

### MYSTERY AND IMAGINATION (1966-70)

*Mystery and Imagination* was an anthology series of adaptations of classic Gothic novels, short stories and plays, produced by Jonathan Alwyn for ABC Television (1966-8), and later by Reginald Collin for Thames (1968-70). The series is a striking example of the way in which anthology drama on ITV, during a time of intense competition, produced innovative, experimental 'teleplays' which responded to the possibilities of television, showcased new production technologies, and challenged the predominance of naturalistic television drama in the 1960s (see Kennedy-Martin, 1964). Indeed, a document produced to accompany ABC's April 1967 franchise application laid out their commitment to the format as a source of challenging, quality entertainment, stating: 'ABC Television has always seen anthology drama as an opportunity for stretching the minds and feelings of peak viewing audiences beyond the narrow confines of variety acts and storytelling.' While some critical attention has been paid to the impact of ABC's *Armchair Theatre* anthology drama series on the development of the dramatic form on television, focusing particularly on the figure of Canadian producer Sydney Newman (see Caughie, 2000; Crisell, 1997), other popular, generically defined anthology series such as *Mystery and Imagination* have received little consideration. This oversight is partly due to the privileging of progressive, social-realist drama within the histories of television drama (as a Gothic anthology series dealing with tales of the supernatural and the monstrous, *Mystery and Imagination* lay firmly outside the realist/naturalist paradigm), as well as the more practical difficulties of piecing together other examples of 'early' ITV drama series from haphazardly preserved materials archived by a

widespread variety of organisations and companies.

Throughout its five-season run, the individual teleplays of *Mystery and Imagination* shifted between two distinct modes of Gothic representation: the suggestive, restrained ambiguity of the supernatural ghost story, owing much to an earlier broadcast version of the genre (the BBC radio play) in its elaborate sound design (e.g. 'The Open Door' [19 February 1966], d. Joan Kemp-Welch, w. Margaret Oliphant/George F. Kerr) and the excessive, spectacular Gothic drama, having more in common with theatrical and cinematic presentations of the Gothic, but ultimately developing what can be seen as a 'televsual' version of the genre (e.g. 'Dracula' [18 November 1968], d. Patrick Dromgoole, w. Bram Stoker/Charles Graham).

Dromgoole's adaptation is particularly notable for a final sequence in which Dracula (played by Denholm Elliott) is defeated by Van Helsing (Bernard Archard), in a moment described by Peter Haining as 'unlike anything ever seen on television before' (1993, p. 292). During this sequence (shot on videotape, as with other *Mystery and Imagination* episodes), the image is dramatically switched to negative and then a series of close-ups of Dracula's rapidly decomposing body are dissolved together, offering an early version of a 'morphing' technique, until only a pile of dust remains. This moment and others from the series (such as the image of two Ian Holms facing one another, playing the eponymous hero and the monster in 'Frankenstein' [11 November 1968]), offer an accentuated performance of non-naturalistic television drama style, and thus delineate the sense of innovation and display which characterised *Mystery and Imagination* (see Wheatley, 2002, for a further discussion of this series).

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teen in the 1979-80 season), serial drama became increasingly prevalent and accomplished, with a surge of period drama and adaptations, including *A Family at War* (Granada, 1970-2), *South Riding* (Yorkshire, 1974) and *Edward and Mrs Simpson* (Thames, 1978). These serials can in turn be seen as precursors to the highly exportable 'heritage' television of the 1980s (*Brideshead Revisited* [Granada, 1981] and *Jewel in the Crown* [Granada, 1984]), which exploited the values of 'quality' television (see Brunson, 1990), to make them the commercial successes of the decade.

ITV in the 1980s continued to respond to an increase in broadcasting hours and the pressure of competition from the new cable and satellite broadcasters in the UK, buying in soaps from Australia to fill the afternoon schedules such as *Sons and Daughters* (Grundy, 1983-90) and

*Home and Away* (Seven Network Australia, 1989-2000), and placing its newest television genre, the audience-based discussion show, in both the mid-morning slot freed by educational broadcasting's move to Channel Four, and in the increased late-night broadcasting slot. This genre is represented by such programmes as *The Time*, *The Place* (Thames, Anglia, 1987-98) during the day and, in the late-night slot, *Central Weekend* (Central, 1986-). The 1980s also saw the beginning of breakfast television with TV-am's *Good Morning Britain*, which was fronted by David Frost, Michael Parkinson, Robert Kee, Angela Rippon and Anna Ford, and conceived as a more serious, news-led show than the BBC's *Breakfast Time*, launched two weeks earlier in January 1983. However, the programme soon produced disappointing ratings, and was 'rescued' by Australian Kerry Packer, new presenters

(Anne Diamond and Nick Owen) and a 'lighter', more bland presentational style. In fact, the failure of *Good Morning Britain* in the mid-1980s might be seen as indicative of the general misconceptions surrounding ITV programming; while the public, press and regulators expected populist, hackneyed output from the network, a sizeable proportion of what the ITV companies actually produced was challenging and innovative.

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## The 'Youth Revolution' and American Television

'The Vast Wasteland.' This phrase, coined by early 1960s FCC Chairman Newton Minow, remains the dominant characterisation of American network programming in the 1960s and 70s. While racial and generational turmoil profoundly challenged the body politic, and movements for social change destabilised the post-war social consensus, TV viewers were treated to a bizarre fantasy world of flying nuns, suburban housewife witches, millionaire Okies in Beverly Hills, talking horses named Ed, bumbling espionage agents talking into their shoes, and other such inanities. Broadcast historian James Baughman argues that 1960s' programming 'meant offering evenings of avoidance' (Baughman, 1985, p. 92).

To an extent this is true. By the early 1960s, the three-network structure was in place. All three targeted middle-class, family audiences. Coming of age in a conformist

1950s of red scares and witch-hunts, CBS, NBC and ABC were generally loath to deal with socially and politically controversial material in entertainment programming. They also viewed the audiences they delivered up to advertisers as an undifferentiated bulk rather than as distinct demographic units. Programming was meant to appeal to mom, pop, the kids, the teens and young adults all more or less equally.

A problem began to develop in the mid-1960s, however. First wave Baby Boomers - young people who had literally grown up with television as the first 'television generation' - were entering their late teens and apparently abandoning the medium. Beginning in 1966 and 1967, all three networks began worrying about the drop-off in young adult and juvenile viewership. CBS in particular worried about its position as video's 'maiden aunt' (Pitman, 1967, p. 25). Increasingly the networks announced their desire to attract a 'youth' audience. However, 'youth' was an amorphous and rather broadly defined category for network executives, advertisers and the Nielsen ratings' people. In the TV-audience business a youth audience comprised the demographic range of eighteen to forty-nine. This rather generous definition of youth hampered the networks in targeting Baby Boomers because they were working with a demographic that, as the 1960s wore on, included two generations whose interests, tastes and ways of interpreting social reality were radically different. The eighteen-to-forty-nine demographic managed to encompass the so-called 'generation gap' of rebellious Boomer youth and their more conservative parents. *TV Guide*, early in 1967, noted, 'the paradox of the networks' consuming passion for attracting young adult viewers is that the TV-ratings race continues to be paced by middle-aged-to-elderly stars' (Doan, 1967, p. 12). Among the networks' biggest stars in this period - all in their fifties and sixties - were Lawrence Welk, Ed Sullivan, Bob Hope, Red Skelton, Jackie Gleason, Lucille Ball, Eddie Albert, Buddy Ebsen and Lorne Greene.

The networks initially attempted to capitalise on elements of the growing youth culture with *Shindig* (ABC, 1964-6) and *Hullabaloo* (NBC, 1965-6), both musical variety shows that showcased current chart-topping recording artists. Both shows provided a very scrubbed down, non-threatening version of youth culture with, in the case of *Hullabaloo*, go-go dancers frugging to musical arrangements that would not have been out of place on the more geriatric *Lawrence Welk Show* (ABC, 1955-71). The show also featured middle-of-the-road and middle-aged guest hosts such as Sammy Davis Jr and Jerry Lewis. Presumably the networks' strategy was to lure the young with pop-rock acts like the Lovin' Spoonful, Sonny and Cher, the



Musical variety and chart-topping artists: *Hullabaloo* (1965-6)

Supremes and occasionally even megastars such as the Rolling Stones and the Beatles while keeping the show's overall environment rapidly unthreatening so as not to discomfort the grownups. *Variety* noted the dilemma that networks encountered when they attempted to entice young viewers: they 'sometimes looked as ridiculous as a matron in a miniskirt and love beads' (Brown, 1969, p. 21).

ABC tried a different strategy to lure young viewers with *The Monkees* (ABC, 1966-8), which featured four wacky, long-haired musicians. The show drew inspiration from the Beatles' films *A Hard Day's Night* and *Help*. Like those films, *The Monkees* was not overly concerned with narrative continuity or logic, relying on frequent blackout sketches and musical numbers. The show's use of a pre-fabricated musical group put together by a casting call in *Variety* generated some controversy among young people, especially as the actors hired to portray the Monkees increasingly sought legitimation by their generational cohort. While the show may have had authenticity problems with its target audience that increasingly expected its rock troubadours to voice the concerns of the generation, older audiences had problems with the visual style of the show and the proliferation of hippie signifiers like long hair. Some network affiliates so disliked the show and its stars that they refused to broadcast it. A number of production professionals also disliked the show's counter-cultural 'let it all hang out' style. One director hired to work on the show grumbled, 'If you don't care about your focus or your lighting, and if you're going to let four idiots ad-lib your dialogue, you don't need a director' (Raddatz, 1967, p. 19). The show proved wildly successful, nevertheless, with teens and pre-teens. It provided a showcase for the initially pre-packaged records the band produced, which quickly became chart-toppers. As the series moved into its second (and last) year on ABC's schedule, the Monkees attempted to wrestle themselves away from their bubblegum image and display more signifiers of 'hipness'. They actively pointed out their constructedness, invited counter-culture figures like Frank Zappa and Tim Buckley onto the show, took more control over their music and, in general, tried to show that they were not complicit with a commodity system that had, in fact, created them. Oddly, considering its success, the show did not become a model for youth-oriented programming as the decade went on.

By the mid-1960s, American network television was only one of a range of media institutions attempting to woo young people. The Hollywood film industry, the recording industry, even the advertising industry, increasingly targeted Baby Boomers as highly coveted potential

consumers. This attempt to cater to youth was, however, a tricky problem in the 1960s and 70s because the most visible, articulate, photogenic and exciting segment of the youth demographic was increasingly at odds with all the values, mores and institutions of the American social and political order. While the majority of Baby Boomers did not drop out and join the counter-culture or engage in New Left campus activism, it was these youth rebels who typically stood in for the entire generation in media discourse, and it was the youth dissidents that the media industries found themselves enamoured of. Even advertising agencies – next to network television the most establishmentarian of culture industries – tried to embrace the sentiments of the counter-culture (Frank, 1997). Prime-time television found itself performing, at times, a treacherous ideological balancing act as the decade progressed and youth rebellion intensified. How would prime time take note of and package the highly dramatic, colourful, sexy, vibrant and politicised youth culture without subverting traditional middle-class, capitalist, post-war norms? As it turned out, in order to even begin courting the young, television programmes increasingly began tilting more towards the values, political critiques and lifestyles of the rebellious young in the medium's ideological balancing act.

Three shows, *The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour* (CBS, 1967-9), *The Mod Squad* (ABC, 1968-73) and *Rowan and Martin's Laugh-in* (NBC, 1968-73) are the most notable examples of how American prime time attempted to grapple with the youth revolution. The Smothers Brothers' comedy-variety series (see grey box) proved the most successful at luring Baby Boomer audiences, but also proved the most controversial and contentious for the network. With their anti-war, pro-counter-culture allegiances increasingly clear, the Smothers Brothers battled with network censors and executives over political content in sketches, over the kinds of songs guests affiliated with the anti-war movement could perform, and over questions of 'taste'. The heavy-handed censorship the show endured legitimated it to many of the era's dissenting youth but also ensured its demise by industry forces still intent on appealing to a broader audience.

Another variety series, *Laugh-in*, provided a more successful model for bringing youth movement values and style to prime time without unduly ruffling establishment feathers. The NBC series was indebted to *The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour* for bringing politically and socially oriented humour to the medium, but diverged from the Smothers' series by proving more adept at playing the ideological and generational balancing act. *Laugh-in's* hosts

were two middle-aged, tuxedoed, Las Vegas-style lounge performers who, unlike the Smothers Brothers, could never be mistaken for youth movement fellow travellers. While Rowan and Martin as stars may have been the picture of middle-of-the-road establishmentarianism, the visual style of *Laugh-in* partook far more of the counter-culture than the Smothers' show ever did. The show abounded in hallucinogenic flashes, zooms, quick cuts, a barrage of psychedelic colours, along with volleys of one-liners that mined the same anti-establishment terrain as the Smothers Brothers' show. But the rapid-fire delivery of anti-war/pro-drug lines (or their presentation scrawled on the body of gyrating, bikini-clad Goldie Hawn) tended to blunt the political implications of the humour. By the time the viewer 'got' the message behind the joke, a number of non-political jokes or blackouts had already whizzed by. *Laugh-in* quickly became the top-rated show in the country by providing popular relevancy, an acknowledgment of youth movement style and politics, but also familiar vaudeville hijinks, and grownup hosts to keep the counter-culture material within safe bounds.

Aaron Spelling's police drama, *The Mod Squad*, was another attempt to balance conflicting youth and adult tastes, politics and worldviews. However, in its ideological balancing act, the Spelling production typically tilted notably towards disaffected youth. The show's premise was both ludicrous and brilliant in appealing to the needs of the two generations. Three disaffected youths with links to various elements of the youth movement were recruited into the Los Angeles Police Department as unarmed undercover cops. Linc, Pete and Julie ('one black, one white, one blonde') were never entirely comfortable with their status as police officers. They typically went after villainous adults preying on vulnerable young people. The trio seemed to be constantly reasserting their allegiance to the rebellious youth. When their boss, Captain Greer, encourages them to infiltrate a youth movement paper whose offices have been bombed, Pete angrily responds, 'We don't like the idea of spying on an underground newspaper!' Greer, the benevolent adult who shares their politics, assures the Squad that they can help the paper by infiltrating. When a radical black priest discovers that the Mod Squad was assigned to protect him from an assassination attempt, Julie and Linc are quick to point out that they don't consider him an assignment: 'We've been around because we wanted to': meaning they support his Black Power politics. Because the trio are police officers and therefore work within the institution of law and order, the image of hippie cops could potentially prove comforting to adults. Moral panics about out-of-control youths rioting in the streets could be allayed

by the comforting image of rebellious youth incorporated by the most establishmentarian of dominant institutions.

In 1969 and 1970, when all three networks were casting about for programming models to help them revamp their programming, *The Mod Squad* served as the prototype. The show's balancing act of advocating the politics and perspectives of dissident young people and wrapping it all within the comforting confines of traditional institutions run by benevolent grown-ups would be reworked all over the TV dial in 1970 and 1971. *The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour* may have been more successful in actually appealing to politicised and counter-culture youth (if commentary in the underground press is any guide), however, *The Mod Squad* was more polysemic (open to a range of possible readings by different audiences). The Smothers' show tended to shut out perspectives and audiences that did not side with its increasingly politicised viewpoints. *The Mod Squad* advocated much the same structure of generational feeling, yet suffered no censorship or network battles. The show provides an example of how American television could incorporate bits and pieces of an oppositional movement and make it broadly palatable.

The 1970-1 so-called 'season of social relevance' brought the youth revolution to prime time in unprecedented strength. The 'hayseed' shows and fantastical sitcoms so popular earlier in the previous decade would all be gone by 1972. However the networks' experimentation with *Mod Squad*-style social relevance was not a big success. A slew of shows placing disaffected young people in traditional institutions, such as *Storefront Lawyers* (CBS, 1970-1) and *The Young Lawyers* (ABC, 1970-1) about idealistic young members of the bar, *The Interns* (CBS, 1970-1) about idealistic young doctors and *The Young Rebels* (ABC, 1970-1) about idealistic, long-haired patriots fighting America's War of Independence were all Nielsen duds. Established network programmes like *Ironside* (NBC, 1967-75) with familiar characters, however, also embraced youth-relevance themes and did quite well in the ratings game. The networks' attempts to lure youth audiences and negotiate youth politics and values would only begin to succeed when programmers turned from drama to comedy. As CBS's great triumvirate of early 1970s' comedies, *All in the Family* (CBS, 1971-9), *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* (CBS, 1970-7), and *M\*A\*S\*H* (CBS, 1972-83) would prove, youth-targeted, socially conscious television flourished when served up with generous helpings of laughter.

In 1970, jazz musician Gil Scott-Heron declared in a musical piece, 'The revolution will not be televised'. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, prime time may not have been

### THE SMOTHERS BROTHERS COMEDY HOUR (CBS, 1967-9)

When the Smothers Brothers, a folk-singing, comedy duo, joined CBS's prime-time line-up in 1967, *Time* magazine described them as 'hippies with haircuts'. The show was designed to appeal to 1960s youth sensibilities, but was expected to embrace CBS's traditional family audience as well. Initially the variety show seemed to do just that with middle-of-the-road guest performers like George Burns and Carol Burnett, along with counter-culture acts like Buffalo Springfield. Sketches featured mildly political humour, but mostly celebrated consensus over confrontation.

Things changed quickly and *The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour* has gone down in television studies as one of the most controversial programmes in American broadcast history. It endured heavy-handed network censorship, struggles over political speech in an entertainment environment, questions of acceptance during a period when taste distinctions were rapidly changing, and battles over what role television entertainment could adopt in commenting on contentious current events.

The Smothers Brothers (especially Tom, 'the dumb one') were very sympathetic to the anti-war and pro-counter-culture youth movement. When their show firmly established itself as a Nielsen success in its first year on the air, the brothers and their team of young writers increasingly began pushing the envelope of acceptable variety show material. In their second season premiere on 10 September 1967 they invited legendary folk singer Pete Seeger to perform. Seeger's scheduled rendition of 'Waist Deep in the Big Muddy', an obvious allusion to President Johnson's Vietnam War policy, raised network hackles. Network censors were particularly concerned with the lyric: 'Now every time I read the papers/That old feelin' comes on/We're waist deep in the Big Muddy/And the big fool says to push on.' CBS censored Seeger's appearance. Public outcry eventually forced the network to relent and Seeger appeared singing the anti-war song later in the season. But the battle lines between the network and the Smothers were now drawn.

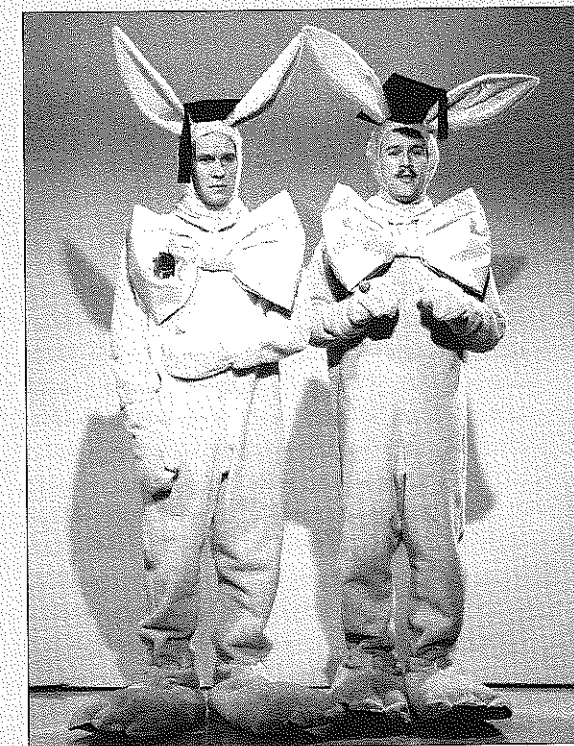
In order to appeal to counter-culture youth, the show featured a recurring hippie character named Goldie Keefe (both first and last name were current slang for marijuana) who extolled the merits of mind-expanding substances. But because her comedy was so heavily coded, censors had a difficult time policing her material. Comedian David Steinberg was less lucky. His regular 'sermonettes' were often deemed in poor taste and likely to offend the religiously minded. Sketches about the very subject of censorship were also often censored.

Material that commented on the contemporary youth movement came in for the most struggle. Harry Belafonte's 'Don't Stop the Carnival' number, which commented on the recent riots at the Chicago Democratic Convention, was summarily cut. Anti-war folk singer Joan Baez had her comments about her husband, a draft resistance leader, snipped.

The show's censorship woes increased its legitimacy among counter-culture and radical youth even as it lost appeal with more mainstream viewers. Conservative CBS affiliates complained about the show and threatened to pull it. Some viewers argued that the Smothers were nothing but propagandists for the anti-war movement, and the show's ratings plunged.

Finally, in April 1969, CBS threw the show off the air before its season was over. The network argued that the Smothers Brothers had not delivered a preview tape in time for review by network censors. This may well have been the case, but, in fact, *The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour* was just too hot for prime time, polarising audiences rather than bringing them together. The show played out on television the same generational tensions, political and cultural turmoil, and crisis of authority that also raged in the body politic that characterised the United States in the 1960s.

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*The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour: TV counter-culture?*

awash in revolution, but it was not showcasing the status quo either. The networks found themselves compelled to disseminate often sympathetic representations of anti-war and counter-culture positions because of the industry's need to woo the huge numbers of American youth to its products. Television thus found itself actively participating in the social transformations of this explosive decade.

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## The BBC Adapts to Competition

For a brief period, 1926-54, the BBC had no domestic competition in its sound, or from 1946, in its TV services. For rest of its history the BBC has had to adapt to increasing competition, first from commercial TV, or ITV (1955), and subsequently from illegal pirate radio (1964), legal commercial radio, or ILR (1973), and, in the 1980s and 90s, to commercial cable, satellite and digital TV and radio services. This pattern of competition was conducted within a shifting political and economic framework, which influenced the pace and nature of change. This contribution outlines some of the key changes in the period after 1954, surveys shifts in programming from the 1950s to the 90s, and examines the BBC's position in the competitive environment in the 1990s.

The BBC's purpose since the 1920s was to provide a public service in broadcasting, based on licence fee funding. Under its first Chief Executive and Director-General, John Reith (1922-38), it pursued a policy of mixed pro-

gramming in its radio services, designed to entertain but also to elevate the tastes of the population. The BBC was very successful, but its mixed programming service met with competition from continental commercial stations, which transmitted music and advertisements to the UK in the 1930s. This, combined with the need to provide morale boosting services in World War II (1939-45) led to the introduction of more streamed radio (three separate and differentiated services) by the end of the 1940s. So, by the time the first ITV station came on stream in September 1955 the BBC had experienced competition. Indeed, as Briggs has shown, the corporation had been preparing for competition in advance of the 1954 Television Act, which authorised a series of regional TV companies, privately owned and funded by 'spot' advertisements, between, and during breaks in, programmes (Briggs, 1979, pp. 937-97). The 1954 Act, by giving ITV companies a separate source of income and requiring that the companies provide a service modelled on BBC standards, in effect established the economic and regulatory context for UK TV until the passage of the 1990 Broadcasting Act.

In an attempt to generate advertising revenue, ITV pursued a strategy of scheduling light entertainment, comedy and game shows. In the third quarter of 1957, according to the BBC's calculations, ITV achieved a 72 per cent share of the viewing public where there was a choice (Briggs, 1995, p. 20). While ITV was winning audiences, by scheduling, in 1957, ten give-away shows in one week (Crisell, 1997, p. 103), its populism was losing the battle with opinion formers. The BBC fought back, developing the populist news magazine programme *Tonight* (1957), drama, like the detective series *Maigret* (1960), and popular music shows like *Juke Box Jury* (1956) and *Six-Five Special* (1956). It also responded to ITV's innovations in news coverage by introducing newscasters.

The aggressive Director-General Hugh Carleton Greene (1960-9) thought the BBC should set itself the target of winning 50 per cent of audience share. He also set out to win government approval for a second channel. Greene prepared the BBC meticulously for the government-appointed Committee on Broadcasting, known after its chair as the Pilkington Committee, which sat from 1960-2. When Pilkington reported in 1962 it was very critical of ITV's populism. Consequently the government awarded a second TV channel to the BBC. BBC2 went on air in 1964. The 1964 Television Act allowed the Independent Television Authority to force ITV companies to transmit serious drama, news and current affairs at peak times. Thus Pilkington had the effect of strengthening the public serv-

ice element in UK television (Crisell, 1997, p. 112; Curran and Seaton, 1997, p. 195).

The 1960s and 70s was a period in which the BBC and ITV settled into stable competition for audiences but not for revenues. In the 1960s there occurred a creative surge in BBC programme-making, echoing the general liberalisation of cultural values in society which developed in those years. The gritty, realist *Z Cars* (1962-78) set new standards for TV cop shows. By 1963 *Z Cars* had audiences of 16.5 million. The *Wednesday Play* strand produced innovative and socially challenging drama, such as *Cathy Come Home* (1966). News and current affairs flourished with peak-time programmes like *Panorama* (1957-). TV satire developed rapidly under the influence of *That Was the Week That Was* (1962-3). It was also a period of challenging comedy, probing generational, *Steptoe and Son* (1962-74), and social issues *Till Death Us Do Part* (1966-74).

During the 1970s there developed a growing body of criticism from broadcasters, the public, trade unionists and academics about the degree to which broadcasting was accountable and represented social diversity in its output. (Briggs, 1995, pp. 993-1004). Simultaneously broadcasters faced problems posed by a period of military conflict in Ireland, exemplified by government criticism of the BBC's *The Question of Ulster* (1972) (Crisell, 1997, p. 184). In addition, this was a period of intense industrial conflict and led to academic criticism of the way the BBC and ITV covered these topics (Beharrell and Philo, 1978).

During the 1970s and 80s the duopoly of the BBC and ITV remained intact. The BBC produced high-quality comedy, *Yes Minister* (1979-82), drama *I, Claudius* (1976) and dramatic serials like the brilliant *Pennies from Heaven* (1978). Its output in peak time included top-rating comedy and light entertainment shows featuring comedians like Morecambe and Wise and Bruce Forsyth. The BBC made a major effort to build audience in the mid-1980s, having been criticised heavily for what emerged as a temporary failure to match ITV. It produced a new soap, *EastEnders* (1985-) and had successes with imports like the US-produced *Dynasty* (1981-9).

In retrospect, viewing share remained fairly constant, with regular, but not dramatic variations. In 1973-4 BBC1 took 43 per cent of audiences, with ITV 49 per cent (Briggs, 1995, p. 960). The arrival of Channel Four in 1982 altered the balance a little, such that in 1987 shares were BBC1, 38 per cent; BBC2, 12 per cent; ITV, 42 per cent; and Channel Four, 8 per cent. A period of rapid policy development in the 1980s resulted in two major pieces of legislation. The 1990 and the 1996 Broadcasting Acts introduced competition into the commercial sector. From the late 1980s



*Yes Minister*: serious comedy from the BBC

onwards cable and satellite services and, after 1996, digital TV, dramatically altered the balance of audience share. By 2000 the shares were, BBC1, 27.2 per cent; BBC 2, 10.8 per cent; ITV 29.3 per cent; Channel Four, 10.5 per cent; Channel 5, 5.7 per cent; and cable and satellite 16.6 per cent. Cable and satellite's share had risen from just 4 per cent in 1991, signalling the rapid change in the competitive environment faced by the BBC. (Total of 100.1 per cent for 2000 as given in BARB, 2002a.)

New communications technologies were introduced in a manner which directly challenged the idea that public service broadcasting should be the principle governing broadcasting (O'Malley, 2001a). The Conservative governments of Margaret Thatcher (1979-90) devised policies that called into question the continuance of the BBC. Cable and satellite technologies were introduced as commercial competitors with, compared to the BBC and ITV, very few expensive public service programming obligations. The government signalled its disapproval of the ethos of public service television by attacking the BBC throughout the 1980s, banning the *Real Lives* (1985) programme on Ireland, and fostering a climate which led to the withdrawal of a programme on the spy satellite *Zircon* in 1987 (see grey box). Thatcher established the Peacock Committee (1985-6), which judged that, while the BBC should remain licence fee-funded, broadcasting should