, Corner proposes, much in line with Geraghty (2003), that aesthetic evaluation of texts does not have to be seen as an *opposing category* to the analysis of television as a primarily social medium. Rather, it is inseparable from the way the medium is produced, its programmes viewed, and eventually, analysed, building a case for “a non-reductive sociology of art” and draws on Georgina Born’s case to take the production aesthetics of television more seriously (2000; 2004). However, Corner raises another crucial issue about documentary’s generic instability and questions how we can evaluate it “given the hectic generic mutations that have occurred in television factual output [...] raising interesting questions of programme claim and programme value as well as production practice and form” (2003a:93). Furthermore, the “genetic mutation” of the documentary mode offers a whole spectrum of aesthetically ambitious programmes, from the authored and formally experimental, to those more committed to the naturalist, observational and news-like style. Indeed, the range of BBC Four’s documentaries varies from pure dramatisation (e.g. *Days that Shook the World*, Lion TV for BBC Four, 2004), authored (e.g. *Storyville* documentary strand, ongoing) to the more naturalist and observational approach such as *Holidays in the Danger Zone* (BBC Four, 2005) or *Dickens in America* (Lion TV for BBC Four, 2005). Corner thus urges more attention to a “vigorous documentary criticism [that] would help to keep aesthetic issues contentiously in view when other perspectives and priorities show their tendency to hide, displace or reduce them” (2003a:100)

Nevertheless, the textual attention to quality poses further issues for the study of BBC Four. Tag-lined as a “benchmark for quality television”, BBC Four’s quality refers to the whole channel and its distinctive creative practices alongside its genre-diverse remit, and the provision of a multitude of programmes, mainly documentaries, organised around “big subjects” and in seasons. The imminent question “to what is the judgement of quality to be ascribed?” remains. The category of text is, therefore, “too small” to be analytically applicable to a thematic specificity, or the generic diversity of the whole channel. As Jacobs points out, “‘television’ is more than an aggregate of

its programmes, which is the main discovery of theories of television flow” (2001:428), but the return to Williams’s category of “flow” would be correspondingly inadequate to describe BBC Four’s highly structured schedule that is driven by “big subjects”, mostly thematic (e.g. music on Fridays) or organised in seasons (e.g. *Justice* season, March 2011, BBC Four). Consequently, although American quality television is not analytically adequate with its narrow focus on drama serials, its attention on associative or *relational* value between the quality *channel* and quality *programme* – for example, in Jane Feuer et al. in *MTM-Quality Television* (1984), and more recently a collection of essays on HBO quality television (e.g. Leverette, Ott et al., 2008) deserves further attention. Correspondingly, the UK regulatory and institutional definition of quality as public service *provision* is essential to understand BBC Four’s quality output. However, for a channel designed to be a home of quality television, a “place to think” (BBC Four strapline, 2002), the notion of quality is increasingly becoming ascribed to a place, or a location; as Janice Hadlow (BBC Four Controller, 2004 – 2008) illustrates, “when our audience come to us, they make a definite date with us. They find us. They make a choice to go to BBC Four” (2005, my emphasis). In that vein, conceptualising the whole channel as quality television directs the attention towards quality as a discursive construct, which, as Akass and McCabe noted in the case of HBO (and applicable to BBC Four), is being used as a brand (in Moseley, 2009), serving to position the channel amongst the growing population on digital platforms. Quality, therefore, as Jacobs points out, needs “to be mobile across too many and too different instances of television” (2001:430); it has to take into account institutional practices, an ongoing process manifested through relationality between industrial, regulatory and critical discourses, while also taking into account production culture, economy of production and a flexible definition of television texts.

2.5.2 From Quality to Historiography: Archive, Classics, Golden Age, and Television Canonicity

Over a decade ago, John Corner observed that British television studies “suffered from a lack of historical studies” and was responding to a “frantically contemporary agenda” (1999:126). A renewed interest in quality television and aesthetics largely coincided with the emerging interest in television historiography. However, this augmented focus on questions of cultural value in academic discourse posed another issue - where to begin in television history, and “which *programmes* might epitomise quality and the public service broadcasting ethos” (Wheatley, 2004:325). The most explicit combinations of evaluative criticism and the interest in history are through the identification of particular periods in television history with reference to the idea of a “golden age”; the construction of a television canon (Johnson, 2007:56), or through identifying television programmes as “classics” (Moseley, 2009; Geraghty, 2009).

It has been argued that the term “golden age” implies deep cultural transitions and transformations; it captures the break from the past, or “that” historical moment when one set of meanings and values is being replaced by another (Caughie, 2000:57), while on the other hand, it is representative of the values of the times it emerged out of. In essence, identifying a “golden age” also presumes understanding of a broader historical context. However, TV critic Peter Fiddick suggests that picking golden moments of television contributes to a myopic historical contextualisation; it means forgetting “the great mass of schedule fodder that filled the time between the good bits” (in Cummings, 2004:2). Cathy Johnson further suggests that, in the case of British television, the issue is not the aesthetic evaluation itself, but the fact that it has been conducted on a limited amount of television programmes, which often privilege social realism as a television “golden age” (2007:56). As a consequence, any “golden age” is in danger of being a generalisation that not only offers a limited understanding of a particular period but also potentially marginalises the study of other areas of television history (*ibid.*). The “golden age” therefore is in danger of ranging from nostalgic projections of longing for certain types of programmes that are no longer made or available, to the

modality of “mythologising the past” which, according to Lacey, is often a means of “denigrating the present, and the historical narrative of debilitating decline is no advance on that of remorseless advance” (2006:6). The implication of an apparent “devolution” of the cultural values of television evokes the cultural pessimism of F. R. Leavis, and “the dark age” of television is often defined via the notion of “dumbing down”.

Like quality television and public service broadcasting, the concept of a “golden age” is nationally defined: Caughie points to the paradox of “golden age” programming as being usually “emphatically British – even English” (2000:71). Indeed, BBC Four’s national character is reinforced with its consistent “branding” of its showcase documentaries involving the word *Britannia* (e.g. *Jazz Britannia*; *Folk Britannia*; *Comics Britannia* and many more), with the aim of capturing the national character and cultural value in the similar way that television drama, Caughie notes, becomes “a central component among marketable images of Britishness in the national and international imagery” (2000:6). The national distinctiveness of the concept is evident when comparing a British “golden age”, assigned to 1960s television when “naturalism” or “nat” became a dominant television aesthetic (2000:101), with American “golden age”, assigned to television of 1950s, when, according to Thompson, “serious people could take TV seriously” (1997:11). Thompson then argues that it is a shifting category that can equally apply to other decades if different evaluative frameworks are in place, such as American quality television (e.g. Feuer’s study of *MTM: Quality Television* in 1984). Hence, Brunson suggests that the category of television quality can be best understood as a contingency of value (1997): that is, cultural value is relative not only because of the taste or subjectivity involved in the process of making judgements, but also, as Johnson elaborates, because “the evaluation of certain works might change over time, and enables programmes that have previously been dismissed to be re-evaluated.” (2007:58). And while the contingency of value may easily slip into problematic relativism, John Ellis’s identification of two contrasting interpretative frameworks in television studies may usefully ground it. Ellis notes that television studies interpret texts predominantly through a contemporary context, which he defines as

“immanent reading”. He advocates the analysis of texts in their historical context, “tying meaning to the period in which the programme was made” (2007:15). While immanence is useful in pointing out the continuing, enduring, power of a text, the idea of the textual-historical approach is essential for extra-textual readings, which points to temporal specificities and continuities (2007:26). The formation of a television canon, or the identification of television texts with “lasting value” is achieved through the tension and friction between these two interpretative frameworks.

While BBC Four itself cannot be linked to the “golden age” of television given its contemporary or “immanent” interpretative framework (Ellis, 2007a), the channel is nevertheless demarcated from other channels by broadcasting programmes that have a “deep” or “lasting value” (Keating, interview, 12 March 2010), which, Geraghty notes, is one of defining features of any “classic”: “surviving the passing of time, establishing longevity, is one important way in which quality is traditionally established” (2009:2). Geraghty, however, argues that the notion of “longevity” for a *television* classic has little purchase, as “it immediately comes up against the emphasis on the contemporary” (ibid.). Indeed, Ellis’s emphasis on the importance of a textual-historical interpretation is even more pertinent here, and has been put into practice. For example, Catherine Johnson defines the BBC science-fiction programme, *The Quatermass Experiment*, as a television classic. Authored by a great “but largely overlooked” television writer, Nigel Kneale (who was paid tribute to on BBC Four – see below), Johnson puts textual-historical interpretation in dialogue with immanent interpretation to suggest that the programme, while appearing “badly paced and poorly executed to contemporary eyes” may also be seen as “innovative when placed within its [historical] context of production and reception” (2007:60). Johnson sees *Quatermass* as an example of contingency of value, and uses historical context to modify, or perhaps even “objectify” the programme against the contemporary evaluative criteria, so that a “claim for the historical importance of a television programme is the judgement of how well that particular text performs a particular function for a particular audience

understood as experiencing the work under certain conditions” (Johnson, 2007:61).

The “golden age” approach can also be seen as a further confirmation of an institutional attempt to overcome insecurities in television as a valid cultural form. BBC Four’s first controller, Roly Keating, poignantly observes that the very use of the term *archive* “is not something you would acknowledge in film or music or literature. *Casablanca* is not an archive movie, *Blonde on Blonde* isn't an archive album, it's just music” (in Burrell, 2010). This struggle for legitimacy is perhaps best explored by Lyn Spiegel’s comparative historical analysis of the cultural logic behind institutional initiatives for creating the US television archive, which in more than one way parallels that of the BBC. Spiegel observes that, “far from being established in some ivory tower of ‘art for art’s sake’ critical distance, the canon of golden age programs (...) is a product of the marriage between public service and public relations”²⁴ (2010a:72). Rationales behind television archive collections range from “promoting an aura of public service” to a “desire to extend its cultural authority” (Spiegel, 2010a:74). BBC Four can therefore be seen in this way as “the showcase for the best of our valuable archive content” (Yentob, 2010), seeking to establish its public service presence as well as cultural authority. However, many scholars would agree that the main precondition for a programme’s canonical treatment is that it still exists in the archive (Ellis, 2007; Messenger-Davies, 2007). Broadcasters and academics have both acknowledged the worrying tendency of programmes being erased and the absence of records of early television programmes (Jacobs, 2000; Ellis, 2007a; Lacey, 2006). The issue that there was no clear curatorial policy about which programmes deserved preserving for posterity meant that institutional, and not only academic, attitudes towards television as a cultural form with enduring values was unfledged. Therefore, as Messenger-Davies points out, “survival is ... an essential (but sometimes neglected) ingredient of canonicity” (2007:41). Making sense of archives, as well as the existence and retrieval of archives is according to Messenger-Davies (2007:11), at the

²⁴ Lyn Spiegel looks into the formation of television archive collections across different US institutions such as Television Academy, The Museum of Modern Art, and The Hollywood Museum (2010)

centre of the process of the canonization of television. In this context, television archive collections depend on the present, or current, ideological frameworks of preservation.

The central question here is, however, who is doing the evaluating? While television historiography and critical evaluation are becoming central to academic research, BBC Four's permanent contact with the audiovisual archive has led to a renewed interest in television historiography not only as an academic but also as a self-reflexive programming practice; or what Paddy Scannell defines as *historicality*, being "part of a history-making process" (2005:58). This process involves the continuous re-evaluation and interpretation of television history: its commissioning, scheduling and production. The centrality of archives for BBC Four further impacts on rephrasing those commissioning and production practices as "curating", and "editorialising", terms that emphasise the production of programmes and schedules as an increasingly self-reflexive, interpretative process. For example, the previously mentioned science fiction classic *The Quatermass Experiment* first transmitted live in 1953 was chosen to be "revived" again as a BBC Four "live drama". Additionally, *Timeshift – The Kneale Tapes* (BBC Four, TX 15 October 2003), a documentary situating the *Quatermass* author's work in the television canon, contributed to a re-evaluation of the television writer and the recognition of his lasting value. Furthermore, the programmes were tied in with BBC Four's ambitious project *TV on Trial* (2005), a six part series where television critics and practitioners (John Sergeant, John Humphrys, Janet Street Porter, Chris Dunkley and Professor Steven Barnett, to name but a few) observe, and evaluate, decade-by-decade changes in television scheduling, in a search for the "golden decade" of television. This is one of the typical journeys an archive programme makes on BBC Four – the channel's exercise of the authentication of the value of the archive means that the artefact, in this case, *The Quatermass Experiment*, has to move "through other systems of display" before it acquires the status of "an "authentic" piece of art worthy of display" (Spigel, based on Clifford's research, 2010a:75). In addition, BBC Four is a part of a much larger scale archive

project, the BBC Archive²⁵, which involves the digitisation of the BBC's huge archive for on demand use. Within that project, the BBC Trust has recently favoured BBC Four, alongside Radio 3 and Radio 4, to pave the way towards releasing "permanent collections" of television archive material²⁶. It is central then, to understand the aesthetic evaluation and canonicity not only as a theoretical framework but also as an ongoing production culture in which BBC Four plays a central role.

2.6 Institutional Self-Reflexivity and Critical Practices: Issues of Cultural Value in Television Production

Understanding contested issues of cultural value and television's legitimation as a cultural form within a multifarious object of study such as television is a daunting task that requires a careful choice of the object of study and the identification of an appropriate disciplinary framework. So far, the debates about cultural value have been predominantly led within the field of television studies vis a vis the focus on quality, text and (the problematisation or the absence of) aesthetic evaluation. But as Feuer acknowledged, the judgement of quality is always *situated* "from some aesthetic or political or moral position" (in McCabe and Akass, 2007:146), so that it is important to understand BBC Four beyond it being only a "sum of texts". As a digital, public service channel for arts, culture and ideas, any cultural analysis of BBC Four requires further understanding of its institutional history, and its political context. Furthermore, its programmes are the outcome of a distinctive production culture and regulatory structure, the latter, Frith argues, being responsible for television being a complex cultural form (2000:35). For analogous reasons, a number of scholars argue that the study of television has to allow an integrated approach (e.g. Born, 2000; Frith, 2000, Wheatley, 2007). This is a particularly pertinent issue when studying questions of value, as Frith notes,

²⁵ Which, in turn, is the part of a bigger project, the "Creative Archive Licence Group", which joins the forces of the BBC, the BFI (British Film Institute), Channel 4 and the Open University "to make their archive content available for download under the terms of the Creative Archive Licence"
http://www.bbc.co.uk/creativearchive/faqs.shtml#cal_what

²⁶ From Roly Keating's blog, entry entitled "Permanent Collections – the next stage in opening up the best of the BBC", 8 February 2011; also, BBC Trust, 2011b

Television culture' refers as much to viewing practice as to production process, and the question becomes how two kinds of culture relate to each other. One link is the discourse of value, usually focused on programmes themselves, whose makers anticipate their meaning and importance for viewers just as viewers make assumptions as to how and why these programmes came to be made (2000:38).

Corner (2003b) helpfully identifies five distinct aspects of studying television history: television as institution, framed by policy (e.g. Briggs, 1961-1995; Curran and Seaton, 1981/2003); television as making (professional culture and professional practice) (e.g. Burns, 1977; Born, 2004); television as representation and form (aesthetic framing; Brunsdon, 1997; Geraghty, 2003); television as a sociocultural phenomenon (e.g. Spigel, 1992; Ellis, 1982; 2000); and television as technology (e.g. Williams, 1974/2003). In seeing how these categories connect, Corner recognises both patterns of disjunction and linkages. His view is that the greatest value of understanding these linkage is not only in "engagement with these aspects" but in revealing "at least some of the lines of historical interconnection between them" (2003b:276). Two relevant examples of successful integration include Scannell and Cardiff's study of the BBC (1991) which acknowledges a "full range of factors, including the cultural" (Corner, 2003b:276), and Georgina Born's *Uncertain Vision* (2004) a highly relevant study that focuses on "television as institution" and "television as practice". Born looks at the BBC's institutional and regulatory history to find out how "cultural production has cumulative historical effects in the formation of the prevailing currents of public culture" (2000:405). With particular attention paid to the regulatory changes of the 1990s, Born's ethnographic study details how they, as Simon Frith puts it, "disrupted established production mentalities" (2000:39). Born's attention to production culture leads her to argue for the ontological priority of production over reception. For example, she distinguishes professionals' active initiatives in issues over creativity as well as in the process of value judgement, and points to the need to attend to "a category of specifically media intellectuals whose task is to mediate the generic dynamics that bridge the past, present and future of media output" (2000:406). Born builds a strong case for the move *inside* institutions, observing evidence of the agency

of media intellectuals and other industry professionals, to develop an understanding of how television industry values are formed. This is equally a useful approach for smaller scale research such as BBC Four, using this complex dynamic as a basis for aesthetic evaluation.

Born's study is a sustained examination of how the transformation of the internal organisation of the BBC shifted the balance of power from producers to television executives, which in turn affected the quality of television programmes. Born's further emphasis on the importance of "organic intellectuals" in broadcasting, who, she explains, have to be "engaged at once in creative cultural practices (the commissioning and making of programmes, the scheduling of engaging channels) and in second-guessing the likely social, cultural, political and economic ramifications of these practices" (2000:420), is particularly relevant for a smaller scale case study such as BBC Four. As I will argue in the chapters to follow, the creative output that BBC Four produces and its programming policy are outcomes of a cumulative effect of specific individual and collective belief systems. This is where, in addition to Born's research, Caldwell's ethnography of production of L.A. television and film production culture (2008) is another important model of an integrated approach, specifically in its examination of "industrial self-reflexivity" which he explains, "needs to be understood as [a] form of local cultural negotiation and expression" (2008:2). Caldwell observes how critical analysis and evaluative practices (and therefore ideologies) are increasingly a part of production processes and invariably enter programme texts themselves. His examples of "making-of" and "behind-the-scenes" documentaries are analogous to BBC Four's programmes such as *TV on Trial*, or its attention to archives and social history. Caldwell suggests that this is "shifting emphasis to the industry's 'deep' texts, rituals and spaces" and offer "a very different picture of film/television" (2008:3). It is possible that what Caldwell defines as practices of industrial "critical" or "theorising" artefacts, rituals and mediated forms of reflexivity "express an emerging but unstable economic and social order" (ibid.:5), and as I wish to argue, extend to the instability of cultural order in the case of BBC Four.

2.7 Conclusion: Devaluing Questions of Cultural Value? BBC Four as a “Place to Think”

The major challenge offered by the culture analysis framework for this case study research is in generating a successful synthesis of two separate theoretical frameworks: the first one involves a diachronic account of culture and civilization and culturalist traditions which allows further understanding and reconceptualization of concepts of “highbrow” and “high culture”, which is necessary to understand a major national cultural institution such as the BBC and its Reithian ethos. The second one, which recognises the major contribution of Matthew Arnold, F. R. Leavis, but also the Frankfurt School and Theodor Adorno, is not so much about furthering and renegotiating the approaches of discriminatory practices, but about offering a vision of the moral and educational purposes of culture, which was weakened by cultural populism. This offers a normative background for conceptualising a complex object of study such as television, whose institutional practices and cultural output are still informed by Arnoldian and Reithian public service principles in a national framework, and which, in a time of profound technological and social change, searches for a new “language” in order to be seen as a legitimate cultural form.

However, the culture and civilisation tradition is also limited if wholly applied to the contemporary cultural contexts, especially in its assumptions of cultural hierarchies and the rigidity of canons, and the undemocratic belief that cultural authority should be subject to minority control. As elaborated in this chapter, its claims of evaluative objectivism were challenged by the culturalist approach of Raymond Williams, who broadened the concept of culture to become an inclusive category, and Hall and Whannel (1964), who framed a dialogical relationship between categories of popular and high culture that articulated a significant cultural shift or transition. The return to these processual views of culture after the populist “inversion of values” or “cultural turn”, offer a stronger framework for BBC Four as a case study research, especially in the analysis of the contemporary and narrower issue of

“quality” television. The specific attention to issues of quality television and the evaluation of texts puts forward a more direct and unambiguous way to engage with television as a primarily cultural form, and therefore to view the case study, BBC Four, as a “quality benchmark” and as a “culturally enriching” channel. While the centrality of the text is important in understanding BBC Four as a channel, the question as to *why* BBC Four is quality television, however, still lingers on: in other words, assigning “quality” to a text is very different from discussing quality of provision, which cannot be understood simply as a “sum of texts”. Born identifies the key problem in that television studies positions itself “outside” of television, and like Frith, proposes a more process-based understanding of cultural value (2000). The integrated approach, that pays attention to production culture, historical context and texts produced, provides a more holistic way to study the cultural value of television. Television historiography allows reflexivity in understanding how cultural value has been conceptualised in both academic and practitioners’ approaches to television, and the case study of BBC Four, I believe, can saliently tackle Corner’s central question: “how can a proper engagement with breath of context (television in society, television in culture) be offered alongside a concern for tracing lines of development and change?” (2003b:273)

As both Wheatley and Lacey observe, the increased academic interest in television historiography coincides with the medium itself undergoing a radical change (Wheatley, 2007:4); indeed, as Morley notes, contemporary developments in digital media require that academic research be set in a “much longer historical perspective” (2006:3). BBC Four is a contemporary phenomenon that emerged out of almost a century of accumulated debates about culture, but it is also situated amidst anxieties of the as yet unknown cultural effects of the converging broadcasting and telecommunication ecology. The technological changes also involve a deeper interest in “things from the past”, such as the increased availability of television archives (Lacey, 2006), both on BBC Four but also in the context of the multiplicity of other sources that surround it. Archive repeats can be found on Freeview channels, internet download, on demand television, DVD releases, or video upload

such as YouTube, all of which enable television's past to become very much part of television's present. This increasingly present "heterochronic regime" (Uricchio, 2010) raises another issue, aptly perceived by Simon Frith, about how a changed modality of television – i.e. the shift from broadcasting to narrowcasting, single to multiplatform – brings a very different implication to questions of value, quality television, and modes of engagement with television (2000). Indeed, Corner points out that television, as technology, is becoming an "increasingly powerful resource for a changing social aesthetics" (2003a:276). One significant outcome of an integrated approach to BBC Four, may be that the particular attention to the intersection between television historiography, production practices and technology leads to the observation that BBC Four is becoming a "site" of different modalities of social aesthetics and cultural value. BBC Four is "a place to think": it is a location where quality television is to be found within the BBC television portfolio; it represents an "extra space" for BBC Two, and it is also a place for a "permanent collection" of television archives. It might be, then, that this cultural shift can be seen as a "production of space" (Lefebvre, 1974), that is reconfiguring cultural hierarchies into new spaces where self-reflexive practices of uncovering and redefining cultural value are increasingly taking place.

Chapter 3. Methods and Methodologies: Writing about BBC Four and the Cultural Value of Television

3.1 Introduction – Towards A Qualitative Multi-Methodological Approach

My interest in BBC Four emerged out of a concern for the ways that the values of public service broadcasting and cultural programming are being re-shaped in a changing industrial and institutional context, together with a lack of academic investigation into contemporary issues concerning the cultural value of television. The digital switchover and television's "dissipation" into various multiplatform spaces conditioned and continually contributed to the necessity for a readjustment of public service broadcasting's cultural output. In these circumstances, BBC Four as a channel has become symbolic of this transition, presenting itself as a salient case study to understand the complexity of these multi-faceted changes. The digital channel, moreover, emerged out of a specific historical context, and is also a contemporary phenomenon, and it combines the "sedimented" public service mission with new production practices, which create a unique set of circumstances that are central to the approach of this research.

Studying the "behavior" of a contemporary phenomenon such as a digital television channel could have been approached using a number of different methods, but the case study method was the most logical one, as the channel became associated with "the place to think" slogan as well as being a location for "culturally enriching" television. As the question of the changing nature of quality television and cultural programming are central to this research, and are both essentially *unquantifiable* concepts, the choice of qualitative methodologies seemed most appropriate. These encompass: 1) historical analysis of public service broadcasting in relation to the questions of cultural value; 2) textual analysis of a small selection of the channel's programmes; and 3) in-depth semi-structured interviews aimed at gathering historical data and information about production practices and programme making.

The integrated case study approach is used in the analysis of four distinct television-related transformations: policy changes, shifts in television ecology, transformations of production practices, and the distinction in quality of the channel's programme output. Attention to *policy* processes offers an insight into discourses over BBC Four's formation and in particular, its *historical context* - that is, how this contemporary channel is framed by policy debates and institutional values. The second and the third transformations refer to television ecology and production practices respectively, and here special attention is paid to how cultural value is articulated through the production of BBC Four as a channel – which involves its broadcasting activities including its schedule and its programmes – for which I predominantly turn to *qualitative semi-structured interviews*. I was particularly interested in the emerging production practices, which shift the audiovisual and television archive away from the documentation centre and the domain of cultural preservation and towards the site of cultural production. This is reflexive of its cultural value, both in terms of channel production and individual texts, for which *textual analysis* was used as a method. Finally, the research identifies *discursive shifts* away from notions of “worthy” and “intellectual” content towards “think” TV, and therefore discourse analysis is used to identify both these changes as well as the lack of terminology used to address these cultural shifts taking place.

The multi-methodological approach taken in this research grows naturally out of the scope of the object of study itself; television as a medium, as Simon Frith observes, “is studied (and written about) from a variety of different disciplinary perspectives, each of which produce ‘television’ as a different kind of object” (2000:34). Similarly, the selection of methods to analyse a contemporary phenomena – a fledgling television channel, compared to BBC One or ITV - needs to be sensitive to different disciplinary takes on it. These cross-disciplinary issues are framed as three types of “convergences” that are related to the complexities of the object of study: firstly, the *industrial* convergence between the media and ephemeral broadcasting schedule and the archival, preservational and custodial character of television today. Secondly, the research reflects, as was already noted, the

ongoing *disciplinary* convergence in media studies, as methodologies used in this research, as well as theoretical approaches, are located at the cusp between social sciences and humanities: “to treat ‘television’ as the object of a single disciplinary approach would be to misunderstand its social significance” (Frith, 2000:34). Thirdly, the research reflects the *symbolic* or *value* “convergence” of culture – the complex overlap between “high” and “low” programmes, “worthy” and “entertainment”, “quality” and “trash” television, and flattening them across existing and new media platforms and archival spaces.

3.2 The Case of BBC Four – Analysis, Generalisability, and the Authority of the Case Study Approach

The key method used in this research is that of a qualitative case study, as it allows “study of a particularity and complexity of a single case” (Stake, 1995: xi). According to Gomm et al., the term “case study” carries implications of the “collection of unstructured data, and qualitative analysis of those data” (2000:3), which is why it is a habitually disputed social enquiry method; its qualitative approach is seen as “too imprecise, value laden, and particularistic to be of much use in generating general or causal explanations” (Lidlof in Deacon et al., 1999:179). The purpose of a qualitative case study approach is to capture the uniqueness rather than the broad applicability of the case (Yin, 2003; Gomm et al., 2000), but, according to Jensen, the purpose of case studies is, after all, “to arrive at descriptions and typologies which have implications for other, or larger, social systems” (2002:239).

BBC Four as a case study receives detailed attention because it is a television channel and a part of a public service organization that is designed with the intent to generate and facilitate cultural programming. BBC Four is also approached because of its “structural and thematic interrelations with other phenomena and contexts” (Jensen, 2002:239) such as the channel being part of a “whole” (a public service institution), and embedding the phenomenon of “quality”, or even more broadly, addressing the complexities of culture as both a process and a product. The case study approach serves

those who research contemporary events, according to Yin, “when the relevant behaviours cannot be manipulated” (2003:7). It allows for an integrated methodological approach, and includes historical analysis, although, according to Yin, it “adds two sources of evidence not usually included in the historian’s repertoire: direct observation of the events being studied and interviews of the persons involved in the events” (Yin, 2003:8). How the programmes are chosen and valued in production processes and how cultural value is articulated and promoted is of central importance to this thesis. The case study of BBC Four is therefore “intrinsic”, as it is chosen “not because by studying it we learn about other cases or about some general problem, but because we need to learn about that particular case” (Stake, 1995:3).

Based on the types of research questions, (e.g. “why”, “what”, “how”), and the degree of focus on contemporary as opposed to historical events, Yin’s classification (2003) identifies three types of case study strategies: exploratory, descriptive and explanatory. Based on Yin’s categorisation, this is an *explanatory* case study approach as it researches “a contemporary set of events, over which the investigator has little or no control.” (2003:9). Explanatory case studies ask questions that start with “what” and “how”. This research attempts to identify *what* is quality television today, and *how* its cultural value is understood within a range of historical, policy and production contexts that are reflected through its texts. In other words, the case study of BBC Four is used to identify *how* cultural meanings and values are shifting and reflected through production practices, the channel’s structure, and its texts.

Case study approaches have also been criticised for “fetishising detail” at the expense of a more general analysis, an issue that, according to Yin, problematises the external validity of research findings arrived at through this method. Indeed, questions of quality television and cultural value in television studies have traditionally been approached through individual programmes, “details” amongst a vast choice of texts. As Johnson points out, this “canonisation of certain programmes” (2007:15) is a problem because it may neglect other broader patterns. This becomes a crucial issue in the study of a

channel, which, crudely put, can be seen as a text, or a “sum of television programmes”. Singling out a specific channel is therefore analogous to singling out specific television programmes at the expense of others; the process suggests that tacit evaluations need to take place in order to find a “representative detail”. But if individual programmes are not the central focus, but rather, a part of a broader research into how broadcasting activities are informed by values, then the case study of BBC Four, as explanatory case study, uses programme examples as “samples” serving to explain larger contexts, rather than a “detail” that is enlarged. Furthermore, as some of the texts analysed here involve television archives, which are not a detail or a sample “of” the channel but rather, were made before the channel’s existence and therefore are “of” the BBC as an institution, the notion of the case study’s “particularity” needs to be revised. Therefore, Stake’s view resolves the rigidity of thinking about the restrictive nature of the case study method, in that it,

...proliferates rather than narrows. One is left with more to pay attention to rather than less. The case study attends to the idiosyncratic more than to the pervasive (1978:7).

Stake further argues that case study research offers a “natural basis for generalisation” as it may “be epistemologically in harmony with the reader’s experience” (1978:5), or as Spigel succinctly puts it, “the individual example becomes the ground for a theorization of language and culture that is capable of understanding things that do not fit into reigning epistemologies or social practices (as well as things that do)” (2001:13). Spigel’s observation is particularly pertinent in conducting case study research of television – as the process of generalising also carries implications of cultural homogeneity. This then can be falsely linked with value judgement, as the assumption of a programme’s “popularity” can be recognised in her reflection on the differences between social sciences and studies of popular culture:

[I]t would be impossible to imagine that the same researcher would come up with a scientific “representative” sample of, for instance, Faulkner or Picasso and then proceed to count the negative portrayals of women in those stories or on those canvases. The works of the “masters” are somehow deemed important for their variation,

singularity, and nuance, while the works of popular media are considered wholly repetitive and “typical” (Spigel, 2001:14).

The case study of BBC Four is chosen for its programmes that claim the territory of uniqueness on television and that are not shown elsewhere on the BBC because they might be seen as more distinctive, experimental or authored. Moreover, BBC Four emerges out of the rich history of debates over what constitutes quality television and can be seen, according to Schofield’s categorisation, as a case study of *what could be*, as we are “locating situations that we know or expect to be ideal or exceptional on some *a priori* basis and studying them to see what is actually going on there” (in Gomm et al., 2000:93). Indeed, the journey of the research design could attest to this definition. As BBC Four was identified as a case study that centres on “quality television”, the logical choice would be to include programmes that are already hailed as quality television in the popular press and scholarly research, such as *Mad Men* or *Curb Your Enthusiasm*, with an emphasis on “televisuality” in which “style has become the primary content of the medium” (Newcomb and Lotz, 2002:73). Furthermore, I wanted to look into BBC Four as a rare place for quality dramas with “subtitles” (*Wallander*, *The Killing*, *The Bridge*), as this relates to a growing trend of more culturally “worthy” channels²⁷. This “cosmopolitan outlook” was also present in documentaries such as *Storyville* while the notion of “quality drama” also extended to home-grown, low budget, original comedy such as *The Thick of It* and *Lead Balloon*.

However salient, all the above examples proved to be representative of a more generic and textual notion of “quality”. Therefore, they do little to represent the entire channel; in most cases, they have not specifically been commissioned for the channel (with the exception of *The Thick of It*, *Lead Balloon*, and some *Storyville* programmes). On the other hand, archive programming was neither a prominent part of the original research design nor the original remit of BBC Four, but became a central theme of the case study research through triangulation of the three methods used in the research – qualitative interviews, textual analysis and historical analysis

²⁷ Vicky Frost, in her Guardian article that marks the 10th anniversary of the channel, observes an emerging competition “with fellow digital channels ITV3, FX and Sky Arts all subsequently purchasing and broadcasting European crime imports” (2 March 2012).

respectively. As Jensen argues, “the data are ‘found’ rather than ‘made’ through the researcher’s intervention in the field” (2002:243). Indeed, the television archive was ‘found’ through interviews, and was initially treated as what Kevin Robins defines as a “counter-intuitive” component²⁸, and triangulation was needed to understand its prominence and validity “from a number of vantage points”, that is, textual analysis, historical analysis and qualitative interviews, in order “to fix the ‘true’ position” (Deacon et al., 1999:29). The research findings of the case study of BBC Four and the resulting focus on the archive in this context mirror Spigel’s claim that a case study explores “relationships between the particular and the general in ways that force a reevaluation of each” (2001:14).

Early in the research, different methodological routes could have been taken to cater for the ever-shifting complexity of the channel’s programme output and an alternative case study scenario. For example, the research could have opted for comparative or multiple case study design rather than a single case study (see Yin, 2003:52). Yin explores the advantages of multiple-case designs as they are considered more suitable for generalisations, and as “analytic conclusions independently arising from two cases, as with two experiments, will be more powerful than those coming from a single case (or single experiment) alone.” (2003:53) Indeed, the comparative research between, for example, BBC Four and Sky Arts, would potentially offer contrasting (at least hypothetically speaking) findings which might involve interesting trajectories over the economy of “quality television” and comparison between how the two different funding models invest in quality programming. The research could have also examined BBC Four’s European “equivalent”, the Franco-German Arte channel, which would direct the research question to a more European conceptualisation of television and its cultural value. However, the two hypothetical comparative and/or multiple case study designs would also serve as a further distraction from the initial research question which related BBC Four to its historical context, cultural

²⁸ Robins defines “counter-intuitive” component of research as an exploration of “counter-intuitive” or alternative trajectories that an object of study does not obviously present. The concept is explored in his ‘Peripheral Vision: Cultural Industries and Cultural Identities in Turkey’, *Environment and Planning A*, 29(1), 1997 p.1937 - 1952 (with A. Aksoy). Reprinted in *Paragraph*, 20(1), 1997, pp.75 - 99

purpose, and its break from (or continuation of) Reithian ideology. Therefore, the need to attend to the channel's institutional and structural organisation and its production practices in relation to its broadcasting content was prioritised in search of an adequate definition of the channel's quality and value.

Furthermore, the single case study approach with archive programmes at its centre allows for a further examination of the trajectory from public service broadcasting (as an ideological structure and element of national culture), to a public service publishing model, which is shifting towards digital, multiplatform and archival forms. It is a litmus test for contemporary shifts that are happening in television convergence. The channel's own focus on archive and television as cultural form is closely linked with the BBC Archive platform and the BBC Four's own online platform, the BBC Four Collections. This "integration or convergence between previously separate media" (see Jensen, 2002:183) adds to the methodological complexity and requires a more focused object of study in order to have a clear and defined methodological design. The advantage of choosing a single broadcasting channel as a case study is therefore multifold, as BBC Four can be seen as what Gomm et al. define as a case study, namely, "a microcosm of some larger system or a whole society" (2000:99). While the "walls" of the case study become increasingly porous, this "lack of clarity about the boundaries of the case" (Gomm et al., 2000:112), may also justify its significance and the importance for studying it.

3.2.1 Case Study vs. Ethnography

Ethnography is a commonly used methodology in analysing production processes. The everyday practices and television production of the BBC as a public institution require "much more extensive involvement, more detailed encounters with informants, and closer engagement with the entire "culture" of the production process" (Newcomb and Lotz, 2002:72). These were certainly achieved in the ethnographies that this case study research draws on, such as Tom Burns' *The BBC – Public Institution/Private World* (1977) and

Georgina Born's extensive ethnographic study of the BBC's Birt and Dyke era, *Uncertain Vision* (2004), as they are examples that allow "the theoretically informed observation of the social practices of cultural production" (Schlesinger, 1987:xxxii). Yet, while ethnography allows observation of specific production cultures, this research used interviewing as a preferred method for the observation of broadcasting practices within the case study approach. Furthermore, according to Yin, the case study approach has often been confused with ethnographies or with participant-observation: "many standard methodological texts (...) in fact still cover "fieldwork" only as a data collection technique and omit any further discussion of case studies" (2003:12). It is not the culture of production that this research deems as most significant, but whether it links to questions of how value and quality programme-making feature in decision-making. However, the distinction between production culture, broadcasting practices, and the way cultural value has been conceptualised in production processes for the channel needed initial refining.

Some ethnographic approaches, however, are ingredients within a multi-methodological design, such as John T. Caldwell's integrated cultural-industrial method of analysis, which uses ethnography as a part of his "synthetic approach". This examines data from four "registers" or "modes of analysis": "textual analysis of trade and worker artefacts; interviews with film/television workers; ethnographic field observation of production spaces and professional gatherings; and economic/industrial analysis" (2008:4). Caldwell's research design is possibly the closest to the case study of BBC Four, in that it uses a similar range of methods (textual analysis and interviews). Ethnographic research has clear advantages, and would have potentially been a natural methodological choice even *within* the case study framework, as the a case study approach often involves participant observation of a particular "setting" in which meaning making is taking place (Gubrium, Holstein, 2002:85). Indeed, while this research was conducted, the majority of BBC Four operations took place on the sixth floor of BBC Television Centre in an open plan space shared with other television channel executives. But the location or "space" of interest here is that of BBC Four

broadcasting practices, programmes, and its scheduling structure—therefore not a physical, but rather, a symbolic setting of growing platforms and strategies and changing discursive qualities. For that, the synthetic approach of a case study combined with historical, textual and interview analysis was the most appropriate choice.

3.3 Historical Analysis

According to Paddy Scannell, “the study of any aspect of broadcasting, and other media, is impossible without knowledge of the wider political, social and cultural contexts within which they are situated” (Scannell, 2002:204). In order to establish the grounds for the case study of BBC Four, therefore, it was necessary to look into a broader historical framework of public service broadcasting, as it is connected “to a whole set of contested issues of *value*” (Corner, 2003b:273). What became evident early on in the research was that the BBC, and BBC Four as the case study, is in continuous dialogue with a Reithian ethos that, in its core adherence to a sense of cultural uplift, keeps being resurrected, albeit in institutionally, politically and economically reframed circumstances. Initiating the case study of BBC Four, therefore, involved historical research in order to challenge certain presuppositions and to establish fundamental grounds for its articulation of cultural value. As Scannell observes,

There is a tendency today still to write of the BBC and the meaning of public service broadcasting as if it were set in place, once and for all, by its first Director-General, John Reith. But the meaning of public service has undergone significant and important changes in the past eighty years, and necessarily so, since it operates today in conditions very different from the 1920s when it began (2002:204).

In order to unpack the significant changes for public service broadcasting – and determine whether they also reflect cultural shifts in broadcasting – historical analysis of policy debates was central. Regulatory changes were then examined in relation to institutional discourses and production and cultural output at the BBC. As Frith rightly points out, the history of television, unlike that of any other media, is defined by regulation, a

process that “produced television as a complex cultural form” (2000:35). Therefore, researching these technological and regulatory changes becomes crucial as “they disrupted established production mentalities (...) and production practices” (ibid.:39). Similarly, Newcomb and Lotz observe how “a major approach to studying the relationship between policy and production has been historical” (2002:63). Historical analysis therefore proved to be a vital method in examining the extent to which the cultural values of television have been shaped by policy discourses, and how historical analysis interrelated with institutional discourses and public service broadcasting programme output. As John Corner succinctly puts it: “an enriched sense of ‘then’ produces, in its differences and commonalities combined, a stronger, imaginative and analytically energised sense of ‘now’” (2003b:275).

The historical analysis in Chapter 4 initially identified five distinct moments in broadcasting history, during which questions of cultural value were articulated through production and debated through regulatory discourses, and in which changes may or may not have been created. The research was seeking a type of data that could capture “the density of the historical moment”, as Corner argues, and which, if it is “properly explored and interpreted, can turn contingency and the circumstantial into *pattern*” (Corner, 2003b:274). Indeed, it was through data such as policy debates over cultural value that a sense of a pattern of both cultural continuities and discursive shifts began to emerge. Central themes were identified through the observation of how the mission of broadcasting was perceived through competing attributes. Broadcasting as a cultural form, has been variously seen as both a “product” and a “process” (Jensen, 2002:5); as product, it is both an aesthetic representation of culture (as Arnold’s definition of the “best that has been thought in the world”) and a social practice (as in Raymond Williams’ sense of culture being “ordinary”) (ibid.). Thus, five moments in broadcasting history were identified in order to capture the cultural dichotomy and demonstrate discursive shifts that reflected both broadcasting policy decisions and their institutional enactments, which were reflected through reoccurring binary (op)positions, for example, “highbrow” and

“lowbrow”, “trivial” and “intellectual” and tropes such as “ “raising cultural standards” versus “entertainment in a narrow sense” and finally, as Jim McGuigan has noted, “elitism” versus “populism”, one of the central dichotomies (2004:114).

Furthermore, taking a longitudinal approach to cultural value on television confirmed it as being a process that is prone to, as Branston noted, being “sedimented down, pressed into new narratives and accounts” involving “taken-for-granted assumptions which in turn shape the relationship of television’s legislators, trainees, practitioners and historians in an imaginary past and an even more speculative future” (1998:51). The notion of cultural debates being “sedimented” is a particularly useful metaphor for capturing both continuities and changes in the way cultural value is conceptualised and especially how, as Bransdon observes, histories become naturalised as parts of everyday discourse. It is naturalisation that should not be taken for granted, and historical analysis allowed, for example, a discursive comparison of statements about cultural hierarchy on television in 1966 made by David Attenborough, BBC Two’s second, “golden age” controller (1965 – 1969) and BBC Four’s second controller, Janice Hadlow (2004 – 2008) in 2006. In 1966, Attenborough expressed how “very few of us are exclusively ‘high-brow’ or ‘low-brow’. Nearly all of us are complex amalgams with tastes that span the whole intellectual range” (1966:7). Forty years later, Hadlow declared that the “barriers between low and high culture have come crashing down...People are much more promiscuous now. There’s no reason why you can’t watch *Big Brother* and switch to learning about what happened in Hungary in 1956” (in Robinson, 2006). While this example demonstrates strong similarities in cultural aspiration between the two channels in two different time frames, confirming that certain discourses about television’s cultural value are still in currency, they are outcomes of data that “largely hold value to the extent that they can be turned into evidence within an account of significant events and circumstances and their interconnection” (Corner, 2003b:274). The two given examples demonstrate, however, as Kevin Robins elsewhere noted, that cultural processes, rather than shifting “from one historical epoch or era to another”, are more akin to the

metaphor of “geological layering” (2006:144). In this context, the metaphor of “geographical layering” allow us to observe that historical analysis can countenance the tendency of perceiving cultural shifts on the one hand, through overemphasis “of the contrast between two phases” and on the other hand, through oversimplifying “the nature of each phase” (Robins, 2006:144).

According to Yin, “although case studies and histories can overlap, the case study’s unique strength is its ability to deal with a full variety of evidence – documents, artefacts, interviews, and observations – beyond what might be available in a conventional historical study” (2003:8). Sources of historical analysis included a combination of materials which ranged from archives that included policy documents (e.g. the Pilkington Report, the Annan Report) and archive programmes, the latter also being approached through the method of textual analysis. The study also included public records such as the BBC Annual Reports (BBC, 2013) and the strategy review (BBC Trust, 2010) as well as BBC Four Press Packs (BBC Press Office, 2002; 2009) that are intended for the purposes of marketing and not academic research. Historical research also included various online resources, most notably the developing BBC archive site, BBC Four’s website and its online collection as well as swathes of audiovisual data, for example speeches (in their transcribed form, such as the McTaggart Lectures) and television archive programmes. The outcome of a plethora of sources used for historical analysis can potentially cause problems in connecting longitudinal and latitudinal inquiry (Corner, 2003b:277). This is particularly resonant in the age of internet access, where data became much easier to source but needs to be systematised. In the case of BBC Four and its short history, digitised newspaper articles were particularly helpful. McGuigan notes that “when studying current events and unfolding developments of one kind or another, academics do have to draw on journalistic source material” (2010:4) but he then emphasises that journalistic material has to be handled with

...the kind of caution that historians apply to archival documentation – that is, being cognisant of textual features, the author-reader

relation, the political context and the time space conjecture in which the evidence is produced (McGuigan, 2010:4).

The complexity of an historical examination of culture became reflected particularly through the uses of the archival data which, in the process of the research, became itself increasingly important not only as a methodological source, but also as an object of the study as the television archive became central to the contemporary production culture of BBC Four. It was sometimes the case that the same television archive used as methodological source material became subjected to thematic analysis, for example, the *TimeShift* programme *Missing, Believed Wiped* (see Chapter 7). This could have been potentially problematic, leading to a “mise en abyme” effect that can distort the direction of research, but it can also be seen as a unique methodological approach that corroborates the complexity of cultural value on television, which as contemporary phenomena is undergoing “double hermeneutics” (Giddens, 1984). In other words, I examined the archive both in terms of what it documented as well as how it became interpreted at a later stage by being used in contemporary programming contexts. As Giddens explains, “the appropriateness of the term derives from the double process of translation or interpretation which is involved” (1984:284). It is at this point that the methodology shifts from analysis of the archival data to analysis of how it is interpreted institutionally and within the context of the channel. Also, linking historical and contextual analysis with textual analysis through the reflexivity of production processes is another key methodological approach of this research.

3.4 Textual Analysis: Watching Archives on BBC Four - Double Hermeneutics, Reflexivity and the Uses of Archive

According to Frith, “studies of television companies cannot be disentangled from studies of television programmes” (2000: 38), which was confirmed in my preliminary analyses which demonstrated that television archive programmes and footage are increasingly central to BBC Four’s broadcasting activities, both at the level of programming and scheduling, and textual (programme) production. As Jensen asserts, “language and texts are

not merely, or even primarily, means of representation and sources of evidence about the past. Texts, genres, and media are cultural *resources which are at once material and discursive*" (2002: 38, original emphasis). Archive programmes are at once material and discursive: they are artefacts, and therefore objects – or a site of - cultural value. My primary aim was to see how the use of archive programmes and archive footage was integrated into "new" programmes and into the textual flow of the channel, and to analyse how the television archive is becoming an integral part of production processes, as can be demonstrated through the method of textual analysis. As "textual analysis examines a given object – a text or a group of texts – as closely and as systematically as possible in order to answer specific research questions" (Larsen, 2002:8), and as the aim was to source texts that demonstrate how cultural value was communicated through them, it was difficult to avoid questions of aesthetics (Brunsdon, 1997; Geraghty, 2003). Nevertheless, it is important to stress that the research question was focused on *how* quality and the cultural value of television programmes were both addressed in production and reflected through the texts; it is an *object of study* rather than a methodological tool. And while one of the outcomes of my analysis is that that new experimentations with archive programme content do indeed result in new television aesthetics (e.g. *Arena – Cool*, see Chapter 7), this was not arrived at through a traditional evaluative approach that looks into filming or sound techniques.

Most textual analysis was conducted for Chapter 7, which focuses on seven archive-based texts in order to identify how the TV archive was used and/or repurposed. When considering the incorporation of archive footage into television texts, I was looking at the overall structure of the programme, the sequence of archived and non-archived footage, and how they were connected. I was further looking at the role that participants play in "real-time", and how they interact with the archive. I analysed programmes that contained an unambiguously and exclusively "deep" archive. Audiovisual properties of a deep archive are easily observable – signified by the footage being either black and white, looking "dated", with clear temporal markings and/or origin. I was further looking for sightings of uniqueness in archive

footage, not through its intrinsic aesthetic properties, but in terms of their quality or “rarity”, in the sense that they possess ephemeral qualities that mark them as being “rarely seen” on television. The archival material was often an “accidental discovery”, a result of “deep archive mining”, and not chosen for its familiarity or established cultural value. The rationale was a concern that familiarity with the material may become a distraction either because the programme can be seen in some way as aesthetically or generically representative or, simply, not generating any new insights or knowledge. In the words of one BBC programme maker, “there are [archive] shots you have seen so many times – all meaning has been robbed off them” (Anthony Wall, interview, 21 July 2011).

The focus of the first textual analysis is the first two parts of the six-part BBC Four signature event, *TV on Trial* (2005), where television texts consisted partly of television archive and partly by television critics, who watched the archive in “real time” with viewers. The purpose of the participation of television critics was to evaluate programmes from the television archive, as the aim of the event was the search for television’s “golden age”. Although there was an option to watch the programmes without television experts (by pressing the interactive red button), the data were collected by looking at sequences in which archive is linked to the “live” debate. Using John Ellis’s interpretative model of analysis (Ellis 2007a), the textual analysis involved – in fact deliberately picked – the expert response to the television archive from the 1950s and 1960s, as it was a clear example of “double hermeneutics” (Giddens, 1984), or Ellis’s two models of interpretation. This demonstrated self-reflexivity involved in programme making processes, and offered an insight into how evaluative and interpretative practices are becoming core “ingredients” of re-producing archives.

The second choice of archive based text had a related aim: the *Timeshift* programme *Missing, Believed Wiped* (2003) was chosen because it this particular programme can be seen as a symbolic beginning of the increased use of archive for BBC Four programmes. Significantly, it was

chosen as it addressed a similar, cultural value thematic, and because its subject was television programmes which were undeservedly missing from archives. The missing (and sometimes found) archives identified for this programme were mainly classic comedies, and their absence was the subject of another “double hermeneutics”, where what is analysed and interpreted is television producers’, writers’ and comedians’ interpretation of the value of the television archive. Already from the first two examples, it was clear that programmes chosen for textual analysis were those with “inbuilt” reflexivity - containing debates over legitimising television’s value as a cultural form. What was identified was that the reflexive element contributed to the archive not being merely used as illustrative “filler”, but as a starting point for *new* broadcasting activities, and new meaning making processes.

While data analysed in the first textual example demonstrated reflexivity via “experts” analysing the footage from “afar”, the *Timeshift* programme, and two programmes analysed from the *What Happened Next?* series included people who were involved in either production of the original archive programmes or who were one of the original programme’s subjects. Again, attention was paid to processes of sequencing and editing between archive and contemporary footage. Further attention was paid to the rationale behind choosing unique and individualistic subjects in order to tell the story of the changing nature of British society and culture. My final examples of two *Arena* documentaries (*Cool* and *Exodus '77*) were chosen as they represent *new* programmes almost entirely made of archive footage which is manipulated to tell stories about significant historical moments. In both instances, the untypical choice of archive footage was analysed, with particular attention paid to “collage” techniques in editing and footage manipulation, as most of the footage was overlaid with audio that was not indigenous to the shot. Borrowing archives from other media (for example, radio and film) was also noted, with a particular interest in how they are structured and how the meaning is organised, and paying attention to the uses of archives and linking them to production processes. Textual analysis of archive-based programmes was therefore combined with an interview method, which allowed me to identify “recurrent, typical features” (Larsen,

2002:8) of archive-based programmes in which interpretative, reflexive processes were taking place. Programme makers and producers were actively negotiating the value of the archive whilst making the programmes. As I did not have any direct model that used research data in a similar way, this approach to textual analysis was largely invented. The lack of vocabulary to classify or understand the archive as a production material led me to identify three types of archive uses: *interpretative* (where the aim of using the archive is predominantly hermeneutic), *interventional* (where the archive is put to reflective and revisionist purpose) and *imaginative* (where the archive is used creatively and experimentally).

The choice of television programmes analysed was largely made as an outcome of the data analysis of interviews with producers, as well as through doing historical research. The ultimate aim of textual analysis was to contribute towards a better insight into critical production practices that negotiate and articulate questions of cultural value through the use of television archives. Integrating methods of analysis was a logical step following triangulation of the three methods used in the research – historical analysis, textual analysis and interviews, the latter being one of the central methods of the case study.

3.5 Qualitative Interviews

The key methodological approach to the research is that of a qualitative interview – variously known as semi-structured, “depth”, “exploratory” (King, 2004:11) or focused “on particular themes; (...) neither strictly structured with standardised questions, nor entirely “nondirective” (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009:28). According to King (2004) and Kvale (2009), the goal of a qualitative interview is to understand the interviewee’s perspective, which can be done by “a low degree of structure imposed by the interviewer; a preponderance of open questions; and a focus on ‘specific situations and action sequences in the world of the interviewee’” (Kvale in King, 2004:11). As this was a semi-structured interview, “an interview guide” (King, 2004:12) rather than set questions, was designed for each of the

respondents. The interview guide included respondent-specific material; if, for example, a television producer was interviewed about specific programmes made (i.e. *Arena's Cool*, produced and directed by Anthony Wall), notes were produced to refer to the specific material which would then be used for follow up or reformulated questions which were either broader or more specific.

All interviews were conducted face to face apart from one, which was conducted over the phone due to the respondent's busy schedule. In some instances (two respondents), questions were requested in advance of the face-to-face meeting. Each respondent provided either verbal (recorded) or written (email) consent agreeing to the recorded interview and its full transcription. Furthermore, each respondent was also given an opportunity to be anonymised, but all respondents agreed to be named. All respondents also asked, due to the internal obligations at the BBC, to be sent either transcripts or sections were their interview to be used. The average length of interview was one hour, and between February 2010 and July 2012, sixteen interviews were conducted.

The first three respondents interviewed (John Wyver, Grant Gee and Mark Kidel) were chosen as documentary filmmakers, "organic intellectuals" and independent television producers (see Appendix 3 for a comprehensive list of interviewees) and were eventually used as pilot interviews to test the validity of my questions, and to see whether those questions generated the type of data that was needed for the research. The initial interviews were instrumental in understanding the meaning-making processes involved in the practice of documentary programme making, but it soon became clear that, although questions of cultural value were discussed when related to programmes that respondents produced, it was challenging to transfer the answers to the case of a whole channel. The sheer volume of programmes being produced on the channel and the amount of producers working on it day to day meant that interpretative frameworks and ways of approaching questions of cultural value allowed the chosen method – interviewing – to help me to navigate through the complexity of the research questions. The

preliminary analysis of data gathered from initial interviews was therefore crucial, especially when analysis involved data about how respondents made sense of the “overall picture” of the channel. The questions asked therefore “actively followed up on the subjects’ answers, seeking to clarify and extend the interview statements” (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009:7). For example, the link that Adam Tandy, the producer of BBC Four’s comedy *The Thick of It* provided between BBC Four and BBC Two, became one of the central themes, which produced a need for a multi-methodological approach; the sense of continuity and analogy between the two channels was further emphasised by the example of the long standing art programme *Arena* being shared between the two channels.

The case study required knowledge and understanding of the channel’s everyday practices, and therefore needed informants as well as respondents: interviewees who were overseeing day-to-day programming and production of the channel. Following the pilot interviews, determining parameters and identifying and shortlisting key respondents from BBC Four was a relatively straightforward process, as I was seeking interviewees involved in defining the channel’s mission. The ideological and professional character of interviewees was of crucial importance, as was already demonstrated in pilot interviews, so a preliminary and “crude” classification suggested that producers are more involved in the creative process or in making their own specific programmes; a scheduler oversees BBC Four programmes as a connected whole; and the channel controller has the ability to see the channel’s output within “external discourses” (Born, 2000:408), that is, within a broader institutional and industry structure (in this case the BBC and the television industry), with sensitivities to technological, political and economic concerns. I pursued interviewees who possessed “a kind of indigenous cultural theory that operates outside of academia” (Caldwell, 2008:5), or what Born identified as a need to,

... attend to a category of specifically media intellectuals whose task is to mediate the generic dynamics that bridge the past, present and future of media output. Their skill is in the art of judging how to progress a set of generic possibilities in given conditions, and how to balance the enhancement of the entertainment, pleasure and

education of the audience. This points to the importance of theorizing agency, reflexivity and again, value (2000:406).

Although informant interviews are less common in media studies (Jensen, 2002:240), researching a contemporary phenomenon about which little has been written, necessitated informant interviews as the role of individuals in creating and running a channel is crucial. As Born noted,

British television is replete with sophisticated and reflexive debates, debates informing and informed by practice, concerning the optimal output that can be achieved in given conditions... executive producers and producers are constantly engaged in reading what it is possible to do, and what it is not, in prevailing market and aesthetic conditions (2000:411).

Therefore, a selected number of interviewees that would fit into the category of “media intellectuals” (Born, *ibid.*) or “organic intellectuals” (Gramsci, 2005), did provide much needed background information that is not documented or available elsewhere, as “individuals often express and enact internalised institutional goals as well as restraints, rather than any uniquely personal perspectives, as part of an ongoing structuration of media and society” (Giddens, 1984 in Newcomb and Lotz, 2002:76). The respondents were controllers of BBC Four channel (Roly Keating, Janice Hadlow and Richard Klein), key people involved in scheduling of programmes (Don Cameron, Head of Scheduling; John Das, Acting Channel Executive in 2010), or otherwise longstanding and high-profile producers at the BBC (Anthony Wall of *Arena*, Nick Fraser of *Storyville*, Adam Tandy of *The Thick of It*, John Das of *TimeShift* and *What Happened Next?*) and experts in archive (again, Roly Keating, Director of Archive Content [2008 – 2012] and Andy O’Dwyer, BBC Archive Project Manager).

Taking all this into consideration, the issue of access was anticipated, but did not prove to be a problem as the majority of interviewees responded in a timely manner to the interview request sent by email. Most interviews began with a question about the interviewee’s background, which was aimed as a “warm up” as well as a way to assess the relationship of the respondents to the channel’s structure and output, and to offer a “lead in” to the more specific questions that would often be linked to the respondents’ biographical

data. In some instances, the “warm up” question was skipped or deliberately avoided as there was an awareness that most of respondents’ biographies were widely available (some of them even made a point of that during the interview), and as the interviewees were highly experienced, competent and comfortable as media trained individuals. Most of the interviews were conducted in the respondents’ natural setting (their offices, meeting rooms) as they were conducted within working hours.

All my respondents and informants had a high degree of communicative competency, as “organic intellectuals”. Some of them, however, had a broader and deeper insight into the research, coupled with the ability to synthesise key policy debates and the channel’s mission with day-to-day issues and demands. That was the case with, for example, Roly Keating, the original BBC Four controller, who was interviewed twice and became a key informant, as his was an instrumental role in the conception of not only of BBC Four, but also policy and archive initiatives, the producing and commissioning of arts programmes, as well as the channels leading up to BBC Four (UKTV and BBC Knowledge), so that his interview became one of the motivations for further historical analysis. Additionally, Keating was also involved in the licence fee renewal in 2006 and one of the people who formulated the BBC’s public value test. Keating was until August 2012 the Director of Archive Content, which was a new and increasingly important BBC initiative that promoted the importance of the archive department in the organisation (O’Dwyer, 2012), but also involved BBC Four as one of its “custodians” on the digital platform and with “collectors” online. Here is a very brief sample of the first interview with Keating, conducted on the 12 March 2010 at the BBC Television Centre in London, which illustrates the type of information that “elevated” him into a key informant:

The original spark of doing an archive channel based on cultural archives came out of our bit of the BBC – that got merged into commercial UKTV project, and by strange sequence of events I ended up being a programme director for all UKTV when we launched it in 1996-97, and the original suite of commercial channels included alongside the more obvious things – lifestyle, comedy, and so on – a channel called UK Arena, which was a commercial archive based art channel (interview, 12 March 2012).

Keating explains here the origins of BBC Four via its lesser-known predecessor, a short-lived art channel UK Arena, part of the UKTV portfolio of BBC commercial channels, which was also a predecessor to BBC Knowledge and BBC Choice. This seemingly insignificant section illustrates how “interview statements are, in a strong sense of the word, ‘data’, and [how] they become sources of information only through analysis and interpretation” (Jensen, 2002:240).

3.5.1 Discourse-Sensitive Interviews: From “Intellectual” Television to “Intelligent” BBC Four

Awareness of discursive shifts was present at the very early stages of research and became integral to the methods of historical analysis, textual analysis and semi-structured interview. As a broad term, discourse analysis is concerned with structural and rhetorical features of a text, and in particular, questions of meaning and power within the text, and according to Deacon et al., “it can be applied to media texts of various kinds as well as to media talk” (1999:310). The fundamental question that the discourse analysis approach addresses is, according to Dijk, “how are societal structures related to discourse structures?” (in Bell and Garrett, 2000:7). In the case study of BBC Four, this question can be reframed into “how are the values of a social structure such as the BBC (and therefore, BBC Four) related to the discourse structures”? The research, in particular, wanted to address the tendency of “discursifying things” (Jensen, 2002:240) – for example, invention of new discursive categories, such as “intelligent” and “culturally enriching” television, or “public value”, as well as institutional distancing from the “old” discursive lexical categories and binaries such as highbrow/lowbrow.

At this point, it might be useful to mention Kvale and Brinkmann’s distinction between three different types of semi-structured interviews (2009:14): *phenomenological* which charts “how human subjects *experience* life world phenomena”; *hermeneutical*, in which interpretation of meaning is central; and *discursive*, in which the focus is on “how language and discursive practices *construct* the social worlds in which human beings live” (ibid.). The

choice of semi-structured interviews for this research involved a pragmatic combination of all the above; for example, it was phenomenological in that it asked questions with “deliberate naiveté”, as openness to the new information was important. However, the respondents’ and informants’ discursive understanding of cultural value was of key importance as discursive analysis is “able to document a closer relationship between the linguistic details of media texts and the production of ideology” (Schröder in Jensen, 2002:104). Particular lexical processes such as the choice of adjectives or nouns used for evaluating programmes in relation to other channels were important. Cultural value is a discursive category – it is a question of “recognition” according to Gee, because, “if you put language, action, interaction, values, beliefs, symbols, objects, tools, and places together in such a way that others *recognise* you as a particular type of *who* (identity) engaged in a particular type of *what* (activity), here and now, then you have pulled off a Discourse” (1999:35). Often, it was the case of asking a direct question, in which case it was clear that particular lexical choices had ideological implications – channel controllers, for example, were more comfortable with accepting questions about cultural value, but were sometimes reluctant to engage with the term itself. Producers clearly referred to the terminology as something that was outside their realm. Certainly, there is a form of distancing or a perceived gap between the general sense of the concept and putting it into practice, so when asking how cultural value appeared in commissioning and scheduling decisions, the majority of respondents articulated the concept as untried in their everyday practices, preferring, instead, to use different attributes.

The analysis of the data pointed to this discursive distancing and led to the identification of three interconnected issues: 1) the fact that it is difficult to relate to cultural value conceptually, which suggest issues with openly evaluating or judging programmes; 2) the inadequacy of terminology to define everyday production practices; and 3) the possibility that the concept is itself outdated, and that there is no clear replacement, as according to Donmoyer, “one of the reason why social scientists often cling uncritically to outdated notions is the absence of an alternative language with which to talk about

phenomena” (2000:53). The issue at hand is that the old discourses about television’s value are dying out, and the lacklustre attempt to replace them is not an even, coordinated process; public discourse (in, for example, newspapers) still talks about television in term of “highbrow” and “lowbrow”, while institutional discourses, although arguably always more cautious in using the term, make continuous attempts at rephrasing, restocking and changing. This sensitivity to discourses during interviews and historical analysis identified the problem with discussing what is culturally valuable, which hopefully validates the adequacy of discourse-sensitive interview analysis as one of the “tools of enquiry” available.

3.6 Conclusion: Bringing Methodological Approaches Together

As many scholarly researches so far have already demonstrated, researching television and its cultural value always involves a multi-methodological approach (Frith, 2000; Corner, 2003b). This case study is dedicated to understanding change: how the case study of BBC Four is a part of the “life cycle” of a phenomenon (Schofield in Gomm et al., 2000:83); the “life cycle” of the cultural value of television (as a cultural form) as well as *on* television (in terms of the production of particular television programmes). However, researching BBC Four was not “free” from time and context (Lincoln and Guba in Gomm et al., 2000:31). In understanding how the channel fits within a broader framework of continuities and changes within the BBC and its place in a mixed market convergent ecology, it was important to have, as Scannell notes a historical sensitivity as “the work of historians – unlike that of social theorists – begins only as the past emerges as distinct from the present” (2002:192). The use of a case study was vital in trying to understand the changes in quality television and to illustrate that cultural value on television has been wrought by epistemological questions such as “can a culture or context ever be known in full?” (Scannell, 2002:236), as well as a pragmatic sense that, as Horace Newcomb explicated,

[T]he problem faced by any scholar or student planning to study television is that all these questions, attendant “methods” or “approaches,” all the lines of thought, bodies of information

generated, remain in play. No single focus has replaced another. Despite scholarly arguments over epistemology or legitimacy of purpose, each can explain certain aspects of the medium, lead to identification and definition of new problems, overlap with other results. This is the stew of issues stirred by television (2010:24).

The central issue of any methodological approach, and case study approach in particular, remains to be its generalisability, but the findings of the BBC Four case study can hopefully “speak to situations beyond the one immediately studied” (Schofield in Gomm et al., 2000:74), and offer a working hypothesis, or what Goetz and LeCompte define as “comparability” and “translatability” (1984:228) to other digital, culture, or public service channels. Furthermore, the combination of historical analysis, textual analysis and qualitative interviews with informants is intended to provide a unique narrative, “an achievement of theoretical ‘saturation’ – an equilibrium between empirical evidence and explanatory concepts” (Jensen, 2002:247) that generates knowledge through the exploration of continuities and shifts of cultural value, and through a closer look at the new forms of quality television in digital and multiplatform environments.

Chapter 4. The Reithian Legacy and Key Television Policy Debates about Cultural Value: From the Third Programme to BBC Four

4.1 Introduction

This chapter lays out the grounds for the case study of BBC Four, by looking into how the Reithian legacy has been revaluated and negotiated within a broader historical framework of public service broadcasting. It examines the extent to which cultural value(s) have been shaped by policy discourses, and interrelated with institutional discourses, programme output and beyond. The chapter further identifies five relevant and distinct moments in broadcasting history, during which questions of Reithian ethos and cultural value were articulated, debated, and modified to fit the changing economic, political and social contexts. The first such moment stretches from the Reithian values of the first decades of public service broadcasting towards the post-war revival of “high culture”, distinguishing the cultural uplift of the former from the cultural elitism of the latter. The second moment is identified with the aftermath of the television competition of the 1950s, the Pilkington Report, and its contribution towards defining cultural standards on television, specifically in connection with the launch of the third public service television channel, BBC Two. The third moment is seen as a more gradual yet profound shift in policy, institutional and public (press) discourses, that led to the launch of Channel 4. It focuses on the Annan Report and the need to “open up” to new discourses of the plurality and diversity of culture, while also examining how Channel 4’s remit to be “different” was negotiated. The fourth moment is identified as the cultural consequences of Thatcherism and deregulatory policies. The Peacock Report is recognised as causing a sharp discursive shift in the conceptualisation of cultural evaluation, an outcome of neoliberal logic of the free market and the decline of public service values. This finally brings us to 2002 and the arrival of the BBC Four, the section which examines how the channel fared amidst the stronghold of the

marketisation of culture, and how new regulatory practices inform the channel.

The conceptual framework of this chapter is guided by three central assumptions: firstly, that “there is no longer a stable hierarchy of value (even an inverted one) running from “high” to “low” culture” (Frow, 1995:1). The second assumption recognises that cultural change does not occur in a linear progression from regulatory debates towards institutional enactments; rather, it can be represented as a series of dialogical and cumulative processes (despite the structure and organisation of this chapter which may imply a chronological, or even ontological, order in placing policy discourses as preceding television output). And finally, the chapter identifies a thread, not commonly acknowledged in policy research, which occupies the space between programme makers and audience in understanding the questions of cultural value on television, or what Simon Frith defines as the value in the “black box” (2000:37). In particular, the way that audiences are imagined plays the central part in policy as well as institutional discourses on cultural value.

Patterns of differences between each moment in cultural policy debates and their institutional enactments can be discerned through dichotomising tensions. According to McGuigan (2004), “elitism” versus “populism”, is one of the central binaries in discourses about cultural value, however, McGuigan also emphasises that this dichotomy is not defined by the terms’ essential semantic properties; rather, it is defined by ideological opposition (2004:114; see Chapter 2). This chapter wishes to address the ideological properties of the dichotomous terms by addressing discursive shifts and the relativisation of values that mark each moment: from the obvious “highbrow” versus “lowbrow” binary, to tropes such as “raising cultural standards” versus “entertainment in a narrow sense” in the first days of broadcasting; the idea of “triviality” versus “intellectual ghetto” in Pilkington discourses; “diversity”, “pluralisation of culture” and “minority culture” around the Annan Report; and finally, “quality television” “dumbing down”, and “up-marketisation”, the terms coined after Peacock Report. The

question that arises out of these dichotomising processes is to what extent was their use aimed at managing the contradictions and uncertainties of the times? Additionally, are the changes the outcome of progressive alternatives or compromises forced by technological, economical and social context? While these questions are particularly relevant when approaching questions of cultural value on television diachronically, this chapter also accepts the premise that the dichotomisation of cultural value is still an ongoing process. This is evident in both regulatory and institutional discourses, with an observed “trend” that either reflects a conscious discursive shift away from binary divisions in compound terms such as “citizen-consumer” or “public value”, or discursive replacement, such as use of terms such as *quality* television, or *complex* culture. The question ultimately posed by this chapter is whether these changes present a genuine attempt to remove cultural hierarchy and democratise culture, and where BBC Four is situated within those debates.

4.2 Beginnings: Reithian Ethos, Cultural Standards and Cultural Uplift in broadcasting

The place of broadcasting in British society, its relationship to the state, and centrally for this chapter – the normativity of its cultural value - are generally thought to have been shaped by the legacy of the first director general, John Reith. From its inception, the British Broadcasting Company, and later, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), was intended to serve the public and the needs of democratic society, and the institution’s constitutional character was the main point of the first policy initiatives. The Sykes Committee (1923) recommended that broadcasting should be run as “a public utility company”, and that high standards of broadcast programmes could only be achieved without advertising (1923:para 41). Three years later, the Crawford Committee (1926) recommended that the BBC become a public service organisation, acting in the national interest with no direct parliamentary control. The proposals of the early policy debates, such as the Sykes and the Crawford Committees, clearly demonstrate that one of the

central concerns of the time was the broadcasting's educational purpose and cultural mission. Recommendations such as asking for "a higher proportion of educational content" and expressing that "every effort should be made to raise the standard of style and performance ... particularly in music" were also interpreted as having high expectations. Decisions over the very character of the BBC's cultural mission and specifically, its programme content were indisputably Reith's own responsibility during his tenure as the first director general (1923 – 1938). He wondered, as early as 1924,

... if it is realized how much was left to us, in policy, in judgement and in enterprise, and how different the state of affairs might have been today had we been content with mediocrity, with providing a service which was just sufficiently good to avoid complaint (1924: 26).

Broadcasting emerged out of an industrialised Britain swelling with a new phenomenon of "masses" (Carey, 1992), and whose conditions dominated the political agenda (A. J. P. Taylor, 1965:170), in particular, the concerns over the reform of educational policy (Curran and Seaton, 2003, Briggs, 1985). From early on, Reith was interested in giving the BBC a conscious social purpose, a public sphere "to instruct and fashion public opinion; to banish ignorance and misery; to contribute richly and in so many ways to the sum total of human wellbeing" (Reith, 1949:103). "Raising cultural standards in broadcasting" and "cultural uplift" were two normative tropes that were crucial in discourses about cultural value. According to Scannell and Cardiff, the term "cultural uplift" referred to an institutional ethos that was,

... a complex set of developments which included the establishment of more authoritative styles and modes of address in the presentation and announcing of programmes; the pursuit of social and cultural prestige, most notably in the fields of music and talks; ... the corporate ethos of public service broadcasting in the national interest (1991:17).

While cultural uplift implied an elitist, centralised practice that was to serve as an internal regulator of programme makers, the trope of "raising cultural standards" referred to broadcasting as a cultural agency. Broadcasting was creating a space to educate, inform and entertain the public; it was there

to promote “knowledge and discussion, both a provider of information and a common cultural resource, the nature of which is a matter for public scrutiny and public concern” (Corner, 1995a:7). This ethos also fitted within a longer, historical relationship between the arts and the “improvement” of British national life as analysed by Raymond Williams (1958/1989), R. H. Tawney’s social-democratic project of releasing culture from the sole possession of a privileged elite (in McGuigan, 2004:39), and in particular, the access to Matthew Arnold’s definition of culture as “the best that has been thought and written in the world” (1938:6)²⁹. Reith believed that a cumulative effect of the systematic increase of “worthy” culture would be to close the growing gap between classes. This idea was heavily rejected by some of the key intellectuals of the time,³⁰ who distrusted the mass medium’s capability of transmission of any kind of cultural value (Carey, 1992). Interestingly, Reith was aware of broadcasting’s inherent “low” value which “in no sense is to be regarded as a substitute for the reading of good books or the study of good music. It should supplement and encourage” (1924:96). Although he refused to allow broadcasting to become a vehicle for “entertainment in a narrow sense”, Reith was clearly in favour of entertainment being a key ingredient of a radio programme while insisting on “the importance of the wholesome entertainment” (1949:116, my emphasis).

4.2.1 “Music for All”: Taste, Hierarchy and National Culture

Reith’s “culturing” project is best illustrated by his music policy, through which he aimed to bring “universality of appeal” (Reith, 1924:173) and unite divided classes. Bringing together a broad choice of established musical genres ranging from dance hall to classical music was meant to banish “ignorance, divisions and prejudices” (ibid.:178), but while the coexistence of different musical tastes was promoted as a way to provide universality of appeal, it was also subjected to discriminative practices: “we have heard of

²⁹ In his book *Broadcasting over Britain* Reith shows familiarity with Arnold’s work, but not with his ideas of culture (1924:208). Oliver Bennett also feels that “its first director general, John Reith, as far as I know never acknowledged Arnold as a formative influence. Yet, when he says of the BBC that it would be “a drawn sword parting the darkness of ignorance” and that its function “would be to offer the public something better than it now thinks it likes”, the Arnoldian voice is unmistakable.” (2005:474)

³⁰ Bloomsbury circle, H. G. Wells, D. H. Lawrence, Ezra Pound, to name but a few

‘highbrow’ and ‘lowbrow’, complex and simplex, classical and popular”, said Reith (1924:174). In other words, while the BBC arguably offered the first systematic mediation of different music tastes on a large scale, it might be well be that this unifying, democratic impulse, Scannell and Cardiff argue, unintentionally *intensified* the division and sometimes the actual collision of tastes, thus paradoxically raising awareness of class difference and cultural hierarchy. Scannell and Cardiff explain,

The terms highbrow, middlebrow and lowbrow, widely current in discussions of music and radio in the twenties and thirties, only became meaningful systems of classification when different kinds of music were brought into close proximity with each other (1991:207).

A plurality of choices, Scannell and Cardiff argue, “was more likely to produce a negative response to one kind of music in order to affirm a preference for another, rather than acceptance of them all” (1991:207). Briggs and Scannell note the difficulty in evaluating the result of these efforts; on one hand, the evidence of “the conscience-stricken listeners”³¹ suggests the positive effect of music education while on the other hand there were instances of oppositional reactions to the authoritarian impositions of taste through over the airwaves.

However, the BBC’s and Reith’s commitment to raise cultural standards has contributed to broadening the appeal of classical music. The BBC’s taking over of the Promenade Concerts in 1927, renaming it into the BBC Proms, represents “the most successful single attempt at the democratisation of music in this country.” (Scannell and Cardiff, 1991:199). It should also be noted that even then, there were considerable disagreements over what higher standards actually meant, and it was not only the case of “low” cultural forms that were excluded. The Music Advisory Committee often found that the Music Department’s choice of music was “too highbrow”, and that they were not doing enough to promote British music.

³¹ Many letters addressed to Percy Scholes, the *Radio Times* music critic (1923 - 1929) were suggestive of both listeners’ responsiveness to the project of improving their tastes, but also, to adverse reactions to taste impositions: “I enjoyed the overture to the *Nutcracker Suite*, so I suppose I’m improving, for Tchaikovsky used generally to beat me and often to annoy me.” (Scannell, Cardiff, 1991:214) or “[y]ou will have to go a long way to hear navvies or dockers whistling the *Rondo Capriccioso*, or your other favourite the Grieg Concerto. But you and the other big pots of the BBC can take it from me that the public don’t want it. They want something more tuneful and pleasant. They can always go to a funeral and hear your sort of nice music.” (in Scannell, Cardiff, 1991:207)

The BBC Symphony Orchestra conductor, Adrian Boult, pointed out how the Music Advisory Committee preferred “a second rate Britisher to a first-rate foreigner and a concert of first-class importance.” (ibid.:300). Modern composers “from the continent” (e.g. Bartok), were avoided, as they would fall into the category of musical innovation and experiment, although these very features have since been considered as core indicators of cultural value in broadcasting³². Furthermore, Robinson notes that the BBC rarely responded to the “cultural turbulence that also marked the years between 1922 and 1924” (1982:31) such as the avant-garde. Some emerging new forms of music - for example, jazz - were rarely played, as they did not fare well with Reith (Briggs, 1985; Cardiff and Scannell, 1991). And while Scannell & Cardiff (1991) and Briggs (1985) also note numerous accounts of the BBC’s imposition of highbrow tastes, Curran and Seaton (2003) and in particular, Crisell (1997) highlight figures given to the Ullswater Committee (1934) that demonstrated there were nearly three times as much dance and light music being broadcast as opposed to “serious” music (Crisell, 1997:29). This reveals that even in the Reithian days of cultural uplift there were limitations that affected both cultural spectrums, suggesting that music policy was largely determined by a search for the middle-ground, or the middle-of-the-road, and often settled on middlebrow tastes.

Elite tastes were better serviced after the Second World War, when the restoration of the national culture whetted the appetite for more “minority” high culture, a moment that, Smith believes, “brought about a new faith in the intellectual potential of the mass audience” (1974:78). In this period of Keynesian arts policy and cultural regeneration, the idea of “high art” being accessible to a broader public “did not sound like contradiction” (Jardine, 2005). The Government White Paper in 1946 introduced a plan for a new radio channel, the Third Programme, to add to the “pyramid of taste”, above the Home and the Light Programme channels. Said to be the brainchild of the then director general, William Haley, the channel was not meant for “background listening”, and it was consciously aimed at a minority audience. The channel was defined as capable of a more refined judgment of taste, and

³² For example, in the current BBC mission statement, *Building Public Value*, BBC, 2004

its search for “the perfect listener”, engrossed and attentive, even led to programmes entirely dedicated to the act of listening itself, such as *How to Listen* (Carpenter, 1997:27). However, the perfect listener was more often than not elusive, with the listener research figures dropping as low as “two people in 1,000” in summer 1948 (Carpenter, 1997:54). The Third Programme, it could be argued, advocated Leavisite cultural elitism³³ that was different from the Arnoldian approach embellished by Reith’s concept of mixed programming. By catering to elite tastes, the channel also marks the first ever sustained attempt to satisfy small pockets of interests (see Chapter 5), and to be designed for a targeted audience of educated minorities, in other words, what is now considered as a “niche” audience.

4.2.2 Addressing and Engaging: Reithian Legacy and the Breakup of the Monopoly

From early on, one of the broadcasters’ key considerations was not only *what* was listened to, but also *how* it was listened to and *where*. Institutionally, there was a general awareness that the audience was not “an aggregated totality but a constellation of individuals positioned in families” (Scannell et al., 1991:14). Expectations from audiences were high and often very specific; the BBC anticipated listeners to be engrossed, and “the personal relationship between listener and programme was elevated into a principle. The class and tastes of groups of listeners were irrelevant” (Curran and Seaton, 2003:150). Listening was central for establishing cultural authority, which would, in turn, give support to personal development: “It is occasionally indicated to us that we are apparently setting out to give the public what we think they need – and not what they want, but few know what they want, and very few what they need. ... In any case it is better to over-estimate the mentality of the public, than to under-estimate it” (Reith, 1924: 34). But the outcome of this mission remains ambiguous, according to most scholars. On the one hand, public tastes were believed to be

³³ T. S. Eliot, an outspoken supporter of Third Programme, believed that elite culture was a preserve of a very few (*Towards the Definition of Culture*, 1948), a view reflecting F R Leavis’s definition of minority culture in *Mass Civilisation and Minority Culture* (1930)

broadening and changing (“interest in drama or opera and the extension of the appreciation of classical music owed much to the BBC, but it is not easy to say how much.” [Briggs, 1965:7]); while on the other hand, bringing together a broad range of cultural texts that ranged from highbrow to lowbrow, seem to also result in a collision, narrowing, or rejection of certain cultural experiences, and drew attention to class differences (Scannell, Cardiff, 1991).

The significant diffusion of Reith’s values also owed much to their deep rootedness in religious, Presbyterian ethics and its “common sense” appeal. A. J. P. Taylor observes that the majority of Britain was “Christian in morality, though not in faith. ... Standards of honesty and public duty were astonishingly high” (1965:169). Reith’s unsympathetic personal traits, however, are often seen as being intensely embedded within his legacy, including his rearward utterances against the medium of television, and the central importance of monopoly in protecting cultural standards that he shared long past his BBC tenure. The latter position, such as his insistence that commercial television was “a potential social menace of the first magnitude”, is still used occasionally to discredit the public service ethos and strengthen commercial rhetoric, with that same quote being used in 2005 by Dawn Airey, then managing director of Sky Networks (*Huw Weldon Lecture*, BBC Two).

The BBC’s “brute force of monopoly” formally ended in 1955, when “the discussion began to turn towards a major unresolvable enigma involving standards of culture, the democratic responsibilities of broadcasting” (Smith, 1974:16). Competition opened up the debates about taste imposition and the BBC’s paternalistic tendencies that included a new interpretation of cultural uplift as a “compulsory uplift” (Corner, 1995a:163). The break-up of the monopoly also challenged the Reithian notion of serving “the whole person”. The visual dimension of television made it increasingly difficult to understand the medium as the aggregate of texts, problematising further the ways in which the programmes are meant to be valued. But while pre-televisual culture was no longer dominant, the ascendancy of the medium of television

retained the same concern over cultural value and the notion of cultural hierarchy.

4.3 The Pilkington Report – Cultural Standards versus Trivialism

Post-war Britain was marked by the rise of the middle classes and the growing affluence of society, and with viewing figures on the rise, the television medium was seen as a powerful, and contributing factor to the erosion of class structure, the increase in social mobility, and the tearing down of traditional ways of life (Curran and Seaton, 2003:171). In 1960, a Committee of Enquiry led by Harry Pilkington was formed to explore plans for the launch of a third television channel. By then, the duopoly between the BBC and the ITA (Independent Television Authority) affirmed two distinct rationales of the role of television in society and its influence on taste formation: the previously dominant view emerging from the Reithian tradition of broadcasting as a cultural agency that can influence, educate and shape tastes and a more commercially informed rationale that the role of broadcasting was to reflect, rather than shape, society; television was “primarily a form of cultural response to it” (Corner, 1995a:165). Both rationales were to inform the recommendations of the Pilkington Committee; however, fear over the homogenising force of commercial, mass-popular culture became the foundation for key arguments against which the third television channel, BBC Two, was launched.

The Pilkington Report (1962) remains one of the most progressive policy re-articulations of the Reithian ethos and the value of culture. According to Caughie, it represented “an institutionalisation of ‘Left-Liberal Leavisism’: left in its extension of culture beyond the educated elite; liberal in its recognition that entertainment could be excellent; but Leavisite in its hierarchy of values which preferred the challenging to the comfortable” (2000:84). Underlying the report were a set of principles faithful to the concept of the universality of provision and the expectations of the professionalism and integrity of programme makers. The report argued that viewers’ tastes are best seen as an amalgamation of different interests that do

not necessarily fit within the established hierarchy. Public service broadcasting, the report saw, was bound in its duty towards viewers as “the public” as opposed to the “majority” or the “masses” (1962:17). It was resistant to the notion of television as a mere answer to viewers’ desires, arguing that, “they will be offered only the average of common experience and awareness... They will be kept unaware of what lies beyond the average of experience; their field of choice will be limited” (ibid.). Richard Hoggart, one of the most prominent committee members, was particularly outraged by the unconvincing argument offered by the ITA that “people get the television they deserve” (1992: 67). He later reflected on this deeply unethical proposition that served in defence “of whatever their commercial television transmitted; low populism masquerading as democracy” (1992:69) and the ensuing unscrupulous attitude of television producers to “make programmes they secretly or even unconsciously despise” (ibid.:66).

Television’s cultural value was seen in the Report as reflecting the professional and creative values of a broadcaster: “Good broadcasting is a practice, not a prescription. (...) Though its standards exist and are recognisable, broadcasting is more nearly an art than an exact science. It deals in tastes and values, and is not precisely definable” (1962:12; 13). The report emphasised the centrality of texts (Curran and Seaton, 2003:176) and elevated the creativity and “authenticity” of cultural products. Heavy criticism fell upon the programmes’ disengagement from the creative process and the programme makers’ lack of moral conviction that led to the making of “unworthy material, mass appeal programmes, vapid and puerile, derivative content, presentation [that] demonstrates a lack of willingness to experiment” (1962:13). The report’s central argument³⁴ maintained and expanded on Reith’s paternal position: “Those who say they give the public what it wants begin by underestimating public taste, and end by debauching it” (1962:17). But whereas Reithian broadcasting looked at genres and formats as well as subject matter as being inherently trivial, the Pilkington report viewed triviality as “not necessarily related to the subject matter of a

³⁴ In his diaries, Richard Hoggart attributes this exact wording, significantly, to the most articulate defender of “high culture” in broadcasting, T.S. Eliot (1992:70)

programme; it can appear in drama, current affairs programmes, religious programmes or sports programmes just as easily as in light comedy or variety shows. (...) Triviality resides in the way the subject matter is approached and the manner in which it is presented” (1962:34).

Public interest, the committee maintained, could not be served while also searching for private profit, a view strongly opposed by one emerging economic think tank as “a species of Marxism at its most naïve... some of its members began with a suspicion that private profit is incompatible with intellectual progress” (IEA, 1962). In reality, the Pilkington Report’s moralistic and determinist tone attracted a fair share of criticism; the distaste for commercial arguments was often closely knitted with personal value judgements, best exemplified through fervent quotes such as “triviality is ... more dangerous to the soul than wickedness” (1962:65). Conversely, some of the criticisms directed at the report were reductive, implying that it reflected an elitist view of culture, and that it was “saturated by a haughty conviction that whatever is popular must be bad” (Crisell, 1997:111). Crisell’s claim that the report assumes that “popular” in fact means “trivial” needs to be revised, as the report clearly accused the “triviality” of producers’ modes of address and not the popular content of programmes.

The significance of the Pilkington Report remains in how it purported to define and protect cultural values and the public role of television. However, Corner suggests that the Report failed to address fully “the complexity of the issues of taste formation and taste difference which it raised” (1995a:168). Indeed, it is not clear whether its distaste of populism reflected a concern with the triviality of programmes or whether it represented an attack on the unprincipled professional conduct of the programme makers. In any case, the government accepted its key arguments, ultimately leading to the approval of BBC Two in June 1962, with a remit to provide an alternative service and offer more challenging, experimental programmes that would cater for minority audiences.

4.3.1 BBC Two: From “Intellectual Ghetto” Towards “a Complex Amalgam of Tastes”

Two years after the Pilkington recommendations, in April 1964, BBC Two was launched, burdened by technical difficulties and fears that the channel would be dismissed as a flop, based on the fact that serious music, documentaries, and continental films were programmes that did not have a mass appeal. The additional difficulty was that the channel was to be transmitted on UHF rather than VHF, which required the purchase of new television sets. It was also planned as the first channel to accommodate colour broadcasting (Briggs, 1995:405), in order to enhance BBC Two’s impact (Briggs, 1995:407), but this was a challenging task, partly because of its remit to cater for minority tastes; the channel was also to become distinguished from BBC One and ITV in providing “more opportunity for programmes of an experimental nature” (Briggs, 1995:403) and for the first time “a televised entertainment for minorities”, for people interested in “the uncommon denominators” (Briggs, 1995:403). With Michael Peacock as its original Programme Chief (1964 – 1965), the channel experimented with scheduling, much like the Third Programme before it. “The tyranny of timing and planning” was to disappear, and could arguably be seen as one of the first television channels with scheduling specifically designed to complement another channel, BBC One, a model that was later followed by the complementary relationship between BBC Two and BBC Four from 2002 onwards. According to Light, the launch of BBC Two can be arguably seen as “the beginning of narrowcasting” (2004:55).

BBC Two’s aim for a more innovative approach across all generic forms was a unique proposition. The channel was “acquiring different meanings” (Crisell, 1997:109) than BBC One and ITV; it sought out a new relationship with “minority interests” that needed to be protected and nurtured, as they would be “otherwise neglected” (ibid.). It was distinctive, yet clearly derived from the Reithian principle of the universality of culture. An image that was readily cropping up in both policy and institutional statements was that of an engaged viewer who belongs to a minority community, as well as enjoying a broad range of interests (Hoggart, 1992:66;

Greene, 1969:61). According to Crisell, the channel “wore a rather more thoughtful air than (...) BBC One” (1997:114). The idea of cultural hierarchy was also challenged by the BBC Two’s second controller, David Attenborough (1965 -1969),

[I]t is an illusion that the contradistinction we must apply in complementary planning is between so-called ‘high-brow’ and ‘low-brow’ programmes, and that were we to part programmes in this way, no one would find the clashes irritating. For the fact is that very few of us are exclusively ‘high-brow’ or ‘low-brow’. Nearly all of us are complex amalgams with tastes that span the whole intellectual range (1966:7).

This statement highlights the institutional attempts to bridge the uneasy cultural dichotomies that entered public discourse, by suggesting that intellectually stimulating programmes may, at the same time, be popular, and illustrates the emergence of the new cultural pluralism of the 1960s. Initial public reaction to BBC Two, however, was to label it as an intellectual ghetto. The trope may have echoed the debates around the cultural pyramid and the Third Programme; other suggestions in fact imply its origins in American broadcasting’s sharp division between public service and commercial television³⁵. Attenborough saw early on the relative values of binary divisions between “popular” and “intellectual”: “The *Evening Standard* has called us an intellectuals’ ghetto: and yet I have a regular correspondent who castigates me for failing to put out even one programme with any really solid intellectual content” (1966:3). But the outcome of the attempt to reflect a “complex amalgam of tastes” in the avoidance of “puerile” and “mindless” programmes on one hand (Attenborough, 2006), while on the other, seeking an alternative from BBC One and ITV, may be interpreted as early indications of the destabilising of cultural values. In the words of Joan Bakewell, the presenter of BBC Two’s discussion programme, *Late Night Line-Up* (1964 – 1972), cultural hierarchy was crumbling; the programme “simply refused to acknowledge the division between high art and popular entertainment. ... We would have jazz next to politics, we would have pop music next to philosophy... We didn’t make any value judgements, we just said, here is

³⁵ “BBC Two will be of mixed popular appeal, not what Americans sometimes call an intellectual ghetto.” (Miall in Briggs, 1995:405)

some jazz, sport, set of jokes” (2006). Bakewell’s analysis resonates with another reinterpretation of the Reithian ethos, which showed mixed programming extended to “widen the brow”, but within a single programme. However, while this example shows the first signs of crumbling cultural hierarchy, it is questionable to what extent this was the universal case for all of the BBC programmes and departments (e.g. Burns, 1977).

4.3.2 BBC Two, the Golden Age of Television, and Producer Power

An innovative approach to programming and its intellectual output that would engage audiences was demonstrated not only through programmes but also through scheduling. It was Michael Peacock who pioneered the concept of “themed evenings” that would later be taken up by Channel 4 and further developed by BBC Four. They were, however, short-lived as “viewers who were in any case uninterested in the theme were lost to the network for an entire evening” (Crisell, 1997:115)³⁶. Its evening programmes clearly catered for minority audiences, designed to “create a sense of occasion” by alternating “serious plays”, “serious music”, and “the best continental films” (Briggs, 1995:408) but also, “a weekly programme dealing with the criticism of television” would be mixed with more popular programming – comedy, “pop concerts” and “narrative drama series”.

BBC Two’s focus on the experimentation of generic formats was left out of policy recommendations. Freedman observes how, for example, television policy was not of central concern to many in the Labour government and its then prime minister, Howard Wilson (1964-1970), and he, in fact, did very little to “actively promote an atmosphere of confidence and experimentation” (2003:70). This focus on experimentation was said to be a direct result of the efforts of producers, directors and scriptwriters, as they attempted to “relate more to the profound political and social changes of the 1960s than to creative government steering of broadcasting” (ibid.).

³⁶ This rationale, significantly, was turned on its head with the introduction of digital television. BBC Four controller Janice Hadlow designing the channel’s themed evenings and seasons to “stop people from going”. More about scheduling and seasons in Chapter 6

Director General Hugh Carleton-Greene had been known to care deeply about individuality and risk-taking in programme making and encouraged the shift away from “the ivory tower stuffiness” (in Hendy, 2007:18). The “Greene era” was known for a greater sense of risk taking (Caughie, 2000:78), which is, arguably, a bold and contemporising redefinition of Reithian values. This is evident in what is, according to Hendy, one of his most important statements of intent: “I believe we have a duty to take account of the changes in society, to be ahead of public opinion, rather than [to] always wait upon it” (Green in Hendy, 2007:19). Indeed, by 1966, BBC Two had finally reached nearly two thirds of the population and entered what is now largely seen as its “golden age” with its controller, David Attenborough. Experimentalism, creativity and innovation were encouraged, and authorship and originality were highly regarded: the BBC “sought out writers in the knowledge that they would shape a new set of cultural values for the institution” (Smith, 1986:15). Intellectual programmes were popularised, such as the documentary series *The Great War* (BBC Two, 1964), and Kenneth Clark’s *Civilization* (BBC Two, 13 episodes, 1969). Contemporaneous takes on art were encouraged, exemplified by the BBC Two arts series *Release*, which included “intercutting snippets of Marshall McLuhan with pop-art style film montages” (Hendy, 2007:20). This serious approach was extended to drama series, such as *The Forsythe Saga* (BBC Two, 1966), adapted by Donald Wilson. Pioneering new genres on BBC Two were commonplace, often “pushing television to its intellectual limits” (Crisell, 1997:117), while the channel also brought pop and rock music into its schedule.

Greene evidently encouraged a spirit of competition that, according to Anthony Smith, aided creativity and produced “an enormous flowering of talent and inventiveness which became characteristic of broadcasting in the first half of the 1960s” (1974:126). While notions of cultural hierarchy were largely destabilised during the 1960s with pop, experimental and high arts being placed side by side, the production of programmes, Burns observes, still depended on the institutional hierarchy. The BBC was a prestigious, progressive cultural environment, but not without various departmental

conflicts due to “different interpretations of the function of broadcasting and of the way the BBC should discharge it” (1977:253). For example, Burns notes that the BBC’s entertainment departments felt they were an “unfortunate necessity”, their only value being that of having audience pulling power, and he argues that the Pilkington Report was regarded as an “ideological campaign” that led to their sense of insecurity (1977:146). Talks and Current Affairs (the “journalists”) were at the top of the hierarchical ladder followed by the Drama department. In higher ranks the competition between “‘balanced programme’ advocates, ‘the mirror of society’ journalists, and the neo-Reithians had indeed died down” (ibid.). This suggested a loss of uniformity in interpreting a public service ethos, but also demonstrated that the disappearance of cultural hierarchy was a privilege of the higher ranks.

4.4 Opening Up: The Annan Report, Channel 4 and the Pluralisation of Culture

The idea of broadcasters as a powerful elite increased in the late 1970s, mirroring a real shift of political mood which reflected a “more forceful social and cultural liberalism and suspicion of a class- or Establishment-based state” (Goodwin, 1998:18). Britain was increasingly viewed as a plural and fragmented society, and broadcasting was seen as no longer serving all niches and pockets of interests. Government officials, media and academics shared the view that “British broadcasting is run like a highly restricted club – managed exclusively by broadcasters according to their own criteria of what counts as good television and radio” (Blumler and Smith quoted in Annan, 1977:61). The criticism fell on the rigid duopoly of the BBC and ITV, and demands for a fourth national channel grew stronger, as did the idea of meeting the needs of minority cultures. Lord Annan, vice-chancellor of London University, was appointed by the Labour Government to chair the Committee on The Future of Broadcasting. The Annan Report was published in 1977, but it was not until 1981, two years into the Thatcher’s Conservative government, that Channel 4 was launched. The possibility of an independent new channel, regulated by the Independent Television Authority (ITA), dates

back to the 1960s, but Lord Annan was not inclined to give the extra channel to ITV, fearing that competition would intensify and result in a neglect of minorities. Annan's recommendation of the design of the new Channel 4 owes a lot to various pressure groups³⁷ from the left and later on, the right, but in particular, "the most detailed proposals for a new body of this kind came from two members of the Standing Conference on Broadcasting, Anthony Smith and Jay Blumler, who submitted a separate paper which they called "A Pluralist Approach" (Annan, 1977:60) and brought forward the idea that the duopoly between BBC and ITV should be broken up to make way for the end of spectrum scarcity.

The Annan Report, looking for new models of television funding, was strongly influenced by the idea of a "National Television Foundation" conceptualised by Anthony Smith, in which he proposed that the new channel should be based on a commissioning model, the equivalent to a publishing house for independent programme-makers. Encouraging a growth of independent production companies would allow a much needed variety of provision, facilitating the growth of creative talent and more crucially, diversifying cultural output. Annan's proposal was that the new channel would have two thirds of its output made up of programmes of special interest, while the remaining third would have a broader appeal – a strategy very similar to that of BBC Two. This version was adopted by the government. The Broadcasting Act of 1980 ensured a "substantial proportion" of the programmes would be sourced from independent producers. Goodwin remarks on "a quite original – and quite specific – statutory prescription" (1998:28), in which for the first time in British history, and arguably, internationally, a television channel was "given a specific statutory remit to be 'different'" (ibid.). "It was probably the only television channel in the world to combine a legislative requirement to *experiment*, to *innovate* and to *complement* the service offered by the existing commercial television channel" (Harvey, 1994:102, original emphasis).

³⁷ Mrs Whitehouse's National Viewers' and Listeners' Association with their statute pressure on broadcasters regarding issues of taste and decency; Free Communications Group; the 76 Group, Standing Conference on Broadcasting (SCoB), the latter dubbed as the "alternative Annan" and involving academics committed to media reform, including Jay Blumler, Stuart Hood, Dennis McQuail, Nicholas Garnham, Anthony Smith, James Curran, Stuart Hall, and Raymond Williams.

Channel 4 was designed as a national, rather than a regional, channel that was to recognise changes in cultural life in Britain, departing from the Arnoldian definition. According to the report, culture is,

...always susceptible to change and able to absorb the *avant-garde* within its own urban, liberal, flexible principles, [and which] found it even more difficult to accommodate the new expressions of life in the sixties. The new vision of life reflected divisions within society, divisions between classes, the generations and the sexes, between north and south, between the provinces and London, between pragmatists and ideologues (Annan, 1977:14).

Underpinning this argument was a profound sense of cultures *in plural*, and that fractures between pockets of interests could be restored by giving them equal airspace. Centrally, the discursive shift also meant that programme makers were no longer to be viewed as the judges of what culture is, but more as caterers for different cultures. A Reithian mode of engagement with television programmes was not taken for granted any more in a shift that Crisell sees as “the first explicit renunciation of the Reithian idea of broadcasters as moral or cultural leaders” (1997:193).

Freedman points out that the Annan Report was “based on the need, not simply for modernization or renewal, but for the democratization of broadcasting” (2003:101). Its concern was in unlocking the industry from the uniformity brought about by the duopoly that was increasingly seen as suppressing cultural expression:

It has been put to us that broadcasting should be “opened up”. At present, so it is argued, the broadcasters have become an overmighty subject, an unelected elite, more interested in preserving their own organisation intact than in enriching the nation’s culture. Dedicated to the outworn concepts of balance and impartiality, how can the broadcasters reflect the multitude of opinions in our pluralist society? (Annan, 1977:16)

The Annan Report marks the beginning of a more global shift in the terminology used for public service broadcasting. Curran and Seaton, for example, note that the formerly dominant view of a public service commitment “to an undivided public good” was abandoned, and replaced with “a new principle of liberal pluralism” (2003:364), the idea that a cultural diversity of provision cannot be accomplished through a social democratic

approach but through the market system. However, while abandoning the principle of universality of culture, the Annan Report clearly articulated that it did not abandon the role of broadcasting in unifying the nation, and that it was to continue to act as “a force for natural cultural cohesion, underpinning (and in part constituting) national identity” (Corner, Harvey, 1994:13). For example, the report stated that “at a time when people worry that society is fragmenting, broadcasting welds it together. It links people, gives the mass audience topics of conversation, makes them realise that, in experiencing similar emotions, they all belong to the same nation” (Annan, 1977:13). However, the success of the idea of cultural diversity also initiated serious doubts about whether public service broadcasting, as a model that provides “undivided public good” should continue in its present form. According to Curran and Seaton, public service broadcasting, intended to provide “the broad consensus – the middle ground upon which all men of good sense could agree” (2003:364) was to be replaced by “a free marketplace in which balance could be achieved through the competition of a multiplicity of independent voices”, resulting in “confusion and crisis, from which no new received doctrine has yet emerged” (ibid.). Gradually, a view emerged that the diversity of culture is not that incompatible with market forces; on the contrary, market forces are in a position to enable broader choice and cultural plurality by ending spectrum scarcity. This was the beginning of the dominance of a neoliberal approach: the “common sense” view that the quality of programming can be more effectively secured through free market competition. Channel 4 was increasingly seen as a model on which to rethink the concept of public service broadcasting and, according to Blumler, the liberal pluralist attention to pockets of interests was increasingly seen, and replaced by, a focus on individual interests and consumer needs, a shift of emphasis from “a *principled* to a *pragmatic* pluralism, yielding only that amount and those forms of diversity that are likely to pay” (1992:32, original emphasis).

4.4.1 Discourses on Plural Culture: Minority, Access, Difference

A year before being elected as the Channel 4's first chief executive, Jeremy Isaacs expressed his vision of the future: "we want a fourth channel which... caters for substantial minorities presently neglected; which builds into its actuality programmes with a complete spectrum of political attitude and opinion... a fourth channel that everyone will watch some of the time and no one all the time. A fourth channel that will, somehow, be different" (in Franklin, 2005:66). The new channel was to reflect a multi-racial and pluralist culture; but the realisation of these promises, however, proved more challenging and, according to Harvey, led to the difficulty of reconciling "that explosive mixture of racial hatred with new multi-racial and multi-cultural tolerance (...) of a new tolerance in matters of sexual orientation with outbursts of homophobic hysteria, of a commitment to the welfare state with the argument that its existence was incompatible with the principle of the free market" (1994:118). Questions remained over how to interpret a very broad remit of catering for minorities: how to define what is meant by "access" for all? McGuigan problematises this further:

Was it confined to creating the conditions for more people down the social hierarchy and in the regions to consume established art forms? Or, did it mean popular control over the means of cultural production, redefining what counts as 'culture' and participation for groups hitherto excluded by the established structures of public patronage? – to facilitate ethnic minority arts, proletarian theatre, feminist film-making, and so on (2004:40).

Channel 4's understanding of minorities was very distinct from that of BBC Two; it included programmes such as the thirty minute long *Opinions*, or the two minute alternative opinions show *Comment*; more audacious programmes about sexual orientation (*One in Five*, about gay lifestyles); and a short-lived programme for trade-unionists. As Ellis observes, Channel 4 "was shifting the then mandatory broadcasting practice of 'balance', and replacing it with programmes that asserted particular points of view rather than constructing a discourse that sought to mediate between points of view." (2007b:139). With David Rose as the head of Channel 4 drama department, the launch of *Film on Four* was created to support the "starving but still

creative British film industry” (Harvey, 1994:123) putting co-production money towards films, and also becoming known for fronting challenging, international, film seasons. The pioneering treatment of minority issues in documentaries and drama enveloped what was previously defined as “highbrow” television. The polar opposites of serious and popular television, already challenged in the 1960s with BBC Two, were collapsing. Channel 4’s direct support of art-house cinema production and an experimental approach across genres led to the formation of new cultural output. John Ellis’s experimental programme *Visions* can be seen as one such example; although short-lived and never scheduled on Channel 4 in regular timeslots (Ellis, 2007b:141), it arose out of Channel 4’s diverse, ambitious and experimental approach to commissioning. This broad and varied range of programmes, however, resulted in insecurities over “the precise intellectual location of the channel’s output” (Morrison et al., 1988:21); the idea of a cultural ghetto on television was to re-emerge. The popular press often focused on some of the channel’s minority culture programmes, with headlines such as the *Sun*’s “Channel that Nobody Watches” (Isaacs, 1989). *The Spectator* claimed that the channel was run by “a bunch of mad radical feminists”, while the *New Statesman* contrasted the debate with a claim that the channel brought together “a bunch of appalling commercial hacks” (ibid.). The ambiguous and diverse nature of the terms “minority, access and difference” generated controversy, and the channel’s cultural remit became a contested field of vested interests: Isaacs reminisced how, according to Conservative party MP Norman Tebbit, programmes about homosexuals were not what the remit was for: “Parliament never meant that sort of thing. The different interests you are supposed to cater for are not like that at all. Golf and sailing and fishing. Hobbies. That’s what we intended” (in Isaacs, 1989:65). As Ellis explains:

The Thatcher government created Channel 4 as an instrument of ‘freedom’. It saw the idea of a channel that commissioned from others rather than making its own programmes as a means of bringing market economics into the closed circuit of TV broadcasting. The project, however, had been conceived with quite another conception of ‘freedom’ in mind: freedom of speech and expression. Both sides can claim significant successes for their conception. Broadcasting has

indeed become marketised; and a degree of freedom of expression that was unthinkable in 1980 has now been achieved (2007b:137).

4.4.2 Channel 4 and the Rise of Independent Production

The publishing model of Channel 4 allowed for the commissioning of creatively diverse programmes to be made by a broad range of companies, and according to Goodwin, “effectively brought into being a substantial new sector in the British television industry – the independent production sector” (1998:33). In 1984/5, Channel 4 aired programmes made by over 300 independent companies and its commissioning editors had a very difficult task in balancing a diverse cultural mix. Interestingly, BBC Two’s once innovative yet unsuccessful “themed” evenings, were to re-emerge as new devices for scheduling on Channel 4 (Goodwin, 1998:31), this time with more success, which owed much to advertising directed towards “up-market” audiences with a disposable income. However, by the end of Isaacs’ tenure, and following the arrival of his successor, Michael Grade, the channel increased its focus on popular programming, with the result that an “alternative remit became increasingly sacrificed to audience maximisation” (Goodwin, 1998:31). It could be argued that the impending change reflects the shift to a neoliberal interpretation of cultural pluralism, reflecting the diversity of social and political identities that gradually gave way to populism and commercial imperatives. “On the one hand it has pursued a liberal and innovative policy, filling the gaps left by other channels, to test the frontiers of taste and of political controversy. On the other hand, it is a Thatcherite model par excellence, dependent on a free-for-all among fiercely competing independent production companies” (Hood et al., 1997:36). And according to one of the channel’s founders, Anthony Smith, Channel 4’s original notion of cultural diversity and experimentation was no longer evident:

... it has given up its interventions in the world of cinema... It has given up its support of workshops... also every other manifestation of extreme experiment... it has stopped pushing at its boundaries every week... ten years on there is a new generation of programme makers hammering on the door – it should be their channel. It should be open to them. Is it? Is it really? (in Goodwin, 1998:32)

Some argue that this perceived blunting of Channel 4's edge may be directly due to its pioneering innovations having been adopted by other channels as the standard practice (Goodwin, 1998:32) Surely, its commitment to new ways of thinking was, like BBC Two previously, subject to the interpretation of its chief executive and producers. Some found that the channel was offering "a more appropriate model for the BBC" (Barnett and Curry, 1994:260) in its attempt to challenge the limits of "common culture", and in the scope it brought to cultural standards. However, Channel 4 also performed an unanticipated realignment of Reithian principles, in its commitment to cater for a broad range of tastes and minorities, which included those who preferred the "higher" ground, and demonstrated that diversity of provision was possible on commercial television. But the channel's cultural innovation combined with its commercial imperative was soon to be used in neoliberal rhetoric against the BBC.

4.5 The Peacock Report and its Aftermath: The Neoliberal Turn and the Marketisation of Culture

Under the Conservative government of Margaret Thatcher, Britain was becoming a neoliberal state encouraging privatisation of the public sector, and opening itself up to the expansion of satellite and cable markets (Hunt Report, 1982). The discernible shift away from Keynesian policies towards new market-driven policies (Leys, 2004) brought about a "continuous 'deep' reshaping of social relations" (ibid., 2). From the government's perspective, the BBC was now seen as a bureaucratic, oversized and inefficient institution that needed to make serious adjustments for a multichannel future. A committee of inquiry, chaired by Sir Alan Peacock, was set up in 1985 with a remit to find alternative financing models for the BBC. The Peacock Committee started with the premise that Britain was

...a class stratified UK society ... divided into insiders and outsiders" and that its task was to "break up the blocks of privilege, open institutions to entry by outsiders and make them more responsive to

the general will of a public able to identify and act in its own interests and which has scant need of authorities (in Collins, 1990:104).

This “opening” and “responsiveness” to the public was to be achieved by empowering consumers and unleashing a sophisticated market system, in which the BBC would compete. Peacock and his committee members had strong affiliations with free market economic think tanks³⁸, including the Institute for Economic Affairs (IEA), and the Adam Smith Institute (ASI) (Goodwin, 1998:69; Freedman, 2003:131). The IEA supported full deregulation, arguing that the highly regulated broadcasting system was in fact a result of the technological limitations of spectrum scarcity, which were lifted with the advent of cable and satellite. Fears that the change would bring a decline in diversity and cultural value and “a tyranny of mediocre monotoned similarity” (Bragg quoted in Veljanovski and Bishop, 1983:19) were dismissed, with the argument that the freedom for a viewer to choose what to consume is a more socially responsive model than the imposition of the programme makers’ own values. The liberating tone in the argument was taken up by the Peacock Committee, which saw the licence fee as enforced, and not providing a direct relationship between the provider of programmes and the consumer (Peacock, 1986:102). The Report’s conclusions sided with the overall deregulatory changes initiated by the Hunt Report and recommended a gradual switchover from a licence fee to a subscription model for the BBC, a lighter touch regulation for independent television, and a 40% increase in the proportion of programmes supplied by independent producers. The Peacock Report, its subsequent White Paper (1989), and the Broadcasting Act (Home Office, 1990) introduced a new discourse where market values and consumer rights replaced the previously dominant discussions over the moral responsibility of programme makers and the importance of cultural standards. In other words, economic and financial criteria took over as the new standards for the evaluation of television programmes.

³⁸ Samuel Brittain, the prominent member of the Peacock Committee was a financial journalist and commentator and the brother of Leon Brittain MP who was appointed Home Secretary in 1983; Sir Alan Peacock was a trustee of the Institute of Economic Affairs; Cento Veljanovski, the author of *Choice by Cable* had a role of a special adviser to the committee, and Peter Jay, also a member of the committee, was an economic journalist, himself strongly affiliated to the IEA (various sources).

The most troublesome change involved the handling of programmes of cultural value that would not survive in the competitive market place. These now needed to be ring-fenced into a more definable category of programmes, a task that has proven problematic within an economic discursive framework:

These are not just the so-called “minority programmes”. (...) These would be likely to be a narrower group than “everything the BBC at present does” but a larger group than what has been called rather gracelessly “an arts and current affairs ghetto” (Peacock, 683, 1986:148).

Cultural and “highbrow” programmes were now (re)classified as “merit goods”, subject to “market failure”, referred to as “the inability of the most perfect market imaginable to achieve goals that are not those of individuals but collective goals. ... [the market] sometimes postulates a peculiar kind of good that people theoretically want but aren’t in practice willing to pay for.” (Leys, 2001: 97) The only way to protect them, as Peacock saw, was by the introduction of a subscription service³⁹. The debate over the protection of “merit goods” by levying a subscription service was eventually absorbed into a broader, but equally problematic category of “quality” television in the government’s White Paper, *Broadcasting in the ‘90s: Competition, Choice and Quality* (Home Office, 1988). By linking “quality” with “competition” and “choice” in its title, the paper mobilised the term “quality” as a reinforcement of the commercialisation of television (Holland, 2013:316). But it also became the term that would signify what would be lost if competitive commercialisation was to take its hold (ibid.). For example, the term was used by pressure groups like the Campaign for Quality Television⁴⁰ to introduce a “quality threshold” for programmes on ITV, a clause introduced to protect programmes from the recommendation to give ITV franchise allocations to the highest bidders. Ultimately, the 1990 Broadcasting Act left the licence fee intact and “the BBC and Channel 4 as the only mainstream broadcasters with (...) public service broadcasting obligations” (O’Malley, 1994:134). The BBC’s duty to inform, educate and entertain the

³⁹ The government did not accept recommendations to introduce a subscription service for the BBC

⁴⁰ One of the key pressure groups, set up in 1988 and lead by then Granada managing director David Plowright

public was increasingly translated as a preservation of its “special role” in British broadcasting, and it was to remain as the “cornerstone” of British broadcasting.

4.5.1 Issues of Public Service and Quality Television

The strongest criticism of public service broadcasting focused on its perceived projection of elitist values. According to the broadcasting magnate Rupert Murdoch, “everybody, within the law of the land, who provides a service which the public wants at a price it can afford is providing a public service” (in Franklin, 2005:133). The Adam Smith Institute saw the argument that commercial competition in broadcasting would result in a loss of professional ethics and programme quality as “clearly elitist”, given that “the idea of a ‘quality’ programme is a highly subjective one. The only fair criterion for judging programme quality is by how many people like it...” (1984:40). Veljanovski and Bishop’s argument went further: “programmes will no longer be determined by the mass audience, advertisers or *highbrow regulators*, but rather by consumer demand in the market-place” (1983:20, my emphasis). The populist rhetorical use of the term “highbrow” to suggest that regulatory politics is determined by elitist tastes is, in fact, indicative of a profound shift in economic power within broadcasting. This view of a democratic culture free of taste impositions was in fact, protecting the commercial priorities of the powerful, privileged economic elite and what Harvey defines as “the reconfiguration of what constitutes an upper class” (2005:31). It is perhaps best expressed by Rupert Murdoch’s famous quote that, “[m]uch of what passes for quality on British television really is no more a reflection of the values of the narrow elite which controls it and which has always thought that its tastes are synonymous with quality – a view, incidentally, that is natural to all governing classes” (in Franklin, 2005:134). The term “quality” was by now, a political football central to policy debates about television’s cultural value and role (Holland, 2013).

The trope of “quality” indicated a further shift in the political balance based on references to class and taste, and can be seen as forging a new type

of value dichotomy, as the term was “deployed within television companies as part of the ongoing battle between art and commerce” (Frith, 2000:45). Collins (1990) offers another interpretation, suggesting that the Peacock Report’s use of “quality” served as a shift from the previous dominance of professional broadcasters’ attitudes towards the measure of audience satisfaction. This is demonstrated by its use of a MORI survey⁴¹ which established that “46 per cent of television viewers said that they were ‘very or fairly satisfied with the quality of television against 45% who were very or fairly dissatisfied’, which, according to standard consumer satisfaction attitudes is a very low figure (Peacock, 1986:198). Indeed, the Peacock Report defines “quality” as a territory for viewers’ judgement, which further points to a shift from a public service view of “total audiences” towards “demographics” (Hesmondhalgh, 2002:244). Frith points out that the term “quality”, while used to describe “an audience rather than a programme”, still implies a hierarchical/dichotomising process, albeit reconfigured: “[Q]uality television is television appealing to the quality audience, defined in terms of age, class, income, taste” (2000:43). According to Corner et al., this generation of quality television “would not so much be initiated from the ‘top down’ but would be the result of demand from the ‘bottom up’” (1994:14), a conception which shifts the process away from production being at the centre of creative innovation. There was, however, a residual meaning of “quality” suggesting it as being definable through professional “international peer recognition” (Blumler et al., 1986), but in that sense, quality once again is “deployed economically to place British television programmes in general in the global market (and to brand the BBC)” (Frith, 2000:43).

In addressing ambiguities associated with quality television, “equated with everything from diversity to non-trivialization, significance to sympathy” (Mulgan, 1994:87), Mulgan’s proposition was to embrace the term’s heterogeneous properties. He distinguished seven definitions of quality television that range from a producer’s and audience’s perspective to textual, aesthetic dimensions, or indeed, quality as a social value of diversity (1994). However, Mulgan’s focus on the term’s key functional uses seems to resonate

⁴¹ MORI survey for the National Consumer Council used in Peacock Report, Cmnd. 9824, 1986

little in academic discourse, where the focus has been more on the term's ideological use (Corner, 1994; Brunsdon, 1997; Frith, 2000) and, more recently, on quality television programmes (see Chapter 2).

While the term “quality” refers to the supplanting of the centrality of production by that of the audience, issues of creativity were raised in connection with the BBC's marketisation and internal restructuring. The Broadcasting Act's recommendations that 25% of the BBC programming should be outsourced to independent television companies increased the focus on the financial decisions of the BBC's management. John Birt, BBC Director General from 1991, initiated the process of managerialisation with the controversial introduction of Producer Choice, which resulted in altering the commissioning structures and the creation of an internal market place. Starting with the BBC drama department, television producers were offered a “choice” in how to spend their budgets, while in-house resource departments were increasingly forced into competition with outside resources; financial criteria became a dominant evaluative tool for programme making. Much scholarly research refers to this restructuring as having profound consequences for creativity processes (Barnett and Curry, 1994; Curran and Seaton, 2003; Born, 2004). Indeed, some of prominent creative forces of television, such as the dramatists Dennis Potter or Alan Bennett, claimed that Birt's era signified the loss of a creative environment. Potter's famous 1993 MacTaggart lecture directly confronted the new managerial culture, pointing out the serious consequences of “demoralisation, the bitterness, and, yes, even the hatred had bitten into the working lives of so many hitherto reasonably contended and undoubtedly talented BBC staff” (2005:166). Potter's view of “legions of troubled and embittered employees at the BBC who can scarcely understand any of the concept of the new ‘management culture’” (ibid.) was perceived as a profound loss of creativity by Alan Bennett, who argued that:

If I regret the supposedly streamlined organisation that eventually emerged, this is not just nostalgia, but an almost ecological regret for the loss of a habitat – the wetlands of the mind, perhaps, the draining of a friendly fen that had long sheltered several struggling or endangered species (Bennett, 2003).

4.5.2 “Wall to Wall Dallas” versus “Higher Ground” – Inversion of Values and the Cultural Turn

Up until the 1990s, maintaining cultural standards and diversity was assured through the regulation of commercial television and an assurance that the BBC’s role included setting high cultural standards. In the words of then Channel 4 Chief Executive, Michael Grade, “it is the BBC which keeps us all honest” (2005:158). The regulatory changes in the early 1990s, however, contributed to, on the one hand the BBC’s push towards making popular programming, and on the other, debates over the fear that the corporation would no longer be the source of “demanding programmes” (Peacock Report, 1986:2.2-12.3). The inversion of values was particularly felt in the approach to cultural programming; the legacy of this complex period was, according to Barnett and Curry (1994), a general disorientation of programme makers. Internally, discussions over the BBC’s move towards a “higher ground” were commonplace, but there is not much record of programmes that could be defined as “higher ground” in the old sense of the word, possibly because the term now implied a “highbrow” status with its negative, elitist implications; and what was exactly meant was not certain any more. Barnett and Curry observed the confusion: “words like ‘distinctive’, ‘high ground’, ‘upmarket’, ‘non-commercial’, ‘quality’ and ‘elitist’ were traded without anyone being prepared to define what they meant for actual programmes and real viewers or listeners” (1994:168). The key challenge for the BBC in particular was to make quality programmes without creating an impression that any cultural uplift was imposed. Programmes of “educated taste”, for example, “often proved controversial, playing into charges of elitism” (Corner et al., 1994:12), and were readily replaced by the “pop posh” as opposed to “posh posh” programmes (Walker, 1993:186). It was commonplace to see the longstanding serious arts documentary series *Omnibus*⁴² (BBC, 1967 – 2002), which had in previous years broadcast programmes about *Magritte* or Richard Long, now dedicating an entire

⁴² Although I use the example of *Omnibus* to illustrate a general populist shift in arts programming, it is worth mentioning that the longstanding arts programme (1967 – 2002) has been consistently dedicated to the study of popular art, for example, *Mr Laurel and Mr Hardy* (1974) or a profile of David Bowie, *Cracked Actor* (1975), reshowed as a part of Alan Yentob’s *Imagine* series (BBC One, TX 4 April 2013)

programme to the mass-popular singer Madonna (BBC One, 1990); in 1991, BBC Two launched a series of six programmes suggestively entitled *Relative Values*, an arts programme that dealt with monetary values in relation to art (Walker, 1993:185). The landmark arts programme *The Late Show* (1989 – 1995) was considered to continue the legacy of some of the more diverse and unconventional approaches to arts that Channel 4 previously established, and also “incorporated elements of the irreverence, the playfulness and the ironic knowingness that had come to be associated with *Arena*” (Wyver, 2007:61). Broadcast in the graveyard slot after BBC Two’s *Newsnight* programme, *The Late Show* was largely based on the premise that the distinction between high and low is gone (Wyver, 2007:61), and broadened the definition of art to embrace “media, architecture, design and style” but also “money and power” (Jackson in Wyver, 2007:61). It is most remembered for sparking off the most celebrated discussion of the decade with playwright David Hare controversially asserting on one of its programmes in 1991 that “finally, Keats is the better poet of Bob Dylan” (McGuigan, 1996/2002:192; Wyver, 2007:61). Hare’s comment and subsequent debates served to illustrate a glaring affirmation – or at least, a broadening consensus - that the aesthetic canon was becoming a questionable concept, and its fixity a product of a bygone era⁴³.

While the cultural canon was debated and relativised, so was the BBC’s Reithian ideal. According to Born, amidst the corporation’s structural transformations, a Reithian ethos was maintained as the official managerial rhetoric (2004:81). But Reithianism was also, as Born notes, “animating the BBC’s production cultures” (2004:84), albeit as a “counter-discourse”, emphasising concerns that Reithian principles were no longer being honoured. Outside of this institutional schism, which split Reithian values into, on the one hand, instrumental rhetoric, and on the other, moral discourses, there were other concerns over the BBC’s cultural output. The exemption of the deregulated cable and satellite market from the quotas for foreign programmes brought in reactionary concerns calling for the

⁴³ Wyver quotes Matthew Norman who recalled that the debate that Hare’s comment sparked off “ran for weeks, was intelligent, passionate and utterly fascinating. The question of how we make cultural value judgments lies at the heart of our culture itself” (in Wyver, 2007:61)

protection of heritage and national culture, once again calling up questions of the importance of a cultural canon, and of value judgements. The exemption of the deregulated cable and satellite market from the quotas for foreign programmes brought in reactionary concerns calling for the protection of heritage and national culture, once again bringing back questions of the importance of a cultural canon, and of value judgements. Although they had a comparatively low share and reach of the audience, as the great majority of viewers tuned in to terrestrial television, the increase of US imports, described as “wall-to-wall Dallas” (Dunkley, 1985), affected a drop in drama, current affairs and documentaries for the BBC (Seymour, Barnett, 2006), and in international coverage or foreign films (Barnett, Dover, 2004). These “dumbing down”, “tabloidising” and “vulgarising” effects were largely seen to be a direct outcome of competition with unregulated television (Curran and Seaton, 2003:209). However, by the middle of 1994, the concept of the higher ground was gradually abandoned as “unashamedly popular (and populist) programmes aimed at winning viewers were launched with pride” (Barnett, Curry, 1994:227). *Later... with Jools Holland* (1992 -) was considered a spin-off programme from *The Late Show*, and makeover programmes started dominating peak time schedules. Populism and anti-intellectualism were slowly becoming prevailing values that shaped cultural programmes and that, in reflecting the cultural (and postmodern) turn, on the one hand naturalised and normativised the notion of cultural difference, while on the other, also elevated the commercial, exchange values of programme making decisions which were now shaping cultural output in mixed market programming.

4.6 The Arrival of BBC Four – Continuities and Changes to the Market Failure Logic in the Digital Age

The late 1990s and the first years of the 21st century were marked by the expansion of the multichannel sector and the internationalisation of policy making. Under the New Labour government, British broadcasting became a force in the digitisation of television in Europe, yet, as Barnett asserts “did not represent any kind of ideological fracture in the dominant framework of

policy thinking” (2002:35). Following the 2003 Communications Act, the newly converged regulator Ofcom was created, combining the existing broadcasting and telecommunication regulators. The New Labour government’s policies inherited and further promoted the neoliberal enthusiasm for a broadcasting marketplace. According to the culture secretary at the time, Tessa Jowell, the aim was to bring “greater competition in broadcasting and a broadcasting market more friendly to public service broadcasting” (quoted in Collins, 2002:6).

The BBC was given the responsibility to be the leading force in digital switchover, and expanded its operations into new media activities, but the energies invested did not deter the public from noticing the declining presence of cultural programmes. Established arts series such as *Omnibus* were moved from BBC One to BBC Two in 2001 (Deans, 2001), before being discontinued in 2002, and the budget for BBC Two’s flagship arts programme, *Arena* was significantly reduced⁴⁴ - there were no new arts programmes offered to replace either series. In continuation with the previous decade the BBC was seen as progressively “dumbing down”, and the disappearance of arts programming was now evident. Melvyn Bragg, the writer and presenter of *The South Bank Show*, the longest running arts programme on ITV, called it “a total dereliction of its public duty” (2001, see Chapter 1). However, complaints over the decline of arts television were dismissed; for example, then chairman of the BBC Governors, Gavyn Davies (2001 – 2004) argued that the BBC was under increasing pressure to compete for audiences with commercial channels and that “typically, this criticism comes from a particular group of people in the UK. They tend to be southern, white, middle class, middle aged and well educated” (2002). Culturally demanding programmes continued to be seen as elitist, while also being defined as economic goods in need of protection. For example, Graham and Davies (1997) argued that public service broadcasting’s unique role should be in correcting market failure and in increasing the production of

⁴⁴ This was reflected in the number of programmes that *Arena* could annually produce. According to the archive documents noting annual transmission dates of *Arena* programmes since its inception (“*Arena* programmes by TX Date”), in 1981, the number of *Arena* programmes was a healthy 28, compared to 15 in 1991, 12 in 2001 and 3 in 2009

programmes of cultural value, but according to Hesmondhalgh, this argument only reaffirmed the commercial logic, and became “easily assimilable in an agenda that favours private media business” (2005:103).

The economic discourse spilled over into issues about the BBC’s over-competitiveness, and its “crowding out” of commercial TV players (Barwise, 2002:29), the effect of which was to further polarise the BBC’s content and thus create new debates about cultural binaries between “popular” and “market failure”. The debates over the murky waters of quality television continued. But the notion of “quality” that was deliberated was even further detached from the previous residue of aesthetic concerns or the term’s cultural meanings. Sylvia Harvey notes that the regulation of public service broadcasting has become myopically focused and is not sufficiently engaged with key questions about the *purpose* of public service broadcasting, as “its key operating paradigms appear to rule out an engagement with the splendid and slippery issues of quality and of value and to be incapable of dealing with questions of cultural significance” (2006). The debates about the BBC’s cultural role were mainly framed by the commercial lobby who, threatened by the BBC’s competition, were urging the Corporation to stick to its role of providing “higher ground” programming. For example, the key argument by the former chief executive of BskyB, Tony Ball, in his MacTaggart speech in 2003 was that the BBC should leave entertainment to the commercial channels (2005). While Harvey argued that the purpose of public service broadcasting was not sufficiently addressed, Hesmondhalgh contended that the definition of the concept became too narrow, developing as “a residual filler of programming gaps left by market failure (...) now prevalent in centrist think tanks of the kind that inform Labour policy, and in Ofcom” (2005:103).

In the run up to the Charter renewal in 2006, the BBC took a decidedly sharp turn, changing its institutional discourse as well as its programme policy. BBC One launched the first high profile arts programmes in a decade, Alan Yentob’s *Imagine* (BBC One, 2003 – present), and shortly after, BBC Two started *The Culture Show* (BBC Two, 2004 - present). The

shift triggered critical observations such as that by the veteran of BBC serious programming, John Humphrys, during his McTaggart Lecture in 2004: “[The BBC] has recently rediscovered the value of genuine public-service broadcasting, or so we are told. Some deeply cynical souls make a connection between that and the charter renewal. Well, I never! ... Maybe it should be renewed more frequently if this is truly the effect it has” (in Franklin, 2005: 271). While the public service ideal was precipitously marketed as flourishing by the introduction of the new arts programmes, these were not sufficient in number to address the issue of its evident decline. For example, Bergg (2002) demonstrated that the further fragmentation of a multichannel environment contributed to an all-encompassing decline of public service programmes between 1992 and 2002, with arts programming being halved (2002:12). The trend continued in the later part of the decade, with Ofcom’s report specifying that spending on arts programming has been in decline from £72 million in 2006 to £44 million in 2011⁴⁵ (2012:11). A new buzzword “dumbing-up” emerged, signifying predominantly nominal corrective mechanisms to “dumbed down” television content. Examples of “dumbing-up” include a “quality upgrade” of Channel 5, or Sky’s purchase of the arts subscription channel Artsworld in 2003⁴⁶, but Walker suggests that this was part of a much longer trend in broadcasting. Defining it as a “fig leaf function” Walker contended that “a proportion of programmes devoted to high culture serves merely as a *fig leaf* for more vulgar, trivial programmes and increases the chances of a company being awarded a franchise or having their existing franchise renewed” (1993:14). Indeed, for some, the rationale behind BBC Four’s launch was to serve as a façade that would conceal the abandonment of the Corporation’s public service commitment towards universal provision within which challenging programming will have a prominent place. In essence, the birth of the channel was seen as the BBC’s

⁴⁵ These figures were also inclusive of BBC Four programme content

⁴⁶ See, for example, “Artsworld gets Sky branding”, *The Guardian*, 5 February 2007. Also, while the arrival of BBC Four was greeted as a sign of public service broadcasting “dumbing-up”, providing “higher ground” programming, it was also seen as a threat to the art channel Artsworld, whose near closure was blamed on BBC Four. But as Barwise argues, BBC Four “is unlikely to have significantly reduced the viewing of the loss-making Artsworld Channel. BBC Four’s viewing share in multichannel homes is only 0.2 per cent. Even among viewers of the Artsworld Channel, BBC Four is unlikely to be capturing more than one per cent or at most two per cent of viewing, an immeasurably small impact” (2002:29/30)

most expensive “fig leaf” so far⁴⁷ representing a reduction of cultural values in public service broadcasting. BBC Four’s arrival was therefore perceived as ideological, a sign of public service diminution as opposed to the commitment to cultural values, a strategic move to justify its licence fee amidst the abandonment of “higher ground” programmes, but also an expensive “stooge” for a longer and more widespread trend of a decline of public service programming on the BBC (e.g. Bergg, 2002; Ofcom, 2012; also see Chapter 1). In addition, echoing discourses over the launch of BBC Two four decades prior, there were debates about the issues of access: BBC Four was launched as a digital public service channel in a year when multi-channel viewing share uptake was only 22.1%, “a quarter of all viewing in 2002” (Bergg, 2002:6).

However, this myopic argument does not take into account that the launch of BBC Four had been planned for a much longer time as a response to the complex structural redesign of the BBC’s public service provision for the digital age (see Chapter 5).⁴⁸ In this context, BBC Four is seen as one part of a bigger television package, a portfolio of seven channels⁴⁹ which was to serve as a “proper and obvious extension of the BBC’s public service” (Keating, interview, 12 March 2010). Moreover, the channel’s personality was designed to be “unashamedly intellectual” (Greg Dyke in Franklin, 2005:234); Dyke’s use of the adjective “unashamedly” is particularly interesting, and can be seen as a sharp discursive shift away from the previous institutional articulations of the Corporation producing “unashamedly popular” television (Barnett and Curry, 1994:227, see the chapter section 4.5.2). As Light observes, the use of “unashamedly” in fact suggests, “conversely, that there might be something to be ashamed about in providing such intellectual programming” (2004:236). This contrast in the use of the term further implies the co-existence of competing cultural values, or at least a complex sediment of contradictory discriminatory practices at play.

⁴⁷ Again, Lord Melvyn Bragg defined BBC Four as a “fig leaf” for arts television and an example of “brochure programming” (in Deans, *The Guardian*, 8 Jan 2004)

⁴⁸ “In order to achieve this principle of universality we believe we should offer a portfolio of seven services across five channels” (Dyke in Franklin, 2005:233)

⁴⁹ Dyke was at the time Director General of the BBC, and Roly Keating, BBC Four’s first controller, revealed during *Media Guardian Talk Online* that “BBC Four was an idea launched for the first time by Greg Dyke in his McTaggart speech in 2000” (6 March 2002)

Nevertheless, the launch of BBC Four triggered a broad discursive repertoire, with concept of quality used both exponentially and elusively when mobilised to question the changing role of public service broadcasting and cultural values. It was seen as symbolic of a new form of cultural segregation or “unpleasant relativist balance”, according to Richard Hoggart, as “quality is or should be indivisible, and its criteria should apply to ‘light’ as much as to ‘heavy’ programmes” (Hoggart, 2002). Ultimately, questions were raised as to whether the BBC television portfolio meant an increase of quality in cultural programming and enrichment of the BBC’s public service remit, and whether a separate space for arts and culture would contribute to the reinvention of a universality principle in a multichannel, multiplatform age.

4.6.1 BBC Four and the Public Value Test

Alongside the substantial upturn of culturally demanding programmes, the BBC also changed its institutional and regulatory guidelines in anticipation of the 2006 Charter renewal. In response to conflicting expectations over its cultural output, the dominance of market failure logic and increasing pressures from its commercial competition, the BBC published its manifesto entitled *Building Public Value* (BBC, 2004). The document, based on the US public management theory⁵⁰, was aimed at introducing a new set of value measurements of its services, a “public value test” which was an institutional effort to secure the licence fee and stabilise its positioning in a convergent broadcasting ecology. It references the results of an Ofcom survey in which public service broadcasting is defined “not as a narrow set of particular programme categories which the market may fail to provide, but as a broad and integrated system of programmes and services” (2004:7). The term “public value”, defined as “the sum total of the BBC’s individual value, citizen value and economic value” (2004:29), attempted to distinguish itself from “shareholder”, or “return value” in commercial broadcasting (2004:7), while also proposing criteria for the measurement of its performance in terms of reach, quality, impact, as well as value for money (ibid.:15). It might be worth

⁵⁰ The concept of “Public Value” was first introduced by Mark Harrison Moore in 1995 in his book *Creating Public Value: Strategic Management in Government*

mentioning that besides “quality”, the term “value for money” also entered the BBC’s vernacular in the 1990s⁵¹ as an outcome of increased regulatory pressures to augment the accountability and efficiency of the organisation in the growing, multichannel broadcasting marketplace. It retains a prominent place in the public value test and in the close monitoring of the institution’s performance. According to Born,

...[Q]uestions of how the BBC’s programming and services might be reconceived and what new guiding values they should espouse were given low priority and displaced by other dominant concerns: efficiency, markets, value for money, audit and accountability. While these concerns might well form *part* of a redefinition of the practice of public service broadcasting, they were not articulated in these terms and stood more as ends in themselves (2004:252, original emphasis).

The “public value test” initially caused controversy and uncharacteristic comments from habitual sources of criticism: for example, David Elstein, a veteran of the commercial broadcasting sector, who is widely known for his regular reproach of the BBC, welcomed the radical and introspective aspects of this document, but was paradoxically one of the first to observe and criticise the introduction of quantifying properties: “this so called public value – over and above the commodity value – of broadcasting cannot be quantified in monetary terms (...) [It] is virtually impossible for anyone – the BBC, Ofcom, Parliament, Davies – to judge how much needs to be spent on public subsidy” (2004:13). Oakley, Lee and Naylor also suggested that the term “public value” further obscured “the real terms of the debate regarding the BBC, which remain a debate about the pros and cons of public service broadcasting” (Oakley et al., 2006:8). However, Roly Keating, the Controller of BBC Four (2002 – 2004), and one of the members of the BBC Charter renewal team, pointed out that the engineering of “public value” had a precisely opposite rationale, as it emerged out of the frustration of making a

⁵¹ Georgina Born (2004) details the complex implications that accompanied the introduction of the term “value for money” as evidence of the enforcement of new managerial, as well as auditing interventions, which championed business values and transformed the institution’s concerns with cultural value. The term was first introduced in the 1992 Green Paper *The Future of the BBC* which required the BBC to provide “value for money” in its urge to improve its efficiency (Born, 2004:101), and has since been one of the key conflated value ingredients of “public value”. The concept was discussed in the BBC’s statement document *Building Public Value* (2004) in which “value for money” is one of the criteria offered for the measurement of the institution’s performance

case for public services in a defensive manner, relying on previous econometrically framed rhetoric. He explains:

We were confronted with a very reductive language which was attempting to position the BBC purely in terms of market failure economics, and implicitly, perhaps, restrict the BBC's future contribution purely to a defensive retreat at the margins of culture. They were trying to, in some way, identify things that the market would not do under any circumstances and push the BBC into that role (interview, 22 April 2010).

The term “public value” was effectively an attempt to shift the emphasis from a reductive economic agenda towards a new “framework of language” in order to bridge the contradiction that ensued between instrumental and intrinsic culture “within which an idea like cultural value isn't seen as completely meaningless or evanescent or impossible... to capture” (Keating, interview, 22 April 2010). The concept of public value has also become a means to defer various pressures, including those that urged the BBC to focus on making only “higher ground programmes”, and to avert criticisms from the commercial lobby for making popular programmes. However, some scholars argue that the arrival of BBC Four, while potentially being one of the prime candidates for rehabilitating the more traditional approach to cultural and public service values, was nevertheless “in many respects the incarnation of the ‘market failure’ interpretation of public service broadcasting” (Light, 2004:237).

Indeed, the first ever application of the public service test (PVT) on BBC Four demonstrated that the channel was not safe from the market logic, as the test incongruously served to victimise the channel, then only in its second year of operation. In 2004, the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) commissioned a review of BBC digital services by Patrick Barwise, a Professor of Management and Marketing at the London Business School. This was designed to consider the contribution of the BBC's digital television output to public value, and its role in the broader context of public service. Barwise was concerned with how “net public value”, could be defined as the value to the UK public beyond the market impact (2004:4). Barwise's findings revealed that while BBC Four “met or exceeded most of

its commitments” in being an outward looking channel and “the place to think”, but it was still “poor value for money” (2004). Barwise’s report suggests that the efforts to synthesise measurement of value continued to produce a significant fracture between economic and cultural value, and that the focus on an instrumental view of culture continued to have a reductive effect, even through the new discursive framework of public value which was there in order to protect it. However, it was not BBC Four’s “complex cultural activity” but identification of the “lack” of its feasibility that framed the debates to come. The report’s interpretation notwithstanding, Tessa Jowell, the culture secretary at the time, who commissioned the first PVT in the first place, decided to publicly distance herself from the press response that the report generated. BBC Four’s value for money was in particular an issue for Jowell, as demonstrated by her efforts to emphasise the channel’s “high-quality programming” that met the interests, enthusiasms and curiosity of the British people (in Byrne, 2004). Jowell’s stance was not surprising, as earlier the same year, she had released a daring, although largely overlooked, report, *Government and the Value of Culture* (DCMS, 2004)⁵², in which she clearly attempted to argue for the return of discriminatory practices in cultural debates and articulating the need for the government’s emphasis on the educational purpose of culture. Drawing on the Arnoldian roots of the debate, she argued that “complex cultural activity... is at the heart of what it means to be a fully developed human being. The government should be concerned that so few aspire to it” (2004:7).

Some of the early responses to Barwise’s report were even arguing for doubling the budget for BBC Four as it was seen as “potentially the most important of the four services for driving digital takeup because its age profile matches that of the non-adopters much more closely than for CBeebies, CBBC and BBC Three” (Board of Governors, 2004). However, it was BBC Four’s first controller, Roly Keating, who insisted that BBC Four’s budget was

⁵² This is most likely drawing on an earlier report to DEMOS think-tank by an arts consultant, Adrian Ellis (2003)⁵². Ellis was primarily concerned by the nature of arts funding in the UK putting too much emphasis on the instrumental view of culture and the work’s social or commercial value, and argued that funding for art should be based on its intrinsic value.

at the right level (interview, 22 April 2010), defending the report through offering (a brief) historical perspective:

The point that Paddy was making was in the very early years of BBC Three and BBC Four – is that by their nature the reach and therefore to some extent the impact of both channels was still relatively small, but they had reasonably decent budgets. So by any measures they haven't yet performed at an optimal level to say that they got there yet (...) they are still at different stages of their journey. I sincerely hope now, if you look at the metrics, that they demonstrate that the reach has grown, and I think that the quality has probably grown too (interview, 22 April 2010).

Keating defends the need for a discernible, assessable approach to the BBC's portfolio of channels and offers that "all of the more specialist interest services will have to make a harder case for value for money, but they will have to make a very strong case for quality and impact upon their audience" (interview, 22 April 2010). But the question remains whether the public value test can in any way support the health and vitality of the core notions of public service, its quality provision and cultural value.

4.6.2 Putting Quality First? BBC Four - From Originating to Curating Quality Content

"One of the signs of 'quality television' [as opposed to 'commercialised television'] is the nature and extent of its 'arts coverage'" (John Ellis, 1991:60)

Since the term's introduction in the 1990s, the concept of quality established itself as one of the three key purposes of public service broadcasting, along with universality and citizenship (Born and Prosser, 2001:670-1; also see 4.5.1). The arrival of the BBC's aspiringly titled strategy review document *Putting Quality First* (BBC Trust, 2010), aimed at guiding the organisation through the second half of its 2016 Charter renewal, further reinforced the term's vital role in defining the Corporation's mission. The concept of quality was employed with discursive vigour to announce the Corporation's commitment to strengthen its public service duty notwithstanding the impending cuts, given the broadening of the BBC's responsibilities including the need of additional funding for the development

of digital platforms⁵³, and the financial takeover of the BBC World Service. Quality, the document states, can be achieved through *editorial* efforts to strengthen its public service duty which would bring “high (...) standards, creative (...) ambition, range and depth, and UK-focused content and indigenous talent” and would increase the BBC’s public service output within, in particular, “journalism; knowledge, music and culture; UK drama and comedy; children’s; events that bring communities and the nation together” (BBC Trust, 2010:5). Effectively, the quality of content and its recently consigned *measuring* properties⁵⁴ (see 4.6.1) became at once linked to anticipated public service genres and the pursuit of a 25% reduction budget, which effectively reframed the practice of quality programming into doing “fewer things better” (2010:13).

The discursive character of the term *quality* could be seen as both broadened and quantified compared to the 1990s use of the term which carried evaluative, discriminatory properties. In this context, BBC Four could originally be classified as an emblematic carrier of the “old” definition of quality, as it was originally defined as “outward-looking, providing real alternatives - *the benchmark for quality in digital broadcasting*”⁵⁵. However, that definition of the channel has been since abandoned, and the removal of any specific reference to the channel as “quality” can be seen as ideological, considering that the broader institutional adoption of the term coincided with another wave of scrutiny aimed at BBC Four, as the follow-up document *Delivering Quality First* (BBC Trust, 2011) reframed the channel once known as

⁵³ It should be mentioned that some aspects of the BBC’s digitisation of archive did not really go as planned. Digital Media Initiative (DMI), which was designed “to do away with video tapes and create a kind of internal YouTube of BBC archive content that staff can access, upload, edit and then air from their computers – the equivalent of almost 660,000 licence fees” (T. Conlan, *The Guardian*, 24 May 2013) was in fact closed down in May 2013 by Director General Tony Hall (2013 -). Interestingly, it was designed to reduce the production costs by 20%, according to the BBC’s Director of Vision Jana Bennett in 2009, who promised that “DMI could enable production efficiencies of some 2.5% in cost per hour, saving the BBC £100m by 2015, and potentially the wider industry an additional £40m per year” (transcript of the speech, 4 March 2009)

⁵⁴ “Our future set of measures will focus on four factors: reach, quality, impact and value for money. Together, we believe they are the main drivers of public value. Where we can, we will collect direct evidence of public value – such as where a programme has changed lives or behaviour. (...) Some are quantitative; many are qualitative. There is no substitute for judgement in assessing public service broadcasting.” (from *Building Public Value*, 2004)

⁵⁵ This is an early definition of BBC Four sourced online. It was originally retrieved in 2003, and has since been deleted/is no longer available (link bbc.co.uk/info/channels/bbc_four.shtml)

“the benchmark for quality”⁵⁶ into a channel that should provide “fewer things better”. The recent document recommended that BBC Four should downsize, editorially restructure and, much like BBC Radio 6 previously, there were even internal discussions about its closure. In 2011, the decision was made to cut down the channel’s already low budget from £54.3 million to £49.2 million⁵⁷ (BBC Annual report and Accounts, 2013), which continues to be the lowest budget channel compared to for example, BBC One (£1,129 billion, *ibid.*), BBC Two (£404.8 million, *ibid.*), or BBC Three (£89.7 million, *ibid.*).

In less than ten years of operation, BBC Four became established through offering innovative, low budget programmes, especially through such comedies as *The Thick of It* (BBC Four, BBC Two, 2004 – present), *Lead Balloon* (BBC Four, BBC Two, 2006 – 2010) *Getting On* (BBC Four, 2009 – 2012), *Twenty Twelve* (BBC Four, 2011 – 1012). Its distinctive and critically acclaimed dramas such as *The Alan Clark Diaries* (BBC Four, 2004), *The Road to Coronation Street* (BBC Four, 2010); *Gracie, Margot and Enid* (BBC Four, 2009) were instrumental in bringing a new audience to the channel⁵⁸. However, once identified as the channel’s key quality, it became seen as the channel’s principal economic setback. BBC Four has been effectively left with a narrower remit to focus on arts and culture programming, and becoming more of a niche digital provider, but its original controller, Roly Keating’s earlier definition of the channel put this internal decision into a slightly different, yet necessary, perspective:

[T]here was no comedy budget – ever. And there wasn’t a drama budget – ever. In all these documents you will not find references to comedy or drama, although on the launch night of BBC Four we did both, and that was a classic creative push that once you have a channel, there are certain genres you do just for the health and vitality of it (interview, 12 March 2010).

⁵⁶ *ibid.* – see the previous footnote

⁵⁷ According to BBC Trust in 2009, BBC Four’s annual budget was £53.3 million (BBC Trust, *BBC Four Service Licence*, 2009), but the most recent figures incorporate £5 million cut to the channel’s budget as an outcome of *Delivering Quality First* initiative (BBC, 2011; also in *The Guardian*, 25 August 2012)

⁵⁸ For example, *The Alan Clark Diaries* was the first BBC Four drama that attracted highest ratings (840,000 viewers) since the channel’s launch (e.g. Deans, “Clark diaries scores record ratings for BBC4”, *The Guardian*, 16 January 2004)

Indeed, the producer of *The Thick of It*, Adam Tandy, insisted that the talent deals offered to drama and comedy writers and performers are very low: “I think the writer’s deal is that you get only about 50% of your standard network fee” (interview, 9 February 2010). And according to the latest figures, the increase of music and arts on the channel is evident: BBC Four provides the highest amount of music and arts content compared to the other BBC channels⁵⁹. However, the paradox that the channel once hailed as “benchmark for quality” lost its quality drama and comedy through the *Putting Quality First* initiative – with quality applied to broad content provision – suggests that the term “quality” became symbolic of the further restructuring of cultural dichotomies operating within the axis of, on the one hand universality, and the other, niche provision. Certainly, some viewers who publicly protested in response to the channel’s budget cuts were responding in defence of broader public service provision that the channel previously epitomised. The petition to save BBC Four, launched by Armando Iannucci, the author of one of the channel’s most successful original comedies *The Thick of It* attracted over 65,000 signatures⁶⁰, but the decision to cut down on comedy and drama still went ahead, casting a long shadow on some of the channel’s creative ambitions. However, it has been also argued that the channel’s low budget is also the key to its own survival, with BBC Four controller Richard Klein (2008 – 2013) arguing that cuts are not designed to “break the channel” (*The Guardian*, 25 Aug 2012). Roly Keating (2002 – 2004) argues that the low budget is itself a key contributor to the preservation of the public service mission: “I was always wary that we shouldn’t put too much money into BBC Four because the less money you have, the more freedom you have – a very, very important equation here in a cultural organisation.” (interview, 12 March 2010). However, the emphasis on the channel’s cost three years previously, and the reduction of original programming may have been too high a price to pay:

⁵⁹ BBC Annual Report and Accounts 2012/13 states that BBC Four’s music and arts output has been 1,354 hours compared to BBC Three’s 50 hours and BBC Two’s 50 hours

⁶⁰ Source: Sunday Times article “Victory in fight to save BBC4” by Richard Brooks, published 11 Sept 2011, http://www.thesundaytimes.co.uk/sto/news/uk_news/Arts/article773553.ece

I get about one point share, which costs roughly £50 million to buy... that is what it would roughly cost - £50 million to buy. Well, Channel 4's overall budget is what – £0.5 billion... something like that? They get about a 7% or 8% share. It is not incomparable. BBC Two is roughly 400 million, they get 8% - in other words, we are buying a share on BBC Four for roughly the same price as it costs (...) [Y]ou can quote me, this isn't exact. I am estimating, so people can unpack it if they want – but in terms of the cost per share, we are not completely off the scale (Richard Klein, interview, 18 March 2010).

In fact, if the recent figures are taken into account, BBC Four arguably could be saved from the market failure label, as the channel's cost per user per hour is now reduced from 16.8p (*The Times*, 2010) to 6.8p (BBC, 2013), which is now lower than BBC Two's 8.3p⁶¹. While the cost per user per hour improvement can be seen as directly related to the decline of the original production of drama and comedy on the channel, BBC Four is rating as highest in *quality measures* which include “distinctiveness” (“feeling fresh and new”) and audience appreciation index (AI) (these are 2013 figures, see Appendix 7). The introduction of quality as a measuring tool, therefore, means that the investment in new, original productions and the emphasis on specific genres such as drama is becoming secondary. It is the “feeling” of freshness and newness, rather than “originality” that new quality measures refer to, or as Klein puts it, “being very smart about acquisitions and repeats” (in Sweeney, 2012; also see Chapter 5 and Chapter 6).

4.7 Conclusion

The effort to situate historically the debates over cultural value and a public service broadcasting ethos offers a closer look at both the continuities and changes of this value saturated public institution with its foundation in Reithian moral principles and an Arnoldian concept of culture. These foundational values have been continuously reframed and rearticulated through policy and institutional discourses, which were in turn reflecting broader social, political and economical changes. The framework of debates, while always linked to issues concerning the legitimation of culture,

⁶¹ The Annual Report 2012/13 figures also suggest that there has been a significant drop in cost per user hour, from 16.8p given in 2010 (*The Times*, 2010)

nevertheless shifted its focus towards an instrumental, or economically defined, perspective. But this introduction of measurements of value was also accompanied by complex reconfigurations of how BBC viewers are imagined and accounted for. It is evident that culturally demanding programmes travelled from Reithian efforts to educate and provide culture for “the masses”, towards attempts to provide culture for “minorities” on the Third Programme and later, on BBC Two. This process moved onto serving “individuals”, who were variously conceptualised through cultural difference in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and finally ended with a neoliberal view of individual “consumers”. This “journey” not only demonstrates the increased sophistication in understanding who culture is for; it is also a shift away from understanding television cultural production as a process, to becoming increasingly culture as a product.

The consequence of the deregulatory politics of the Thatcher era for serious or “highbrow” programmes is that it made a deeper indentation than other regulatory “moments”, and its effect is twofold. Cultural programming became framed by market economic logic and defined as “market failure”, it became *segregated* while continuing to be “hierarchised”; this changed “status” within a Reithian ideal of universal provision continues to be debated and negotiated to the present day. While all of the five moments of cultural debates that I have identified progressively demonstrate a gradual embrace of uncertainties and compromise over the place of cultural programmes in a mixed market economy, the more recent positions indicate proactive attempts to institutionally absorb an instrumental approach to culture, in particular through the example of public value. This concept represents one of the first instances of internal regulatory initiatives intended to address cultural value and quality provision as measurable, economically compatible categories.

However, despite these “self-imposed” restrictions and limitations, the BBC continues to be a publicly scrutinised institution, and the Corporation’s reframing approaches to its own public value have nevertheless retained a cultural purpose on the agenda. BBC Four’s

emergence in the digital market demonstrates a survival of Reithian ethos and continuation of an aspirational cultural mission, and its success can be also measured by the enthusiasm and appreciation figures of its small but loyal audience (see Chapter 1). However, if the historical overview of key policy debates demonstrates anything, it is that the currency of the old debates is still rife; as Branston pointed out, they became “sedimented down, pressed into new narratives and accounts” (1998:51). Perhaps Robins’s analogy of cultural change as being more akin to “geological layering” (2006:144) is an apt way to understand why hierarchical frameworks still coexist with their inversion or why new terminologies do not always “replace” or “cancel” each other. The question remains, however, of how these new cultural and discursive sediments will impact BBC Four’s journey. Will they serve to support a genuine cultural change, or will they flatten, or merely “rebrand” the sedimented cultural hierarchies?

Chapter 5. Case Study I: BBC Four and the “Internal Cultural Geography”

Although we wanted [BBC Four] to be innovative, this feeling that it should feel like it has been there forever... we wanted to try and achieve something that didn't feel like an unexpected intrusion into the market, but rather, a confident, proper and obvious extension of the BBC public service in response to the digital opportunity.
(Roly Keating, the founder and the first controller of BBC Four, interview, 12 March 2010)

With regulatory interventions examined in the Chapter 4, it has so far been demonstrated that there has been a progressive shift towards an instrumentalist view of culture and a conflation between neoliberal values and a public service ethos⁶². However, while this present chapter continues to pay methodological attention to historical context, it departs from a television policy framework because such an approach is not sufficient to address how cultural value is articulated in everyday, broadcasting practices and programme making. As Born argues, the focus on broadcasting policy falls short in understanding the importance of the “way creative practices and processes are organised, and who gets to make programmes” (2004:67). Therefore, by being largely informed by interviews with controllers, producers and schedulers who are involved in the shaping of BBC Four, the central concern here is how institutional structure and broadcasting practices inform the channel’s cultural mission. The tension between economic value and the cultural expectations of the BBC and its programmes, or the “increased integration of the aesthetic and economic production” (Frow, 1995:1) continue to be examined by paying particular attention to organisational and structural changes within the BBC, as well as identifying changes in discourses about cultural value in relation to channel broadcasting activities.

As explored in Chapter 4, the pressures brought by metricising quality and cultural value served to define BBC Four’s cultural output. However, while economic logic is evidently affecting the ways that the notion

of quality television is thought of, it is being played out differently in the everyday production of the channel. This chapter argues that branding and cross-promotion frameworks are direct manifestation of broader cultural shifts and have become an integral part of articulating the cultural identity of the channel. Analysis of the interview data has further demonstrated a defensible abandonment of hierarchical positions when debating cultural value and a general uneasiness in engaging with evaluative and discriminatory language and practices. This may not come as a surprise as traditional academic approaches to questions of quality television and cultural value⁶³ have been exploring for a while the difficulty with engaging with the aesthetic aspects of television (McGuigan, 1992), although they usually focus on television text as their main category (e.g. Brunsdon, 1997; Geraghty, 2003; Caughie, 2000; McCabe and Akass, 2007; see Chapter 2). However, the category of television text also becomes problematic when assessing a whole channel, which is informed, amongst other, by editorial decisions and scheduling activities; BBC Four is a home for a broad range of acquired, repeated and original programmes that are interlinked as they are organised in clusters of thematic units, such as documentary strands and seasons. This programme structure has intertextual qualities, that is, it also relocates innovation and creativity to the symbolic, thematic, and narrative space outside of the text, to how programmes connect. For example, the emergence of the use of the term “curating” television programmes is symptomatic of these thematic and subject-led programme activities. But “curating” can also be seen, on the one hand as a symptom of a qualitative shift that is linked to digitisation and convergence of the internet and broadcasting, while on the other, to the impact of archival and storing modalities that shape this fundamentally ephemeral medium towards an emphasis on its duration and the permanence of its programmes and their “stay” or cumulative value. However, this chapter will also track how the cultural value of BBC Four, as seen through archival permanence and TV

⁶³ As elaborated in Chapter 2 and Chapter 4, the term “quality” was introduced into policy, institutional and academic vocabulary to define shift in value judgements, but as the first symptom of marketisation and now expanded to encompass all BBC programming output with the *Putting Quality First: The BBC and Public Space* initiative (March, 2010), it was deemed too broad as a concept for a discursive analysis and therefore avoided in interviews

repeats is also manifested by the increase of economic terminology, such as *long tail effect*, *long shelf value*, *cumulative reach* and *deep value*, and it is this discursive shift that will be analysed beyond this chapter.

With these two considerations at play – on the one hand, the inseparability of concerns over cultural value from their economic impact, and on the other hand, the concern that channel identity has to take into account the way that its content is organised - this chapter posits that the cultural value of the channel needs to be explored through “internal cultural geography”, which can be defined as a discursively and structurally redefined architecture of the BBC’s cultural output. This “internal cultural geography” is also useful when taking into account the broader considerations of this chapter, which situates BBC Four within a multiplatform, multi-temporal portfolio public service offering, with a reoccurring emphasis on the channel offering “additional space”⁶⁴ to BBC Two, which further contributes to the spatial emphasis of its cultural output. This “spatial turn” is played out through the increasing number of platforms and the reliance on a stored data of programmes manifested through television repeats and extended availability to programmes (i.e. on iPlayer, 14 days after they are aired originally; and BBC Four Collections). But firstly, this chapter will explore the “internal cultural geography” historically, by examining how older examples of *minority* portfolio channels such as the Third Programme (and Radio 3), the short-lived UKTV Arena and BBC Knowledge, or even BBC Two can shed the light on the ways in which BBC Four’s relational character has been formed and its cultural value framed.

5.1 Genealogy of BBC Four: From Cultural Ladder of Radio to Cultural Niche of Digital Television

BBC Four was pitched as a channel where... though it is not like Radio 3 in its content, nonetheless has a parallel symbolic role in the market, as a publicly funded, free to air channel space where certain voices could be heard, certain talents could

⁶⁴ Again, the emphasis on quality and space, importantly, has also entered the BBC’s institutional discourse in its latest strategy review, entitled *Putting Quality First: The BBC and Public Space* (BBC Trust, 2010)

be cultivated or ideas explored, which a more popular channel would not be able to, or would not have time to, or space to explore... (Roly Keating, interview, 12 March 2010)

The reorganisation of BBC television took place in 2000 under Greg Dyke's director-generalship and plans were made to associate the analogue channels BBC One and BBC Two with the complimentary digital portfolio of BBC Three, BBC Four, BBC News 24 and the children's channels CBBC and CBeebies. The drive behind this expansion was a growing segmentation of audiences, which corresponded with the need to expand the television's family of channels and offer more tailored services. Conceptually, it was the BBC Radio services that served as a suitable blueprint for the television portfolio. The portfolio's design is credited largely to Mark Thompson, who was at the time the Director of Television (2001 – 2002). Thompson used the analogy between the radio and television, as Keating explains, "not as the spirit of the channel-to-channel matching, but in terms of the basic scale and shape of the BBC's offer" (interview, 12 March 2010). The architecture of the radio portfolio, while clearly structurally informing television portfolio, was also a cultural stimulus. The BBC's *Broadcasting in the Seventies* strategy offered the transformation of radio services away from "mixed-genre" channels towards "format" radio (Light, 2004:61), but Greg Dyke in his 2000 McTaggart Lecture also notably defined BBC Four's place in a new family of channels as "a mixture of Radios 3 and 4 on television" (2005:234). Radio 4, according to BBC Four's Head of Planning and Scheduling, Don Cameron, served as BBC Four's standard for talk shows. However, Keating explains that the idea was largely abandoned as the "target audience we were aiming for pretty much rejected this very strongly, on the basis that they had that in Radio 4" (interview, 12 March 2010). Keating clarifies, however, that it was not the genre of programmes as such but the level of engagement that they were attempting to amalgamate from the radio channel:

I occasionally used to talk about the characteristic of Radio 4's output that you would turn onto the network not knowing what you were listening to, and within three minutes you would be hooked and find yourself engaged with something you didn't know you'd be interested in... and often I would say to documentary filmmakers, that is what I

am looking for in programmes for BBC Four (interview, 12 March 2010).

The quality of the depth of audience engagement for BBC Four or, as Keating defines it, “building deep value over time”, is seen as one of the key stimuli, and represents the defining features of the channel’s cultural value. It can also be a conceptualisation of viewers that remains immeasurable through audience research alone, as evoked by Keating’s early vision of BBC Four viewers as being “perched at the edge of their seat, leaning forward, engrossed in what they are watching” (in Born, 2002). To some extent, this way of imagining the audience’s level of engagement can be seen as a direct legacy of more traditional views of the role of broadcasting towards cultural improvement and a way of rearticulating a Reithian ethos. It is certainly evocative of the post-war introduction of the “pyramid of taste” of the Home, Light and Third Programme channels (see Chapter 4) which was the first instance of a “specialist” channel designed to challenge listeners by offering highbrow programming they are expected to be deeply engaged with. But Keating’s earlier reference to the “scale” and “shape” of offer also refers to imagining audience groups with established tastes being allocated a more tailored service. The cultural pyramid was designed on expectations of the BBC audience “developing” with the public service’s offering; the Third Programme perceived the audience as mutable, able to culturally improve through the process of listening, and expected to educate themselves up the cultural ladder, “each... leading on to the other, the listener being induced through the years to discriminate in favour of the things that are more worthwhile” (Haley in Light, 2004:60). This approach can be contrasted to the current radio and television portfolio’s design for already “formed” audience groups. The “from the cradle to the grave” positioning of the digital TV channels illustrates the importance of audience research and demographics, and using that knowledge to inform the content and shape of a television channel and its identity. In this context, BBC Four can be seen as a bridge between old and new frameworks in terms of how culture is classified, a space that evokes the traditional “great ladder of culture” while being primarily defined by audience-research, channel identity, and tailored offering.

5.1.1 UKTV – UK Arena

A direct genealogy of BBC Four goes back to the mid 1990s and the BBC's anticipation of digital opportunities, with its venture into the cable and satellite commercial market. It was initiated with the launch of a news service BBC World in 1991, and shortly followed by the launch of UK Gold in 1992, which was the first attempt to create a channel that is entirely based on the BBC's classic archive programmes. Shortly after, it expanded into UKTV, a joint venture between BBC Worldwide and Flextech developed in 1997, from which several channels branched out, offering niche, generically specific archive content. UKTV can thus be seen as an early example of a BBC television portfolio, but the motivation behind it was predominantly economical. Johnson points out that "for the BBC, the venture provided a guaranteed site through which to financially exploit its extensive back catalogue of programmes, with UKTV having a first-look deal on all BBC Worldwide programmes." (2012:76). Indeed, Roly Keating explains:

That was a strategic choice for the BBC to run its own channels rather than simply sell our archives to other broadcasters. It was a structured way to run the archive – a commercial basis. And, suffice to say, the original spark of doing an archive channel based on cultural archives came out of our bit of the BBC – that got merged into commercial UKTV project (interview, 12 March 2010).

Keating went on to become a programme director for all UKTV channels, which included not only UK Gold but also a number of channels which were associated with BBC programmes by their name, as UK Horizon (named after the longstanding BBC science programme, *Horizon*), and the "commercial archive based channel" UK Arena (named after the BBC's art strand *Arena*; Light, 2004:149; Johnson, 2012:77). This was the first time that archives were placed at the centre of cultural proposition as well as economic enterprise, with the first digital channels attempting to harness the BBC's longstanding arts and science series as brands. Interestingly, however, the removal of "BBC" from the channel title signalled the separation between the BBC's corporate identity and its commercial activities (Johnson, 2012:76), and marked its efforts to turn programme series into brand names. The UK Arena channel was "very low budget" (Keating, interview, 12 March 2010),

with a limited two year run, and its programming consisted only of arts programmes and culture documentaries. Keating explains why it was short lived:

It was not commercially viable – certainly not at that stage. It was very low cost, the multichannel market was not mature... all sorts of reasons. But it was definitely an interesting trial run for some ideas about what it might be, in that case, to leverage the art archive of the BBC. And I think it also demonstrated, to my satisfaction, that the commercial market alone would not sustain the kind of dedicated cultural service which I think many of us believed could exist, and that the BBC had enough resource, and clout, and energy, to create such a channel (Keating, interview, 12 March 2010).

The failure of the BBC's initial attempt to create an arts and culture channel as commercially viable pinpoints the heart of the problem which relates to framing cultural value as a market failure category, with commercial imperatives being possibly the reason why the idea of a “clearly specialised public service channel” was abandoned. But Johnson observes that the failure of these channels may also have been the result of the wrong choice of branding: instead of being defined by the BBC's corporate identity, they were named after their national belonging (UK) and programme brands (*Arena*, *Horizon*) (2012:76). Johnson's observation is particularly pertinent as it emphasises that the cultural value of the channel was increasingly articulated through branding processes. However, it was also a dramatically different proposition from a public service mixed genre approach, and UKTV certainly demonstrates the start of the BBC moving more towards the idea of channels being “content-clusters” which, according to Mark Thompson were “not necessarily showing a single genre, but certainly with a pretty clear proposition or flavour...” (in Light, 2004:84).

5.1.2 From BBC Knowledge to BBC Four

The growing culture of audience research within the BBC, and its understanding of audience segmentation in a multichannel environment required a prompt response in terms of designing channels with a level of content specialisation, as UKTV testified. However, as the commercial

venture of non-BBC branded channels proved unsuccessful for delivering public service, and the “market failure” models of *Arena* and *Horizon* were not viable as niche channel contenders, a need for a broader family of BBC branded channels became a more viable strategy. The next step saw the emergence of BBC Knowledge and BBC Choice. As Keating explains,

News 24 was the first channel to launch, and then... we launched BBC Choice and BBC Knowledge, as relatively tentative moves into expanding the suite of the BBC public channels. So tentative that it was not entirely clear that there should be the separate channel called BBC Choice – the original thought had been to use the digital spectrum to use the side channel alongside BBC One or BBC Two, which was sort of like a red button service so you could go deeper. And, in the end this thinking crystallised with us actually launching a channel called BBC Choice, and then not long after, a low budget educational channel called BBC Knowledge (interview, 12 March 2010).

BBC Knowledge was launched in 1999 alongside BBC Choice as a first step towards expanding public service broadcasting into the digital market. Designed as an educational channel, Knowledge’s remit was much broader than its niche commercial, archive-based predecessors, UK Arena and UK Horizon. However, from its early days the debates were, according to Light, saturated with dilemmas about how to put the BBC’s educational mission into practice, and more interestingly, how to distinguish its educational mission from other channels’ factual provision (2004:228), given that the channel’s focus was in broadcasting of the BBC’s factual genres of history and arts. BBC Knowledge eventually “clarified its identity in genre terms, moving away from the looser definition of ‘educational’, which could be applied across genres, to one of factual, making it clearer what the audience might expect to receive” (Light, 2004:231). Both BBC Knowledge and BBC Choice emerged at the very early stage of digital television, with audience ratings being a low priority, which Light identifies as one of the key reasons for their failure (ibid.). But the channels were also, as Keating explains, “very very low cost... and very inventive in terms of what they could do with their budgets, but they had very little cut through, and I think that the BBC wasn’t quite sure what it wanted from either of them” (interview, 12 March 2010). BBC Knowledge, specifically, was “running on probably £7 or £8 million a year”

(ibid.). Additionally, both channels were constructed and perceived internally as “side channels” rather than as channels in their own right (Light, 2004:215). Indeed, there continues to be a fine line between being a “side” channel such as BBC Knowledge and a “complimentary” channel such as BBC Four, as demonstrated later in this chapter (see the section 5.3 *Four and Two: Extending and Exiling Cultural Value*).

BBC Knowledge was one of the channels that relied on themed scheduling in the evenings and weekends, but it ultimately transpired that the channel’s identity was not sufficiently defined. Keating identifies Mark Thompson’s appointment as BBC Director of Television in 2000 as a turning point in the development of a more long-term approach to digital services. Eventually, it was decided that a dedicated public service channel was needed that would replace BBC Knowledge by having a clearer target audience (over 35s) and which, according to one of Light’s interviewees, “sat somewhere between its educational roots on the one hand and a more highbrow documentary based cultural service on the other” (2004:232). The decision, therefore, was ultimately to rebrand channels in a way that would link them more efficiently to the analogue channels as well as “break the brand associations relating to the low quality and production values that had plagued [BBC Choice and BBC Knowledge] in their earlier incarnations (Light, 2004:150). This branding and positioning can be seen as paving new ways of articulation for public service values, with the channel’s numerical labels carrying specific identity traits (see Appendix 5). Crucially, the conception of BBC Four was, according to Keating, informed by the debates over the decline of arts programming (see Chapter 4) and the thought that there should be a dedicated channel that would cater for not only knowledge and education, but also become primarily a cultural service. Nevertheless, by the time that BBC Four emerged in 2002, the sense that the channel had a “fig leaf” function permeated, as the pressures for more challenging programming were mounting. This clearly demonstrated a very complex accumulation of meaning and interaction between old public service values, new branding practices, and an increased focus on market and economic frameworks.

5.2 Branding and Creative Authoring of BBC Four's Cultural Value

VG: I am using the example of BBC Four to research how cultural value has been rethought...Richard Klein, Controller of BBC Four: Ok... What does cultural value mean? VG: Well, I am actually here to ask you that question... (interview, 18 March 2010)

Born details in *Uncertain Vision* (2004) how structural changes initiated in the Birt era such as the centralisation of the commissioning process offer an important context to understanding the shifts in cultural value. The expansion of the BBC into the digital spectrum was accompanied by the separation of commissioning programmes from being an individual channel's responsibility to becoming an overarching structure across the whole television portfolio. This was first initiated with Birt's "Broadcast/Production split", which was the starting point for internal restructuring. The "broadcast" section consisted of commissioners, working closely with channel controllers, schedulers, audience research and marketing, and other platforms, amongst others. With the arrival of Greg Dyke and his initiative of "One BBC", the commissioning processes became genre driven, allocating commissions across the channel portfolio. The design of the portfolio was also there to "help to communicate to commissioners and producers that the BBC would have a set of clearly defined channels and services, each performing a particular role for the BBC" (Light, 2004:88), which effectively led to the move away from an offer-led system, and towards a demand-led system (Ellis, 2000a:132). BBC Four Head of Planning and Scheduling, Don Cameron, clarifies the shift as "the commissioners are facing largely the suppliers of programmes – producers; and the channels are largely facing the audience, so in many ways, one is about getting programmes made, and we are about what happens once they are made, the purpose they are put to, the use they have" (interview, 10 March 2010). While commissioners have now "taken over" from what was traditionally the producer's role in order to meet the needs of the portfolio, the individual channels are expected to editorialise, and create "a channel positioning statement, channel distinctiveness and the key audience objectives for the channel." (Light, 2004:77)

This link between major restructuring and the purpose of the channel was evident in the early conceptualising stages of BBC Four. The internal pitch document for BBC Four, produced in May 2000⁶⁵, serves as an apt example of how the planning of BBC Four's cultural value became articulated as a branding exercise. Although it was largely a strategic document exploring the transition from BBC Knowledge, the internal pitch document nevertheless stated BBC Four's cultural purpose while also looking into possible ideological threats to the channel (e.g. Sky). Crucially, the document elucidates the channel as initially conceptualised to be a carrier of "original thoughts, arts and ideas", a "cross of arts, media and political thought" offering an "immersive" viewing experience (in Keating, interview, 12 March 2010). Essentially, BBC Four's design as a culturally aspirational and ambitious expansion of the BBC Knowledge's educational remit was never separate from its Reithian mission, which became articulated through finding key words characteristic of branding practices.

BBC Trust's description of BBC Four's remit reflects that the channel's design as "an ambitious range of innovative, high quality output that is intellectually and culturally enriching, taking an expert and in-depth approach to a wide range of subjects" (November 2012). This gives BBC Four a clearly defined position in the BBC portfolio, which corresponds to a more narrow definition of its public service purpose, as a channel performing a specific role in transmitting culture. However, in questioning interviewees about BBC Four's cultural value, answers proved to expose the term as ungraspable or somewhat challenging in relation to how the channel's identity is defined. Reflecting on the reasons why difficulties emerged with the concept, Nick Fraser, the series editor of BBC Four's *Storyville* suggested that, "it is very hard... to analyse cultural value and the BBC, because they are very reluctant to discuss things in those terms" (interview, 2 February 2010). The reluctance Fraser is referring to was resonant in all interviews and also symptomatic of the discursive repositioning of the concept in policy debates (see Chapter 4). But the difficulty was more tangible in all the interviews so

⁶⁵ I had a brief glimpse at this at the time confidential document in the course of interviewing Roly Keating, BBC Four's founder and first controller, on 12 March 2010

that an understanding of the reasons behind the challenges raised by the concept of cultural value became imperative.

One of the possible interpretations for this disinclination to define the channel's programmes as culturally valuable was a perceived gap between the general meaning of the concept and actually putting it into practice; when asked how cultural value appeared in commissioning and scheduling decisions, the majority of respondents articulated the concept as untried in their everyday practices, preferring, instead, to use different attributes. In the words of the Acting Controller of BBC Four, Janice Hadlow (Controller, 2004 – 2008; Acting Controller, 2013 -):

Those are policy statements and strategic statements, but I think when you put those in practice they express themselves rather differently. (...) I had a very clear vision of what I should get BBC Four to do, and I wouldn't use the term cultural value myself, but nevertheless, that is what it amounted to, which I would probably express by saying that I believe profoundly in intelligent television (interview, 2 March 2010).

Hadlow's detachment from the trope of television's cultural value seems to point to the term being a marker of policy debates, and a discrepancy between its discursive use in strategy documents and the practice of day-to-day broadcasting activities. However, Hadlow's response also reveals a broader trend of evasiveness of engaging with evaluative language, while at the same time, demonstrating the necessity to find new qualifying terminology in order to link the concept of cultural value with the channel's brand identity. Indeed, both the BBC Trust's use of the phrase "intellectually and culturally enriching" (BBC Trust, 2012a), and Hadlow's use of the term "intelligent" presumably address the same type of television. While both instances represent a cautious reframing of terminology that wishes to distance itself from being associated with cultural hierarchy, Hadlow's choice of attributes also implicates the consequences of the rebranding practices taking place. But the emphasis on inclusivity and access, and the remains of an historical continuity of the public service ethos continue to feature highly:

I was very conscious I was a part of a very significant heritage; of which I would say I had benefited from myself as a younger viewer... I don't think you should take strategic documents quite as literally as that (Hadlow, interview, 2 March 2010).

John Das, BBC Four's Acting Channel Executive and the producer of its archive rich programme *Timeshift*, concurs:

I am not so sure that we literally think of "cultural value" – it may be the case that the commissioners of the channel, and the ways that the ideas are put forward to them, have that [concept] in the back of their minds. (...) I suppose that some things have a clearer sense of cultural value in that they have an obvious highbrow, art appeal... but it depends how you define cultural value (Das, interview, 10 March 2010).

The acknowledgement that there are different ways of conveying cultural value chimes with Hadlow's own need to stretch the definition of BBC Four programming away from cultural hierarchies. Yet comments made by both Das and Hadlow presuppose that cultural value continues to be inseparable from the category of "highbrow". Indeed, steering away from terminology that is associated with cultural hierarchy was evident in all my interviews, where attributes such as thoughtfulness and intelligence replaced the former Director General, Greg Dyke's provocative introduction of BBC Four as "unashamedly intellectual" (2005:234; see Chapter 4). This indicates a cautious distancing from a terminology laden with value judgements. Das explains:

I think that the channel is quite weary of how it presents itself. It would be very happy to describe itself as an intelligent channel, and that we are making intelligent programmes. I don't think we want to be seen as making intellectual programmes, because this has a certain kind of connotation with a particular group of people – it is not a very inviting term (interview, 10 March 2010).

The careful choice of phrasing, while indicating efforts invested towards cultural inclusivity, also signifies a psychology of self-regulation when communicating about values. How the values of BBC Four are articulated certainly carries broader implications of the discursive shift away from concerns of cultural evaluation, and towards an increasing level of engagement with the institution's legitimation as a bearer of national culture,

and more specifically, the channel's identity, which is refined and articulated through a discourse of *brand* values. With an expanded BBC television services comprising of eight distinct channels, the requirement to lead audiences across the channels has resulted in an increased emphasis on branding and the need to articulate a channel's identity. It is communicated through a careful selection of specific terms that are more to do with *positioning* the channel (Born, 2004:289) within the BBC portfolio. Given its reliance on terms such as "intelligent" or the BBC Four's early strapline, "a place to think", BBC Four can be therefore differentiated from BBC One as "the most popular" channel "offering a wide range of high quality programmes" (BBC Trust, 2012b), BBC Two offering "programmes of depth and substance" (BBC Trust, 2012b) and BBC Three giving audiences "innovative UK content featuring new UK talent" (BBC Trust, 2012b). As Hadlow explains, BBC Four's "original strapline was 'the place to think', and I think for that reason that was essentially that it had to be a highly distinctive channel which wore its intelligence proposition very visibly" (Hadlow, interview, 2 March 2010).

Branding of BBC Four arguably started with a process of defining the channel's discursive uniqueness, and its cultural value can be seen as negotiated through its identity; as Greg Dyke articulated, "over time each channel will develop its own *personality* and will increasingly be aimed at particular target audiences" (2005:235, my emphasis). Roly Keating, who launched BBC Four, unambiguously talks about the birth of a channel as a branding process; that is, "rebranding BBC Choice and BBC Knowledge" to create a "separate brand from BBC Two" (interview, 12 March 2010). Janice Hadlow, who followed on from Keating (2004 – 2008), expresses her version of the channel's authorship by finding key words for the channel:

Your job is to present a viewer with an identity, a joined-up picture if you like, of what the channel means, and you do that best, I think, through the programmes that you help commission, you do that through what the viewer sees on the screen, so all of that is a statement, if you like, of what the channel think is important. So that is your task, really, to do that in the framework of trying to find something that excites, challenges, entertains, surprises, all those sorts of key words (Hadlow, interview, 2 March 2010).

While the key words or brand values are consistently offered when attempting to define the channel as a “joined-up picture” of programmes, they change with controllers. Richard Klein, BBC Four’s controller from 2008 - 2013, although thinking that “the road from Roly to Janice to me doesn’t wriggle that much”, nevertheless offers a slightly different vision of the channel’s values through the assemblage of programmes, and his role in shaping it:

The point about running a channel, being a controller of a channel, and it applies to any channel but BBC Four more than most, is that you need to be both very opinionated *and* have a broad mind (laughs). So, I’ve got very particular tastes and viewpoints, but I hope I have a broad mind to allow other voices in. And it is like being an editor of a newspaper: I want to have lots of different things going on at one channel at one time. A little bit international; a bit domestic; some classical music; some contemporary; nice arts programme coming up; maybe some interesting comedy or some clever, witty up to date current thinking about the modern world through Charlie Brooker’s *Newswipe*; you know, these are all pieces of a puzzle (Klein, interview, 18 March 2010).

To Klein, who used to be the Head of Independent Factual Commissioning prior to his role as the controller of BBC Four (2008 – 2013), the range and diversity of the channel’s programmes is a priority, and the key to its (difficult to define) cultural value. But what is also emerging out of these articulations is symptomatic not only of branding discourses, but of a more specific change to do with the role of channel controllers. Born observes a shift in roles and responsibilities which she defines as *creatively authoring channels* (2004:289, my emphasis). Klein’s remark about the need to be “simultaneously opinionated and broad-minded” therefore resonates with what Born identifies as “a tension between authorship and marketing ‘science’” (ibid.). Channels in this sense can be seen as a controller’s unique vision or “opinion”, while simultaneously being “content packagers” (Light, 2004:136) treated as stable brands with their own discursive signatures. Thus, the manifestation of a channel’s cultural value is often ideologically framed by a selection of its representative programmes chosen to articulate the channel’s brand. It is perhaps best illustrated on the BBC Four commissioning page, which currently states that the channel “relishes big ideas and embraces

thought-provoking television - especially programmes that are made with wit, creativity and verve” (BBC, 2013c). A sample is chosen to serve as the channel’s “landmark programmes”; for example, a list of “definitive” specialist factual programme singles and series are represented by examples of “*Art Of Germany, Opera Italia, A Century of Fatherhood, Chemistry: A Volatile History* and *Writers In Their Own Words* which have become 'category-killers' for the channel” (ibid.). Indeed, the channel is seen as inviting filmmakers and producers of more challenging documentaries, such as Mark Kidel, the author of BBC Four’s Grierson awarded documentary, *Hungary 1956: Our Revolution* (TX 21 Nov 2007)⁶⁶ who was told, “BBC Four is for people like you. It is the channel for people like you to make films” (interview, 11 September 2009). The values of the channel, in other words, could be seen as being arrived at not only from the association with individual, or “landmark” programmes, but also with specific attributes, tone and the “type” of renowned television producers that serve as key qualities to define authorship of a digital channel controller.

In order to make BBC Four a marketable brand, attracting “big talent” to the channel, was and continues to be essential. This was, however, one of the more challenging tasks for BBC Four; as Don Cameron remembers, the channel was often stigmatised for being “too small for talent”: “There are some people... still.... They are relatively rare now, but there were a lot of them in early days, who felt that a digital channel was too small for them. That they should be on BBC One or Two or not at all... that has changed.” (interview, 10 March 2010). The change is evident with some of the more notable examples including Jonathan Ross’s three part series celebrating Asian film, *Asian Invasion* (BBC Four, 2006), *Stephen Fry and the Gutenberg Press* (BBC Four, 2008), Charlie Brooker’s *Screenwipe* (BBC Four, 2006 – 2008) and later on, *Newswipe*⁶⁷ (BBC Four, 2009 – 2010), are some of programme examples of that have been made once the channel had been already established. It is the channel’s budget limitations (coupled with its revised remit in 2011 – see

⁶⁶ The documentary commissioned for BBC Four received Grierson Award for Best History Documentary; Historical Film of the Year Award; and History Today Awards, in 2007

⁶⁷ Charlie Brooker moved from BBC Four to BBC Two with a series entitled *Week Wipe* (BBC Two, TX Jan – March 2013)

Chapter 1 and 4) which remain an issue in attracting big talent. For example, single dramas about great British female artists Gracie Fields, Margot Fonteyn and Enid Blyton - *Gracie!*, *Margot* and *Enid* (BBC Four 2009), commissioned for BBC Four as a part of the *Women We Loved* season (November 2009), attracted headlines such as “Low-budget projects attract high-value celebrities” (Variety, 2009).⁶⁸ The channel’s budget limitations remain tied in with its cultural promise, and are a key concern for filmmakers in terms of producing challenging content. Further strategies to cope with these limitations are problematised later in this chapter.

As demonstrated in Chapter 4, the public value test, inclusive of cultural value and quality measurements, can be seen as offering a pragmatic solution to this contradiction, but the tension is still exposed. However, the freedom to experiment and a space for creativity remain benefits for programme contributors and might be one of the BBC Four’s unique (although, arguably, underdeveloped) propositions, and one that actually attracts talent. According to Adam Tandy, the producer of the highly successful BBC Four comedy by Armando Iannucci, *The Thick of It*, what contributed to the series’ development and success was “a free reign to experiment, with the sum of money to do whatever we liked” (interview, 9 February 2010). Anthony Wall, the longstanding producer of the arts strand *Arena*, sees BBC Four as a welcome space for arts programming: “for me, when it came along, it was a very good thing because again there was a certain amount of freedom... I think that the BBC Two got much more constrained than it was.” (interview, 11 February 2010). Wall gives example of the season *Pinter at the BBC* (BBC Four, October – November 2002) and the one on Dennis Potter (BBC Four, December 2004) that allowed *Arena* to do extensive documentary programmes alongside introductions to the respective writers’ plays. The editorial space and freedom also offers opportunities for foreign language acquisitions, which became BBC Four’s most unlikely success story. The Saturday night scheduling of, in particular, Scandinavian dramas, starting with the Swedish series *Wallander*, and followed

⁶⁸ When asked why did she choose to portray the famous children’s writer for BBC Four, Bohnam-Carter deadpanned, “I did it for money” (Variety, 2009)

by the Danish crime series *The Killing* and political thriller series *Borgen*, attracted the growth of the audience by “more than threefold”, it was reported, “with a 2.9 per cent share of the audience in 2012 (compared with 0.9 per cent audience share in 2009)”⁶⁹. The allowance of space also extends to lesser publicised foreign language documentaries. As Fraser points out, “This was the first time that the BBC has shown documentaries from all over the world in really quite large numbers, and we were able to show the best documentaries from all over the world” (interview, 2 February 2010). The channel’s limited financial resources can be therefore seen as contributing to the justification of greater freedom and diversity of content, allowing for a cosmopolitan outlook of culture or a “cacophony of voices” (ibid.) which is its unique proposition.

5.3 Four and Two: Extending and Exiling Cultural Value

BBC Four’s reputation for quality is high and it covers knowledge, music and culture with depth and range. But it will need a clearer remit and focus alongside a re-positioned BBC Two. (BBC Trust, 2010:37)

As already explored in this chapter, Radio 3 and to some extent Radio 4 provided a model for BBC Four’s proposition in the family of channels; however, the strongest likeness of BBC Four is to be found with BBC Two. The launch of BBC Four was marked by its first schedule being simulcast on BBC Two on 2 March 2002, and the two channels have been allied ever since. Much as BBC Knowledge was perceived as a “side” channel, BBC Four’s remit was defined in relation to BBC Two, with the BBC strategy review expressing that the two channels need “complimentary commissioning” (Yentob, 2010). From the outset, however, the perception of the relationship between the two channels was not perceived as complimentary. To some, BBC Four was “a lifeboat for disgruntled BBC Two viewers, especially those attracted by the stripling’s resemblance to the earlier, more ambitious BBC

⁶⁹ Source: BBC Media Centre, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/latestnews/2013/bbc-four-acquisitions.html> (last retrieved in April 2014)

Two of the late 1960s and 1970s” (Gilbert, 2007). Indeed, according to the BBC internal communication in 2002,

BBC Two is now a mainstream channel right in the middle of a 600 channel universe. No longer at the edge of a five channel world, these days our job is to do the really big ideas differently, for people who want pleasurable and rewarding television (in Light, 2004:142).

The repositioning of BBC Two as a more popular, mainstream channel, which took place before the launch of BBC Four, nevertheless continues to provoke ill sentiment making BBC Four something of a straw man, with comments that BBC Four has, for instance, “robbed BBC Two of its identity”⁷⁰ not being unusual. Discussions about merging the two channels became commonplace in the public domain, with some arguing that,

[F]or BBC Four's ethos to prosper and for BBC Two to regain its oomph, the most sensible course of action for the corporation is to merge BBC Two and BBC Four. BBC Two already shows programmes previously broadcast on BBC Four and indeed on BBC Three. The result - a reinvigorated BBC Two - will be greater than the sum of its parts. (McLean, 2007).

There has long been a sense of uncertainty about the lasting value of a digital channel, so much so that the merger between BBC Two and BBC Four had been seriously considered in January 2010 during a review of BBC operations, but so far, this option has been ruled out (Conlan, 2010). The outcome, however, seems to put BBC Four into a position even more dependent on BBC Two, as the digital channel's remit is essentially relational to BBC Two as,

[I]t should frequently provide factual and arts programming that compliment output on BBC Two, by adding greater depth and context. The channel should not develop at the expense of music and arts programmes on BBC One and BBC Two (BBC Trust, 2012a).

This complimentary commissioning and scheduling process, Light points out, allows for cross-promotion and “common junctions”, which allow “audience flow from one BBC channel to another” (2004:123). Internally too, the two channels are also linked by the job of the BBC Four controller which is seen as a stepping stone towards controlling BBC Two. Both the founding

⁷⁰ This is just an example comment that can be found on a TV Forum thread, “Should we scrap BBC Three and BBC Four” (e.g. digitalspy.co.uk)

controller of BBC Four, Roly Keating (BBC Four, 2002 – 2004) and subsequently Janice Hadlow (BBC Four, 2004 – 2008), followed up their BBC Four post by being the controller of BBC Two (Keating, BBC Two, 2004 – 2008; Hadlow, BBC Two, 2008 – current; and since 2013, Hadlow is also the acting channel controller for BBC Four). The symbiotic relationship between the channels is extended by sharing programmes and while one of its purposes is to encourage collaboration, nevertheless, the two channels' unique relationship is uneven, with Four, and its capped low budget, clearly being in a supporting role.

But what kind of qualities, value systems and more specifically, programmes are shared between the two channels? Firstly, the changes of “internal cultural geography” and the sense of BBC Four opening a space for public service values has been one of the central arguments. BBC Four's chief architect, its first controller Roly Keating, explains that the relationship emerged out of,

... the thought which we debated in various presentations, that BBC Two was carrying too much, having to do too many things, and that if we were to seriously reach young audiences, we needed a separate brand, that it is not enough to have zones or slots on the main channels. But equally, that there was scope to do more at the most culturally ambitious end of what the BBC can do, that even BBC Two couldn't do with its mixed schedule (Keating, interview, 12 March 2010).

The remit of BBC Four is a “a broad range of culturally enriching and innovative programming including philosophy and ideas, science and nature, politics, social issues, art, performance, music, film, media and news – in particular global news and current affairs” (BBC Trust, 2012a). However, it is not clear how the meaning of “a broad range of culturally enriching and innovative programming” is distinctive from BBC Two. BBC Two's remit of a “mixed-genre channel appealing to a broad adult audience with programmes of depth and substance” is a broader definition than BBC Four's narrower remit “to reflect a range of UK and international arts, music and culture” (See Appendix 5). The channel aims to cater for arts, culture and ideas⁷¹ and is

⁷¹ The emphasis of culture and ideas is even stronger following the BBC strategy review in 2010

often defined as the “highbrow ghetto” (e.g. Robinson, 2006) of BBC Two which relies on audiences with cultural capital. Richard Klein (BBC Four controller, 2008 – 2013) argues that what distinguishes the channel is not to do with the height of the brow of its programmes:

I think that is an overly simple view of what it is like... because in many ways, there is plenty of highbrow/lowbrow content on all the channels – we are all multi-genre, and there is always overlap, as there should be when you are running a portfolio of channels. (...) There should be overlap between four channels, because we want to move audiences about. We like the idea of audiences on [BBC] One maybe listening to [BBC] Four or vice versa. If there are chasms, then they won't... than there is no contact? How would that benefit a licence fee payer? There wouldn't be a good way of culturally enriching people's lives... but clearly, yes, BBC One has a job to do in terms of drama, entertainment, comedy, principally, some factual and BBC Two is principally a factual channel – and a very, very good one at that. [...] I guess BBC Four is trying to do something different, but not in competition or opposition to other channels. We would tackle some subject matters that other channels wouldn't do necessarily, but they are still mainstream subjects (Klein, interview, 18 March 2010).

The confusion over this distinction is justified by the need and the opportunities for additional space for cultural expression that is one of BBC Four's strongest propositions. According to Adam Tandy, producer of BBC Four's political comedy *The Thick of It* (2004 – present), “BBC Four offered the chance to make things the way BBC Two *used* to do it. You know, when Attenborough commissioned what he fancied... when BBC first started in the 1960...” (interview, 9 February 2010). This sense of freedom is perceived by producers and controllers alike, with Richard Klein explaining:

You are interestingly liberated – well I am – by sometimes not being so worried about audiences in that way. It is a liberation which ironically, and counter-intuitively generates audiences. Because we feel brave. Because, we go... we can just do this. Let's just do this. It is kind of interesting to audiences, because nobody else does that thing on television. Because of the tyranny of the overnights, because of the need to drive audiences for market reasons, for advertising, understandably – or in the case of BBC One or BBC Two, big audiences are important because they justify the kind of money that we are spending – and that is right. BBC Four, we might argue, has a different kind of cultural role, to take risks with breadth, with perhaps more arcane, stranger things (Klein, interview, 18 March 2010).

But on the flipside, the freedom of space also brings about involuntary exile for series and strands, such as *Storyville* or *Arena*, that were squeezed out of the over-commissioned BBC Two. In what is to follow, I will examine the opportunities and setbacks of both providing the space for growth as well as for exile, and whether the rationale for shifting programmes to and from BBC Two is also implying normative changes in cultural value.

5.3.1 “BBC Four on Two”: Incubating Intelligent Entertainment

BBC Four produced some entertainment programmes that never made it to BBC Two (*The Late Edition*, 2005 - 2008; *I’ve Never Seen Star Wars*, 2009 – after the Radio 4 version; and *It’s Only A Theory*, 2009). But there are also examples of entertainment programmes, such as the documentary on the organisation team of 2012 London Olympics, *Twenty Twelve* (written and directed by John Morton, BBC Four, 2011), which ended up on BBC Two (first broadcast in March 2012 with the last episode aired a few days before the Olympics opening ceremony). Similarly, *Lead Balloon* (BBC Four, 2006; BBC Two, 2007 - present) and *The Thick of It* (BBC Four, 2005 – 2009; BBC Two, 2009 - present), both comedy series originally developed for BBC Four and both success stories, are two cases that need to be explored in order to understand the rationale behind BBC Four’s role of incubator of programmes for BBC Two. It is even more pertinent in the light of the 2010 BBC strategy review, with its announcement that there “will be a reduction in entertainment and comedy on the channel. Its remit will continue to evolve in light of a successfully re-shaped BBC Two” (BBC Trust, 2010:23).

BBC Four unveiled Armando Iannucci’s political comedy *The Thick of It* in May 2005, which shortly became a landmark series absorbed with BBC Four’s brand values as a producer of “intelligent” comedy. Starting as a low budget, innovative series that follows a tradition of satire started by *Yes, Minister* (1980 – 1984) and filmed in a mock fly-on-the-wall style, it takes direct inspiration from the New Labour’s obsession with spin and news management. Its producer, Adam Tandy, offers a detailed account of the

journey the comedy made from a low budget project on a small digital channel to the success it achieved (even branching into a feature film spin-off, *In the Loop*, 2008, nominated for an Oscar for original screenplay in 2010) and assigns it to a combination of Yentob's and Keating's instinct, Iannucci's talent, a willingness to take risks and the freedom to experiment *because* of its low budget. Tandy explains the attraction of "starting small":

You don't really want to expose yourself to the pressures of having to deliver something together ... together with the comedy audience, without having worked it through. So although we thought it would be a good show, we definitely wanted to be left alone to do what we did. And Roly had made available the sum of money (Tandy, interview, 9 February 2010).

Keating concurs, explaining that *The Thick of It* matched BBC Four's exacting requirements:

It was very particular in a way that it was aggressively experimental with a low budget, and commissioned with low expectations for audience figures, but a strong hunch that you had an exceptionally talented and ambitious individual in the shape of Armando and a very clear vision. So in that sense it was commissioned in a way that Richard Klein and I commissioned documentaries for BBC Four which was believing that he was a unique voice that had a talent to do something different, and if they are prepared to work with limited resources, then, the channel exists to give them the opportunity for that. You know, with articulating that that was the thought process that would run through one's head in a conversation one would have with Armando over what became *The Thick of It*. That is not what conditions every commissioning decision on BBC Four – it is pragmatic channel that even in its unique nature, it has to do lots of different things: it has to have a reasonably broad audience appeal; it needs to, particularly in the first ten years, grow; it should always be on the growth trajectory. Because it needed to consolidate, it needed to properly find an audience, and maintain it (Keating, interview, 12 March 2010).

The balancing act between BBC Four's pragmatism and its risk-taking was also reflected in the budget. Resources were limited, with Tandy quoting around £100,000 per episode for the first season – "a fifth of the price for that sort of drama". However, he adds, "that was born completely out of necessity, but it did create a performance environment that the actors found challenging and it suited the material. I think that was the key thing. The look

and feeling was right, because it had politicians hide all the time, not to be caught out” (interview, 9 February 2010). It found its beat and quickly became critically lauded as one of the best political satires after *Yes, Minister* (although Tandy insists that “it is not satire – it is comedy”) after only three episodes:

The critics loved it instantly. We’d obviously found a method and a tenor that was absolutely in tune with how the people felt. Politicians were the same way. The word of mouth was really so good right from the beginning. And the stories were good. The scripts were great. Armando spent a long time finding exactly what kind of problems ministers face and what make them squirm and... if not stupid, make them look at least consumed (Tandy, interview, 9 February 2010).

BBC Four broadcast a second three-part series later in 2005 which was followed by two specials two years later - *The Rise of the Nutters* and *Spinners and Losers*. All episodes of both the 2005 and 2007 seasons were repeated on BBC Two. Tandy explains that the BBC Two wanted the show “because of the reviews... not because of the ratings... simply because of the reaction” (ibid.). The measure of critical success, however, was enough to also create new challenges –BBC Four was rapidly becoming too small a channel, although Iannucci and Tandy were still keen to keep it as a home,

[B]ecause of the success of the programme, [I realised] I was going to have to start rewarding writers and the cast at an appropriate level, because I wouldn’t be able to book them for the fees I got them for the first three. So I managed to find the way of doing something called reversed co-production. Basically, I went to BBC Two, and said: look, it is going to cost you more to repeat these programmes, it is going to cost you more to repeat them as delivered from BBC Four, why don’t you commission them for BBC Two, but show them on BBC Four first. BBC Four then pays a licence fee to everybody, for the right to show them on digital channel, even though it was premiered on BBC Four (Tandy, interview, 9 February 2010).

The financing of the new series was healthier, reliant on complex repackaging and sharing between the two channels, and the value of the programme was measured by its cumulative reach conditioned by programme repeats. As Tandy wittily remarks, “in true BBC tradition, they were trying to build an audience by repeating the series and then showing a new episode” (ibid.). But developing comedy in the first place was an exception rather than

a rule; an explicitly stated budget for comedy was just not in BBC Four's remit (see Chapter 4). The health and vitality of BBC Four might have been an act of authorship by the BBC Four controller, which was likely to be short-lived, given the BBC's 2010 strategy review decision to cut down comedy on the channel and to increase it for BBC Two⁷². While this can be interpreted as the mere streamlining of BBC Four to take it back to its original remit, it can also be understood as potentially problematic. BBC Two's advantage to make bigger budget programmes still does not resolve its lack of space in peak time:

Armando would have been pleased to have made the link to BBC Two, but the problem I think, was that the BBC Two was very over-commissioned, it always had been (...) You can't go at 10 o'clock; you have to go at 11.15... and it is not brilliant... So, we were sort of trying to make the budget work to create the programme with a decent budget, to allow us a bit of variety to have it commissioned for BBC Two but to have the programmes available ready to go on BBC Four first (Tandy, interview, 9 February 2010).

The series was again re-commissioned for BBC Two for its third season, resulting in a more than doubling of the episodes from three to eight. A BBC Two relocation was claimed to have taken place after its highly successful and critically acclaimed film spin-off, *In The Loop* (2008), a debut cinematic experience for its creator, Armando Iannucci⁷³.

The success of *The Thick of It* is, to a lesser extent, comparable to the case study of another BBC Four comedy, *Lead Balloon* (BBC Four/BBC Two, 2006 – 2011), although *Lead Balloon* arrived at BBC Two much more hastily. Produced by Open Mike Productions, the sitcom was the brainchild of Pete Sinclair and the comedian Jack Dee, the latter also playing his alter-ego version of a disgruntled comedian, Rick Spleen. The series was first repeated, and then switched over to BBC Two before the show finished its run on BBC Four. The rationale behind this move was the popularity and ratings of its first episode, with viewing figures of 383,000 representing, at the time of

⁷² BBC Two will be given a £25m budget boost by 2013 – which is half of the annual budget for BBC Four, to "establish a stronger and more distinctive role in comedy, supporting the cult classics of the future as well as new comedy with the potential to become the mainstream hits of tomorrow." (BBC Trust, 2010)

⁷³ *In The Loop*, based on *The Thick of It*, was nominated for an Oscar in 2010 for the best original screenplay

broadcast, the highest ever rating for a comedy show on BBC Four (in Holmwood, 2006). Furthermore, this swift decision quadrupled the ratings, as the first repeated episode entitled *Rubbish* received 2.6 million viewers on BBC Two (ibid.). Since then, the series has been adopted by BBC Two as its home. Hadlow, who commissioned it for BBC Four, said, “we were very lucky to get a talent such as Jack Dee” (interview, 2 March 2010).

The talent is claimed to be at the centre of it all, and it does not only come in shape of comedies. Cameron lists the recent discoveries, such as Middle Ages authority, Professor Robert Bartlett, who did *Inside of the Medieval Mind* for BBC Four (2008) “and he is doing a series on the Normans on BBC Two. Ian Stewart, Paul Rose, you know... have number of presenters with shows like *The Thick of It...*” (interview, 10 March 2010). A branded area on BBC Two, “BBC Four on Two” was used for a while to promote the digital channel and was characterised by talent driven content, including *Mark Lawson Talks to Bill Oddie* (11 Oct 2004, 12 midnight), or *Jonathan Ross in Search of Steve Ditko* (TX 29 July 2008, 11:20 pm, BBC Two), a documentary in which the popular TV presenter tracks down the reclusive comic book artist, the creator of *Spiderman*. But whether talent alone can sustain a difficult balance between innovation and entertainment, or whether it is necessary to follow the path of the commercial channels in terms of this “logic of safety” (Gitlin, 1994:74) is perhaps a much bigger question.

5.3.2 “BBC Two on Four”: *Storyville*, *Arena* and New Frontiers for Old Values

It might be tempting to believe that the “reverse flow” of programmes moving from what used to be terrestrial BBC Two to digital BBC Four is just another brand exercise to help boost the value of the younger channel. However, it is evident that relegating certain programmes to their new home at BBC Four was informed by a different set of priorities. There is no such thing as “Two on Four” although, in the early days of BBC Four, the BBC was accused of shifting its more highbrow output to the new channel (Herman, 2003). Certainly for the authored documentary strand *Storyville*, and the long

standing arts programme series, *Arena*, offering more space for showing longer programmes was a welcome shift, but it also had harsh limitations, reflected in budget cuts and a drop in ratings.

5.3.2.1 Save Storyville!

Storyville, a critically acclaimed BBC documentary strand with a remit to show broad and diverse documentaries that nurture international filmmaking talent and world perspectives. Some examples are Kevin McDonald's Oscar winning *One Day in September* (2000) and *Darwin's Nightmare* (Hubert Sauper, 2006), which won a Grierson in the same year. The strand began on BBC Two in 1994 as a series called *Fine Cut*, starting with around eight documentaries a year. The original name was "buried" as its editor Nick Fraser "wanted to create a brand on BBC Two where you could show really good documentaries about our lives, international documentaries, but also British ones" (interview, 2 February 2010). When BBC Four was launched, and the documentary series expanded from the original eight documentaries per year to sixteen, and soon after, increasing to over thirty documentaries a year. Its series editor, Nick Fraser, names Mark Thompson and Roly Keating as key supporters and offers a brief overview of the changes that took place:

The great opportunity for *Storyville* comes with BBC Four starting because it was always difficult to get these programmes scheduled on BBC Two, because they take up – they are quite long – they take up quite a lot of the evening. And as soon as you got BBC Four, you could show many more of them, you have much better choice, but obviously, the audiences would be much smaller. And the audiences for the first years of BBC Four were very small indeed. However, this actually was the first time that the BBC had shown documentaries from all over the world in really quite great numbers, and we were able to show the best documentaries from all over the world – the ones we could buy, the ones we could co-produce (Fraser, interview, 2 February 2010).

The increase in the number of documentaries was shortly followed by further cuts until the number settled down to 25 documentaries per year, organised in "batches of six" with a permanent BBC Four slot on Monday

nights. And while the number of documentaries was stabilised, an uneasy compromise was reached, with the series' transfer to BBC Four leading to the dramatic reduction of viewing figures. The drop in audience ratings, according to Fraser, was sometimes tenfold:

Good, well performing documentaries on BBC Two would get one to two million. Now, the level of the audience depends actually on whether it is in English or subtitles, largely, but as soon as you get down to BBC Four, although the shows are transmitted many times on BBC Four, they have four or five time showings, it is like... 200,000, 300,000, 400,000 are very good numbers. So, the ratings are much, much smaller, but you are offering people a huge range of films rather than just a few (Fraser, interview, 2 February 2010).

With a limited budget, the attraction of *Storyville* for filmmakers is that they will be shown on the BBC, but “what is difficult is that the benefits are not huge, and obviously, they get disappointed by the size of the audiences, which is nothing I can do about.” (ibid.) Only a few make it back to BBC Two these days, such as *Man on Wire*⁷⁴ (March, 2009), the documentary film about Phillipe Petit who tightrope-walked between the Twin Towers of New York's World Trade Centre in 1974 which was a big success for Fraser, or *RFK* (Grubin, 2004):

It is an extremely emotional show about what a great man Robert Kennedy was. Every time that show is on BBC Two after *Newsnight*, we get enormous ratings. Like, for BBC Two at that time, 300,000, or 400,000 (...) that is your problem on BBC Two, you've got a certain type of people who watch *Newsnight*, and they will follow it on. I mean, I think the real problem about these documentaries is that there is no ideal slot for them on the BBC. So the best place for them to go is on BBC Four, you know, and they are then shown on other bits of the BBC. That is the best (Fraser, interview, 2 February 2010).

Storyville has been working under serious budget restraints, which, according to Fraser, causes dissatisfaction globally and has forced the series to reconsider 90% of its documentaries as co-productions. Although Fraser feels that the “BBC's presence makes it possible for the filmmakers to get more money from our resources” and that his role is that of “investor and entrepreneur on behalf of filmmakers and the BBC” (interview, 2 February

⁷⁴ The documentary was in fact commissioned by the BBC Four controller, Richard Klein (2008 – 2013) while still the Head of Independent Factual Commissioning,

2010), the programme is wrought with internal struggles to justify low ratings to both filmmakers and BBC management. Moreover, the seriousness of its budget restraints escalated in 2007 during the BBC's internal spending review which proposed that *Storyville*'s budget cuts add up to 60% - from £2.2 million to £1 million, threatening the collapse of the entire series (Usborne, 2008)⁷⁵. The budget was consequentially restored, but the rationale behind this crisis is still uncertain:

If you are asking why BBC did this, it is still not clear to me. (...) They gave us a fewer slots, but they restored the budget roughly, per slot. You know, this is the plan, to cut *Storyville* back, in such a way that we couldn't coproduce anything - we had to buy everything. And I was told, which I tend to believe, that is either only a transitional plan, or that actually it was a way that people at the BBC were getting more money out of the system, because they thought that cuts on *Storyville* would be restored anyway. So I have been told both those things, which one is correct, I don't know. I mean, the most important thing for me is that the cuts were restored. And I think that it also shows that there are a huge number of fans that are prepared to sign up (Fraser, interview, 2 February 2010).

The strand has survived so far, and its "cacophony of competing voices" (Fraser, interview, 2 February 2010) and cosmopolitan outlook offers a surviving space for diversity, authorship, and innovation in public service broadcasting, thanks to (or in spite of?) being on BBC Four:

I would be much happier if all those shows were... 25 shows – on BBC Two. That was never going to happen. The offer was: do you want to make these shows work on BBC Four? To which my answer was, of course – it's a no brainer. Of course you want to do that. Because my aim has always been to show the very best programmes you can find, but show them in enough numbers that you can show, you can convey to people how many good documentaries there are around (Fraser, interview, 2 February 2010).

5.3.2.2 BBC and Arena: Cultural Institution or Market Failure?

With the demise of the terrestrial version of the *South Bank Show* in 2009, *Arena* remains the oldest established arts documentary strand on

⁷⁵ The response to this crisis was a petition "Save Storyville" conducted online, attracting more than 3,500 signatures, mostly from television and film industry, including high profile filmmakers such as Werner Herzog, who stated that it would be "a catastrophe"

British television. Launched in October 1975 on BBC Two and running for the past 35 years under its series editor Anthony Wall, it has been a stronghold for authored documentaries, critical acclaim and the refuge of aspiring and famous filmmakers alike. Its founding producers were Alan Yentob, now Creative Director of the BBC, and Mark Kidel, producer and director, who remembers the series' conception as a pioneering art programme which wanted to break the tradition of arts television being "radio with pictures". "The lack of visual language, and the dependence on presenters (...) it wasn't using the image as a visual medium, or very little, not enough. (...) I pioneered, I decided we would have no presenter, we'd just make a magazine programme with a voice" (Kidel, interview, 11 Sept 2009). The result is series programmes that step out of the narrow definition of arts TV, with distinctive, authored approaches such as Anthony Wall's study of the fascination that surrounds Frank Sinatra's most famous song *My Way* (1979), or Nigel Finch's exploration of New York's landmark artists' haunt, *Chelsea Hotel* (1981). John Wyver summarises the value of the series as "irreverent, imaginative films colliding great characters with submerged skeins of cultural theory, boundless curiosity with a delight in every kind of surprise" (2007:59). Wall, looking back, sees the creative output in a more playful way: "Nigel Finch and I were highly literate and concerned, but honestly and truly, our principle was to make something that could come from the arts area, but be really entertaining, and surprising, and make people want to watch" (interview, 11 February 2010). *Arena* is a cultural establishment in its own right, steadily attracting critical acclaim and high-profile contributors such as Martin Scorsese, who authored *Arena's* two part documentary on Bob Dylan, *No Direction Home* (2005), or Clint Eastwood's biography of *Johnny Mercer: The Dream is On Me* (2010).

Following UK *Arena's* withdrawal, the launch of BBC Four provided a new platform for *Arena* as a "showcase for occasional, high-profile 'specials' in the BBC Two and BBC Four schedules" (Wyver, 2007:59), but while its cultural value endures, the scope of its original output – regardless of the extra space offered by BBC Four – seems to be reluctantly withering away. The series used to make over twenty original documentaries a year,

broadcast weekly, until 1994 when the first round of budget cuts took place. Wall has “lost count” of how many rounds there were; in 2006, *Arena* was making six or seven a year (Wyver, 2007:82) but the last “round” took place in 2008, reducing *Arena* to five hour budget split across BBC Two (three hours) and BBC Four (two hours). When asked what the rationale behind the cuts is, Wall offers:

That it is necessary to reduce the number of slots that you have for saving exercises of one kind or other, where you don't see where that money that belonged to you goes - you know that it goes somewhere else. I am sure that they are million of things that they go to: ten years ago there was no iPlayer, there wasn't anything other than BBC One and BBC Two (...) I am not privileged this information and to get to the nitty-gritty of that – that would also be incredibly time consuming. So what I am interested in is making the films. And so that, as long as it is possible to do them by being editorially free, then I would continue to do it (Wall, interview, 11 February 2010).

Although the budget cuts started taking place in the Birt era, the opening up of BBC Four as a new space for arts and culture programmes has not contributed to more space for origination. BBC Four has a remit to “broadcast at least 100 hours of new arts and music programmes each year” (BBC Trust, 2009, my emphasis)⁷⁶ to which *Arena* contributes only two hours of new programmes. Wall argues that “we are not going to be anything other than a small percentage in terms of hours on television, if that is the way you assess it” (interview, 11 February 2010). Indeed, for Wall, the value of *Arena* remains in its incalculable, innovative approaches to culture and art, although this approach to filmmaking, evoking the core public service values, might be seen by some as an extinct form of idealism belonging to a different era of the BBC. No matter, the budget, however limited, does not reflect on the quality of programmes:

It is not like each documentary has the same amount of money (...) it is how much you need to spend on a given film. And there is absolutely no correlation on how much something costs and how

⁷⁶ This specification is no longer present in the more recent BBC Four service license document, issued in November 2012, but it was relevant at the time of the interview with Anthony Wall, as it is useful in terms of understanding *Arena*'s qualitative and quantitative contribution to the channel's innovative arts TV output

good it is. *My Way* cost virtually nothing. And some of the best ones cost a fortune (Wall, interview, 11 February 2010).

However, Wall concedes, much like *Storyville*, most *Arena* films are now co-produced: “put it like this: we couldn’t do this if it weren’t for co-productions... so there is no way that we could turn out the stuff at the level that we do without co-production money” (ibid.) For example, *Arena*’s acclaimed *Searching for the Wrong-Eyed Jesus* (BBC Four, TX 23 January 2006) was a “three way co-production, with the director’s (Andrew Douglas) own company, and the company that supported him and us (Anonymous Content)” (interview, 11 Feb 2010). An institutional aversion to risk taking, and the perpetual crisis of programmes that provide challenging, critically acclaimed and cosmopolitan content such as *Storyville* and *Arena*, have resulted in a limited volume and restricted presence on BBC Two. The quiet exit of these programmes from the bigger channel is symptomatic of an opening up to the “internal cultural geography” of the BBC’s television channel portfolio, but it is also indicative of treating certain types of minority programmes as market failure. Richard Klein muses on the role of BBC Four in the mixed market multichannel environment:

I think that one of the BBC’s overall jobs is market failure. Of course it is. We are partly there to do all those sorts of things that other channels wouldn’t do. That is public service broadcasting. That is right. I suppose one has to accept that one of the challenges of market failure is why is it market failure out there? One of the reasons might be that people have the right not to watch our programmes. They can watch something else. (...) So, you could put all of BBC Four stuff on BBC Two, and ask yourself the question, is this still being watched by more people? It might not be, I don’t know, by the way. But it is true that if you put some of the market failure programmes on BBC Two, you are getting over time the same sort of numbers that we get. Do you follow me? In other words, times have moved on. We are in a multichannel world (Klein, interview, 18 March 2010).

5.4 Multichannel and Multiplatform BBC – Unlocking Spaces for Enduring Value?

The expansion of channels and platforms for BBC programmes has enabled different places for programmes to be accessed, conditioned new

possibilities for viewing, and subsequently, introduced the possibility of new, thought-provoking and challenging programmes. Approved by the BBC Trust in 2007, iPlayer became the UK's foremost internet television service that provides free live streaming and downloading of most of the BBC's radio and television programmes. According to Bennett, two years after the launch the number of requests for programme viewing has risen to "over 729 million" (2011:1). Programmes shown on iPlayer are no longer a part of a scheduled flow of channels; the interface design and database structure of iPlayer offers an equal prominence to every BBC television channel, and generates a selection of programme highlights from their original channel. Although just one of a few working digital media platforms in the UK, iPlayer holds a special representative value for a new kind of televisual experience out of context of its broadcasting flow, with more emphasis on content. Michael Grade introduced the service with reference to the Reithian slogan: "Information, education, entertainment, interaction, wherever, whenever, however you want it. We like to think of it as the 'You-can-run-but-you-can't-hide' strategy" (in Strange, 2011:137).

This complementary access to the BBC Four content has helped to attract different kinds of viewing quality and to "pull" in diverse viewers. Indeed, iPlayer has been at its most effective when offering "niche interest programmes" (Sweeney, 2008); it emerged that some of BBC Four's programmes work surprisingly well on iPlayer and for Hadlow, this is a part of the attraction for some viewers, who want to see programmes "outside of the connotation of the brand of BBC Four" (interview, 2 March 2010). According to Nick Fraser, a very good performance of some of the *Storyville* documentaries is somewhat unexpected: "it is a small number of people, 100,000 or whatever... but often they come up to number 2, number 3 or number 6 on iPlayer" (interview, 2 Feb 2010). Indeed, quite a few BBC Four programmes have made it in the top 100 most streamed programmes. 2008 saw the series *Dance Britannia* and the programme *Factory: Manchester from Joy Division to Happy Mondays* (BBC Four, 2008) included in the top 100 most rated programmes on iPlayer (Sweeney, 2008). In the same vein, given the examples of Charlie Brooker's [*Screenwipe*; *Newswipe*] programmes that

always do well on iPlayer, Cameron observes that “the iPlayer’s general rule is that it is used by young people more than old people, but the balance is changing inevitably”. What is critical is that “proportionately to the original audience, our audiences are higher. So I think that the top rated programme of the week tends to be 30,000 viewers – but it can get much higher than that” (Cameron, interview, 10 March 2010).

According to Hadlow, this success can be ascribed to the “long tail principle”⁷⁷; the programmes that do well, in other words, are the programmes that “may not have the immediacy but have a long shelf life” (interview, 2 March 2010). The phenomenon of the “long tail” was first spotted in online book and music selling, and indicates a “new economic model for media and entertainment industries” (Anderson, 2004), and according to Dabett, redistributing or re-versioning programme content can also be viewed as a service that “extends the shelf-life and reach of publicly funded productions, building on word-of-mouth publicity, and thereby help to maximize the value of public investment” (2009:810). Inductively, the long tail effect may mean the end of the “market failure” concept, although Keating is cautious in overplaying its function:

iPlayer has a modest role, I would say, because it only has a seven day window⁷⁸ at any one time, so what you have not ever really got is any evidence to test a long tail effect... you would never be able to publish a BBC Four documentary online for like a year to see whether it accumulates the audiences... so I wouldn’t overplay the iPlayer factor yet... (interview, 12 March 2010).

Keating’s vigilant address of the iPlayer platform’s contribution towards extending visibility of BBC Four programmes may be due to the arrival of another BBC platform. In 2010, the controller of BBC strategy, Alan Yentob introduced BBC Four as the “showcase for the best of our valuable archive content” (2010). In 2011, the BBC, well on its way with digitising its archive, quietly launched BBC Four *Collections*, a platform which offers

⁷⁷ A term most commonly associated to the online commercial sites which describe a retail strategy of selling small volumes of hard-to-find items to many customers instead of only selling large volumes of a reduced number of popular items. The total sales of this large number of “non-hit items” is called the *Long Tail*, the term popularised by Chris Anderson, the author and journalist of *Wired* magazine (issue 12.10, October 2004)

⁷⁸ iPlayer’s “window” has, since increased to two weeks

content on a permanent basis, this time specifically designed around BBC Four's programmes. Next to permanent collections designed for Radio 3 and Radio 4, these online streaming services of the television and radio archive are largely extensions of individual channels, designed to provide additional content (see Appendix 6). The provision of a rich, permanent, and free access archive collection was, in the case of BBC Four, done on the back of the channel's unique scheduling design of *seasons* (see Chapter 6), where the limited on-demand presence of some of the programmes expanded into editorialised, or "curated" online collections. For example, the *America* season (BBC Four, Autumn/Winter 2011) was extended into a collection entitled *All American*, with fifteen archive programmes given permanent online access. The copyright cleared programmes on permanent view include *Alistair Cooke's America: The First impact* (1972), *Arena: Chelsea Hotel* (1981), *Face to Face: Dr Martin Luther King Jr* (1961) and *Panorama: California 2000* (1966), to name but a few.

This extension of television content is part of a much longer trend in the television industry, and is a preferred strategy for commercial broadcasters to extend content through offering spin-offs and "making of" documentaries (e.g. Caldwell, 2008). Characterised by reusing the existing, copyright cleared content and extending its life cycle and visibility, the strategy has also been increasingly implemented across the BBC and its growing platforms. Nikki Strange defines this occurrence as a "bundled project" (2011:138). One of these larger scale "bundled" projects by the BBC was *The Big Read* (BBC, 2003; see Strange, 2011:139), which, in addition to the usual BBC channels and platforms, included other public organisations (charities, libraries, publishers) as partners, with the BBC acting as the "starting point for a variety of activities and involvements" (Murdock, 2004:11). In the case of BBC Four specifically, these "bundled" or "recycled" broadcasting activities are an everyday occurrence, albeit on a smaller scale. They are manifested through scheduling activities, such as the channel's seasons and themed evenings, which are designed to produce television "events" (see Chapter 6 for more detailed account). While the purpose of these events is very much linked to branding and marketing practices, they

are also time-defined; the presence of BBC Four's collection, also, crucially, represents a specific break from the evanescent nature of television programmes towards a prolonged, perpetual, on-demand occurrence. This lasting value of certain, copyright-cleared programmes, holds a promise that challenges some of the core issues of assessing and addressing cultural value of television as a time-defined medium (Ellis, 2007a; Uricchio, 2010, see Chapter 6). It allows easier access towards defining what is good, quality, golden age, or highbrow, as programmes have a clearer "lasting value and the best of them may be viewed and reviewed in the decades to come" (Keating, interview, 22 March 2010). In other words, the increased access to a much broader range of the television archive offers opportunities for new engagements with evaluative practices for re-thinking television as a legitimate cultural form. The increasingly used concept of the *curation* of television content is also a response to the lasting value of television programmes, as Keating, who was, until 2012, the Director of Archive Content (which aims to digitise the BBC archives for on demand use), explains that curating is becoming "necessary in the realm of mass-digitised content" (interview, 22 April 2010). With a multichannel world, the vastness of programme archives is incalculable and so a system of classification (that is, curation) is necessary. Using the analogy with paintings, Keating elaborates,

The world is full of millions, countless paintings and drawings and they are there, they are permanent, they are accumulated. And the only way to turn them into stories for exhibition is to extract them, make stories out of them, and that is a familiar, established skill. In the realm of the broadcasting, we don't know how to do this. We have one simple form of curation which is, we construct a linear schedule night after night, and that is how we curate our programmes. In an age where (...) a vast majority of our programmes are technically, possibly digitised, served somewhere on the server, clearly, there will be a need for the skill of a curator to be able to turn that into stories. That is – curating is not the only thing you can do with a vast, digitised archive... it is a new thing you can do (interview, 22 April 2010).

The internet emphasises altogether different qualities of television programmes, such as a sense of endurance and permanence. The potential for open access archives inevitably reveals new ways of thinking about cultural value. For Murdock, "this intervention accelerates a shift in public

broadcasting's working model of culture that has been gathering momentum for some time" (2004:10). Keating, comparing unlocking the BBC's digital archives to the peer-to-peer music streaming service Spotify, further suggests that curatorship will not be the exclusive privilege of controllers and schedulers:

I think that we will see as more and more of content of all kinds becomes published, and available, and linkable to, and screenable over digital screens. You will get new kinds of new curation and they won't all be professional, maybe the minority will be professional. Some of the very best kinds of curating we've seen are playlists. (...) We are not – the world is full of curators – our job is to move the BBC from an organisation which fails to publish most of its stuff, to the organisation which learns how to do the basic act of digitising, serving and publishing, and that will trigger new forms of reuse activity, discovery, and as I said, some of them will be curatorial, some of them will be editorial, some will be wholly consumer driven, some of them will be playful, some will be scholarly, some of them will be commercial, who knows – that is the beauty of this, that we are not trying to predict the future, but we are taking a gamble that there are certain kinds of *base level* publication principles and releases of material which will make unquantifiable differences in the future (Keating, interview, 22 April 2010).

5.5 Conclusion: Rethinking Cultural Value – Towards Lasting, Deep and Cumulative Value

In conclusion, as the BBC was founded as a value-imbued public institution (Born, 2004:372), the impact of the neoliberal turn, marketisation, and expansion into a multichannel and multiplatform marketplace has redefined the terms and conditions under which the cultural value of the channel and its programmes are viewed. BBC Four's cultural impact, and for that matter, the whole of the BBC as an institution, has become defined via its brand values, with a Reithian philosophy becoming the BBC's core brand followed by those of individual channels, programme strands and genres. The parameters and communicative frameworks in terms of "key-word" driven identities of channels (e.g. "intelligent, "culturally enriching") can be seen as increasingly contributing to the limited possibility of experimental and innovative programmes. On the other hand, these parameters have also

brought a level of freedom from taxing associations with the BBC's past elitist practices and cultural hierarchies. The "great ladder of culture" (Murdock, 2007:219) of its radio channels, which served as a model for BBC Four's place in the portfolio, is now a great *brand* portfolio, framed by new spatial qualities and practices of *positioning* within the "internal cultural geography" which places BBC Four in an ambivalently close relationship to BBC Two in particular. Often seen as an extension of BBC Two's space, the cultural promise of BBC Four is in incubating of programmes that are of a more experimental nature, and in providing freedom and extra space for BBC Two's landmark and long standing programme strands such as *Arena* and *Storyville*. But BBC Four, in terms of scheduling practices, can also be seen, according to Light, as a "protected space" as it caters for genres, such as arts television and authored documentaries, which are defined by their public service identity (2004:115). It could further be argued that BBC Four attracts the less formulaic producers with "omnivorous tastes" (Peterson, 2005), which potentially compensate for more pragmatic, instrumental ways of thinking about cultural value. This pragmatism is articulated through archive programmes as well as repeats that both prolong the shelf-life of programmes and also provide the source for editorial intervention into the channel content so that innovation is to be found in the ways programmes are curated and conceptualised. Paradoxically, the cultural promise of BBC Four as a channel is therefore not as much as in nurturing *new* programme strategies that will innovate, but in its novel use of *old* programmes, which, although harnessed for the purposes of channel identity, are also serving to expand on programme diversity and the meaning of authorship and are enabling cultural value as a relational space, a place of meaning-making between programmes.

Fraser observes that the future for content diversity is "is not among broadcasters, it is on the internet (...). BBC Four is still at the end of the line of 80s and 90s experiment, rather than a new thing" (interview, 2 February 2010). It might be that BBC Four's editorial and curatorial role, and its emphasis on novel uses of scheduling provides a way of reinventing its public service purpose, as "the flexible access of on-demand media offers a

reinvented form of universality, one that caters for contemporary lifestyles” (Dabrett, 2009:810). Richard Klein argued for the channel’s core Reithian purpose: it is not enough to “deliver a Wikipedia-based lump of content or stick out repeats by the yard without purpose or curation. Channels that seek to comment on the world must engage actively with that world, not passively reflect it” (2010:2). The unlocking of the BBC’s archives, with BBC Four being their primary showcase, carries broader questions of access, public service values and finding new ways of classifying culture. According to Graham Murdock,

...we have to stop thinking of public broadcasting as a stand-alone organisation and see it as the principal node in an emerging network of public and civil initiatives that taken together, provide the basis for a new shared cultural space, a digital commons, that can help forge new communal connections and stand against the continual pressure for enclosure coming from commercial interests on the one hand and the new moral essentialism on the other (2007:2).

The BBC collaborates with other public institutions such as the British Museum (Keating, interview, 22 April 2010), whose process of unlocking its vast audiovisual archives is reliant on BBC Four serving as a curator and a gateway. In this sense, BBC Four is becoming, according to Klein “increasingly the principal portal for the viewing public to access the BBC’s archive – not just as an inert library but as a lively and entertaining place” (2010:1/2). In this sense, the channel offers a different view of the Arnoldian idea of culture as the “best that had been thought and said”, away from residues of a capital “C” culture, and towards the self-reflexive revising of the value of the BBC as the heart of national culture and cultural standards. The shift of programmes away from their ephemeral nature towards more enduring qualities also transfers the focus from the making of the programmes to their *uses*, and finding new ways of thinking about quality, diversity and cultural citizenship.

Chapter 6. Case Study 2: BBC Four and the Uses of Television's Past – Towards New Spaces of Cultural Value

"This is not a museum – it is a working archive" (Adrian Williams, the BBC's Preservation Manager, BBC Archive, 2008)

6.1 Introduction - Television Temporality and the Spatial Turn

"Everybody needs a place to think" - the tagline that introduced BBC Four to its viewers back in 2002 - can still be found engraved on memorial benches placed alongside the Thames Walk and in the heart of the regenerated South Bank Centre. These BBC Four memorial benches, originally used as a marketing tool to celebrate and advertise the channel's existence, are accessible and scattered around the capital's cultural spaces and are situated side-by-side with museums, art galleries and cinemas. Just like the places around them, they are seen as "the site of leisure, calmness, and meditation needed to confront the ravages of acceleration outside its walls" (Huysen, 1995:29). A semiotic interpretation of a BBC Four bench is a good starting point to address the focus of this chapter: how the channel has positioned itself as a "restful" *place* for culture and arts, and has articulated its cultural significance by establishing itself as a site where history, television memory, self reflexivity and canonicity are located. BBC Four, to reiterate, has become "the showcase for the best of our valuable archive content" within the BBC television portfolio (Yentob, 2010), and is therefore vital in understanding cultural value on television not as a canon considered over time, but as a new cultural *space*. The role of television repeats as well as the resurgence and renewed centrality of the television archive on BBC Four are some of the key concerns of this chapter.

Television has been historically characterised as an essentially "temporal, ephemeral experience, whose only record is memory" (Zettl, 1978:3). Paddy Scannell (1996) used a phenomenological approach to observe

it as a means of scheduling our daily, temporal regimes, while Raymond Williams's concept of television "flow" (1974/2003) located television texts within the "art of segue" (Uricchio, 2010:28). Television's "ephemeral art" (Worsley, 1970) was variously shaped by qualities such as "liveness" and "immediacy", tropes that, as Whitehead noted, represent an "accelerated form of temporality with their instant entertainment, frenetic pace, and quick oblivion" (2009:1). The common argument is that television, as Uricchio reminds us, contributes to "a loss of history because "liveness" and "flow" keep the viewer trapped in an endless unfolding of a (simulated present), too interested by what comes next to ever reflect upon deeper sets of connections" (2010:29).

The technological ability to record, store and repeat has been said to further promote the temporal nature of the medium and explains the resurgence of interest in television memory. Digital multichannel television that relies on repeats and digital platforms that promote the storing of programmes (e.g. iPlayer, YouTube) are contributing to the medium's archival properties. Television programmes are valued, therefore, for their ability to endure the test of repetition and permanence *as well as* being a memory in time. In the case of BBC Four, this need is reflected through a high prominence of repeats and archive programmes. As a "custodian of BBC archives" (John Das, *Timeshift* series producer, interview, 10 March 2010), BBC Four employs scheduling techniques that join together television texts from different decades and temporalities, make new programmes out of old ones, with repeats and archives confirming this new "heterochronic" regime, or "a time machine, allowing viewers to experience a distinctive kind of time, and possibly even notion of history" (Uricchio, 2010:27). But this rehabilitated "cultural heritage" on permanent display requires thoughtful, editorial, and curatorial practices which puts an emphasis on meaning making processes, "internal cultural geography", and the formation of new and distinctive *spaces* of cultural programming. In other words, this chapter posits that the notion of *how* cultural value is articulated through television can be increasingly understood by identifying *where* it is located.

The idea of a spatial turn is becoming increasingly central in understanding the “relocation of television” into the digital and multiplatform arenas (Gripsrud, 2010:3). Indeed, spatial metaphors, according to Light, are frequently used in discussions of digital television (2004:144). But as the previous chapter posits, the institutional framing of cultural value, demonstrated through the genealogy of BBC Four as a part of the BBC television portfolio, its branding practices, and its *relational* value in defining BBC Four an “extra space” to BBC Two, also calls for the notion of *space* as being central to understanding the articulation of the channel’s qualities. This chapter focuses on how repeats and archive texts are organised and scheduled and further emphasises the importance of *spatiality* in understanding how the value of culture is distributed in terms of an institutional shift towards *relational* thinking (Massey et al., 1999) about its cultural output. Furthermore, it is by enabling this relational thinking that television aesthetics and canonicity can be applied beyond the category of text, by looking into scheduling and the channel’s architecture (Ellis, 2000b; Light, 2004). BBC Four’s archive programmes are cut and reassembled; television repeats are rested and brought back in new contexts and associations; and instead of seeking new canons in order to justify TV’s cultural value, BBC Four focuses on exploring archives in search of “big subjects” that can be retrieved and organised into seasons. As Uricchio points out, it is the “role of sequence, context and association in the construction of meaning, and the tensions inherent in ordering and reordering the bits of time, space, and event that they constitute” (2010:28) that are essential in understanding the cultural value of (and on) television today.

6.2 Repeating, Repurposing, and Thematically Contextualising Television: Scheduling on BBC Four

“[The BBC Four schedule] starts with the news, than it goes on with a repeat of a documentary; then there is *Skippy – Australia’s First Superstar* – a repeat, no less; then there is *Paws, Claws and Videotape* – a clip show about famous animals, and then there is a bought film...

then, *Skippy – Australia’s First Superstar*, again, *Paws, Claws and Videotape* repeated, *Storyville* – a repeated documentary, and then *Paws, Claws and Videotape* again, but with subtitles!”⁷⁹

BBC Four broadcasts nine to ten hours a day, seven days a week. In 2012, its annual programme budget was reported to be £49.2 million (BBC, 2013), down from £54.3 million in 2009 (BBC Trust, 2012a), a budget that allows less than one hour of origination a day (Cameron, interview, 10 March 2010; Klein, interview, 18 March 2010). As the introductory quote aptly, if polemically, illustrates, BBC Four is heavily dependent on recycling content which includes both programme repeats and programmes from the BBC archive. The difference between TV archive and TV repeat can be seen as artificial, as there is, as yet, no standardised distinction between the two, other than a working one. As BBC Four’s Head of Scheduling, Don Cameron, explains, “I am sure [that the Archive Unit] pick things that happen more recently than that, but I feel that it is a repeat if it is less than 10 years old, and that it is an archive if it is more than 10 years old” (interview, 7 July 2010).

Historically, programme repeats are associated with the decline of cultural value of television. Television’s value has been, and continues to be, in capturing the present moment or “event”. As John Ellis observes, television is a time-defined medium in which programmes are only temporarily meaningful and result in “intimate connections between its programmes and the moment of their intended broadcast” (2007a:16). However, the rise of cable and satellite television and multichannel broadcasting, alongside with the ability to record television programmes, has facilitated different articulations of this “intimate connection” through the sustained offer of entertainment and familiarity with narratives and characters (e.g. Dunkley’s “wall-to-wall Dallas”, 1985). This turn from “intimate connection” as a temporal event to repeated narrative with familiar characters has been widely considered as culturally derivative. Long running series on cable, satellite and now digital

⁷⁹ Transcript of a Newsnight interview (BBC Two, TX 3 March 2010), in which Jeremy Paxman confronts then BBC Director General Mark Thompson over the recent announcement about the proposed closure of BBC 6 Music and BBC Asian Network. Paxman’s reading out loud of the BBC Four’s schedule that day is aimed at highlighting its repeats, which contribute to BBC Four being an equal candidate for closure

channels imported from the US that operate on a “cultural discount”⁸⁰ are continually repeated⁸¹, and are seen as one of the key reasons for the decline in television’s cultural importance. In this context, the introductory quote by Jeremy Paxman could fittingly introduce BBC Four’s own small presence in a culturally uninspired television landscape. As Mark Lawson observes, “the repetition of material has become symbolic of a failure to provide proper value for the licence fee” (2011). The central question, then, is how can the prominence of repeats on BBC Four be reconciled with its promise of being a “culturally most enriching channel”? Moreover, are BBC Four repeats in any way intrinsically valuable?

Perhaps the most salient answer to that question is that BBC Four, unlike other digital channels, does not depend on long, extended, narratives, where audiences “invest in character and diagesis, often over hundreds of hours of programming” (Holdsworth, 2010:141). The presence of long running series on BBC Four are, in fact, minimal, and so far the channel has not depended on their continuous repeats. As the previous chapter demonstrated through the representative example of two television series, *The Thick of It* and *Lead Balloon*, BBC Four has until now only commissioned short running series and has not been prepared to buy long running repeats⁸². However, repeating programmes leads to the use of “narrative repeats” – a phenomenon characteristic of satellite and cable channels which “repeat a single show in a series in the same week as the original showing in order to give the audience an alternative time to view the programme as part of a ‘first run’” (Light, 2004:123).

While “narrative repeats” may be superfluous given the access to increasing storing and recording options, from iPlayer to time-shifting technology such as Sky +, the attention paid to different approaches to reruns and repeats also reveals a key distinction between BBC Four and

⁸⁰ A term coined by Hoskins and Mirus, 1988 to denote the limitations of imported programmes’ appeal to domestic audiences because of cultural and/or language differences.

⁸¹ E.g. sitcom series *Friends*, originally broadcast on Channel 4 in the 1990s, has been running for over ten years on Channel 4’s digital channel E4 since the channel’s launch in 2001– see, for example, “Countdown to E4”, http://offthetelly.co.uk/?page_id=1857

⁸² There exceptions here would be archive repeats, such as *The Avengers*, the long running series bought from ITV/ABC/Thames. Original run 7 January 1961 – 21 May 1969, repeated on BBC Four between November 2005 and 2008

other digital channels: its scheduling approach. According to Ellis, the process of scheduling is one television broadcasting activity that has been so far given very little attention (2000a:131; 2000b:26), yet it defines “a specific nature of the channel” (2000a:131) and serves as a channel’s architecture (Ellis, 2000a, 2000b; Light, 2004). In fact, Light argues that scheduling can be seen as a key extending mechanism of Reithian ideology (2004:115). The core purpose of scheduling in public service broadcasting is to provide a balance between a broader range of genres compared to that in commercial broadcasting (Ellis, 2000a), which has been traditionally achieved by two techniques in particular – hammocking and tent-polling – as embedding “fundamental public service principles” (Light, 2004:115). Both scheduling techniques have been designed to provide a range and variety of programming by placing “unknown”, serious, or challenging programmes on either side of (tent-polling), or between (hammocking), popular ones. With the expansion of a portfolio, and as a response to increasing competition in the mixed economy market, the public service “style” of scheduling, in particular, was undergoing a profound change. The move “from an offer-led system to a demand-led system” (Ellis, 2000a:132) made redundant the two scheduling techniques, which was, according to Mark Thompson, a positive development as “they were based ultimately on a patronising, pessimistic view of audiences and of public taste (in Light, 2004:116). Thomson’s statement clearly suggests a link between the character of this scheduling with old Reithian values. So, what new scheduling strategies have been put in place to reflect a more modern, audience-sensitive response to the institution’s Reithian principles?

With the BBC’s expansion into a portfolio offering and increased attention to target audiences, scheduling techniques have adapted to manage the increased prospect of television repeats. Some more common techniques in a multichannel ecology include stripping (showing the same television programme or series at the same time of the day, every day) and stranding (having a regular slot for a particular type of a day/time, but weekly). As the channel’s Head of Scheduling, Don Cameron, explains:

Factual digital channels tend to be stripped and stranded, so they tend to go for a long running series that you can put in the same slot for

every day as long as you can possibly get away with it. And [BBC Four] looks for like-minded programming (interview, 9 July 2010).

These new scheduling approaches, according to Light, allowed the process to be “less of an assembly job and more of a fundamental architecture of the channel” (2004:117). One such approach was the creation of “zones” which allowed for the programming of a single genre, to allow for “inheritance and audience flow” (Light, 2004:118). BBC Four adopted some of these zoning techniques as a means of “bundling” (Strange, 2011), or clustering like-minded programming “to make a statement”, and to articulate the channel’s character or identity. But the channel’s approach to zoning largely departs from the standard techniques used by most digital channels reliant on reruns, as the repetition is mostly based on single documentaries that have been commissioned for the channel which are then shuffled, rearranged and recontextualised within the schedule. Richard Klein explains, concurring with Cameron, that,

BBC Four is singular because unlike virtually any other digital channel (...) we rely on our share overwhelmingly from new commissions, all the time. We don’t strip and strand in the old sense of the word. Virtually everyone who runs a digital channel *does* strip and strand. What that means that those digital channels get most of their share from the top ten shows, every week (interview, 18 March 2010).

BBC Four’s pragmatic scheduling of “like-minded programmes” has become synonymous with its distinctive identity and a means to extend its Reithian cultural mission in a manner which is very different to the old techniques developed in the “age of scarcity” (Ellis, 2000a). This pragmatic approach can be also seen in BBC Four’s acquisition of drama and comedy imports. Usually stripped and stranded on most of the channels, series such as *Curb Your Enthusiasm* (HBO, US, 2001 – present), *Mad Men*, (US, 2007 – present), *Wallander* (Sweden, 26 episodes, 2005 – 2010) or *The Killing* (*Forbrydelsen*, Denmark, 2007 – 2012), became thematically framed as distinctive programmes. All four examples of imported television series are identifiable as quality drama (McCabe and Akass, 2007), but none of them have so far been cyclically repeated. The first example, *Curb Your Enthusiasm*, only ran on BBC Four for the first two series before More 4 took over. *Mad Men*, an

Emmy awarded US drama series was lost to BskyB's new HBO style channel, Sky Atlantic, after four seasons on BBC Four, with both examples putting BBC Four in the place of a "testing ground" for quality drama. *The Killing*, in particular, earned the channel a reputation as a trailblazer for the popularity of foreign language, subtitled, television programmes⁸³. The Danish programme was named as "a game-changer" for BBC Four by its former controller, Richard Klein (in Frost, 2011).

Perhaps a more central distinction between the nature of programme repeats on BBC Four and other digital channels - with few exceptions⁸⁴ - is that BBC Four nurtures single dramas and documentaries. According to Cameron,

We have far more single programmes than any other channel, I suspect. But, you know, it is a function of money to be able to afford to do great long running shows. And it may be that we will get there at some point – show something that is longer running... we are not rejecting it... but that means that we have a load of eggs in one basket. And you are therefore scheduling from an entirely different perspective (interview, 10 March 2010).

Quality single dramas, "serious television" (Caughie, 2000) and documentaries, are programmes that are most likely to be repeated on BBC Four. When Richard Klein, BBC Four controller, was asked by one of his viewers to run more "quality repeats" as "so many great series only get shown once", Klein replied that drama doesn't repeat well – partly because, like reading a book, people don't really watch them twice" (*Radio Times*, 2011). Furthermore, the individual or "stand alone" quality of long running series does not lend itself to big thematic subjects, compared to the flexibility for recontextualisation offered by moving single dramas and documentaries. Cameron also suggests that programmes that are originally commissioned for BBC Four are done so with the intention to be repeated:

⁸³ It can be argued that BBC Four opened a floodgate to other UK channels buying foreign language series (e.g. Channel 4's acquisition of the French supernatural drama series, *The Returned* (2013)). *The Killing* is one of the more distinctive BBC Four examples of imported series where the subtitles are considered as the part of the quality of the series; according to *The Guardian's* Vicky Frost, "the translation feel full of personality and verve" (16 February 2011) <http://www.guardian.co.uk/tv-and-radio/tvandradioblog/2011/feb/16/the-killing-bbc4>; also see Janet McCabe's blog entry on "Dark Nordic Saturday Nights on BBC Four", <http://cstonline.tv/cst-blog-3>

⁸⁴ For example, Sky Arts and Yesterday

We can afford effectively about an hour of origination a day. So that means that when you are trying to do something interesting, it doesn't involve making new programmes for over 8 hours... and that does mean that the programmes you do make new, do have to work on a cycle – we clear the rights for 3 years, as a general rule (Cameron, interview, 10 March 2010).

The cycle that Cameron refers to is included in a standard contractual agreement with production companies and producers, and is now an inevitable part of scheduling on digital channels. In fact, it was the value of programming rights that, according to Julie Light, partly drove the design of the portfolio (2004:88). It could be said that this “maximising of value” is extended not only by “using programming across all the channels and services” (ibid.) but is now also extended across different platforms. Cameron identifies “play days” - a 24 hour period during which a programme may be repeated and the rights can be cleared⁸⁵ - as the most common scheduling example of this cycle of repetition. In other words, Paxman's controversial reciting of one day of BBC Four schedule can be seen a typical example of a “play day”, where repetition is intended to reflect effective budgeting and extend the visibility of the channel. Cameron explains:

With quite a lot of digital channels, there is a limited amount of listings space to cover information and that is a key. So what you have is a block of programming every three or four hours through the day. And that is how BBC Knowledge, BBC Four's predecessor, worked. You had to show in blocks, and therefore you clear the rights, so a play day is to broadcast a show six times a day so that you use up one licence – if you have nine licences - on a contract (interview, 10 March 2010).

This pragmatic approach to scheduling, or what has been previously referred to as “narrative repeats”, is also reinforced by finding a cultural purpose in repetition: BBC Four uses “play days” as an opportunity to reinforce the thematic message, but also to create new associations between different sets of programmes. For example, *Arena's The Other Side of the Mirror - Bob Dylan at the Newport Folk Festival* (dir. Murray Lerner, 2007), a single documentary about Bob Dylan's performances at the Newport Folk

⁸⁵ For example, see Channel 4's Code of Practice on <http://www.channel4.com/media/documents/commissioning/DOCUMENTS%20RESOURCES%20WEBSITES/CodeOfPractice.pdf>

Festival between 1963 and 1965 has so far been repeated six times in the last three years⁸⁶, not including extended viewing on the iPlayer platform. *Arena's* producer Anthony Wall explains that repeats are planned: “in terms of [*Arena's*] budget, we are running fifteen to twenty repeats a year” (interview, 11 February 2011). But repeats gain new meanings not only by being shown at different times, but also by being linked with the different texts that surround them in the shared scheduling space. Wall quotes documentaries *My Name is Celia Cruz* (dir. Anthony Wall, 2010), and *The Other Side of the Mirror* (dir. Murray Lerner, 2007) as two relevant examples that gained by their recontextualisation due to the repeated viewing and “tie ins”. The extra-textual and/or contextual viewings were enabled when the two programmes were associated with a “big subject”. The key, as Light puts it, is in “finding a way to change the character of a programme by way of the schedule” (interviewee T in Light, 2004:119). For example, *My Name is Celia Cruz* was tied in with a four-part documentary on *Latin Music USA* (BBC Four, Feb 2010), a long-overdue exploration of the Latino influence on American popular music. Bob Dylan at the Newport Folk Festival was repeated as a tie in to the *Folk America Season* evolving around an original three-part documentary series exploring the history of American folk music.

The case of *Arena* demonstrates that the schedule is increasingly becoming “a commissioning tool to link commissions with particular target audiences through the scheduled slot” (Light, 2004:124), and further constitutes a strong hypothesis against the insular view that repeats represent a force that diminishes the cultural importance of the programmes. Presenting past programmes that appeal to viewers’ memories and nostalgia through a rich choice of archive and repeats can offer exploratory, in depth and occasionally, even interactive experiences⁸⁷. This is how the ideas of cumulative value or “deep value over time” are formed and, I would argue, the scheduling technique can be seen as a revision of the Reithian ethos when

⁸⁶ Sun 14 Oct 2007, 21:40; Thu 18 Oct 2007, 00:30; Sat 20 Oct 2007, 23:55; Fri 6 Feb 2009 22:00; Sat 7 Feb 2009, 02:50; Sat 27 Feb 2010, 01:30 – all repeats on BBC Four. Information retrieved in March 2011 from <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0082gz7>

⁸⁷ E.g. *TV on Trial* involved the audience choosing to watch “golden age” television with or without critics commentary, and were invited to vote for the “best television decade”

its primary impulse is to attract immersive viewing, in continuation of “proper” modes of engagement with the past. As Keating explains:

One phrase I used early on was “building deep value over time”. In other words, we knew that the channel as a whole needed to take time to bed in; if it is bedded in with people’s habits and affections, then it will be quite deeply rooted. And you can take that down on the micro level with individual programmes - a single fantastic documentary just would not achieve its full audience on its first night, even its first week. And it was always understood that BBC Four would have a long steady repeat rate for its key programmes (interview, 12 March 2010).

Keating proposes here that repetition directly feeds into not only the extended life of programmes, but also their cumulative cultural value, achieved by increasing their visibility and enriching their context. These “landmark” programmes have the quality of a prolonged life; that is, while contributing to the expansion of meaning and interpretations, they are also economically viable, as defined by the “long tail principle” (in Chapter 5). The cultural impact of the programmes is such that they “may not have the immediacy but have a long shelf life” (Hadlow, interview, 2 March 2010), where the cumulative value of programmes serve as a negotiating strategy between cultural motivation and economic priorities in television production. The acceleration of opportunities for the reinterpretation of culturally demanding programmes in new contexts can be seen as contributing to enriching their meaning and therefore increasing the cultural value of a text. As Uricchio remarks, repetition invariably “takes place in a new cultural present, serving variously to reactivate the past of the primary text (recalling original impressions upon first seeing the programme or, through the text, its fuller cultural moment) or to recast it through the knowledge that has since been acquired” (2010:33). What Uricchio defines as the process of “time-shifting” repeats to trigger a new quality of response and facilitate new contexts for interpretations, could also be seen as the “space-extending” of programmes - a direct outcome of allowing a wide range of culturally demanding programmes to remain accessible and visible:

Don Cameron has been adept at extending the life of programmes, resting them, bringing them back, rescheduling them, representing

them... and that is good value for money, but also exposes the cumulative reach of a documentary on BBC Four, it can have up to what you might expect on BBC Two or Channel 4 in one night – or exceed it (Keating, interview, 12 March 2010).

The “cumulative value” facilitated by repeats is one of the most important outcomes of the high investment/low return pattern, characteristic of programmes that would, in the age of cable and satellite, have a very low survival rate. Spatial allowance by digital and multiplatform broadcasters, therefore, is able to turn “market failure” into a “long shelf life” or a “long tail effect”, that assures the survival of programmes with a more experimental and innovative edge that need to “bed in”. For Adam Tandy, the producer of the acclaimed BBC Four programme *The Thick of It*, the ability to repeat and increase the visibility of programmes, is directly connected with the series success:

We would get about 400,000 for the second block on BBC Four, but the pattern, of course, is that there are several repeats of the show. So the first one may get 400,000 and then the next two shows might get 10,000 and 50,000 or something like that, you pick up quite a lot of viewers along the way (interview, 9 February 2010).

The importance of visibility and access in the “age of plenty” (Ellis, 2000a) has further augmented critical and self-reflexive practices amongst producers as well as viewers. Television repeats can be linked to the study of the effects of recording technologies and the engagement with texts, most notably, Laura Mulvey’s observation that VHS contributed to the “reinvention of textual analysis” (2006:242) as repeated viewing and the ability to pause and rewind allowed a closer reading of a text (Walters, 2008:79; Holdsworth, 2010:132) and a shift from engagement with television away from “glance” and towards “gaze” (Ellis, 1982). With BBC Four’s commissioning page describing the channel as being not for “a type of viewer but drawn by a type of viewing”⁸⁸, the distinction used to differentiate value between film and television, needs to be rethought. The practice of television repeats demonstrates the openness to seeing the lasting value of programmes and its repurposing potential, as recombining and resequencing programmes

⁸⁸ In “Our Audience” section, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/commissioning/tv/what-we-want/service-strategies/bbc-four-service-strategy.shtml>

“suggests signs of a *critical* engagement” (Uricchio, 2010: 38). In the case of BBC Four, critical practices and self-reflexivity are symptomatic of “industrial reflexivity” (Caldwell, 2008) so that we can see the repetition of programmes having a function to promote and facilitate their critical analysis – with the process of critical analysis itself being increasingly identified as an essential part of the production process. BBC Four programmes do not make an impact through qualities such as “liveness” and “immediacy” as they are programmes that are made for repeated transmission. This suggests a shift away from fleeting programmes and their ephemeral presence in the churn of television’s scheduling flow, and is a step closer towards endurance in time, a qualitative shift of television that contributes to programmes being increasingly seen as cultural artefacts.⁸⁹

6.3 BBC Four and Television Archive – Television Programmes as Cultural Artefacts

Unlike repeats, television archives in a public service organisation such as the BBC are undisputed for their symbolic and material representation of both national and institutional cultural values. Adrian Williams, the BBC's Preservation Manager, aptly shows this through his definition of archives as the “BBC's cultural heritage and the nation's cultural heritage” (BBC Archive, 2008). BBC Four is given a prominent place as a custodian of the BBC audiovisual past, “the principal portal for the viewing public to access the BBC’s archive” (Klein, interview, 18 March 2010). Positioning BBC Four at the heart of the appraisal, use, and sometimes even acquisition of television archive content certainly invites a closer look at the television archive as BBC Four’s cultural value. However, a brief disarticulation of *a priori* links between the television archive and the cultural value of BBC Four may be a useful starting point. This would allow analysis of the uses of the television archive for BBC Four programming as indicative of technological, commercial as well

⁸⁹ The definition of television programmes as “artefacts” has been increasingly and variously used in scholarly discourses (e.g. Caldwell, 2008; Uricchio, 2010) as well as institutional ones (e.g. interview with Roly Keating)

as cultural interests which all facilitate new production practices, the focus of this section.

Although an attempt was made in the previous section to clearly distinguish between programmes defined as archive and those considered as repeats, the powerful normative opposition between these terms remains ambiguous and hard to resolve. The term “archive” is perceived as a record from a distant past that, brought to the present, requires protective and aesthetically motivated interpretative practices, something that the term “repeat”, usually associated with recognition, familiarity and “suggestions of tedium or acid indigestion” (Lawson, 2011) does not. The temporal distinction of the “ten year rule” may be a helpful working definition in scheduling and curating seasons, but as Don Cameron previously explained, it is not related to any standardised practice. Furthermore, the qualities that make programmes contextually more “contemporary” or “dated” often need to be taken into account. Cameron offers an interesting example:

We tried, in 2007, to do a week of programmes from the archive about 1997, about the moment when New Labour came in; to see how it changed over those ten years. And what was interesting about the archive, is that it didn't particularly excite people's imagination - it wasn't so different in terms of its style and values (interview, 9 July 2010).

The distinction between an archive and a repeat is problematic, especially when taking into account that culturally demanding, educational programmes that are repeated are often made with lasting – that is, *archival* - purposes in mind. Furthermore, the “age” distinction between the two is not sufficient to understand the processes involved in the appraisal that leads to broadcasting. This is especially relevant when the presentation of either archive or repeat programmes takes place in shifting contexts (i.e. two or more seasons), which affects both an archive and a repeat in equal measure.

BBC Four was set up on the premise to “increase the shelf space” of BBC Two and the channel's purposeful visit into the archives was a part of its remit from its very conception (Keating, interview, 12 March 2010). But the BBC Four's preferred strategy is that of *uncovering* lesser-known television

archives. For example, rather than simply repeating the nation's favourite programmes and television classics, *In their Own Words: British Novelists* (BBC Four, TX August 2010), was a programme made entirely of rare archive footage of British twentieth century writers⁹⁰. So, in the words of Anthony Wall, we need to look at “what is done” with archives (interview, 11 February 2010). The attention to historical contextualisation and *interpretation*, as well as its use as a creative *intervention* in production and broadcasting activities emphasise the attention to increased self-reflexive and critical practices in television production, in addressing questions of whether the chosen programmes are of sufficient quality for the channel.

Working with the television archive offers an ideological exposure to the historical importance of the BBC and its prominent place in British national culture. Janice Hadlow during her tenure as the controller of BBC Four (2004 – 2008), reflects on being very conscious of being “a part of very significant heritage, of which I would say I had benefited myself as a younger viewer” (interview, 2 March 2010). BBC Four's permanent contact with its audiovisual archive seems to facilitate a need for understanding the BBC's historiography as a self-reflexive production practice. This is best explicated in choosing to use the archive to make programmes that explore television as an important cultural form and its prominent place such as programmes about the early days of television: *The Third Programme: High Culture For All*, (BBC Four, 2008); *The Truth About 60s TV*, (BBC Four, 2005); and *Greg Dyke on Lord Reith* (BBC Four, 2007). This is also achieved by programmes that celebrate television writers and programmes - e.g. *The Kneale Tapes*, (*Timeshift*, BBC Four, 2006; see Appendix 4); *Arena: Dennis Potter, in Potter at the BBC: Classic Plays* (BBC Four, December 2004 - February 2005); *Jack Rosenthal Season* (BBC Four, 2004). Thinking about the cultural and social impact of television extends to more recent dramatisation, such as the making of ITV's soap opera, *Corrie: The Road to Coronation Street* (BBC Four, 2010), but there are also programmes dedicated to the analysis of the golden

⁹⁰ BBC Four has been showing old episodes of ITV's series *The Avengers*, but the commercial, cable & satellite channel, UK Gold would be a more typical example of an entire schedule dedicated to best loved archive repeats, e.g. *'Allo 'Allo*, *Only Fools and Horses* or *Last of the Summer Wine* (schedule in April 2011)

age of television, like the ambitious project involving twelve television experts evaluating six decades of programmes, *TV on Trial* (2005). While these programmes emphasise that television is a valid cultural form, they also illustrate implicit (*Corrie: The Road to Coronation Street*) or explicit (*TV on Trial* week) effort to uncover television classics and explore possibilities of a canon of public service television, explored further in Chapter 7.

6.3.1 Archive as a Creative Process: “Auratic Spaces” of “Uncovering and Recovering”⁹¹

According to Seaton, the BBC archives “illuminate contemporary history more vividly than any other” (in Hendy, 2007:vii). But in describing his early experience of researching the BBC archives, Jason Jacobs, in search of the evidence of early television drama that doesn’t exist on tape, recalled a sense of incomprehensibility facing scraps of papers, various memos and budget reports, “obscure bureaucratic procedures... no clear statement of aesthetic or artistic intent” (2006:1). The vast amount of erased and irretrievable programmes prompted Jacobs to imagine a perfect BBC Archive internet database that would spare him the arduous, time consuming search process, but he was doubtful that “online material would tell us very much about television drama aesthetics in the mid-1950s” (2006:17). As Jacobs explains, mining archives involves “repeated periods of blind searching, rogue searching, or ‘chancing it’ in the hope that something relevant will turn up, or what seemed irrelevant takes on a new significance in the light of additional findings” (ibid.). This “long chain of missing links which have been wiped from the record either to reuse the tapes or to save storage space” Caughie observes, makes “the recovery of the early history of television form and style an archaeological, rather than a strictly historical procedure” (in Corner, 1991:24-5).

Jacobs’s journey through the BBC’s deep archives, in search of artistic intent, is the work of the interpretative imagination of a historian, which, as

⁹¹ relates to one of the definitions of archive as a “a *place* of uncovering and recovering” (Blouin and Rosenberg, 2006:viii, my emphasis)

he expresses, is difficult to imagine once the archives are digitised, accessible and readily available. The act of searching, the laborious journey to collect data and turn it into something meaningful, is now an established part of the production culture at BBC Four, and a creative one at that, regardless of the comparative “value” of the document searched. If archives are “auratic objects”, as in “the older an object, the more presence it can command, the more distinct it is from current-and-soon-to-be-obsolete as well as recent-and-already-obsolete objects” (Huysen, 1995:33), then the process of search and interpretation can be seen as an “auratic experience”. This kind of creativity lies in identifying, investigating and interpreting, only, these days, it is television producers who are increasingly doing it.

Archive interpretation is one of the central distinctions of BBC Four archive programmes in terms of the shift away from showing programmes in order to “maintain memories” (Sorlin, 2001:25) towards using memories as a starting point to “make new out of old”. The growth of archive search and its reproduction at the BBC has increased to the extent that it has become a distinct production process; it involves archive mining and interpretation as a form of creative intervention as in some of the “signature” archive-based programmes on BBC Four. Programmes such as *Timeshift* (2002 – present) and *What Happened Next?* (2008 - 2009) were “commissioned to be showcases for the archive” (Hadlow, interview, 2 March 2010). Cameron explains that the process of searching the deep archives is often awakened by a television memory (interview, 9 July 2010). Archive mining consists of the arduous hunt through a labyrinthine system accessible through a library catalogue style database, which is based on the *Radio Times*. The catalogue, Cameron adds, is “not very accurate, and it is incredibly pedantic: if you have a comma in the phrase, it won’t pick it up” (interview, 10 March 2010), but Das explains that this is just the start of the process:

If we have an idea and we want to see what is in the archive, we literally do a search through the database to see what programmes have been made or shown by dates. And it gives us a kind of top line of what content is as well - so we can get a sense that in the 1960s they did a programme about this and about news reporting in 1962,

and so on. And then, obviously, it is calling this stuff up and having to look at it to see if it is any good (interview, 10 March 2010)

This continuous process of critical assessment involves making value judgments; Das explains that the archive selection process stems from the careful choice of material that is initially made with the intention of reactivating the past, but also that “looking through the archive throws up all kinds of new ideas” (ibid.). The creative interventions that ensue contribute to the archive being contextualised in a “new cultural present” (Uricchio, 2010:33), or as Charlotte Brunsdon notes, whether archive refers to the footage, “the bits and pieces” or the entire programmes, the search for the material inevitably involves “programmes set loose from original context” (2009:29). The television archive can also be understood as a site that “arrests temporality” (Kleinman, 2002:322), turning itself into a site of imagination, creativity and production, as well as of documentary preservation. John Ellis’s distinction between two contrasting interpretive procedures as *immanent* (text-centred and focused on its potential meaning), and *textual-historical* (tying the meaning to its historical context) is useful here (2007a:16). Don Cameron illustrates Ellis’s categories in relation to the working practices of the archive selection:

There are some archives that age more gracefully or remain relevant, and you are choosing to enjoy them in exactly the same way you would enjoy a new programme. There are some things that remain actually very fixed to the time they were made because they illuminate that particular time, and I think there are advantages of having both aspects (interview, 9 July 2010).

Ellis’s view of the *tension* between the two approaches is particularly valuable in addressing the rationale behind archive choices as well as their interpretations and creative interventions which balance a particular programme between a piece of historic evidence and its topicality and relevance. John Das, the series editor of *Timeshift*, explains that “if Don [Cameron] or I watch an archive programme with a view of repeating it on BBC Four, in the current schedule, we still have to watch really carefully to make sure that it is not dated so badly”. Thinking about what the warning

signs might be, he argues further of the importance of the *immanent* reading in the selection process:

There is no question that television has become a lot more rhythmically fast in terms of how it works now, it is much more pacey, and that applies across the spectrum, really; so you could conceivably watch programmes where you have a very long pans of landscape and no commentary over them or anything (...) but you are really looking for films that can kind of hold an audience today. And that doesn't mean to say that they have to be fast moving... (Das, interview, 10 March 2010).

The once ephemeral audiovisual record made for one-off broadcast is now treated as an archaeological find, a cultural artefact and a starting point of different interpretative and creative activities, supporting Brunsdon's view that "the archive is being transformed in the current period" (2009:29). The process of dealing with archive has also dramatically increased in scale and scope, and beyond archival programme making. BBC Four, alongside Radio 3 and Radio 4, has been given a "green light" to create its own "permanent collections" of archives in collaboration with the BBC Archive Unit⁹² (also see Chapter 5). This shift from ephemera to permanence, according to Keating, further validates television as a creative medium:

The internet is enabling a certain kind of broadcast creativity, the importing of those ideas of what was once considered to be a wholly ephemeral media. I am not sure it was fundamentally novel, maybe what is novel is the idea that you can look at certain artefacts in broadcasting and say that they actually have a very lasting value and the best of them may be still be viewed and reviewed in the decades to come (interview, 22 March 2010).

The increased interpretative and interventional practices involved in working with archives are a sign of a deeper shift located in the transformation of television from an ephemeral medium to one that involves permanence. As programmes are progressively viewed as cultural artefacts "with lasting value", recognition of how many of them are lost has been woven into institutional discourse. Keating, for example, suggests that coming

⁹² See Roly Keating's blog entry on <http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/aboutthebbc/2011/02/something-happened-today-that.shtml>

to terms with the loss of archives has directly contributed to the increased need to validate television as a cultural form:

I think the journey towards television taking itself more seriously as a cultural form has relatively deep roots for the BBC... the realization around 1970s or 80s that people have been wiping key dramas and documentaries of early television did come as a real shock to the audience as well as the institution itself. And that was one of the early dawns of the idea that television in some respect was an art form itself and the best of it needed preservation (interview, 22 April 2010).

While Keating identifies the BBC archive as part of the gradual process of the BBC accepting its institutional role as the guardian of television as an art form, Richard Klein (BBC Four controller, 2008 – current), emphasises BBC Four’s mission in this process, with the channel’s duty to uncover how television archive plays an important part in social history:

[With archives] we paint the underlying story... that is because BBC Four’s mission is, in my view, to reflect the twentieth century back to our audiences, to reappraise it gradually. We think that the story of our last century is about a huge change... civilization, modernity... and in that sense the archive is very valuable (interview, 18 March 2010).

Klein’s recognition of television as a major interpreter of history and the agent for our understanding of twentieth century culture illustrates the broader social importance of archives as an audiovisual source. Archives act, as Blouin and Rosenberg explained, as *places* “of uncovering and re-covering, as sites of concealment and suppression as well as of the expression, projection, and revelation of individual and social pasts and futures” (2006:viii). Working with the television archive, therefore, also enables producers and channel executives to move cultural analysis beyond academic “theory” and, as Caldwell emphasises, turn the archive research into “industrial work” or cultural practice (2008:7). This is what Paul Willis identified as “examples of critical theory embedded within the everyday of workers’ experience – that is, through the pursuit of a kind of indigenous cultural theory that operates outside of academia” (in Caldwell, 2008:5). The

“self-ethnographic discourse” (ibid.) or critical cultural theory that is pursued through “studying the industry’s own self-representation, self-critique, and self-reflection” (Caldwell, 2008:5), is evident not only in approaches to the television archive through editorial, curatorial practices, but also in programme production. Keating’s analysis, as well as Klein’s attempt to use the television archive as a form of reappraisal of culture, emphasises the role of a channel controller belonging to Gramsci’s category of “organic intellectuals” in a place that Born described as being characterised by “sophisticated and reflexive debates, debates informing and informed by practice, concerning the optimal output that can be achieved in given conditions” (2000:411). In this sense, we can understand BBC Four’s interpretative and interventional approach to archive programmes as a broadcasting practice with an aim to legitimise television as a medium, and therefore to locate cultural value shifts through the critical and evaluative practices of cultural intermediaries.

6.3.2 Economy of Archives

BBC Four’s emphasis on “archive mining” is a direct result of a deep, and as I argued in the previous chapter, problematic economic rationale, a specific product of budget restraints which has forced the ongoing renegotiation of a public service ethos. The use of TV archives, as Caughie observed, emerged out of the recognition that recorded programmes had not only cultural value but also a commodity status which finally convinced broadcasters, especially the BBC, to abandon unrecorded live transmission (in Lacey, 2006:7). Today, however, the process of selecting archives for BBC Four broadcast is primarily determined by their affordability, which is often in conflict with creative decisions. Don Cameron articulates the inherent pragmatism in the selection process:

That is the function of the amount of money that we have... we have access to the archive. The kind of audiences that we are going for are interested in things from the past (...) So it is playing to the advantage of what I call smoke and mirrors – there is almost no money, the audiences we are trying to attract have a very high standard – possibly

the highest standard because actually they don't need to switch the television on... (Cameron, interview, 10 March 2010).

Framed by financial limitations, "a budgetary issue became a scheduling practice" (Light, 2004:219), but it is the rights ownership that can also determine the course of creative interventions. For example, BBC Four's showcase archive programmes, *What Happened Next?*, and *Timeshift* are programmes designed around archives that have minor or no rights issues:

[The *Timeshift* team] deliberately chose programmes that were shot by the BBC where the BBC owns the rights, and therefore there weren't many clearances. [...] Where the BBC has gone out and shot something, you know, at that point we may own the rights. And it is relatively cheap to include those clips into a programme (Cameron, interview, 9 July 2010).

John Das, the *Timeshift* series producer, explains how creative process is formed and guided by economic priorities:

What Happened Next? was designed as a low cost series. In this particular case there was a big choice of programmes...so we didn't really have to go for low quality, because it was a low cost. [...] We didn't start out saying, "you have to do these three stories, and find out that the rights were available and weren't too expensive"; it was, "put the researchers on the team to find stories that lend themselves to finding out what happens next, and we have the rights too, so we can afford to do a series (Das, interview, 10 March 2010).

Archive mining involves an arduous task of "trying to track down who actually owns the material these days, and then of course, where the contracts were efficiently negotiated, would we be able to use it again" (Cameron, interview, 10 March 2010). Das explains the precarious nature of the rights clearance of archives giving an example of the classic 70s science fiction series, *Blake's 7*:

[The rights] may be particularly expensive, because we made a particular deal with the writer, with actors, and so on... The famous example is the series from 1970s called *Blake's 7* - it has never been shown, as far as I know, on terrestrial television since [its] original airing, because of the contractual deals that were made either with performers or writers - it is too expensive to show it again on television (Das, interview, 10 March 2010).

The inaccessibility of the cult sci-fi television series was negotiated and bypassed. Instead of abandoning the project, a documentary programme about the series - *The Cult of... Blake's 7* (BBC Four, 2006) was made as part of the channel's *Science Fiction Britannia* series. But there are instances when the pragmatic bypassing of expensive rights is subject to controversy. In November 2011, for example, the channel's intention to mark the 25th anniversary of Dennis Potter's classic television series *Singing Detective* by rescreening the original series was cut short, due to the channel's inability to produce the extra £5,000 requested for the series rights (Brown, 2011). According to a channel spokeswoman: "BBC Four does not have big budgets for this kind of programme and we offered a fair deal that was turned down" (ibid.). Following the public uproar, BBC Four eventually decided to make a u-turn on the decision, and broadcast the TV drama classic in February 2012. But the real expense, as Ellis points out, "lies in the laborious work of going back through the contract files and clearing all the underlying rights with multiple agents and agencies: not just the writer but the actors, the musicians, the composers, the production companies... if any one of them says no than the deal's off and all the work is wasted" (2011b).

While the "old media" still grapple with rights clearance issues, there are mounting concerns of cataloguing as, according to Andy O'Dwyer, the BBC archivist working in the Research and Development department, the "vast majority of archive isn't catalogued" (interview, 9 May 2012). Cataloguing itself was a value laden process, with certain programmes – according to O'Dwyer, most likely those with public service values such as documentaries and current affairs – being catalogued in great detail, with drama often containing only a synopsis taken from the *Radio Times* (ibid.). Furthermore, the "new media" outside of the BBC have become central, as their use of archive and of any television recordings seem to have a significantly freer rein and flexibility, despite the ongoing debates about copyright⁹³. Programmes on video-sharing websites such as YouTube, as

⁹³ YouTube in particular is known for breaking the copyright rules with many lawsuits being filed against it (e.g. Viacom, Mediaset, etc.), but "copyright holders cannot order the removal of an online file without first determining whether the posting reflected fair use of the material"

O'Dwyer, reports, are often the first point of call for research for many people looking for audiovisual archive material:

[What] is often overlooked is that a lot of people carry out research on BBC programmes on YouTube, and then come back to us, when they've looked at the material not via us but via people who've uploaded it, like enthusiasts. So often it comes as a surprise to us that people know what is within our programmes, when it is not even catalogued (interview, 9 May 2012).

This phenomenon, notes Anthony Wall, poses copyright as well as aesthetic challenges for television practitioners making programmes with archive footage. Wall offers the example of the YouTube video clip of Bob Marley's song *War*, generously using archive: "somebody took this bit down, added war footage into it and then put it back up again. You know? So that is what is happening. The big broadcaster like the BBC, CNN can't play fast and loose with people's rights, but your average YouTube user can put up anything they want to" (interview, 11 February 2010). This is just one of many examples of the complexities involved in the promotion of archive from the site of preservation to the site of production, which put questions of privilege, authorship, copyright, and the place of older broadcasting forms into question.

6.4 BBC Four Seasons: Curating New Cultural Spaces, from Temporary Exhibitions to Permanent Collections

One of the early "scheduling tools" (Keating, 12 March 2010) or "marketing strategies" (Hadlow, interview, 2 March 2010) for BBC Four was the introduction of *seasons*. Defined as "a signature dish of BBC Four" that "cleverly blends distinctive original programmes and forgotten gems from the BBC's archive" (BBC Press Office, 2009), seasons are themed clusters of television programmes that unfold across the schedule and can be organised in a variety of ways and across different time frames. They are thematically defined, and their duration is dependent on the broadness or the specificity of the concept or subject matter addressed. They are also conditioned by the richness of available archive material on the subject, as the specificity of the

subject matter (e.g. *Prog Britannia*, TX January 2009) narrows down the time frame of the season, while a more conceptual overarching “big subject” (e.g. *Justice* on BBC Four; *Fatherhood* on BBC Four) may last for several months, and include external tie-ins.

The building blocks of a season are usually repeats clustered around a “landmark” programme or a documentary series originally commissioned for the season. Don Cameron, responsible for the season’s rhythm and structure explains that its structure requires a thematic centre: “you want to start with the programme which naturally draws attention to itself, as a sort of calling card, as an entry point into the season.” (interview, 10 March 2010). “The calling card” is often an original documentary (e.g. *Folk America*, an original three-part documentary series exploring the history of American folk music which was commissioned for the *Folk America Season* in Winter 2009) that Light sees as “an important part of the demand-led commissioning environment”. This is “designed to stand out from the bulk of programming on a channel” (2004:145) and has two essential purposes: to attract a larger audience and to “create an aura for the channel... so that the channel becomes associated with the values and characteristics of the landmark programme” (ibid.)⁹⁴. In the case of BBC Four, the “aura” is pursued through scheduling, with seasons at their most successful, according to Cameron, when particular arguments or questions are pursued with the initial, or landmark, programme, explaining how effective editorial intervention can extract the deeper value of the topic. Cameron gives the example of the *Medieval Season* on BBC Four (TX Spring 2008):

Janice [Hadlow] started by asking the question about if you can’t empirically measure time or distance, or you don’t record most of what happens and therefore so much of your life is based on faith and intuition, how do you get into that mindset that things with imagination may actually have the same weight in the community as, you know, facts... and I think it was getting into, almost an alien mindset with that season (Cameron, interview, 10 March 2010).

⁹⁴ Light here proposes that landmark programmes are pursued by all channels, particularly cable/satellite ones, and gives example of Sky 1 being defined by *The Simpsons* and Living channel by *Jerry Springer* (2004:146)

The *Medieval Season* included original programmes, including a parody historical drama *Heist* (BBC Four, TX 23 April 2008) based on Richard of Pudlicott; Steven Fry's *The Gutenberg Press: The Machine That Made Us* (BBC Four, TX 14 April 2008); the landmark, four part series *Inside the Medieval Mind* featuring the Middle Ages scholar, Professor Robert Bartlett (Open University/BBC Four, TX April/May 2008); and historian Michael Wood's portrait of a fourteenth century woman from Hertfordshire, *Christina: A Medieval Life* (produced by Maya Vision, 2008). Hadlow reinforces Cameron's argument:

The best intelligent television has always been about something else. It is *interpretative knowledge*, seeking not just to classify the world but also to make sense of it, to extract meaning and draw conclusions. It is not afraid to make distinctions about what is important and what is less so (interview, 2 March 2010).

The “meaning making” process is involved as much in the thematic content of a season or original programming, as it is in editorial activities invested in structuring a season. As Ellis contends, scheduling involves processes similar to narrative construction, as “[t]he schedulers try to combine variety and connection, repetition and originality into harmonious and mutually supportive arrangements” (2000b:25). Indeed, as Cameron confirms, scheduling BBC Four adds extra reflexivity to Ellis's definition, as the process of creating a BBC Four season aims to generate a meaningful wall of repeats and archive material that envelopes original documentary, and adds “a big range of tone and style and pace and format” (interview, 10 March 2010). BBC Four opts for programming that involves editorialising, which consists of the selection of an overarching theme, pursued through the exploration of individual programmes – usually documentaries. Richard Klein explains the distinction of BBC Four's use of television archive succinctly:

The consistent thing that separates BBC Four from other particularly digital, but I think most other channels – is that we always promise to editorialise our programming. (...) What we promise is that we will apply intelligence, and curatorship, an editorial view, a tone, or point of view, on a subject matter. We may showcase two or three performances, and we will also build around the archive. (...) We pick the best pieces and we say, here's a point of view on that subject matter. Now – you can take that point of view, and use it to inform

how you might appreciate that subject matter when you meet it in the real world. That is a cultural benefit to the nation, in my opinion (Klein, interview, 18 March 2010).

6.4.1 The Genealogy of BBC Four Seasons

The interest in a thematic unity of several programmes that are shown in regular intervals is not a recent phenomenon. Themed evenings, for example, emerged as early as the 1960s and can be linked to the medium's temporal modality and what Dayan identified as television's uniqueness as a cultural form in creating "media events" (1994). Lynn Spigel notes how thematic unity is linked to television literacy, which is why it became a regular feature of what she defines as the US "nostalgia networks" – channels such as Nick at Nite and TV Land, which strip re-runs throughout their weekly schedule while also creating "themed flows" which "appeal to a TV-literate generation" (2010a:87). Indeed, it is often the case that BBC Four's thematic evenings are linked to nostalgia, perhaps best illustrated by scheduling *Jackanory Night* (BBC Four, TX 19 Feb 2006), or themed Friday evenings dedicated to a particular music genre, artist or a decade (e.g. Elton John, TX Fri 3 May 2013; or Jazz, TX Fri 9 May 2013). On a broader scale, mounting research has been done on linking television reruns, repeats and archive with nostalgia viewing within a thriving multichannel ecology. This is the "boutique" model of televisual repetition (e.g. O'Sullivan, 1998; Kompare, 2005; Holdsworth, 2011; Piper, 2011). Holdsworth sees BBC Four's search for a golden age, *TV on Trial*, as an example of one of the many variants of television nostalgia (2011:121 – 123). However, nostalgia only partially explains the structure of the seasons, and *TV on Trial's* careful selection of programmes is linked to editorial and aesthetic considerations (see Chapter 7). In this sense, it has as much to do with reminiscing as with allowing a *space* for the television canon. To be more specific, the architecture, or scheduling of BBC Four seasons, serves as an expansion beyond nostalgic television, to that of a television museum, with seasons associating themselves, as well as being analogous with, an exhibition or an art event:

The template for the ambitious BBC Four season came towards the end of my time there [Summer 2004]. We did a big season (...) *Summer in the Sixties*, we called it. (...) That was a deliberate attempt to turn all the guns of the channel on one theme, a whole slew of documentaries, *The Avengers* repeats, big art... we got the Tate to do an exhibition called *Art and the 60s*, and wrangled in the season to coincide with that, and we explored popular culture, and so on... and it was very effective, it worked very, very well (Keating, interview, 12 March 2010).

Summer in the Sixties, aired in June 2004, was a month long season that had an original documentary *Art and the 60s*, a three part series about the creative upheaval in London, around which the BBC Four season was built on the mix of archives and smaller original documentaries. Janice Hadlow explains how the seasons were established:

One of the things I introduced into the channel, or built upon the channel – certainly, we did more when I was there – was the idea of seasons, where you can get a variety of different kinds of programming, mostly factual, but sometimes there was a drama or fictional element to it (...). Making use of the BBC's own very rich archives to show the programmes that would complement those seasons was always an incredibly important thing what we did (interview, 2 March 2010).

The first experimentations with the schedule, which were not strictly related to a daily, temporal regime but more with a cluster of related programmes, can be traced back to BBC Two's schedule. BBC Two's original controller Michael Peacock (1964) attempted to organise minority programmes into themed evenings (Crisell, 1997:115; also see Chapter 4). But Keating, who originated seasons for BBC Four, explains the significant qualitative difference between a themed night approach and that of a BBC Four season:

Michael Peacock's schedule for BBC Two was less about themed evenings, in the wholly creative sense, as a spontaneous idea ... he would do a very structured weekly cycle... I mean, Tuesday was light entertainment, and there is a bit of that on BBC (...); Saturday nights on BBC One is entertainment, Friday nights on BBC Two has a bit of gardening in it, BBC Four on Friday nights, we established as music, pretty early on... so there was a little bit of Peacockism on the BBC Four schedule, but the idea of the creative, one-off themed night, and the creative, curated, one-off themed season, is, I think, an artefact of

BBC Two and Channel 4 in the 1980s and 1990s (interview, 12 March 2010).

Keating contrasts the temporal, structured, cyclical pattern of a themed evening, dependent on repetition and regularities in linear schedule, to BBC Four's "creative, curated, one-off" selection of programmes spread across weeks of its schedule. The application of the term "artefact" to both "season" and "television programme" lends further meaning to BBC Four's status as an audiovisual museum space that "exhibits" programmes.

Curated seasons have also been a conceptual heritage of arts programmes. Anthony Wall, who was one of the originators of BBC Two's curated evenings with *Arena* in the early 1980s, points to another source of inspiration on BBC Two, *The Late Night Line Up* (BBC Two, 1964 – 1972) which emphasised different qualities shared with seasons: that of creative intervention combined with a low budget. "It was all very low rent, just like a couple of British jazzers taking you through it, so it did feel very authentic" (interview, 11 February 2010). Wall decided to use the idea with the *Arena Blues Night*:

We got BB King to take you through it, and to show you things, so it was a much more organic sort of organised presentation. There was a whole five hours as a piece, rather than, well, here's another film, here's another film... That was effectively the first themed evening constructed in an organised, produced, sort of editorial... like a five-hour programme. And since then we've done lots. And then it caught on... but a good few years later... (Wall, interview, 11 February 2010).

Arena's themed evenings were developed for BBC Two in the 1980s and the concept has been since been extended and honed on BBC Four over two decades later. In the spirit of cross-fertilisation, the programme also received a season treatment on BBC Four as *Arena at 30* was aired from 3 – 7 September 2005 with a limited selection of programmes shown later in the month on BBC Two. In fact, Wall explains that the season on BBC Four was also one of the strategies aimed at extending the BBC Two space:

The BBC season was that heritage of themed evenings, and then it was also a proposition to have BBC Two and BBC Four to work

closely together, so that for whatever reason, the pressure on the space on BBC Two – you have *Newsnight*, a decision how you measure programmes. Eight o'clock you would have to be squeezed about how much space you have in between... (Wall, interview, 11 February 2010).

However, Light points out that that “the growing practice of ‘theming’ days or evenings of viewing” (2004:121) emerges out of the second half of the 1990s, as a way of “packaging” programmes into events basically as a way to gain more audiences. The “underlying purpose” of themed evenings, Light argues, was not so much linked to cultural objectives, as to branding practices and audience share concerns (2004:122). Indeed, Todreas explains that the tremendous volume of television content (by now, even bigger due to archive digitisation) forces content packaging to the top of the agenda as a way forward to create value in the digital era: “put programmes together into a schedule or a cluster and... it becomes possible to name the cluster, create a visual logo and visual theme for it, differentiate it from other clusters and, in time, create an image around it – in short, to brand it” (1999:175). With the mixed schedule being replaced by a portfolio of channels, a complimentary approach between the channels has further expounded the technique into a strategy that at once represents channel branding and content curating, conflating public service broadcasting’s cultural mission with competitive, economically driven strategies defined by the channel’s entry into a digital, multichannel market.

6.5 Conclusion: “Arresting Temporality” as the Future of Cultural Value?

The effect of the neoliberal turn that facilitated a more instrumental way of thinking about culture is now shaping the institutional practices of BBC Four through the budget limitations on culturally demanding programmes. The prominence of TV archive and repeats on BBC Four is symptomatic of a broader public service shift in the context of multiplatform and digital transformations, where the economic term, the “public good”,

acquires new meanings⁹⁵. In this context, it could be argued that the spatial turn of cultural value is a direct outcome of an economic rationale allowing a far greater amount of space for repeats, especially of culturally demanding television programmes, and which serves to compensate for the reduction in new, original and innovative programmes. However, I wish to argue that despite, or because of, these limitations, new approaches to television production and programming are increasingly prominent. These strategies are culturally motivated, formed by aesthetic concerns and manifested as curatorial interventions, and contribute to new ways of engaging with and conceptualising the cultural value of television. In other words, although essentially a “pragmatic channel” (see Keating, Chapter 5), BBC Four compensates for the reduction of formally innovative programmes by investing in a small amount of culturally demanding programmes that achieve resonance and value through their repeated and extended viewing (i.e. cultural value as a *cumulative* process), and through mining archives (i.e. cultural value as *lasting*, permanent artefacts). Furthermore, repeats and archive programmes are organised, editorialised and curated, indicating the increasing prominence of “industrial reflexivity and critical practice in film and television⁹⁶” (Caldwell, 2008). In the case of BBC Four, these reflexive and critical practices are demonstrated in the resurrection of the television archive or the making of programmes that highlight television’s (or the BBC’s) cultural significance and history, which in turn contribute to the resurgence of an institutional interest in aesthetic re-evaluation, canonicity and the search to legitimate television as a cultural form. This interest is demonstrated through, for example, the channel commissioning documentaries about broadcasting history and its social and cultural impact⁹⁷, or the emphasis on nurturing “big subjects” and television seasons (e.g. *Justice Season*, BBC Four, 2010; *Germany Season*, BBC Four, 2010) that indicate a

⁹⁵ For example, Graham Murdock’s “digital commons” refers to new space brought by the digital and multiplatform to public service broadcasting’s mission to realise the full potential for cultural citizenship by allowing communal connections and distancing from the pressure coming from commercial interests (2004, 2007)

⁹⁶ In his *Production Culture* (2008), Caldwell draws on the surge of extra-textual programmes such as “making-ofs”, behind-the-scene docs or DVD bonus tracks to illustrate that film and television practices also involve analyzing and theorizing, which Caldwell defines as “culture as an interpretative system” (2008:2)

⁹⁷ For example, *The Third Programme: High Culture For All* (BBC Four, 2008); *Truth About 60s TV* (BBC Four, 2005); *Greg Dyke on Lord Reith* (BBC Four, 2007)

shift from an aesthetic concern over a single text to the relational value shared between a few texts grouped together. As Light points out, this moves television “away from the currency of the programme and towards that of the ‘mediascape’” (2004:125). The spatial turn of cultural value, in other words, emerges out of this self-reflexivity, as a new concern with television history. This “obsession with memory” can be seen as a “reaction formation” against the seismic shift brought about by digital, multiplatform television. The BBC’s vast archives serve as a refuge, where we can, as Huyssen defined “‘attempt to slow down information processing’ and to anchor ourselves in more extended structures of temporality” (1995:7; also Whitehead, 2009:2).

Chapter 7. Case Study 3: The BBC Four Archive - Texts, Interpretations, and the New Aesthetics

*I am very interested in how the past can be brought into the present.
Intellectually I think it is the most fascinating thing at the moment...*
(Anthony Wall, interview, 11 February 2010)

Archive television is a growing industry in the digital multiplatform and television ecology (e.g. UKTV channels such as GOLD, Yesterday, Dave). It can be argued that all commercial archive-based channels are, by default, involved in the safeguarding of cultural value as, according to Lyn Spigel, the television archive is preserved and reshowed for multiple motives, ranging from its reuse for commercial purposes to more “purely” cultural ones. By culture, Spigel here refers to both an anthropological/historical sense (shedding light on a national culture), and to an account of culture as “an art object representing – in the Arnoldian tradition – the “best of man” (2010:70). Consideration of how cultural and economic layers intertwine places BBC Four in the shared space of archive digital channels. In this sense, BBC Four’s reliance on low budget repeats means that its scheduling practices are actually very similar to commercial channels such as UK Gold. However, although it is useful to emphasise that the television archive is

often used for its commercial and entertainment value, especially for the programming of “the best-loved telly”, archive channels, Lynn Spigel argues, are equally informed by “a complex web of belief systems and prevailing discourses about television’s value as an object” (2010a:70). As explored in the previous chapter, BBC Four’s remit alone suggests a qualitative difference in the place its archives have: it is a public service digital channel which, although undergoing continuous financial pressure (see Chapters 4 and 5) is seen as a “custodian of BBC archives”, and its financial dependence on archive programming is also coupled with high expectations for innovative and ambitious programme making – i.e. programmes that offer more depth, analysis or complexity (BBC Trust, 2011).

Barbara Herrnstein-Smith argues that, in the case of literary “archives”, each of the archival “acts” involving the text – whether that is purchasing, preserving, or in case of television archives, erasing - “is an implicit act of evaluation” (1988:3). While the previous chapters demonstrated that it is a process not only about preservation, but also cataloguing and retrieval, archives also require a regulated “space” where the evaluation can take place. In other words, analysing the concept of the “preservation” of television and other forms of cultural memory depends on defining the space where it is located, whether it be a museum (see Spigel, 2010b), a website, or a channel.

BBC Four is one of those archival places and a site of cultural evaluation. It is contained within a discourse of institutional preservation, of which there are three elements. Firstly, as mentioned in Chapters 5 and 6, scheduling and programming strategies lie at the heart of creating BBC Four as a platform for culture, and the production of culture on the channel is a process that is now often likened to “curating”, which implicitly acknowledges television programmes as enduring artefacts that are preserved for posterity and have “a high reuse value” (O’Dwyer, interview, 9 May 2012). Secondly, BBC Four plays a major role in aggregating archive programmes and producing multiplatform archive “collections”, both in the form of broadcast seasons and in its own online permanent collection.

Thirdly, and centrally to this chapter, the television archive (either whole programme and/or archive footage) has ascended into a central part of television production, and is a necessary ingredient of many of BBC Four's documentary programmes.

The programmes that BBC Four produces in which archives play an integral part should therefore not only be seen as a site of archive "preservation" but also as a site of programme making practices, or archive "production". Any serious examination of the channel requires a closer look at its archive-based texts, which, as this chapter argues, frame the notion of cultural value through the process of a self-reflexive production practice. Television archives are continually examined and evaluated within the production framework, as they are repurposed for new television programmes. Caldwell defines "industrial self-reflexivity" as a "form of local cultural negotiation and expression" (2008:2; also Chapter 2), which, in the case of BBC Four, results in the channel being a pro-active mediator of a national and institutional past. Archive mining, and its editorial and curatorial interventions, are all processes aiming to produce something new: whether it is to build confidence in the value of television as a cultural form, to make sense of one's past, or crucially, to create new values out of the old ones.

In order to critically explore these processes as new sites for the production of cultural value, this chapter focuses on a selection of archive based television *texts*. The focus of this chapter, therefore, is how the television archive, whether whole programmes or footage, is integrated into the production of "new" programmes. I will identify approaches to archive as *interpretative*, *interventional* and *imaginative*. *Interpretative* refers to the way in which programme makers, although discursively framed by nostalgia, nevertheless attempt to expand their programming away from merely "maintaining memories" (Sorlin, 2001:25). BBC Four's choice of archive is frequently made on the basis of its "benefit for the nation" value, and the cultural or social value of programmes also involves "double hermeneutics" (Giddens, 1984), in that the process of interpretation is self-reflexive, and, to some extent, intertextual. For example, the BBC's own institutional history

and cultural value is increasingly explored in programmes such as *The Third Programme: High Culture For All*, (BBC Four, 2008); *The Truth About 60s TV*, (BBC Four, 2005); *Greg Dyke on Lord Reith*, (BBC Four, 2007), or the BBC Four project *TV on Trial*, the latter of which is analysed later in this chapter. Some examples, such as programmes about the early days of television, especially those celebrating television writers (e.g. Nigel Kneale, *The Kneale Tapes*, *Timeshift*, 2006; *Arena: Dennis Potter*, in *Potter at the BBC: Classic Plays*, BBC Four, December 2004 - February 2005; *Jack Rosenthal Season*, BBC Four, 2004), are a signature of BBC Four and further point to the need to relate production of programmes back to an institutional self-reflexivity.

The rise of these archive-rich programmes on BBC Four is, unlike other channels, characterised by the attempt of “making new out of old”, or the process of actively linking the past and the present in which archives are interpreted through a process of *intervention*, i.e. re-editing or re-contextualising archive material, segments or entire programmes (see, for example, *What Happened Next?* [ten part series, BBC Four, 2008]; and *Timeshift* [BBC Four, 2002 – present]; see Appendix 4). These two television archive strands are further explored in this chapter because they use archives as a story-telling resource which implicitly positions television’s role in a broader social and cultural history. The archive is, furthermore, clearly becoming a “creative tool” (Das, interview, 10 March 2010), and a closer look into inventive ways of mining and selecting archives, such as Anthony Wall’s *Arena* programmes, including *Cool* (BBC Four, 2009) and *Exodus ’77* (BBC Two/Four, 2007) reveal new forms of content innovation. This innovation involves the use of the archives’ evocative, nostalgic and ambient qualities and, I argue, can be seen as an *imaginative* development of archive use, representing both continuity and a break from earlier television aesthetics. Both *Arena* programmes in question are exceptions rather than the rule; they are also music themed, which further highlights a new archive-based television aesthetics which, although continuing to experiment within the medium, is not characterised by formal interventions (Mulvey, 2007), but is rather, content driven.

7.1 Taking Television Seriously: The Cultural Value of Archive as Self-Reflexive Production Process and “Innovative, High Quality Programming”⁹⁸

A renewed interest amongst television studies scholars in historiography and a more systematic understanding of television’s textual history (Wheatley, 2007; also see Chapter 2) is closely knit with the disciplinary turn to television aesthetics and the idea of a television canon (Geraghty, 2003; Jacobs, 2000; Johnson, 2007), both of which facilitate a growing focus on television archives. This research tangent needs to be contextualised by taking into account that television studies’ dominant concern is in television texts, rather than television production or the nature of the medium itself (Jacobs, 2000). It is also worth mentioning, as Ellis contends, that the medium’s modality brings what is an overwhelming focus on *present* texts: television is essentially a time-defined medium in which programmes are generally considered as only temporarily meaningful (2007a). The medium of television facilitates “mobile privatisation” (Williams, 1974/2003), and forges “intimate connections between its programmes and the moment of their intended broadcast” (Ellis, 2007a:16), collapsing the external world into personal, lived experience which is why most past television texts are framed by nostalgia (O’Sullivan, 1998; Holdsworth, 2011). Watching television archives, therefore, could be seen as experiencing intimate connections with a mediated past or likened to a form of “TV as a time machine” (Uricchio, 2010). Television scholar Horace Newcomb, for example, observed recently how finding reshowed programmes he had enjoyed and written about (*Ironside* and *St Elsewhere*) was like watching “reflections of what they were, incomplete images and imaginings of time, place, significance, pleasure” (2009:117). The television archive, therefore, is not merely an artefact or a mediated historical record, but a discrete site where cultural value is often contingent on personal memory and nostalgia.

But what happens when these intimate connections and re-aestheticised mediations are not part of the viewer’s imagination but rather,

⁹⁸ BBC Four’s Remit (BBC Trust, 2011)

an integral part of television production? For Caldwell, the introspective, reflexive nature of viewing is a growing part of producing and making television (2008), expressing a tendency that “film and television today reflect obsessively back upon themselves and invest considerable energy in over-producing and distributing this industrial self-analysis to the public” (2008:1). Although Caldwell focuses on Hollywood industry practice and behind-the-scenes documentaries, “making-ofs” and DVD bonus tracks as his examples, his essential argument is that television and film programmes are effectively becoming seen as “artefacts” – fixed objects of cultural and historical interest subject to documentary focus and analysis which also serves as their promotional material. As Hills among others has suggested, DVD television, taken out of the flow of ordinary viewing and packaged into discrete commodities, is a prime candidate for canonisation (in Geraghty, 2009:7). Archive based programmes, similarly, in being offered a more permanent home in the BBC Four collection, can be seen as key contenders for entering a television canon, as well as undergoing the same process of Caldwell’s “industrial self-analysis” *vis a vis* BBC Four’s seasons, online collections, archive footage used regularly as historical evidence, and archive programmes as objects of study through documentaries. Television archives can therefore be seen as texts that are increasingly a part of an institutional “culture as an interpretative system” approach (Caldwell, 2008:2).

Interpreting television and searching for a television canon – and therefore looking at its archives - is wrapped in the “presentness” of meaning making which is why the cultural analysis of archives tends to be ahistorically construed. Ellis refers to the “otherness” of programmes when shown outside their intended broadcast moment, which he distinguishes from the search for the “lasting value” of television. Ellis’s distinction between two different interpretative frameworks - *immanent*, text-centred and focused on its potential meaning through its present context; and *textual-historical*, linking the meaning to its historical context at the time the programme was made (2007a) – can be of value in understanding not only textual properties but also self-reflexive processes in production practices. Ellis argues that the measure – and possibility – of a television canon, can be reached through the

tension and friction between these two interpretations. Immanence is useful in pointing out the continuing power of a text, while the idea of the *textual-historical* is important for extra-textual readings which point to temporal specificities and continuities and can be seen “as reinforcing the importance of the text, drawing it away from wilful and partial interpretation” (2007:26). The two interpretative positions in this instance are therefore used here to frame production choices made in evaluating the television archive or as an illustration of “double hermeneutics” and self-reflexivity in production to support this chapter’s argument that the very interpretation of television texts itself is becoming a subject matter of archive-based television programmes. For example, BBC Four’s project *TV on Trial* is a key example of an *interpretative* approach to television archive that looks into how cultural value is construed within television texts. This chapter further addresses *interventional* approaches to television archive, using BBC Four’s flagship archive driven programmes *Time-Shift* and *What Happened Next?* as examples of the use of archive footage and archive programmes for the purpose of revising a lesser known or understood historical period or probing into its social value. Finally, the *imaginative* interpretation of archive on BBC Four is examined through two archive based programmes from the BBC’s longest running art series *Arena*, now existing on both BBC Two and on BBC Four (see Chapter 5). This approach looks at the use of archive footage and how it is integrated into a new television aesthetics of digital video remixing.

7.1.1 *TV on Trial*: In Search of a Golden Age of Television - on Television

According to Johnson, historical comparison of television programmes is often “mobilised, particularly in claims about the decline of certain genres” (2007:55). A year after John Humphrys’ declaration that British reality television is “seedy, cynical and harmful” to society at the annual McTaggart Lecture (2005:271), BBC Four undertook a project of finding a “golden television decade”, in what could be arguably seen as the first sustained and large scale project to look systematically at British television’s own past. The

season of putting the television medium itself on trial took place between 27 March and 8 April 2005, and included debates by television critics and personalities, including John Humphrys, Mark Lawson, Janet Street-Porter and David Aaronovitch. Presented by John Sergeant, *TV on Trial* was staged amidst the “widely-held assumption that British TV has deteriorated in quality since the early yesteryear” (Sergeant in *TV on Trial*, 2005). The programme itself was “evidently inspired by the popularity of countdown and “best of nostalgia formats” but from the commissioning and scheduling perspective, the programme had a more ambitious goal, “as a way of utilising archives, but also allowing people to discuss and have an opinion about archives, give a kind of context and the meaning” (Hadlow, interview, 2 March 2010). In addition, *TV on Trial* was an interactive viewing experience, inviting viewers to vote for the best television decade, with the “closing ceremony” that announced the winning decade accompanied by a research documentary by Professor Steven Barnett.

Six decades of television were examined and placed in competition with each other to determine the “golden decade”. The journey started in 1955 with *TV on Trial: 1955* (BBC Four, TX 27 March 2005), commonly understood as the beginning of television⁹⁹, and continued with a timeline of chronologically ordered programmes, each dedicated to the middle years of a decade (*TV on Trial: 1965*; *TV on Trial 1975*, etc). The focus here is on programmes dedicated to the first two decades – the 1950s and 1960s – as examples of how “deep archives” lent themselves to discursive analysis by television experts within the *TV on Trial* programme. Each programme consisted of a very broad choice of programme examples from the decade being analysed, including those from television archives other than the BBC. Most of these programmes were shown in their entirety with an interactive option to see it with or without a real-time commentary of two prominent broadcasting personalities, who had been selected to debate the programmes

⁹⁹ The 50th year anniversary of the television duopoly with the launch of ITV in 1955 is considered as the moment in history which had a “transformative effect on drama production” as well as the beginning of a transitional period between the “near total reliance on live studio drama production and the increasing use of pre-recorded material, on tape and film.” (Jacobs, 2000:5) But perhaps more importantly, it is the pre-recorded material that enabled a dramatic increase in the availability of visual archive material (ibid.), enabling the *TV on Trial* programme to start with the year 1955.

being viewed. The choice of programmes was not based on “the best of” or television “classics”, but was rather a cross-section of different representative genres of the year in question, suggesting that programmes being judged were representative of a broader context and that the aim of the programme was not to evaluate particular archive texts, but to look at a sum of representative texts.

Following a brief montage of key events that took place in the year and decade analysed, we see the critics seated in front of a television set, in a simulated living room space designed in the style of the decade debated. The programmes they watched were “framed upon a blue digital background, emphasising their position within the ‘flow’ of *TV on Trial* or via split screens which displayed the reactions and responses of the commentators” (Holdsworth, 2011:121). Each critic was chosen for his or her position in the debate, with one pundit representing and defending the decade, while the other taking a sceptical view. These two positions correspond to Ellis’s two interpretative frameworks: a textual-historical interpretation is adopted by the “witness for the defence” (Holdsworth, 2011:121), a broadcasting personality who lived as a child through the specific decade; while the second, immanent interpretation, is undertaken by the “witness for the prosecution” (ibid.), who was critical of the decade’s television especially when comparing it to the medium in the present. The dialogue between the critics was not structured but rather filmed in real time in order to offer a spontaneous critique and commentary of archive programmes as they are watched. As a result, the viewers get a sense they are actually watching television *with* the critics. Furthermore, as Holdsworth points out, framing the archive image “on the digital blue screen exaggerates the variable ‘quality’ of the image and prompts the viewer to make comparative aesthetic judgements” (2011:123). For the purpose of this chapter – and in order to situate it within unambiguous territory concerning the meaning of archives - I will look in particular at the structure of the debates around “deep archives” and will focus on two episodes, *TV on Trial: 1955* and *TV on Trial: 1965*.



FIGURE 1 – TV ON TRIAL: CHRIS DUNKLEY AND MARK LAWSON IN A MOCK 1960S LIVING ROOM; AND TO THE RIGHT, SPLIT SCREEN SHOTS WHILE WATCHING A 1965 EPISODE OF STEPTOE & SON

7.1.2 TV on Trial: 1955 – The Age of Innocence?

TV on Trial: 1955 (BBC Four, 2005) is defended by the former Labour politician Roy Hattersley, whose formative years were spent watching 1950s television. While establishing his awareness that television as a medium has developed, Hattersley argues that the 1950s could be defined as the best on account of its “innocence”. Taking a sceptical position is *the Observer* television critic and columnist Kathryn Flett who, unlike Hattersley, is unfamiliar with the television decade and its programmes as it was “before her time”. They start with the first scripted sitcom of a real-life American family, *Life With The Lyons* (BBC, 1955), with father Ben Lyon, his wife Bebe, and their children, who live in London. In the episode, a live studio recording, we see the family dynamics over breakfast and events through the day. Flett’s observations concern the technical outdatedness and theatricality of the programme while Hattersley defends the situation comedy by contextualising it within the values of post-war Britain, which, he explains, was characterised by a sense of cultural renewal that was reflected in the “newness and freshness” of the programme. Hattersley also notes its playful challenges to patriarchal values, which Flett interprets from a contemporary perspective as sexism and an endorsement of patriarchal values. Hattersley’s clear textual historicist position is evident throughout, asserting that although he is unable to “defend that programme comparing it to 2006”, its historical context and textual modality point to a “more innocent time, a much more deferential age”. Flett is able to respond positively to the idea of contextualising the programme: “I can put myself in the place where I can see the charm of this.”

However, the charm soon wears off and is replaced by her observations of the programme's use of clichés, and her diachronic observations of its lack of visual language. Hattersley points out that this is the medium's beginner stutter, as he delineates the show as a precursor of contemporary family sitcoms. Flett observes that "it is a classic farce material" but suggests that, even so, "there was nothing about breaking out of stereotypes, it was about relating to them, and feeling safe doing it".

The structure of *TV on Trial* consists of the original archive programme with an optional analytical narrative by critics, which effectively becomes a text with a built-in textual analysis of itself, constructed *vis a vis* the tension between the immanent and textual-historical readings. This is further demonstrated in the analysis of an episode of an "early makeover show", *Can You Tell Me* (BBC, 1955), devised and presented by Mrs Digby Morton. Morton is looking at the camera while reading her female viewers' letters, usually related to fashion and style, and engaging with them by inviting experts to respond to the problems. In the episode shown, it is exclusively men who are chosen as "experts"; they tell women what to wear, how to accessorise, become fashion models and to identify what men find attractive in women. Flett's feminist perspective problematises the exclusive reliance on "male expertise", while also continuing to identify problems with the narrative pace and duration. Hattersley agrees that the programme is "fantastically patronising" to women. Flett concludes that the programmes so far seen are "slow and dull, almost unwatchable" until the arrival of an episode of ITV's *Double Your Money* (1955) fronted by Hughie Green. This is a quiz show where contestants from the audience are picked to choose one of forty-two distinct subjects to be asked questions about; each correct answer to the question doubles the amount of money so far earned. Both Hattersley and Flett notice the relaxed, accessible tone of the ITV programme, and its faster pace in contrast to the BBC programmes they have watched. Flett also observes the quiz's "improving" element in the choice of quiz questions, which are, compared to today's programmes, much more challenging. Hughie Green's style of presenting, they both agree, is "virtually unchanged" from the present, in terms of the banter and the style, with Flett pointing out that the

programme could have been ten years older, without her noticing it. However, according to John Ellis, the programme demonstrates the very early stages of presenters “developing forms of performance appropriate for television” (2011:11). In particular, Ellis notes that it is the audience and contestants who are “unsure about how to adjust the normal forms of social intercourse to this new format” (ibid).

What becomes growingly evident about the programmes chosen for this first instalment of *TV on Trial*, is a sense of the 1950s as an under-represented decade. Hattersley, for example, notes that “there were a lot better programmes than this. We haven’t exactly gotten the acme of perfection from 1955.” Indeed, the problem of “the physical survival of the programmes” (Messenger-Davies, 2007:40; Jacobs, 2000) which presents a key challenge in evaluating the early decades (Jacobs, 2000) lead to the re-broadcasting of archive programmes, which, according to Wheatley, “often have little or no historical accuracy in relation to the broader picture of television broadcasting in a particular time or place” (2007:10), thus limiting the possibilities of revising the television canon. The 1950s *TV on Trial* archive choice, then, becomes valuable for visual idiosyncrasies that represent the “50s feel” and are suggestive of the antiquated everydayness, and what Flett describes as “nascent feel of television”. The Hattersley/Flett debate is consequently framed by observations of social change and cultural history, rather than the canonical quality of the programmes themselves. Still, according to Ellis, the enduring value of programmes from this early decade of television is that “even the most inconsequential examples of television entertainment [are significant] in uncovering aspects of social interaction and social history.” (2011a:11).

The choice of the year to start television analysis in 1955 is another interesting, self-reflexive intervention by its producers, although arguably a pragmatic one – the very beginnings of television in 1936 were interrupted by the Second World War, only to be re-launched in 1946, with a very limited audiovisual archive record available. Although 1955 was not the starting decade of television in Britain, it was a year that marked the breakup of the

BBC monopoly and the launch of ITV. According to Caughie, it was ITV that “scared” the BBC into making “better television” that was in contrast to its “dry and austere programme making” of the late 1950s (2000:51). Indeed, Flett argues that “the medium doesn’t really know how to be; it is in its nascent stage”. The clear 1950s selection favourite amongst the critics is not surprisingly ITV’s *Double Your Money* as it was able to transcend the status of being a social-historic artefact into a watchable programme classic. However, Hattersley warns us that what was culturally valuable in the 1950s was still deeply imbued in a more rigid interpretation of a Reithian ethos which inflexibly divorced education from entertainment: “people like Hugh Gaitskell would only want solemn programmes on archaeology or art history”. This suggests that what has evolved is not only televisual style but also how television itself is valued, evolving from a medium seen as derivative of other cultural forms to one in which a populist evaluative framework, with entertainment as its core value, has become normative.

7.1.3 TV on Trial: 1965 – Golden Age of Television?

Examining *TV on Trial: 1965* (BBC Four, 2005) shifts us from a focus on television as social history with little aesthetic independence, towards its status as a valid and fully-fledged cultural form. Journalist and broadcaster Mark Lawson, who also writes about quality television¹⁰⁰ but is a resolute “golden age” sceptic, contests Chris Dunkley, television critic for the *Financial Times*, who considers the decade as the “golden age” of television. The choice of programmes for 1965 are BBC’s *Steptoe and Son*, ITV’s *Coronation Street*, the BBC documentary *Masters and Prefects*, and *Fable*, a documentary about Britain and apartheid. I will focus here on the critical reception of what is already accepted as a classic British sitcom, *Steptoe and Son* and on the first British soap opera, *Coronation Street*.

Lawson takes an immanent position in the 1960s television debate, arguing that the style of *Steptoe and Son* is derivative. He notes the slow pace

¹⁰⁰ For example, see McCabe, J., Akass, K. (2007) *Quality TV: Contemporary American Television and Beyond*, where Mark Lawson contributed with a chapter based on his interview with David Chase

of the programme and compares the comedy to its contemporary counterparts such as *The Office* (BBC Two), which is more formally televisual, since it is made in a documentary style. He observes the prominence of class issues, but is surprised about the political and topical specificity of the episode. Dunkley agrees, focusing more on the comedy's richness and quality in terms of the writing. Calling himself a "golden ager", Dunkley believes that there was a period between 1965 – 1980 where an "extraordinary up-thrust of talent" took place. But Dunkley's evaluation, and the notion of a "golden age", as Jacobs rightly puts it, depends on the idea of "liberation" from the early static theatre of television drama; "from the innovations of Sydney Newman and *Armchair Theatre*, to the "golden age" of *The Wednesday Play*, and Dennis Potter – and on the assertion that early television drama (emblematic of television in general) did not develop its own aesthetic" (2000:1). Lawson, like Flett previously, feels that the pace is slower, and that 1960s television "always feels like a kindergarten television; you feel like it is the very early days of the medium". Indeed, for Caughie, the argument that the 1960s and 1970s were the golden age of BBC television drama, fails to take note that "there were a lot of dull plays and unremarkable evenings" and that "nostalgia creates a past without rough edges which only exists in fantasy and desire" (2000:57).

While Caughie's observation is illustrative of the reception of *Steptoe and Son*, the episode of *Coronation Street*, however, does not receive a similar reception by Lawson. The longstanding soap opera was "thrilling to watch" and the technological limitations of the time still allowed for incredibly high production standards, powerful scriptwriting by John Finch and a strong performance by the cast. A scene depicting domestic violence still resonates as emotionally raw, demonstrating the centrality of realist aesthetics in British television at the time, and in soap opera in particular. This is where television as the emblematic medium of social history, harmonises with its aspiration to be a popular cultural form – consider, for example, Dyer's observation of the centrality and depiction of the ordinary lives of people which connects *Coronation Street's* realist aesthetics to the working class culture depicted in Richard Hoggart's *Uses of Literacy* (in Geraghty, 1991:33). Lawson is also

surprised to notice that the episode was directed by a woman (Pauline Shaw), given that television was considered to be a male medium “until about 2003”. Both programmes reveal an unexpected revisionist turn as they, on the one hand, challenge nostalgic assumptions as well as the golden age status of *Steptoe and Son*, while also uncovering the possibilities of the lasting value of the traditionally “lowbrow” and “feminine” genre of *Coronation Street*. Dunkley observes that “the kind of talent that went into *Coronation Street* in Britain would go into cinema in France, or theatre in America”, emphasising the important place that the medium of television holds in British national culture. Indeed, a few years following this analysis, BBC Four marked the 50th anniversary of the soap by commissioning an original single drama *The Road to Coronation Street* (BBC Four/ITV Studios, 2010, originally part of the *Planet North* season in September 2010, BBC Four), which dramatises the groundbreaking efforts of its creator Tony Warren to bring the northern setting to the small screen. Penned by Daran Little, himself one of the *Corrie* writers (95 episodes), the self-referentiality and self-reflexivity of the drama is observed as a thematic shift by its director Charles Sturridge: “It is quite a rare thing to have a chance to make a film about the business you are in, and to make a film which explains a little why we have such a wonderful job”.¹⁰¹

Lawson, however, raises an important point concerning the televisuality of archive programmes as he observes that in watching 1960s television “you begin to see the possibilities that will come later on, but it is not a golden age – it is a beginner age”. The clear borrowing from radio and stage in the episodes shown of *Steptoe and Son* and *Coronation Street* was pertinent. What comes through clearly is that the aesthetic evaluation of a television programme continues to be marked by the search for the “authentic language” of television while also being trampled by its dated, ephemeral everydayness, in which textual-historicism is continually used as a means of transporting programmes back to their intended, and somewhat flawed, past. Television’s ubiquitous, immediate qualities can also be seen as having strong lasting values if they are contingent on the narrative of social

¹⁰¹ In an interview following the reception of a BAFTA award for the best single drama in 2011, <http://www.bafta.org/awards/television/winners-nominees-2011,1766,BA.html>

history. BBC Four's own cultural value lies in its effort to "institutionalize themselves as television's best critics" (Spigel, 2010a:88), a strategy which attempts to represent "television heritage", but also to extend it as an essential part of national culture.

TV on Trial can be seen, however, in a broader framework of the proliferation of archive-based, "best of" and nostalgia programmes that, according to the music critic Simon Reynolds, reached their peak in 2000. Reynolds cites programmes such as *I Love [the Decade]* that originally started on BBC Two but has been franchised on music channels such as VH1 as "the convulsive logic of archive fever"¹⁰². Reynolds interviews Mark Cooper, the BBC Television's Creative Head of Music Entertainment whose production of archive based music documentaries particularly proliferated on BBC Four¹⁰³, Cooper points out that a nostalgic impulse is behind both in-depth music documentaries and the various "countdown" programmes, but he notes that the significant distinction is that the list programmes "did not want to interrogate it or understand it; they just wanted to give a taste of it, a smell of it, in that biscuit sense... They were seen by the production teams as more like shows than documentaries, seeing the past not as history but as pure nostalgia" (in Reynolds, 2011:28). Cooper here vividly demonstrates how value judgement is embedded in everyday commissioning practices, and his distinction between "pure nostalgia" and "history" can be seen as analogous with Hall and Whannel's discriminatory analysis between popular and mass culture (1964; Chapter 2), with TV nostalgia "bites" evoking, not personal memory, but rather, a "de-personalised quality, a no-style" (1964:68). The distinction emerges between television as, on the one hand, a mass medium and on the other, a popular arts form, with BBC Four archive-based music documentaries clearly made to embody the latter.

¹⁰² Reynolds (2011) takes the term "Archive Fever" from Jacques Derrida's essay *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, in which he defines the concept *mal d'archive* with a double meaning; as a reference to the genuine illness of archivists who spend too long in archives as well as a compulsion to collect and accumulate

¹⁰³ For example, Mark Cooper is responsible for the Friday music themed night documentaries, or the three-part series on British music genres such as *Folk Britannia*, *Prog Britannia*, *Synth Britannia*

7.2 BBC Four's Archive Interventions: Archive Mining and Re-Examining Social History Through *Timeshift* and *What Happened Next?*

Timeshift is one of the longest running series on BBC Four. Originally conceived as a part of the *Archive Zone* on BBC Four's predecessor, BBC Knowledge, it is an analytical documentary strand that has "long specialised in plundering the archives to tell resonant tales of social change" (Keating, 2011). John Das, the series producer since 2006, explains that originally the role of the programme series was a thematic supplement to acquired and commissioned dramas and documentaries:

Timeshift programmes were accompanied by a repeat of something from the archive that was relevant, so we packaged it together in a double bill, effectively. We had a drama that would go with it, or another documentary that would be a repeat... and then *Timeshift* evolved to be a stand-alone programme (interview, 10 March 2010).

Timeshift has since become a kind of blueprint for a range of archive-sustained documentaries commissioned for BBC Four (e.g. *Youth Hostelling: the First 100 Year*, BBC Four, TX May 2009; *Hop Skip and Jump: The Story of Children's Play*, TX 15 December 2009). The success of *Timeshift* primarily demonstrated that the longevity of the series was largely due to its low budget formula. But this long running series also demonstrated that mining the BBC's vast audio-visual database presented possibilities for a systematic uncovering of the nation's social history and cultural past. This curatorial approach to the archive, according to Cameron, was unique in the way it looks back "with intelligence on time, and looking at what is different. [It] can vary between looking at fiction, and looking at drama and comedy, and entertainment – or – doing a straightforward documentary..." (Cameron, interview, 9 July 2010). Other representative archive-based documentaries, such as the more clear-cut *Nation of Film* are, for example, dedicated to showing British social history as cultural artefacts – from industrial (coal mining, shipbuilding) to domestic life (school and shopping). *Timeshift* not only interprets the past, but also attempts to broaden its thematic focus as a series; its approach to social history can be defined as "omnivorous" (Peterson, 2005). According to Das:

The greatest appeal of *Timeshift* is that it has got such a wide-ranging feel to it. (...) I really enjoy the variety of ideas; the fact that each new programme is different from the last one makes the series very exciting to oversee, just because it is very stimulating to get all kinds of different ideas, and that no territory is unavailable for you to look at (interview, 10 March 2010).

7.2.1 *Timeshift: Missing, Believed Wiped* – Salvaging British Television History

The variety of ideas that Das refers to is particularly illustrative of self-reflexive programme-making practices. One of the first *Timeshift* programmes for BBC Four was *Missing, Believed Wiped* (2003). The programme documents the progress a British Film Institute's (BFI) initiative, *Missing, Believed Wiped* (MBW) which was set up in order to uncover long lost and valuable UK television programmes from the official UK television archives which were either destroyed or never preserved in the first place. According to Dick Fiddy (2001), the initiative was launched in 1993, following the success of the BFI's pursuit of the lost British movies, *Missing, Believed Lost*. The *Timeshift* episode examines some of the outcomes of MBW initiative, identifying how the institutionalisation of the audiovisual archive was a slow process, contributing to the value shift of television as a cultural form: from making "disposable" programmes to recognising popular culture's lasting values. It focuses on the disappearance and subsequent reappearance of television programmes between 1950 and 1970, either because they were wiped or were never recorded. The series mostly includes lost and found footage of comedy programmes, including *The Likely Lads*, two missing episodes of the second series of *Dad's Army*, which were rescued by a private collector who saw them lying in a skip in 1969, and the first ever episode 'Till *Death Us Do Part* from 1966.

The programme starts with the former Monty Python, Terry Jones, looking through archive footage of *The Complete and Utter History of Britain* (LWT, 1969), a programme he made with his fellow Python Michael Palin believed to be lost for almost forty years prior to this programme. A six part comedy sketch series, *The Complete and Utter History of Britain* was wiped

immediately after being broadcast, but a private copy was preserved in Australia and rescued by the *Missing, Believed Wiped* team. We are then presented with another missing television forerunner to *Monty Python Flying Circus* (BBC, 1969 – 74), *At Last, the 1948 Show* (ITV, 1967 – 1968), which is also restored and shown for the first time after almost four decades. The programme suggests that recording technology was available in the 1960s and indeed includes archive footage of *Panorama*'s Richard Dimbleby announcing the first occasion of television being recorded by VERA (Vision Electronic Recording Apparatus), a magnetic tape device, in 1958. The fascinating moment when Dimbleby directly asks viewers directly to focus their attention on the clock showing 9:15 as the starting point of the recording, so that he can replay the moment five minutes later represents a symbolic turning point for television going from being “ephemeral art” in real-time to one being a “record of history”. It took twenty more years, however, according to the documentary, for the “BBC to understand the value of its archives”, when it celebrated the 40th anniversary of television in 1976.



FIGURE 2 - DAVID DIMBLEBY DEMONSTRATING THE VERA RECORDING DEVICE DURING A PANORAMA PROGRAMME

As the programme suggests, it is only in the 21st century, with the digitisation of programmes, that the recognition of value is fully materialised through the rescue and preservation of archives. The programme thus

emphasises a shift in cultural value: the disparity between what was institutionally, as opposed to popularly, valued in the first three decades of television. The case of unjustly “missing programmes” is particularly emphasised with examples of classic comedy series such as *Steptoe and Son*’s ten missing (erased) episodes and Peter Cook and Dudley Moore’s erased comedy sketches from their show *Not Only But Also*. The change in the perception of cultural value is aptly captured by Terry Jones: “The policy of targeting light entertainment as junk, I always thought, was a mistake, because it is the light entertainment that records the history. The concert of Beethoven in the 1960s is the same as the concert of Beethoven now. The real history is in entertainment” (*Timeshift: Missing, Believed Wiped*, BBC Four, 2003). The programme is at once archive-based as well as self-reflexive; it attempts to demonstrate the television archive as a collective memory and as the heart of social history. Its revisionist self-referentiality focuses on the social and cultural impact of British comedy and an institutional self-critique of past failures to recognise the cultural importance of television entertainment.

7.2.2 What Happened Next? - Creative Intervention into the Social and Cultural History of Britain

The use of archive takes yet another approach with the documentary series *What Happened Next?*. Produced by a *Timeshift* team, it is a follow-up documentary series made for BBC Four in which each programme in the series defined by the same, uncomplicated premise to follow up people who were subjects of deep archive documentary programmes. Das explains:

One of the reasons why we did *What Happened Next??* is that researching the archive for *Timeshift*, we came across other things in the archive – we saw things while looking for other things... and you think, that is interesting - let’s make a note of that so we can do something with it one day (interview, 10 March 2010).

This archive mining is the most essential and far-reaching part of the production process that the *Timeshift* team took part in and the notion of “accidental discovery” is not unlike real archaeological excavation. It requires

interpretative skills and the ability to go through a library catalogue database in order to adapt it to the “new cultural present” (Uricchio, 2010:33, see Chapter 6). Das elaborates:

We look at the films where you would be curious to find out what happened to the people afterwards, and you know, you may have a perfectly good film, but the film has to follow the same questions and never really leave you anything more. Or else, films which have been so difficult in terms of the subject matter that it would be very difficult for people to revisit that subject (Das, interview, 10 March 2010).

The first episode of the series that made use of this new cultural present looked at the *Global Village Trucking Company* (BBC Two, 1973; *What Happened Next?*, BBC Four, 2008). The original documentary from 1973 is a fly-on-the-wall take on a folk rock band with the same name, living in a commune in Norfolk with their family, a roadie and a manager. Viewers are invited to see the original, brief documentary in its entirety, and are introduced to the commune members, all in their early twenties, going about their day-to-day life as part of their search to free themselves from a materialistic society and to lead an independent, self-sustained life. The fact that this documentary was made in the year of the oil crisis and shown for the first time since 1973, frames the narrative interpretation of this lifestyle as being overly idealistic and youthfully naïve, and bound to fail. However, the question the documentary poses is where did this youthful romanticism go to, as the programme is subtly edited to gradually allow viewers to glimpse into the lives of the characters today. As their current professional lives are revealed, we find continuing traces of that idealism, albeit reinterpreted in diverse ways. By way of completing the transition between the archive footage and new documentary material, the end of the documentary sees the band’s first reunion gig in over three decades. Das explains the creative process of reinterpreting the archives, of bringing them into the present:

With *What Happened Next??* we were a lot more creative with how we did new material. (...) I suppose what we were trying to do was not to destroy the feel of the original programmes, but we were certainly much more flexible in how we approached that original material. Partly because we found it then that meant that when we tell the story you might have a very interesting subject, but the

programme itself might have looked dated, by contemporary eyes (Das, interview, 10 March 2010).

In the case of *What Happened Next?: Global Village Trucking Company*, the “datedness” is mostly seen through the characters and their idealism. However, Das raises an important point that archive programmes are often left behind. The driving force behind showing the original recording is contingent on the audience being imagined with a nostalgic yearning. According to Don Cameron, the audience research of BBC Four points to the facts that most viewers are over 40 years old, reflexive and introspective of their own lives, people who

...begin to look back on their lives and think, ‘why on earth did we do the things we did? Why did things work out the way they did?’. And there is, then, a distance, between what they remember of the early part of their lives and what it actually was like (Cameron, interview, 9 July 2010).

But this is also the case for academic researchers and programme makers alike. Wheatley points out that one of the problems of researching television history is “the problem of nostalgia and the need to confront the connection between popular and academic histories of the medium” (2007:8). Flett notes that when watching 1950s children television in *TV on Trial*, “there is a kind of warped nostalgia about the television from [one’s] childhood...” (2005). Warped, as Boym emphasises, because “modern nostalgia is a mourning for the impossibility of mythical return, for the loss of an enchanted world with clear borders and values” (Boym, 2001:8). However, as John Ellis observes, nostalgia,

... soon begins to pall. It gives way to a set of vague uneasiness, a disbelief at the superficial ugliness of clothes, haircuts, furniture and décor, along with a vague discomfort at some of the working assumptions about the nature of life (...) As a result of both nostalgia and unease, the period feels further away in time and more strange than it ever was at the time (2007:19).

The process of “updating” archives can therefore be seen as central to the programmes being removed from their “original habitat”. But changing the television archive’s pace and visual language are not the only concerns; preserving “the feel of the content” is an ethical as well as an aesthetic issue.

In *What Happened Next?: The Broken Bridge* (BBC Four, 2008) the production team pays particular attention to the changed social and moral attitudes towards the developmental disorder of autism and early attempts at its treatment, the focus of the original archive material from the documentary *The Broken Bridge* (BBC, 1968). This documentary is about two autistic children, Philip Morrall and Iris Faith, and the desperate plea of their parents to improve their learning disorders as they embark on the intensive behavioural therapy called “Operant Conditioning” developed by an LA psychiatrist Dr. Irene Kassarla.



FIGURE 3 - WHAT HAPPENED NEXT? THE BROKEN BRIDGE (BBC FOUR, 2008)

We follow the early transformations of these children, in their comparatively rapid gaining of language, previously thought impossible, through a very intensive treatment that involves a controversial system of not only rewards but also punishment. Archive images of the children’s transformation bear witness to the cruelty and effectiveness of the treatment as being two sides of the same coin. However, the voiceover that was retained in this archive intervention emphasises another moral dilemma which has less to do with Kassarla’s methods but of her motivations as it juxtaposes her intensive workshops in London’s private Harley Street clinic, with her rich Californian lifestyle in which she is seen driving out of her sun-drenched villa in an expensive Bentley. It is clear that the original documentary is a moral investigation into psychiatric practices and the ambiguous effect they have on autistic children and their families.

By cutting between archive footage and the present, which reveals the characters as adults, the *What Happened Next? Broken Bridge* programme allows a space for the re-evaluation of the treatment and how it had a mixed effect on the protagonists' lives; the deep transformation of the autistic individuals becomes a dramatic device for the documentary. The change we observe in the protagonists is also enhanced by the juxtaposition of past and present documentary styles; the archive footage with its imposing BBC voiceover becomes softened with a more observational documentary style, and the filmic quality of the archive footage is followed by the crisp, digitised quality of the images of the subjects in the present. The narrative envelops the past and present while the shift in image quality reminds us that the changes that the documentary observes happened over a course of four decades. The first scenes reveal the present state of forty year old Iris, now living in residential care and visiting her mother once a month. As their parents and siblings reminisce about the time the original documentary was made, seeing the children as very different adults provides a cathartic experience. Das explains the immediacy achieved in the updated documentary:

There is a very powerful moment in *The Broken Bridge* when we effectively cut from the main boy in late teens, early 20s - to him as he is now, in his 50s, or early 60s. It is quite a shocking and moving moment when you have the footage of him in the present day, and so I think that, in regards to the subject matter, part of what this series is really about, is the curiosity you have about human beings and how they change with time (Das, interview, 10 March 2010).

The rationale behind the choice of archives for the *What Happened Next??* series is to identify qualities that are socially and culturally intrinsic and unique about the subjects. For Das, "using the archives was the way to bring those subjects to life...to show how those experiences have changed over time and how perhaps cultural attitudes towards those subjects changed over time" (interview, 10 March 2010). The weight of archive footage, rather than merely chosen for nostalgic purposes or dramatic effect, is tied into BBC Four's mission to be a mediator of and commentator on the changing nature of British society. According to Richard Klein, BBC Four's task is to "reflect

the twentieth century back to our audiences; to reappraise the twentieth century gradually; we think that the story of our last century is that of such a huge change... civilization, modernity... In that sense, archive is very valuable” (interview, 18 March 2010). BBC Four takes an active interest in television’s *role* in this social change: not only as its observer and mediator but also as a contributor. What is salient in programmes such as *Timeshift* and *What Happened Next?* is that archive footage is seen not primarily as a nostalgic but rather a unique historical document. Programmes that had all the reasons to be ephemeral and “everyday”, with no immediate suggestion of their enduring value were revived and ascribed with a new sense of cultural and social purpose. The television archive mining and production process allows observation of another possibility of television’s purpose, which is not in the immediacy of satisfying viewers’ nostalgia but in seeing television archive as a lasting social record. In a way, this can be seen as a “producer-centred” approach to the archive, which reaffirms Born’s call for an ontological priority of production over reception, emphasising the initiative of professionals in the judgement of television quality (2000:420).

Furthermore, it is producers’ conceptual, analytical and reflexive approach to archives that allows television programmes to be valued *a priori*, during the production process and prior to their broadcast and reception:

If you show more than about two thirds of your programme as archive, then it starts to look like a repeat rather than actually new material, so you actually have to make sure there is quite a bit of new material for the programme to be particularly seen as a genuinely new programme. It raises interesting questions - you are taking archive and doing very different things to it and are re-visualising it to some extent. But we tried to stick to the basic rule that you can just show a fifteen minute programme and then show the update at the end of it, and not pretend that you have made a new programme - you have to give quite a significant added value (Das, interview, 10 March 2010).

Looking at the process of making archive rich – or archive based – programmes, it is clear that the archive can be treated as a “creative tool” (Das, *ibid.*) more than simply secondary historical evidence or ordinary televised material.

7.3 “The Very New Can Only Come From the Very Old”¹⁰⁴:

Archive as New Television Aesthetics

For John Ellis, the dialectic of nostalgia and unease is a quality associated with archives as a time-bound artefact with immanent and textual historic interpretations in tension. However, Anthony Wall asserts that the word “archive” itself is becoming problematic as it is “ceasing to be a valid term to describe what is done with it” (interview, 11 February 2010). Creative interpretations of archives involve a form of distancing from the sometimes-prescriptive nature of memories and their subjective interpretative frameworks. Yet, engaging with the evocative and nostalgic *textures* of the historical artefact can be productively done. The starting premise here is that the medium of television is now older than most of its audience, which means that the volume of its archive is increasing and, although a younger medium than that of radio and cinema, television archive programmes have less and less hold on an audience who actually remember watching them “live”. The “memory” of television programmes is therefore often referred to as a memory of a mediated past disconnected from any sense of the present. As Cameron expands,

There are memories and then there are *memories*. There aren't many people sitting here who watched them live, when they went out. So ultimately, I wasn't alive in the fifties so I couldn't do that... but quite a lot of these things were repeated later, so they were shown in the 60s and 70s, you know, there were books on stuff, which mythologise some of the programmes, and reviewers who write things remember things, say, wouldn't it be brilliant if we did this, and if you have a time, take a look at those... it depends. Sometimes you absolutely agree with them, and do that (Cameron, interview, 8 July 2010).

The distortion between lived and mediated memories changes the terms and conditions of historicity, and in effect, changes the possibilities of the “fixity” of a television programme in the time it was made. As Wall concedes, “what that means is that past and the present now interact in the

¹⁰⁴ A quote from Ken Russell's BBC *Monitor* art documentary, *Bartok* (1964), quoted in Kay Dickinson's title, “The very new can only come from the very old”: Ken Russell, national culture and the possibility of experimental television at the BBC in the 1960s” (2007)

way they never did before” (interview, 11 February 2010). Wall here refers to the possibility of re-editing the recorded past in a more fluid way that allows for different kinds of audiovisual associations as well as a more *hybrid* approach to archive. Hybridity here refers to the mixing of different temporalities, something that has already been explored in music (e.g. reggae) in which innovation in genres is born out of unlikely combinations (e.g. in reggae’s case, indigenous African music with ska), with access enabled through exposure to this temporal art when it becomes part of a material record (i.e. through recording). Indeed, in her study of Ken Russell’s *Monitor* art programmes, Kay Dickinson examines how British art television has a history of producing films that are “evocative of the practices of the music itself” (2007:73). It is out of this experimental television aesthetic production practice that *Arena* makes *imaginative* use of the archive, and through which archives become central to an exploration of “what history and culture might mean to each other” (ibid.: 71). This idea is explored here through two *Arena* programmes with a music theme – *Exodus ’77* and *Cool*.

7.3.1 *Exodus ’77*: Towards a New Archive Aesthetics

Exploring the music archive in television documentaries further emphasises a the temporal hybridity that is based on the constant exchange and amalgamation taking place between mediated and lived memories. This process is exemplified by *Exodus ’77*¹⁰⁵ (*Arena*, dir. Anthony Wall, 2007). Made almost entirely out of archive footage, mostly taken from television news broadcasts, the documentary explores reggae singer Bob Marley’s cultural impact by attempting to immerse viewers inside the fateful events of 1977. The film opens with home-made archive footage in which we see Bob Marley dancing with children, a close up of him smiling and a shot of him smoking. The footage’s original sound and/or commentary have been removed, and the film is replayed in slow motion to introduce the documentary’s subject. This is contextualised with the next archive clip (from

¹⁰⁵ *Exodus ’77* was originally broadcast on BBC2 in June 2007, marking 30 years of Marley’s exodus to Britain. It was repeated shortly after on BBC1 the same year and BBC Four in July 2007 and again February 2011, as a part of BBC Four’s *Reggae Britannia* season

1986) in which Marley's art director, Neville Garrick, gives an account of the attempt on Marley's life in 1976, whilst standing in the very room where this shooting took place. However, *Arena's* ambition was not to unfold a biography about Bob Marley. Rather, the premise of this documentary is Marley's album *Exodus*, and the historical and cultural importance of his exile in Britain in 1977 that informed the album, and which turned Marley "from a reggae star to a prophet" (in *Exodus '77*, 2007):

... What is going on in the world is seen through his existence ... but he is a political person, he is making recommendations about behaviour and about what things mean, and the full falsity of many propositions (Anthony Wall, interview, 21 July 2011).

We see a record stylus hitting a vinyl groove¹⁰⁶ starts and hear *Natural Mystic*, the opening track of the album. From this point on, the album tracks serve as a soundtrack for each month of 1977. The album is both the backdrop and the subject of the documentary. We also see news archive footage of Marley himself, interspersed with commentary and interview sound recordings. The archive footage is conceptually organised, and the opening song is accompanied by stock archive footage from January 1977, and the next track, "So Much Things to Say", with footage from February 1977, and so on. As the album's songs are chronologically unveiled, the calendrical correspondence emerges as a formal creative intervention: "the discipline was that it had to be that month, and it had to be that year" (Wall, interview, 21 July 2011). The fluid editing of news footage speeds through familiar images of British motorways covered in snow, freezing London streets and handwritten signs that signify a very different time ("price of a loaf 18p"), but also peculiar footage of an operation to capture an escaped lion on the city's streets. The programme maker's choice, seemingly perfunctory, manages to evoke the ephemeral nature of television while also emphasising the atmosphere and the mood of the times as so distinctly unique and visually different from the present. The approach calls to mind writer L. P. Hartley's

¹⁰⁶ This is a "signature" archive shot in *Arena* programmes. Originally used for *Desert Island Discs*, the now archive footage has been reused again both in *Exodus '77* and *Cool*, the latter also analysed in this chapter. All of the documentaries were directed and produced by *Arena's* series editor, Anthony Wall, who expressed that his "absolute ideal, which is what [the needle in the groove shot] is about, is to make a film *only* from *Arena* archives" (interview, 21 July 2011)

proverbial “The past is a foreign country: they do things differently there”. The footage is increasingly associated with Marley’s songs, as they appear over images of famine in Africa or of Sylvia Plath’s funeral procession. We see the words “This could be the first trumpet, might as well be the last, many more will have to suffer, many more will have to die, don’t ask me why” as we watch the images of the poet’s funeral, followed by a Rasta smoking ganja and an interview with a youthful looking Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip.

The news archive footage is deliberately stripped of sound to give way to its different interpretations. For example, the end of the second track sees the ambient music fading back in, ushering a strikingly dated shot of Queen Elizabeth II on one of her visits to what appears to be a former colonial setting. The documentary does not explain the footage as it removes the original voice-over which, Wall remembers, told us “how fabulously and happy [the place] is, with the Queen being there”. What we are left with is the visual remnants of this archive, the image of the Queen seen smiling from the 21st century point of view, and an “immanent reading” (Ellis, 2007a) of the shot emerges as unavoidable. Wall explains how taking away the commentary opens up possibilities of the use of the footage as new:

You start to see it in a completely different way, and you realise that there are a multiplicity of meanings existing in this one shot, and that what happened there with the news is that a very heavy-handed voice-over is trying to determine that you only receive that shot in the way that they intend to receive it. Then, if you put something provocative on the top of it, like a piece of music or some speech or some other kind of assemblage of sounds that on the face of it do not reflect that shot directly, or possibly sounds that might be going on around the corner, it takes on an altogether different meaning indeed (Wall, interview, 21 July 2011).

Wall makes a distinction between using the archive footage of Marley and the news footage of 1977. The archive footage of Marley shown in the documentary is broken into segments taken from his concerts and interviews; these segments intercept the narrative and remind us of the focus of the documentary. However, it is the news footage, coupled with testimonies from Bob Marley fans that create the central layer and narrative of the documentary. Wall explains that the documentary was intended to

become “a poetic construct” of archive footage documenting the time. Indeed, the use of the stock footage seems to borrow from, or at least resemble, music sampling techniques, where both audio and visual elements do not “quote” the archive in discrete and individual sections but rather, blend the samples into a sort of audiovisual synthesis¹⁰⁷. Archives are textures of associations and here the material represents grainy 1970s colour snapshots of “pastness”, building the temporal architecture of Marley’s unique place in world and social history. We hear the voices of his fans and their testimonies of how he changed their life, but with news archives texturing the story of the album. Wall implies that this context is imagined as well as imaginary, and quotes somebody who described it as “ganja in a news dream” (interview, 21 July 2011).

There is an observable reliance on the dated “feel” of archive footage, its grainy colour qualities, which are increasingly becoming aesthetic devices attempting simultaneously to evoke the period as well as to immerse viewers into the footage and thus propose new meanings, which challenges more the conventional use of archive as nostalgic interventions. Jameson’s characterisation of the postmodern function of nostalgia is that it is “approaching pastness through stylistic connotation” (1990:19) through construction of “1950-ness and “1930-ness” (ibid.). This could be seen as only one superficial layer of this documentary. Wall primarily refers to these historically debased fragments not as formal (stylistic) but content-led elements, as ways of reconstructing or re-mediating memory, mirroring Huyssen’s observation that the past “must be articulated to become memory. The fissure that opens up between experiencing an event and remembering it in representation is unavoidable. Rather than lamenting or ignoring it, this split should be understood as a powerful stimulant for cultural and artistic creativity” (1995:3). Indeed, this precise fissure in which changes of cultural values are articulated is what Wall evokes in *Exodus*, and the use of archive footage as creative intervention represents both a continuation and a break

¹⁰⁷ This is analogous to Simon Reynolds’ description of audio sampling techniques where he likens samples as not needing to “be a quote machine but could also effectively work as a n instrument of pure sound synthesis, something that didn’t just decontextualise its sources but abstracted them too.” (2011:321)

from the traditional, autonomous ways that archive has been represented on television.

In arts television, the experimentation with biographical delivery (which, to certain extent, *Exodus '77* is about) was a commonplace, already present in the 1960s, demonstrating that art programmes have a history of more innovative and creative approaches to television programme making. For example, Kay Dickinson gives the example of Ken Russell's films on classical composers for the BBC's *Omnibus* series (1952 – 1961) as defined by “the specific juxtapositions of image and music” that

...rarely seem surreal or implausible because they are so carefully knitted through style or content, into the historical and often geographical specificity of their subject. It is this exactness of reference that renders Russell's experimentation with biographical delivery a more meaningful commentary on the processes of history (Dickinson, 2007:74).

But the confidence of being able to use archive with contextual fluidity without the need to anchor it into precise historic moments, can also be traced back to other media and cultural forms – the internet, video sharing and peer to peer, amateur film making – that create new out of old, and old out of new. Wall refers to his use of archive as being consciously informed by the new forms of audiovisual mediation on the internet:

News, the minute it is transmitted, becomes archive. A positive aspect of all this technology is that it suggests multiplicity, whereas I think previously there was a tendency to aim for a singularity – as in the *auteur* of a film – Antonioni's ‘there is only one way, and not a frame should be touched’ (laughs). Well - that doesn't wash anymore. It was all right then, but it just doesn't make any sense anymore, because there's just *too much stuff*. (Wall, interview, 21 July 2011)

Just as Dickinson observes, the production of art television has always been evocative of practices in music making, the use of archive – in particular, its associative and imaginative architecture that is present in Wall's films also conjures up more contemporary tendencies in alternative music. In the UK in particular, there is an emergent affinity to take samples from distinctly British archives for atmospheric and ghostly textures, “self consciously playing with a

set of bygone cultural forms” (Reynolds, 2011:337)¹⁰⁸. This music direction is defined as “hauntological” after Derrida’s concept of “hauntology” in his *Spectres of Marx* (1994). The loose appropriation of Derrida’s term to define a movement in music could be seen as digressing from Derrida’s deconstructionist response to the Marxist abolition of spectrality, or in Jameson’s words, the claim that “the living present is scarcely as self-sufficient as it claims to be; that we would do well not to count on its density and solidity” (1999:39). However, this simultaneous “presence and absence” of hauntology can be seen as a useful point of dialogical departure from the “nostalgic” and “documented” role of archives in that it references the use of old samples and archives as “ghostly reminders of lost time and the elusiveness of memory” (in Reynolds, 2011:329) and yet, at the same time, refers to the self referential re-examination of archive nostalgia. Wall approves of the need for a new terminology:

The word ‘archive’ is ceasing to be an adequate term for describing what might be done with it. So ‘hauntology’...very much makes sense. Some of the things we are trying to do with those off-the-wall films, is trying to create some magic – a little magic world that didn’t really have any other existence and is constructed within; [...] so it is another dimension that you are entering into spiritually, and emotionally (interview, 11 February 2010).

Wall’s use of archives resembles what Reynolds refers to as the hauntological use of archive for its “musty-and-dusty aura” (2011:330). This aura, however, reflects not only aesthetic concerns in production but also ethical and political ones, as *Exodus ‘77* goes beyond a mere observation of Bob Marley’s own political struggle and Rastafarian beliefs. The archive part of the documentary is anchored into the present by including, for example, the mix of past footage and the present at the unveiling of Marley’s plaque in London in 2006. The contrast between the present and past footage is, however, underplayed to allow both the notion of Marley’s oppression as

¹⁰⁸ This has been extensively written about in *The Wire* magazine, and more recently in Simon Reynolds’ *Retromania* (2011), which lists artists such as Boards of Canada, Mordant Music, and Broadcast and record labels such as Ghost Box label, to name but the few. Reynolds, interestingly, notes that the speech samples used from television are “both archaic and *classed* (usually posh, occasionally regionally inflected or working-class). These are voices from a different age, redolent of both the image Great Britain liked to present to itself (through public broadcasting) but also of actual social realities (and divisions) that have shifted significantly in the last quarter-century” (2011:337)

well as the posthumous institutionalisation of his political struggle to co-exist and inform British culture and heritage in 2006. Wall explains how this

... little ceremony which would have been inconceivable 50 years ago – that a man like Bob Marley would be given a blue plaque on a house in Bloomsbury where he stayed very briefly, and that the kind of people that were [at the ceremony] were a) black and b) they were British and from the Caribbean. So, I thought, what is significant about that wasn't kind of an archive kind of thing – it is happening now (...) It was just something that genuinely arose out of circumstances in contemporary British life. There was one energetic guy interesting in honouring great Black people who lived in Britain. And, that *that* in itself tells you a story that, when Bob started, the things that he would have experienced or complained about, suddenly, and to a considerable degree, got a result (interview, 21 July 2011).

7.3.2 Arena's Cool: Archive as a Way of Deconstructing Auteurship

The use of archives in *Exodus '77* is interventional and imaginative, asking the audience to be immersed in 1970s news clippings and haunted by Marley's interpretation of the world, while never losing sight of the social and ethical resonance of Marley's impact on the present. It is hauntological in that the programme's premise is equally about "memory's power (to linger, pop up unbidden, pray on your mind) and memory's fragility (destined to become distorted, to fade, then finally disappear)" (Reynolds, 2011:335). Similarly, *Arena: Cool* (BBC Four, 2009) is another ambient study by Anthony Wall, an exploration of the etymological journey that the word "cool" made from an "attitude to music" to its present-day meanings. It is entirely built up out of rich and evocative layers of eclectic stock footage from the 1950s, edited to imply the nature of the concept as fluid, changeable, and exploratory. The use of radio interviews, photographic archive, and news footage is seamlessly overlaid with ambient vibraphone sounds, faintly and distantly reminiscent of the 1950s jazz that fades in and out, as it evokes the places in which jazz was an inherent part of urban culture. "There's so much that's rich and remarkable here, and it's so good to see a film that believes in its subject and puts it forward with only minimal mediation" (Wyver, 2009). Instead of mediation, Wall's sparse, unobtrusive voiceover suggests, rather than imposes, the possible interpretations of the music's place in social history,

while the ambient sounds are cut into archive footage of performances by jazz greats such as the Modern Jazz Quartet, the Dave Brubeck Quartet, Chet Baker, Gerry Mulligan, Art Farmer, Oscar Peterson, Dizzy Gillespie, Stan Getz and Antonio Carlos Jobim.

Arena continues to push the boundaries of television into the realm of experimentation and in its promise of future uses of archives, represents a new television aesthetics. But unlike previous experimental television that, according to Mulvey, was characterised by detaching itself from the surrounding flow, both *Exodus '77* and *Cool* embrace television's ephemeral qualities, without any attempt to detach themselves from "the larger textual composite" that is television, or indeed, any other platform. Actually, it sinks even deeper into the flow to reveal new layers of its heterochronic regime (Uricchio, 2010:27), the re-sequencing of programming as being self-reflexive of temporal shifts. *Arena's Cool* is cushioned inside a BBC Four season that aims to offer different modes of exploring the past, such as BBC's jazz series, *Jazz 625*. Don Cameron explains:

It was a week of programmes about 1959...we had Anthony Wall in *Arena* very much making a case that 1959 saw the birth of cool, and he wanted to do something that wasn't straightforwardly presented and lecturing, it was, as you say, suggestive, and evocative of an era. And then we based around that more informational programmes – there was one about the seminal jazz records that were released in Britain in 1959, and then we had a bunch of programmes about artists who were performing in 1959. So we had a range of things, some of them directly informational, some of them evocative (interview, 9 July 2010).

However, *Cool* was created autonomously, as opposed to being commissioned for the season. Additionally, according to Wall, it was not made purely to satisfy passionate fans in offering jazz facts, as one of the fan blog posts begrudges that it "wasted a lot of time that could have been used giving information or showing more footage" (*All About Jazz*, 2009). The effervescent quality of editing in *Cool* points to the possibilities of experimentation with content rather than form; Wall knits this footage together with images of post-war America, images of cities and suburbia, "of the highways, of racial discrimination. At its best the film itself feels like the

best jazz, loose and riffing on and around themes and ideas but all within a tight pattern” (Wyver, 2009). This imaginative use of archives can be seen as moving television aesthetics in line with the more experimental television that Mulvey identified as pushing “the medium’s conventions and boundaries, expanding its vocabulary and investigating its specificity” (2007:1). But while Mulvey focuses on formal experimentation, so rare in the case of 21st century television, Wall argues that archive usage allows him to do something rather different:

I would say that this is aspiring towards the condition of form being content. It is almost like the content itself is necessarily there in order to create a form. So you can take the subject *Cool* – you’ve got to have something you believe in, otherwise you would get bored with it – so, it is art cool, presentational cool, evocative cool, a dream of cool, an invitation to immerse yourself in cool, but all of that is equally outside of the coin. You turn it over, and it is the same coin, it is that all of this is the subject that enables me to manipulate archive into a direction of form, and the content is the form as much as it is the content (Wall, interview, 21 July 2011).

Wall is investigating the archive to capture its slippery, hard to define, subject matter which is rather like a spiritual presence, to place us in the memory of the past rather than the past itself, and to do with archive footage what complex jazz phrasing does with notes – to use them as a “creative tool”. The documentary is made almost entirely in black and white, with a few exceptions (e.g. James Dean in *Rebel without Cause*). Wyver brings up the question of the accuracy of this approach to the archive material: “a fragment in *Cool* of the famous film of Jackson Pollock painting on glass made in 1950 by Hans Namuth and Paul Falkenberg. This was shot in colour but here that’s drained away to ease it into a monochrome montage.” (2009). During the interview with Wall, I extended Wyver’s question: “Is it legitimate to misrepresent a source like this for the greater good of a new film?” He answered that the footage was, indeed, black and white, and that BBC archive footage, if tampered with, must have been done in the past. But this seemingly insignificant observation leads to a much bigger question – is imaginative, creative intervention with the mediated past ethically justified?

You can shoot your own archive. You can play around with it. Or you could, indeed, shoot things so it is not just pure archive like *Cool* was, you can have other things in it like *Exodus* did. But the use of the archive, whether it is total or substantial, or even incidental... the proposition is that it is within the creative process the same way that shooting is. So it is not there to illustrate, it is there to *be* the thing, it is the thing itself (Wall, interview, 21 July 2011).

The television archive is becoming more than “television as museum” artefact. It is becoming a source of new expressive tools, extending as a modality located between the production of atmosphere and the reception of mediated memory. The hauntological nature of some archive-based art programmes reveals another, essential ingredient of the archive; that of it being at the core of self-reflexive programme making where its hyper-temporality becomes engrained not only in distribution, but also in production. This reveals the archive as a vital element of television aesthetics, as it is audiovisual material, unambiguously *of* television and made *for* television. Wall observes:

Here is the great 21st century irony – the more ephemeral it gets, the more it uses and abuses archive. There are shots you have seen so many times – all meaning has been robbed of them. Same shots of New York, or people listening to records in Oxford Street, fifty, sixty, seventy, 200, 500 times – they are used in film idly, because there is the time, and of course, not everybody has seen it ... because it is easier and because it is cheap, it is becoming a major tool of ephemeral television (interview, 21 July 2011).

7.4 Conclusion

This chapter’s focus on a small sample of BBC Four archive-informed texts provided a closer look at how individual programmes make use of audiovisual archive, in order to reveal discourses of value that are taking place. Textual analysis of BBC Four programmes demonstrated that the television archive can be used to represent, revise and critically assess the past by bringing it into the present. The examples provided could be used to contribute to an argument that BBC Four’s uses of archive are a part of a broader “nostalgia industry” which permeates digital multichannel television (e.g. History TV, Gold). However, the concept of “nostalgia”, while applicable

to some of BBC Four's programmes (e.g. *Top of the Pops* or *Jazz 625* reruns), does not sufficiently explain the rationale for using the archive nor the value of individual programmes. This is partly due to the fact that selected programmes used "deep" archive and are therefore contenders for the mediated rather than lived "memory imprint" on viewers. Furthermore, the focus on production rather than reception reveals that the choice of archive was made to provide something "new" and never seen before, involving a process of "uncovering" the unknown past, rather than reminiscing about the familiar.

The inquiry into the production of archive-based documentaries also confirms that the processes of discriminatory and evaluative practices are normative in making choices concerning which past to choose and represent. However, increasingly, these evaluative practices are embedded and are becoming an integral part of programmes' themes and narrative. This is evident in the narrative of the reconstruction of a "television canon" in the search for a golden age of television in *TV on Trial*; or, the series conceptualised around rare and almost lost-to-posterity gems from the archive whose stories are then brought to the present, as in the case of *What Happens Next?* and *Time-Shift*; or in seeing archive as a unique and idiosyncratic audiovisual texture which is vital to documentary storytelling, as in the case of *Arena*. The method of textual analysis further reveals the introspective nature, a form of institutional "soul searching", of television as a medium. The purpose of the *TV on Trial* project, for example, was not only aimed at looking for the best decade; the quest for a "golden age" was essentially directed at the search for television's own cultural identity and the medium's singular language. Similarly, *Timeshift: Missing, Believed Wiped* aimed to pronounce a resolute detachment from the elitist evaluative practices of the past, and embrace popular cultural forms such as sitcoms and sketch-based comedy shows as a pillar of television aesthetics. The use of archive in *What Happened Next?*, celebrates the centrality of television as a social record and potentially an agent of social change; and finally, *Arena's* take on archive footage amply demonstrates the creative potential of the archive – "that it is within the creative process the same way that shooting is" (Wall,

interview, 21 July 2011) – therefore validating television as a complex cultural form with new, unanticipated aesthetics.

The self-reflexivity and postmodern self-referentiality of much of television's content reveals, however, another conundrum – how to aesthetically evaluate the process of evaluation itself. For projects such as *TV on Trial* and *Time-Shift*, the television is used to provide a commentary on television's public and cultural value, rather than aiming to be one of the programmes analysed, thus producing a *mise-en-abyme* archive effect. Caldwell identifies this self-reflexivity as the production and distribution of self-analysis to the public (2008:1). However, it is clear that *Arena*'s programmes “deviate” from this broader trend in their distinction and authorship, creating genuinely new programmes with the hauntological quality of archive footage that reveals its spectral nature or an auratic quality, rather than providing a “running commentary” on the past. Nevertheless, the examples of archive-based programmes used in this chapter, however disparate, could all be seen as “self-consciously” intertextual and associative, involving processes of interpretation, intervention and imagination, which could be defined as dialogical values. These intertextual discourses range from being explicit and analytical (in *TV on Trial*, *Timeshift*) to implicit, or cued (in *What Happened Next?* and the *Arena* series), and reflect an awareness of being a vast textual “composite” of different temporalities. The television archive, as a source of production, can therefore be seen as analogous to the symbolic power of monuments and memorials which, according to Huyssen, are “major modes of aesthetic, historical and spatial expression” (1995:3). This aesthetic reinforces BBC Four, and the BBC as a whole, as an emerging “memory institution”, a historical and spatial formation occupied by the television archive which reinforces Raymond Williams's definition of culture as having “two aspects: the known meanings and directions, which its members are trained to; the new observations and meanings, which are offered and tested” (1989:93).

Chapter 8. Conclusions

This thesis offers a qualitative case study research of a digital public service channel, BBC Four, in order to probe the continuities and changes to the concept of quality television and cultural value in the digital, multichannel and multiplatform environment. While it may seem that the case study of a contemporary phenomenon allows for limited exploration of a transient set of ideas around television and cultural value, in this final chapter I wish to give it an additional currency by linking them to the broader yet pertinent transformations that are currently shaping public service broadcasting.

The focus on BBC Four unravelled and then joined together three separate yet interconnected facets of deep institutional changes that not only brought to the forefront efforts to establish the medium of television as a legitimate cultural form, but also made those efforts more urgent as they variously impacted on the core principles of public service ethos. The first transformation I wish to identify is the BBC's regulatory response to secure its own existence as a public service in a mixed economy broadcasting market. In the past decade, the BBC has introduced the concept of public value and with it the public value test (PVT), "evidence-based" measurements of its own organisational values. The PVT can be seen as an initiative that, for the first time in the history of the BBC, institutionally reframes the way its cultural value is conceptualised - with the notion of quality provision now becoming *internally* approached as a resolutely quantifiable and instrumental category (Chapter 4). It also symbolises a "coping strategy" against the ongoing regulatory and external commercial pressures in a mixed economy broadcasting ecology. The second transformation concerns the changed architecture of its cultural output, or what I elsewhere define as the "internal cultural geography" of television content provision (Chapter 5), through the creation of the BBC channel portfolio and the additional development of different online platforms. In the context of a Reithian legacy and universality of access and provision, these developments effectively led to the redistribution and even a form of demarcation of the BBC's cultural output

across designated areas of interests. But while this institutional change may indicate a kind of dissipation of the universality of public service provision into pockets of interests, it may equally be interpreted as a more attentive way of addressing the audience (Light, 2004), or, as my research points out, a step closer to systematising culture away from “the great ladder of culture” and into an emerging “topography” of culture. The strategy of a portfolio to deliver public service provision by separating it into different channels that are designed to be narrower services, which are also complimentary in nature, largely redefines cultural distribution away from dichotomies and towards a broader classification. Furthermore, questions of filtering, classification and searchability in multiplatform ecology all mean that cultural value is dependent on an “attention economy” (Christophers in Johnson, 2012:95) and therefore on the allocation of a specific *place* as well as the emergence of branded channel identities. If the first two structural reconfigurations serve to unsettle key public service broadcasting principles, the third transformation can be said to bring back notions of cultural commonality, Reithian universality of provision, as well as questions of access and education as some of the central concerns on the Corporation’s agenda. The vast undertaking that is the process of digitising and eventual releasing the majority of the BBC archive back to the public, can be further linked to two different issues: institutional changes in the politics of preservation and access, and more crucially to this case study, the harnessing of the BBC’s archive by identifying its creative and cultural *uses* which, hand in hand with budget limitations and the narrowing channel’s *remits* through branded identities, push questions of authorship and the interpretation of our past to the forefront (Chapter 6 and Chapter 7).

These three institutional transformations, I conclude, are central to understanding the ways in which the notion of cultural value in broadcasting is approached and what it currently means in terms of television production. Television’s cultural output, as identified by this research, can therefore be further demarcated as being *pragmatic*, *topographical*, and *reflexive*, respectively. In other words, going back to the first transformation, the now established practice of monitoring the reach, quality, impact and value for

money (RQIV) of the BBC's content, emphasises not only econometric frameworks that measure how programmes are viewed and received, but also how the decisions are taken over it what is commissioned, produced and broadcast. BBC Four's approach to programme production has clearly been dominated by budgetary concerns with consequences that limit creative, innovative and challenging programming. Secondly, associating specific channel "spaces" and "contexts" with a specific cultural output, in effect, relates to how they are (re)valued. While marketing and branding practices inform how channels are presented, *space* is becoming an essential articulation of the cultural value of BBC Four's content,¹⁰⁹ with portfolios and platforms ordering themselves into a new cultural topography. This shift largely transfers the responsibilities of value judgment away from the producers and programme makers to the audience and their viewing choices. Thirdly, the digitisation of the television archive is a major contributor towards BBC Four's reflexivity over its contribution to public service values. Releasing such a vast amount of content to the public is imbued with ideological as well as logistical challenges, but it also puts the public awareness of (BBC Four) television as the record of a national culture centre stage, unsettling its paradigmatic ephemeral, transitory nature (Uricchio, 2010 and 2012; Grainge, 2012), with some programmes being presented as a permanent record¹¹⁰ ready to put to rest the habitual and highly problematic view of television as a low art form, seeking "applause, not reflection" (Postman, 1986:91). BBC Four is a site where the television archive functions along the paradigm of *permanence* and *deep value over time* (although, according to some scholars, that was the case since recording technology was invented [Kompare, 2005]).

In Britain, digital archiving is a major public service project affecting not only the BBC but also other "memory institutions" that are publicly funded (Chapter 6). Yet, it is particularly significant in the case of BBC Four as the process of digitising the archive is now central to debating the role of

¹⁰⁹ The very trope of "space" is already "taken" as the Arts Council funded digital arts platform (www.thespace.org) with the BBC being one of the public organisations contributing with its content. Most notably, the BBC arts series *Arena* creating *Arena Hotel*, an interactive section containing archive clips of *Arena* guests (<http://thespace.org/items/s00011s0>)

¹¹⁰ BBC Four Collections (www.bbc.co.uk/bbcfour/collections) is a growing platform that contains permanent display of audiovisual archive, including *Modern Classical Music* (curated in 2013), *Talk* (curated in 2012), and *All-American* (curated in 2011)

public service broadcasting in the multichannel ecology, but also, to the creation of BBC Four's unique channel identity. In particular, a thematic, "big subject" approach to television programmes is one of the central propositions of BBC Four, with editorialising and curating practices further promoting scheduling into the last "creative act" (Ellis, 2000b). Furthermore, the television archive contributes to reflexivity as it is inseparable not only from the modality of production practices in search of in-depth programme making, but it is increasingly becoming a central thematic determinant of BBC Four programmes. The resurrection of archives and the making of programmes that highlight television's (or the BBC's) cultural significance and history contribute, in turn, to the resurgence of an institutional interest in aesthetic re-evaluation, canonicity and the search for television as a "legitimate" cultural form. The surge of programmes which reconsider national, cultural, and social history such as the "Britannia" series (e.g. *Synth Britannia*, BBC Four, 2009; *Birds Britannia*, BBC Four, 2011) and media history (e.g. *Goodbye Television Centre*, BBC Four, 2013) are commonplace on the channel, affirming its public service mission while also consciously positioning the BBC as a central part of British culture, reflecting television's "obsession with memory" (Huysen, 1995:6).

8.1 Debating Cultural Values

While I conclude that BBC Four's quality and cultural value is profoundly linked to the organisation's structural, economic and political shifts, relying solely on those contemporary shifts to show how the channel is shaped offers a limited set of conclusions with potentially only transitory significance. The early research conducted for this thesis emphasised the significance of a historical framework in order to shed more light on the broader cultural relevance as well as the impact of these contemporary transformations. As the direction of my research was set to understand how these structural changes resonated through wider historical debates over cultural value and television (Chapter 2 and Chapter 4), considerations of the

enduring legacy of the cultural, foundational values of the BBC informed both the direction of the research as well as its conclusive thoughts.

The thesis situated BBC Four within the sediment of a range of different theories of culture that went beyond the foundational principles of public service broadcasting and Reithian ethos. This approach was deemed important in order to contextualise BBC Four within a variety of broader debates and critical approaches to culture, with specific attention to “high culture”. This journey through different schools of thought revealed binary patterns, critical differences and discursive shifts at play, all of which served to illuminate and problematise different aspects of culture as material (media) practice. The starting point was a contention about defining the channel with concepts such as “highbrow”, “elite” or “high culture”. These terms were seen as reductive, as they were often used rhetorically, referring to a complex and often problematic legacy of different scholarly positions. Namely, these terms underwent ideological [d]evolution from being at the centre of cultural analysis, to being dismissed, or relegated to the margins of studies of culture. With relevance to this case story of BBC Four, the transformation can be summarised as follows.

Matthew Arnold’s authoritarian idea of culture as “the best that has been thought and said in the world” (1966:6) became axiomatic for the founding principles of public service broadcasting, and informed the BBC’s early Reithian policy to raise cultural and educational standards and to offer “cultural uplift”. This elevated position of high culture was further emphasised by Leavis who assigned it to “minority keeping” (1998:13), which can be directly linked to the post-war conceptualisation of the BBC’s hierarchical public service structure or the “pyramid of taste”. The Frankfurt School and specifically Theodor Adorno, who emphasised the devastating effects of capitalist “affirmative” culture and its homogenous properties, echoed Leavis’s pessimistic analysis of irreversible cultural decay brought by industrialisation. But while Adorno’s and Leavis’s pessimistic views of mass culture have since been challenged, their emphasis on the importance of the formative and mobilising qualities of specific types of “high” culture are

essential to understanding the ethical and educational foundations of the Reithian ethos as it continues to be reinterpreted by BBC Four.

However, the Frankfurt School, as well as culture and civilisation traditions, proved to be limited for the analysis of cultural programming, as they employ analytical and evaluative methods either outside or often against the framework of mass media. Culturalist and populist traditions, on the other hand, engage with comprehensive aspects of culture both as a (mass-mediated) process and as a product. Both Raymond Williams (1961) and Richard Hoggart (1967) saw culture as a way of life, outside and in tension with “high culture”, while Hall and Whannel (1964) looked even more directly for discriminatory practices which would include different inflections of high, popular and mass culture as *media artefacts*. Hall and Whannel in particular extended previous evaluative templates from high arts towards popular culture. Populism, on the other hand, sought for a break from discriminatory practices cultivated by earlier scholarly traditions, embracing the aesthetics of the everyday as a central analytical concern, once again reverting the concept of popular art into a binary position with elitism or high art. The populist approach is problematised as it poses serious limitations to a critical understanding of BBC Four, a channel which caters for a range of cultural positions. The category of “quality” television, although emerging out of scholarly debates as a direct critique of populist scholarly position (Chapter 2), and remaining the most pervasive term to define the cultural value of television, is a term mobilised to define public service provision, genre-specific television texts (most often, television drama), and most recently, instrumental measures as a part of the Public Value Test (Chapter 4). This points out its confusing and often contradictory adjectival function in relation to television.

The concept of quality television, however, facilitated further appreciation of the complexity of the object of study and its shifting historical context brought about by the onslaught of commercial logic, necessitating a qualitative methodological approach and an attention to discursive analyses (Chapter 3). These, in turn, contributed to restructuring the research

questions, which became concerned not only about *whether*, but *how* the commitment to public service philosophy has been exercised and what has changed, in the context of BBC Four. Here I made a purposeful choice to narrow down the research to debates over the BBC's cultural commitment (rather than its broader public service role as a democratic, social glue). The attention to chronology facilitated further conjectures of discrete historical "moments", which were identified by observing shifts in social concerns and cultural expectations, and which were characterised by discursive changes in the way in which broadcasting culture was conceptualised (Chapter 4).

With a primary role to "provide an ambitious range of innovative, high quality programming that is intellectually and culturally enriching, taking an expert and in-depth approach to a wide range of subjects" (BBC Trust, 2012a), BBC Four unambiguously states that its priorities are genres that are broadly and commonly associated with public service values and that contribute to illuminating citizens: specialist factual arts, science and history programming, quality drama, innovative comedy, and foreign language and imported series and films. But in its prodigious dedication to this Reithian "direction", there were also some intended absences that would provide equally fertile source of analysis. It became clear that BBC Four's channel identity interprets a public service ethos through broadening and reinforcing its understanding of national culture and its past. The programmes commissioned for the channel continue to be opened to documentary examinations of heritage culture and Britain's national, social and cultural history which undoubtedly define its public service character. Although there has been a broad range of high culture¹¹¹ subjects, few programmes include sustained, formal aesthetic experimentation and authorship, aside from home-grown comedies (*The Thick of It*), or arts and documentary strands *Arena* and *Storyville* both of which were "inherited" from BBC Two (Chapter 5). The channel's remit also excludes current affairs programmes, which is one of the key genres that represent public service values and that "claim to nurture informed citizenship and the core values of democracy itself"

¹¹¹ For example, BBC Four commissioned a three part documentary dedicated to the history and development of avant-garde music, *The Sound and Fury* (BBC Four, 2013)

(Holland, 2006:xiv). This poses further questions about the new geographies of public service values, which are further unpacked below.

8.2 From Economising Cultural Spaces to Culturing Commercial Spaces

This research was also informed by scholarly arguments which concur that public service broadcasting was irreversibly affected by neoliberal ideology coupled with competition with commercial enterprises, the response to which set off numerous (and ongoing) institutional transformations, including managerialism, marketisation and branding (Johnson, 2012; Born, 2004) and an increased concern with commercial value (e.g. Leys, 2001; Born, 2004, Freedman, 2008). In the past two decades, commercial logic served both to tighten culturally demanding programmes to the mast of a narrow and reductive definition of public service existing for a solely educational mission, while also reclassifying them into an economic, “market failure” category. The allocation of different classificatory tropes to evaluate television was also symptomatic in this period. The concept of “quality television” (Chapter 2, Chapter 4), while bringing back aesthetic debates in the 1990s, also reflected a shift in the ideological framework within which value judgments are made (Frith, 2000:41). The advent of digital television, and the BBC’s expansion into a multichannel and multiplatform marketplace has brought new uncertainties over the value of its cultural production. This is particularly acute in the context of the growing number of repeats and reruns, which can be directly linked to a decrease of innovation and creativity as variously demonstrated by ethnographic studies (Born, 2004), and by quantitative research by Bergg (2002) who illustrates the decline of traditional forms of public service programming, such as current affairs between 1992 and 2002 by 35 per cent, and arts programming by 52 per cent (2002:12).

The competitive marketplace and the sensitivities involved in justifying the licence fee serve to alter the concerns over more challenging programmes by emphasising their (lack of) popularity as linked to economic

worth, so that public value test categories of reach and impact become increasingly equated with the BBC's ethical purpose. According to Born, "ensuring value for money became the core of the BBC's democratic role" with financial discipline becoming "a new corporate morality" (2004:224). Public value can be seen as a direct outcome of the anxiety to provide each and every licence fee payer with their worth and was institutionalised in 2007 to respond to "changes in technology, culture, market conditions and public expectations" (PVT, 2007:1). This further reframed cultural value as "evidence based", designed "as a straightforward economic, rather than a complex social and cultural practice" (Freedman, 2008:157). For example, the value of BBC Four is now assessed through the introduction of the BBC *quality measures*, a system that includes "distinctiveness" as well as an audience appreciation index (AI) (see Appendix 7). The BBC services became increasingly subject not only to external, regulatory forces but also to *internal* scrutiny (Collins, 2012:5). In this context, the question is how these transformations and shifting economic grounds shape BBC Four's cultural output, and what strategies were/are being put in place to maintain the direction and focus of the channel? Surely, within this framework of an economically informed morality, making "safe" programmes and closely monitoring allocated budgets are some of the key strategies for survival. Therefore, BBC Four's future is primarily secured by it being a low budget service (Chapter 4, Chapter 5). The channel has, in its short history, already been identified more than once as a potential financial liability, the latest being a threat to lose the channel in 2011 following the BBC strategy review (see Chapter 1 and Chapter 4). But there are other, little mentioned outcomes to this "new corporate morality"; in production circles, low budget programme making for BBC Four was, paradoxically, welcomed as it was identified as a rare space for creative freedom, as explored in Chapter 5.

This research has also documented a swathe of public debate about the BBC Four's cultural role, which saw the BBC either as a neoliberal accomplice or its victim, with both opinions pointing to narratives about the irreversible decline of its cultural aspirations (Chapter 2, Chapter 4). This pattern was also evident in various discourses which identified BBC Four

within the framework of the overall decline of cultural value, with the channel being seen either as a place that ring-fences culture by turning it into a “ghetto” or a “sanctuary”, or as a cultural “appendix” to the now more popularised and over-commissioned BBC Two. All these discourses suggest ring-fencing around cultural programmes, viewed as being separate from the rest of the BBC content. They also demonstrate that public service principles are still tied to the previously analogue channels, which act as a kind of cultural “hearth”, with the newer, marginal, digital “extremities” offering inferior provision and value. Indeed, the dominance of the major terrestrial channels “can be attributed to viewer inertia, superior programming and marketing budgets” (Christophers in Johnson, 2012:95), but also point to competitive interests which are against the BBC’s expansion. All of these stances, whether linked to neoliberal or protectionist standpoints, represent a version of cultural pessimism which, along with populism, became normalised in debates about broadcasting and aesthetics. But the underlying thread to both positions is the unremitting pull of a Reithian ethos, which, this research argues, has not been abandoned.

8.3 Reithian Ethos - from a Discursive Category to Material Practice

Caughie succinctly identified the Reithian ethos as “an almost abstract discursive formation rather than as a material practice, or as a body of reflective writing or critical thinking with which we might engage” (2000: 15). This thesis concludes that Reithianism as a discursive formation takes a central position in probing the key issues of the BBC’s cultural value. Reith’s legacy lies in his vision of the BBC as an organisation that provides national unity, democratic access to culture, education and entertainment and that also acts as a provider of high cultural and moral standards. As an institutionalised public service broadcasting ideology, Reithian philosophy, while remaining the Corporation’s most deep-seated guiding principle, has nevertheless survived different articulations over the course of history, even reaching a point of schism (Born, 2003, 2004). Born documents two distinct and opposing types of “neo-Reithianism”, both of them deriving from structural changes at the BBC in the 1990s: one version was used as

managerial rhetoric in communication documents, while the other referred to enduring production values. This second type of neo-Reithianism was expressed as a “counter-discourse”; it believed that managerialist Reithianism was undermining the corporation’s moral and cultural values (2003:77).

As BBC Four is seen as “the Corporation's sole remaining enclave of Reithian values on television” (Glover, 2011), the question posed throughout this case study of BBC Four was not whether, but *how* the channel was able to translate this ethos into “material practice”. These “Reithian materialisations” are approached in two ways: through a discursive understanding of BBC Four’s channel identity and remit, and also through interviews with BBC Four controllers, schedulers and producers. The research findings unequivocally lead to a historically and institutionally conditioned distancing from cultural hierarchy, evoking both “neo-Reithianisms” in the unspoken understanding that this distancing signifies that “the proper hierarchy of BBC values has been upturned” (Born, 2003:77). Nevertheless, questions of cultural standards continue to be probed in editorial and broadcasting activities, albeit through a range of implicit decision-making processes and a compromise of different or even new discursive “registers”, depending on the structural level of involvement with the channel (Chapter 5). Through interviews with channel executives, the research reached the conclusion that BBC Four channel controllers were finding it much easier to engage with a whole range of Reithian nuances and to discuss (or defend) questions of value than programme makers. In other words, they were able to engage with both ideologically distinct neo-Reithian positions, engaging with official managerial rhetoric and, reflectively, engaging with the ethos as a moral guidance to broadcast high quality arts and culture.

The attention given to new terminology to denote the Reithian purpose of BBC Four in Chapters 4 and 5 perhaps addresses these discursive tensions most effectively. The channel has been hailed as “intelligent” television and therefore clearly distances itself from the old, taxing terminology of “highbrow” and “intellectual”. Furthermore, the adjectives that are used by television practitioners, and that are found in the channel’s

licence remit that describes the service, emphasise terms such as “innovative”, “in-depth”, “expert”, “high quality” and “culturally enriching” (2012:1), terms which could be polemically linked to the larger neoliberal discursive shift that Bourdieu and Wacquant observe as the “new planetary vulgate” (2001). This evasive language appears in a range of guises and is often coupled with the need to explain the channel’s purpose and identity. For example, Richard Klein describes the channel for its 10th birthday: “people understand now that Four is an entertainment channel, only we entertain differently, thinking outside the box, through discourse, wit and proposition.” (Klein, 2012). But these “rebranding practices” can also be connected to very different concerns, as a way of institutionally distancing the channel from its elitist past of value judgments, with the very act of value estrangement inviting debates over the dumbing down of culture (Chapter 2 and Chapter 4). Therefore, taking into account that certain structural reorganisations and acts of discursive reframing are signs of broader cultural shifts taking place, this implies not only that a social, political, technological and economic context informs the changes to public service’s cultural mission, but more appositely to this research, suggests how structural changes often ignite debates about cultural value.

8.4 Branding, Authoring and Curating – Marketing Practices or New Ways to engage with National Culture?

As John Caldwell observes, the digital transformation of broadcasting, or what we call “convergence media”, “is not defined by any new technically induced or determined quality or capacity”; rather, it is funnelled by “the long-standing industry practices that are implemented through it” (2003:131). A television channel as an object of study is a largely underresearched object and is in need of sustained academic attention (Johnson, 2012, Light, 2004). This is especially the case as individual channels promise to be the continuing and primary organising units for television content. As such they provide a starting point for understanding not only cultural output but also the study of relational aspects between programmes and presents ways of understanding

affiliation as well as historical context in relation to other audiovisual platforms. The study of BBC Four in particular provides a platform to understand the increased reliance on marketing and branding professions and activities within broadcasting, traditionally linked to the age of digital convergence, the shift from a “push” to a “pull” approach to viewers, and the centrality of audience research which informs the identities of channels (Ellis, 2000a; Caldwell, 2004; Light, 2004; Johnson, 2012). With each new channel or platform dedicated to a specific cultural purpose, public service provision has become articulated through branding processes of creation concerning distinctive, promotionally shaped, identities. And with different channels dedicated to different purposes of public service values, BBC Four’s identity was designed as a specific carrier of “benchmark for quality” and “culturally enriching” programming. In other words, what was once considered a mission fit for universal provision is now established through a “specialist” channel designed for “specific audience segments” (Light, 2004:241).

These marketing strategies are straining and limiting creativity and innovation processes, as they are the direct outcome of demarcated commissioning and editorial requirements for each channel, coupled with a focus on audience research and economising with low budget. Chapter 5 explored in detail how creative practices, previously defining the jobs of producers, are now considered the role of commissioners and channel controllers. Authoring and editorialising are the channel’s key creative interventions – such as the scheduling of BBC Four seasons and theme nights. The outcome of this shift is self-contradictory: while there is an evidence of underinvestment into already well-developed public service “brands” such as the critically acclaimed documentary strand *Storyville* or the BBC’s arts institution *Arena*, the case study of BBC Four has also revealed an ongoing discourse about the channel being one of the rare places in the BBC portfolio where the notion of “creative freedom” can still be practiced. Another crucial point that is not often associated with television but more with digital creativity is value that is articulated through contextualising and associating programmes, with creative production increasingly taking place through scheduling, editorialising and curating processes, chiming with Ellis’s assertion

that scheduling is in fact a “creative act”, seeking to “combine variety and connection, repetition and originality into harmonious and mutually supporting arrangements” (2000b:25). BBC Four’s controller is therefore a creative arbiter of the channel’s narrative “arc”, regularly searching for an “editorially correct tone, and subject matter” (Richard Klein, interview, 18 March 2010). The shift of creative intervention beyond individual programmes allows a look at the whole channel as a programme, or as BBC Four’s Head of Scheduling explains, “turning what is effectively a programme into an event” (Cameron, interview, 10 March 2010). The channel’s identity and the thematic organisation of its content are related to branding and marketing practices that are embedded in the everyday creative decision making of the channel.

8.5 The Past as the Future of Television? Television Archive, Curating the Public Service Canon, and the Quest for Cultural Legitimation

There is a double paradox in this privileging of memory today. Our mnemonic culture rejects the idea of the archive while depending on the archive’s contents for its own sustenance. And it marks its vital difference from the archive by insisting on novelty, the novelty of no longer fetishising the new. (Huysen, 1995:6)

The prominence of archives and repeats on BBC Four is symptomatic of a broader public service initiative: the BBC, alongside other British public institutions, perceives the digitisation of archives as a way of extending public value and thereby increasing the institution’s contribution to national heritage. The aftermath of the Charter Review in 2006 saw the expansion and the overhauling of existing archive services. While the BBC already had a “working archive” in place, it was a “sleeping asset”, fully activated only by digitisation, which increased the frequency in use of its services due to the archive becoming much easier to store and retrieve from, and therefore making it both cheaper and more accessible for making “reuse programmes” (O’Dwyer, 2012). But in addition to making the BBC archive a site of

increased production-related activities, digitisation is also linked to the decision to open up the archive for public use.

Both approaches to the audiovisual archive – the one facilitating cultural and educational content for the purposes of television production, and the other creating new platforms for public engagements with the existing archive - are informing BBC Four’s mission and purpose. BBC Four is hailed as the archive “custodian” and the only BBC *television* channel with a responsibility to create audiovisual archive collections (other collectors include BBC’s established radio channels, Radio 3 and Radio 4). The channel, with a remit to focus on “the provision of factual and arts programming” (BBC Trust, 2009), has now confidently become a “showcase” for “the best of [the BBC’s] valuable archive content” (Yentob, 2010). The BBC Four Collections platform (Chapter 6) provides a structured and themed means of access for the permanent exhibition of television programmes from the archive; in addition, archive programmes and old footage continue to exist as the building blocks of the channel’s “linear” existence (Chapter 6 and 7), whether informing the subject matter of its seasons, its themed evenings, or for individual programmes. What the channel is doing *with* televisual archive material – and *how* the material itself contributes to the channel’s cultural output – have become two of the main research areas that have opened up a broader set of enquiries about new creative practices in television above and beyond BBC Four as the case study. The increased audiovisual preservation is becoming the central component of the channel’s architecture, and that interpretation of the past can be seen as *a growing space* of ongoing social and aesthetic transformations as well as “a crucial context for legitimation, establishing conditions under which television’s status is being renegotiated” (Newman and Levine, 2012:5).

Todreas observes that “[t]he Digital Era has eliminated the distinctions among media” (1999:198), an observation which is irreversibly challenging more traditional approaches to the medium, as television can no longer be seen as “the least legitimate of media forms” (Seiter, 1999:4), drawing its validation “from other, already validated art forms: theatre,

literature, music” (Brunsdon, 1997:112). The rise of the television archive is vital both to the reduction of cultural distinctions, and to the renegotiation of television’s ephemeral aesthetic. Part of this reevaluation is dependent on the television archive’s modality of permanence; television, while not necessarily becoming less ephemeral, is becoming more artefactual and permanent. The logic of television programmes being seen as cultural artefacts further necessitates a system of classification. The process of the selection of programmes, while not necessarily novel, represents an increase of previously marginalised broadcasting activities such as curating collections¹¹², editorialising seasons, and to some extent, extending the life of programmes through scheduling. BBC Four organises television artefacts through “platform agnostic” curation, where the process of selecting (as well as omitting) of past programmes is not unlike the process of canon building. From BBC Four’s collections, to its seasons and programmes such as *TV on Trial*, BBC Four has demonstrated that its broadcasting activities actively engage with the *evaluation* of audiovisual archive. These evaluative, self-reflexive production processes range from archaeological-like discoveries of rare and forgotten programmes and footage, to those driven by personal memories. The tropes that define archive material – history, memory, artefact, repeats and nostalgia - all emphasise television as a record of history and the past, enhancing the importance of Huyssen’s question: “How do we evaluate the paradox that novelty in our culture is ever more associated with memory and the past rather than with future expectation? (Huyssen, 1995:6).

The changed modality of audiovisual material from being a transient to an enduring aesthetic also transfers the focus of the *place* and *uses* of cultural value. Emerging tropes that emphasise BBC Four’s archival activities include “platforms”, “curating”, as well as the branding of the channel as a “place to think”, all of which indicate that its cultural mission is defined through a new televisual *space*. The audiovisual archive, therefore, unravels the BBC’s function as a public repository of culture and a place where a canon of public service television programmes can be forged. The practices of self-

¹¹² According to Inge Ejbye Sørensen, the term “curation” is increasingly used not only in industry circles and trade press but also scholarly debates to describe different “multiplatform and branding strategies of PSBs in the UK” (2013:2).

preservation encompass a direct engagement with Reithian philosophy and a recalibration of the corporation's public service role. In this shifting cultural landscape, and amidst its precarious existence, BBC Four holds a promise to be the sanctuary rather than the ghetto of culture: it reminds us that television is principally a cultural practice, and that a digital, multiplatform channel can serve a public purpose and maintain a Reithian ideal. Its current, uncertain existence heavily relies on the innovative ways of mediating the past, in order to demonstrate a new kind of public service broadcasting shaped by the future.

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Das, John (2010) *Interview with John Das, BBC Four Acting Channel Executive and Timeshift Series Editor* BBC Television Centre, 6th Floor 10 March.

Fraser, Nick (2010) *Interview with Nick Fraser, Series Editor of Storyville*, BBC Television Centre, Ground Floor Café, 2 February.

Hadlow, Janice (2010), *Interview with Janice Hadlow, Controller of BBC Two (2008 – present); Controller of BBC Four (2004 – 2008)*, Telephone Interview, 2 March.

Keating, Roly (2010), *Interview with Roly Keating, Controller of BBC Four (2002 – 2004)*, BBC Television Centre, 7th Floor, 12 March.

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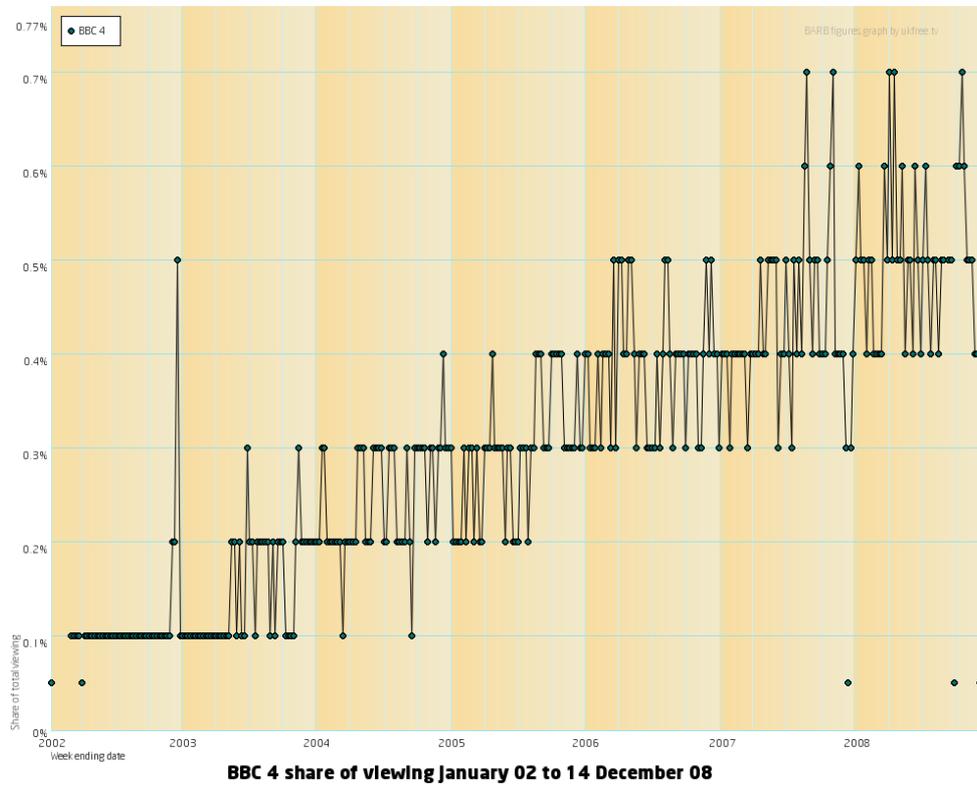
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Wall, Anthony (2010), *Interview with Anthony Wall, Arena Series Producer*, BBC Bush House, 11 February.

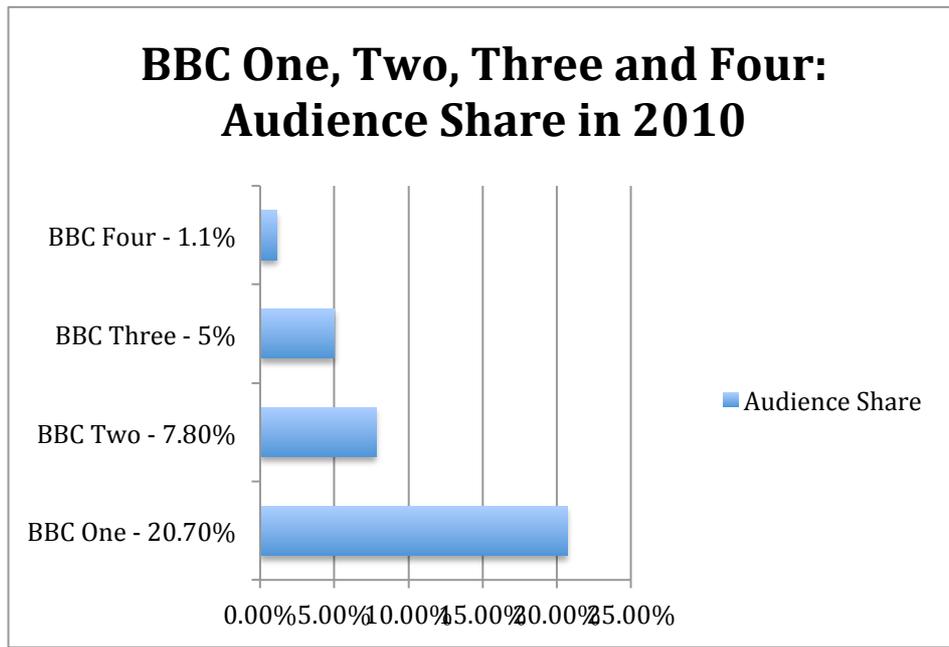
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Appendices

Appendix I



Appendix 2



The chart is based on the November 2010 Press Release,

http://www.bbc.co.uk/pressoffice/pressreleases/stories/2010/11_november/25/audience.shtml

Appendix 3

The complete list of respondents and conducted interviews:

Name of the Respondent	Position	Date, Place and Duration of the Interview
Grant Gee	Documentary Filmmaker (<i>Meeting People is Easy, Joy Division, Patience (After Sebald)</i>)	27 July 2009, Brighton, his home
Mira Erdevicki	Documentary Filmmaker (author of <i>Sevdah: The Bridge that Survived</i> for Storyville, BBC Four, and <i>Tito's Ghosts</i> for Storyville, BBC Four)	11 August 2009, Primrose Hill, London
Mark Kidel	Founding editor of BBC Two Arena, Producer, Calliope Media, author of BBC Four documentaries <i>Soweto Strings</i> and <i>Hungary 1957</i>	11 September 2009, Calliope Media, Bristol
John Wyver	Television Academic and Producer, Illuminations Media	11 November 2009, Illuminations Media offices, London N1
Adam Tandy	Producer, <i>The Thick of It</i> , BBC Four/BBC Two	Tue 9 February 2010, at BAFTA, Piccadilly, London W1
Nick Fraser	Producer, <i>Storyville</i> documentary strand, BBC Four/BBC Two	2 February 2010, at BBC Television Centre cafeteria, White City, Wood Lane, London W12
Anthony Wall	Producer, Arena, BBC	11 February 2010, at Bush House, BBC
Janice Hadlow	Controller, BBC Four (2004 – 2008) Acting Controller, BBC Four (2013 – present)	2 March 2010, telephone interview
Roly Keating	Controller, BBC Four (2002 – 2004)	12 March, BBC Television Centre, 7 th Floor offices, White City, Wood Lane, London W12
John Das	Channel Executive, BBC Four, 2010; Producer, BBC Four <i>Timeshift</i> and <i>What Happens Next?</i>	10 March, BBC Television Centre, 6 th Floor offices, White City, Wood Lane, London W12
Don Cameron	Head of Planning and Scheduling, BBC Four	10 March, BBC Television Centre, 6 th Floor offices, White City, Wood Lane, London W12
Richard Klein	Controller, BBC Four (2008 – 2013)	18 March 2010, BBC Television Centre, 6 th Floor offices, Wood Lane, White City, London W12
Roly Keating	Controller, BBC Four (2002 – 2004), Director of Archive content, BBC	22 April, BBC Television Centre, 7 th Floor, Wood Lane, White City, London W12
Don Cameron	Head of Planning and Scheduling, BBC Four	9 July 2010, BBC Television Centre, 6 th Floor, Wood Lane, W12
Anthony Wall	Producer, Arena, BBC	21 July 2011, BBC Bush House, London
Andy O'Dwyer	BBC Archive Project Manager	9 May 2012, BBC Television Centre, Wood Lane, W12

Appendix 4

Timeshift episodes, BBC Four [Online.] Available at:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/bbcfour/documentaries/timeshift/> (Accessed 3 January 2008)

Alistair Cooke: Postcards from America

Apocalypse Now... and Then

Art School

Black & White Minstrel Show - Revisited

The British Seaside

The Carnival Years

Charles Wheeler: Edge of Frame

Child Prodigies: Too Much Too Young?

Children's News

Cold War Kids

Fantasy Sixties

Footballers' Lives

From the Raj to the Rhondda

Gurus

Hard Drive Heaven

High Rise Dreams

Jack Rosenthal

James Cameron: A Pain in the Neck

Jet Set

Jewish Entertainers

The Kneale Tapes

The Lie of the Land

Live on the Night

The Magic Roundabout

Malcolm Muggeridge

Missing Believed Wiped
New Age Travellers
Political Thrillers
Prog Rock
Six Days to Saturday
Television & Charity
Time Gentlemen, Please: History of the British Pub
Vicars: Dearly Beloved?
Watching You
Whistle Blowers
The World of Georgie Best

Appendix 5

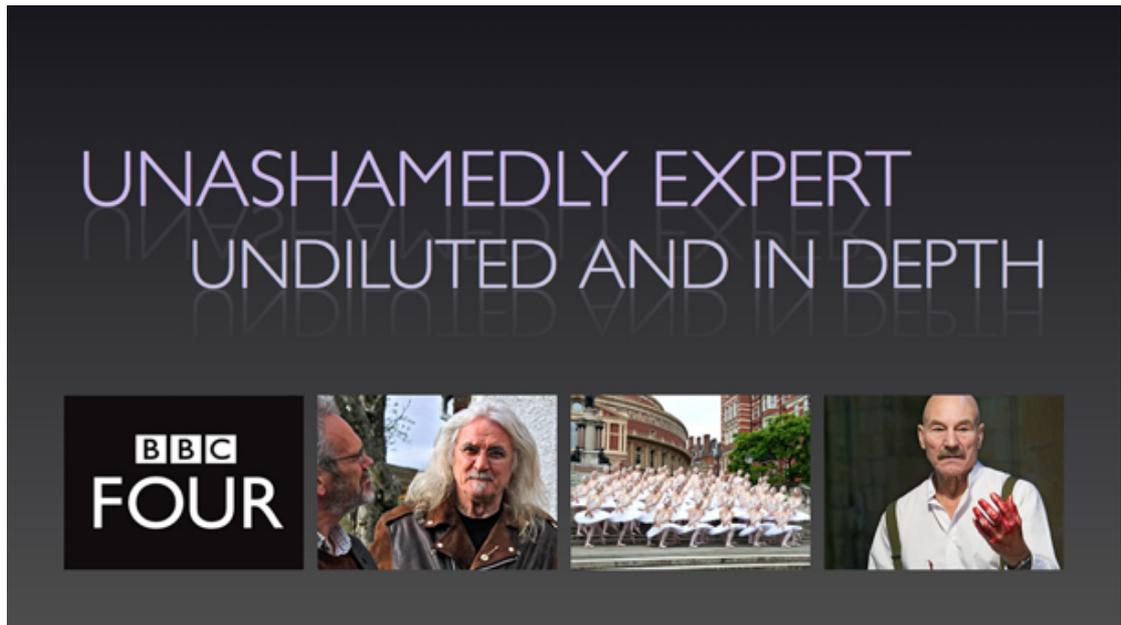


Figure 1: From BBC Four Commissioning Page

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/commissioning/tv/what-we-want/service-strategies/bbc-four-service-strategy.shtml>



Figure 2: BBC Television centre corridor display where portfolio of channels and platforms were on display – photograph taken 9 May 2012 (photo: Vana Goblot)

	<p>BBC One BBC One's remit is to be the BBC's most popular mixed-genre television service across the UK, offering a wide range of high quality programmes.</p>
	<p>BBC Two BBC Two's remit is to be a mixed-genre channel appealing to a broad adult audience with programmes of depth and substance.</p>
	<p>BBC Three The remit of BBC Three is to bring younger audiences to high quality public service broadcasting through a mixed-genre schedule of innovative UK content featuring new UK talent.</p>
	<p>BBC Four BBC Four's primary role is to reflect a range of UK and international arts, music and culture.</p>
	<p>CBBC The remit of CBBC is to provide a wide range of high quality, distinctive content for 6-12 year olds, including drama, entertainment, comedy, animation, news and factual.</p>
	<p>CBeebies The remit of CBeebies is to offer high-quality, mostly UK-produced programmes to educate and entertain the BBC's youngest audience.</p>
	<p>BBC News Channel BBC News Channel should deliver up-to-the-minute, accurate, impartial and independent news, analysis and insight.</p>

Figure 3. Taken from the BBC Trust's Television Service Licences, http://www.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust/our_work/services/television/service_licences.html (accessed May 2013)

Appendix 6

BBC Four Collections (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/bbcfour/collections> - accessed May 2013)

The screenshot shows the BBC Four Collections website interface. At the top is the BBC logo and navigation links for Sign in, News, Sport, Weather, iPlayer, TV, Radio, and More... A search bar is also present. Below the navigation is the 'FOUR' logo and a secondary menu with Home, Schedule, Programmes, Collections, and Newsletter. The main heading is 'Collections', with a sub-heading explaining that BBC Four Collections delve into the archives to select classic full-length BBC TV programmes and make them available for you to watch online.

The featured collection is 'Archaeology at the BBC', which includes a large image of a man holding a fossil. The description states: 'A collection of programmes charting the BBC's first ventures into archaeology programming, dating back to the 1950s, available online to watch in full. View Collection'.

Other collections shown in a grid include:

- Modern Classical Music**: A collection of programmes featuring trailblazing 20th Century classical music composers. (Image: Musicians playing instruments)
- Steam Railways**: Celebrating Britain's extraordinary Steam Railway legacy. (Image: Steam train)
- David Attenborough - The Early Years**: A collection of programmes showcasing the early work of Sir David Attenborough. (Image: David Attenborough)
- London**: Celebrating the people and places of London. (Image: Aerial view of London)
- Talk**: A collection of BBC interviews with influential figures of the 20th century. (Image: Grid of faces)
- All-American**: A collection of BBC programmes about American culture, available to watch online. (Image: Cheerleaders)
- Army: A Very British Institution**: A collection of BBC programmes about the British Armed Forces, available to watch online. (Image: Soldier with camera)
- Radio 4 Collections**: Listen to an ever growing selection of factual content from the Radio 4 archives. (Image: BBC logo and a man)
- About the BBC releasing the archive**: The BBC for the first time has a clear, defined remit to start building a 'permanent collection' of some of its best programmes for free online access by anyone in the UK. (Image: Archive shelves)

At the bottom of the page, there is a footer with the BBC logo, a copyright notice: 'BBC © 2013 The BBC is not responsible for the content of external sites. Read more.', and links for Mobile site, Terms of Use, Privacy, Cookies, Parental Guidance, About the BBC, BBC Help, Accessibility Help, and Contact Us.

Appendix 7

BBC Quality TV assessment (Source: *Audience Information Data Tables [Document]*) – January – March 2013) demonstrates highest scores for BBC Four in Appreciation Index and Distinctiveness

BBC TV Quality Measures

Appreciation Index (AI)

Service 16+	AI out of 100
All BBC TV	82.8
BBC One (including BBC1 HD)	82.2
BBC Two	84.3
BBC Three	83.8
BBC Four	85.4
BBC HD	85.4

Source: Pulse, panel of 20,000 UK Adults, 16+ by GfK for the BBC, January - March 2013. *Channels that are not measured are CBeebies, CBBC, BBC News Channel and BBC Parliament.

Distinctiveness

"BBC programmes feel fresh and new."	
Service by age 16+	Agree (%)
All BBC TV	71.2
BBC One (including BBC1 HD)	69.6
BBC Two	74.3
BBC Three	73.4
BBC Four	79.4
BBC HD	76.7

Source: Pulse, panel of 20,000 UK Adults, 16+ by GfK for the BBC, January - March 2013. *Channels that are not measured are CBeebies, CBBC, BBC News Channel and BBC Parliament.