

Acting in the New World: Studio and Location Realism in *Survivors*

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The importance of performing environs were famously highlighted by Russian drama theoretician Constantin Stanislavski; while walking in the grounds of Kiev palace he was inspired to enact a scene from his current stage success, *A Month in the Country*, which was set in just such a locale. However, the performance style which had won plaudits in the theatre fell strangely flat when reproduced in the actual environment which it was intended to represent: ‘I stopped, because I could not continue my false and theatrical pose. All that I had done seemed untrue to nature, to reality. And it had been said of us that we had developed simplicity to a point of naturalism!’ (Stanislavski 1924: 383).

Stanislavski’s point regarding the importance of space in relation to drama performance has thus far been largely ignored with regard to the recorded media. Since James Naremore’s *Acting in the Cinema* (1988) important work has been carried out by authors including Roberta Pearson (1992) and Sharon Marie Carnicke and Cynthia Baron (2008) on the historical development of screen performance, but this has concentrated almost entirely on film. While the development of British television drama has been well charted by John Caughie (2000) and Lez Cooke (2003), and the exigencies of the studio - the genre’s home from the first days of live transmission - have been touched upon (Jacobs 2000; Ellis 2005; Wheatley 2005), there has been little in-depth investigation of their relation to acting style, or of the impact of the subsequent move to location.¹ This article is intended to address that lack, and provide an analytical framework by which to consider the significance of this shift for acting style in British

television drama. To this end I have evolved the terms ‘studio realism’ and ‘location realism’ which, while not intended as all-encompassing, will be presented via two case studies in an attempt to understand the implications for actors of changing rehearsal and performance environments. Such a study presents the opportunity to examine not only changes in television acting, but also the ways in which they are dictated by and adapted to technological developments which affect working practices both in front of and behind the cameras. The background information provided offers insights which extend beyond acting alone, revealing much about the historical development of British television drama.

The selected text, the BBC drama *Survivors* (1975-77), is particularly useful in that its mode of production underwent a major transformation during the first series. The initial six episodes followed the established Corporation pattern of single camera² film location work, external rehearsals, and finally a multi-camera³ studio recording session at Television Centre; a procedure which dated back to the launch of live television in 1936, and had varied little up till this point. Even when videotape began to be used to pre-record programmes in the 1960s, the cost and difficulty of editing meant that episodes were recorded in sequence ‘as live’, with a minimum of breaks; the opening of Television Centre in June 1960 - followed in May 1970 by the erection of a specially-designed block of rehearsal rooms known colloquially as the ‘Acton Hilton’⁴ - further consolidated this system. Film-only productions remained rare until the 1960s, and although the use of pre-filmed ‘inserts’, either on location, or for special effects work, was not unknown even in the live era, the majority of work was still done in the studio.

However, in the 1970s a number of technological developments had begun to challenge this long-standing production process. The newly increased manipulability of videotape

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introduced the possibility of out-of-sequence studio schedules and post-production editing, meaning that episodes could for the first time be rehearsed and recorded in separate sections; this ‘rehearse/record’ process, while not immediately replacing ‘in continuity’ evening recording, became increasingly favoured as the decade progressed. Also, the use of lighter-weight Outside Broadcast (or OB) cameras - until this time more usually employed for sports coverage - on location video shoots introduced a faster and cheaper mode of working outside the studio than the single film camera, which itself had significantly increased in television drama since the mid-1960s. The result was that it became logistically easier to transfer production away from the constructed performance space of the studio and out into the ‘real’ environment of location; a model adopted by *Survivors* from its seventh episode onwards. The fact that much of the performance preparation was now taking place on location, rather than being marked out and perfected beforehand in a separate rehearsal space, had significant implications for acting style.

Using a combination of textual analysis, archive research and original interviews, this study contrasts the opening episode of *Survivors*, ‘The Fourth Horseman’, recorded using the established studio system, with ‘Law and Order’, the ninth episode and the third to be recorded entirely using OB. The fact that these shared the same director, Pennant Roberts, and many of the same cast provides two stable factors when examining the implications for acting of the move to location.

Case Study 1: ‘The Fourth Horseman’

Conceived as an exploration of the after-effects of a virus which wipes out 95% of the Earth’s population, *Survivors* was based on a format by Terry Nation. Production began in late 1974 (Cross and Priestner 2005: 8) with a single-camera film sequence in

London; the most notable aspect of this process was the absence of a rehearsal period prior to location work, as actress Lucy Fleming recalls:

It's very odd, and I remember very clearly the first scene I did, which was on the flyover coming down to the Marylebone Road, where there was always a traffic jam, and I don't think I'd met anybody. I'd met the director and the producer, but apart from that it was just: 'Oh, we're going to go and film this bit out there'; 'Oh, OK.' (Author interview 2010)

Use of location film had increased since the early 1960s, with all-film dramas such as 'Up the Junction' (BBC, 1965) and 'Cathy Come Home' (BBC, 1966) becoming more common on the *Wednesday Play* (BBC, 1964-70). However, of equal significance for programmes such as *Survivors* was the expansion over this period of pre-filmed inserts, the increased ratio of which was now beginning to disrupt the established rehearsal and continuity performance template; 'The Fourth Horseman' features 22 minutes and 45 seconds of location film, as compared with 25 minutes and 24 seconds of studio videotape.⁵ For the actor, this increase in location filming meant that a greater part of their performance had to be given without the full rehearsal which would be accorded the increasingly rare all-studio production. As Tristan De Vere Cole, who directed on the third series of *Survivors*, later described:

You may be expected to do your final, most intimate scene on film, with a minimum of rehearsal. You will probably have discussions and line rehearsals in the hotel the night before, but even this may not happen if other actors are unavailable, and you may meet your partner for the first time in front of the camera. (1985: 28)

Location filming meant that characterisations created in the earliest part of the production process, before a significant period of preparation and discussion could take place, would have to be adhered to later in the studio for the sake of continuity. Patrick Malahide, who began his television career around this time and later worked on the re-

make of *Survivors*, highlights the shortcomings of this process when describing his first television location shoot:

The director... came up to me... and he said, 'You haven't done this before, have you?' And I said, 'No,' and he said: 'It's very simple. You walk up that hill, and when we say "Action!" you run down the hill, you run into shot, you say your lines, and we shoot it.' And I thought: 'Oh, OK, fine.' But having shot that for probably a week, perhaps two weeks, to get the exteriors, we would then solemnly sit down in a rehearsal room... and have a read-through... You went into rehearsal and started to investigate the text, some of which you'd already shot, which was psychologically, as a journey, nonsensical... Often you were stymied by what you'd already done. (Author interview 2011)

Although Tristan De Vere Cole claimed that actors would seldom be expected to perform on film without some form of rehearsal, he admitted that it was easy for these 'to become orientated towards the camera and sound crews following the action' (1985: 28). According to Denis Lill, who worked on the first series episode 'Corn Dolly' and later became a regular, extensive location rehearsal was more the exception than the rule:

Obviously, for some of the big set pieces... one did have a certain amount of rehearsal time, but it was very much sort of *ad hoc* and *ad lib* and suck it and see, really; just hope that everything turns out all right in the end, and nothing gets spoilt at the chemist's. (Author interview 2010)

Clearly, while location work offered a degree of spontaneity which might be lacking in the rigorously-rehearsed studio sessions, actors were still expected to adapt their performances to suit the technological needs of the production crew. And while it might be thought that single camera location filming offered directors the potential to expand the *mise-en-scène* for the inserts, Pennant Roberts later stated that this was not the case:

It was very difficult then to maintain the same style and technique between the film parts and the video parts. In some ways, then, we

directors fell into bad ways, because what you had to do basically was shoot the film as if it was multi-camera; you couldn't be as filmic as you would have liked to have been. (Roberts 2003)

This obligation to 'match' material filmed on location to a later studio camera plan was in marked contrast to all-film productions, where directors had the possibility of piecing together actors' entire performances from different takes in post-production.

A somewhat compromised picture consequently emerges of location insert filming, yet according to Kevin McNally, who began his television career in 1976, working on the *Survivors* episode 'Parasites', the all-studio *I, Claudius* (BBC, 1976) and the location-heavy *Poldark* (BBC, 1975-77), it possessed one unique advantage:

It was good, actually, because what happened was, you would all go away, as a film group, and you'd get to know each other because you can't go home at night; you have that location filming camaraderie... And then you'd come home and you'd all get down to the boring process of shooting scenes in the studio, but by then you knew each other and were familiar with each other, so it was a very good way. You all went off for a jolly together, and did the more interesting part of the work, actually. (Author interview 2010)

Tristan De Vere Cole also emphasised the company spirit which could emerge on location shoots, especially if actors and crew were staying together at the unit hotel:

You can go through the next day's scenes with fellow actors; and although it is not obligatory to stay up into the small hours, or prop up the bar, you have an opportunity to get to know the cast and crew... There is, generally speaking, more time for camaraderie with a film crew than with the larger number of studio personnel. (1985: 30-31)

For the main cast this sense of location community became an important part of *Survivors*' first series, particularly when production moved entirely to OB, as Lucy Fleming describes:

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I think... we all bonded so well because there we were, either in the mud or the cold or somewhere, and quite often you'd just go and change in some shed... quite a lot of the time we were outside, and we always filmed in January, February, March time. (Author interview 2010)

When filming concluded, the cast returned to London and the rehearsal space of the Acton Hilton. Roger Lloyd Pack, who made guest appearances in both the original series of *Survivors* and the later re-make, is critical of the actual rehearsal process which took place at Acton, contrasting it unfavourably with its theatre equivalent:

You'd come in and you'd rehearse... rather like you would a play, really, without the same detail; it was much more perfunctory. Because a lot of television writing is too conventional, and it's not so demanding the same way as theatre plays are. So it wasn't so intense, but you would rehearse it, and the moves and that, and timing, and you'd go over it again. (ibid)

This view of television rehearsal as a 'perfunctory' process, concentrating on repetitious movement and blocking rather than characterisation and text, is supported by Patrick Malahide: 'rehearsal... wasn't for performance, it was in order to accommodate this huge deal of running these cameras, which were vast things like baby elephants... pushed all around the studios on the ends of cables. So that was a very cumbersome process' (Author interview 2011). For Malahide, such rehearsal did little to assist actors in preparing for the final studio performance:

Looking back at the years I've sat in the Acton Hilton, I find an awful lot of it a dreadful waste of time. An awful lot of it was going over and over and over it again. You know; acting to white tape marks on the floor, whereas as soon as you're in costume and in the real set it immediately felt fresher and different. The trouble with television, because it was rehearsed in such a way, you got there and you couldn't change anything. You'd walk into a set and say: 'Oh, I didn't realise that was going to be there. It would be so much more interesting if I was... Oh, but we can't, because we've already got the camera there.' So I found it stultifying; I much prefer the freshness of responding immediately to walking onto the set, wherever it is, in character, in costume, and responding to what you find then. I found all the time rehearsing for

television that you were kind of second guessing what you would actually find when you got there, and you'd find that you'd made decisions that weren't right, or that you wouldn't have enough flexibility. And I think anything that keeps things flexible and fresh is what makes drama interesting. (ibid)

There seems to be a distinction here between the type of rehearsals which took place for theatre and television. Both Lloyd Pack and Malahide suggest that the rehearsal period at Acton was more concerned with blocking designed to accommodate the - as yet unseen - cameras to be used in the television studio than with character work. While blocking would also be a consideration of stage rehearsals, preparation in the theatre has traditionally focused in detail on text; a discipline instilled early on at drama school, as Kevin McNally recalls of his RADA training: 'It taught me... how to work on a role, whatever you did: how to rehearse, how to read it, how to learn it, how to break it down - a process... that continued in the theatre for many years after I left drama school' (Author interview 2010). While McNally and others stress that such skills are transferable and necessary for television,¹ the comparatively limited amount of time allowed for the majority of drama productions at Acton militated against in-depth character investigation, Tristan De Vere Cole stating:

You may be expected to wade into a scene with a minimum, if any, of *character motivation* discussion... You have been cast because the director sees you in that particular role. He believes that you can call on certain qualities - voice, looks, physique, presence, stillness, etc., to convey that person. It is not like working in a repertory company... The director will expect you to find your *character* comparatively early. [emphasis his] (1985: 49-50)

It is possible, however, that the negative actor recollections of the Acton rehearsal process cited here are coloured by the passing of time, and it should be noted that

¹ Interviewed for this study, actress Louise Jameson claimed that the Stanislavski training she received at RADA left her equally equipped 'to work on a soap script or a piece of Greek tragedy' (Author interview 2011).

provision was made for additional rehearsal when a production required it, as outlined by BBC director Graeme Harper:

When I started in the 1980s it was the common thing, there were certain periods of rehearsal depending on the size of the production. So if you [were] doing a two-and-a-half-hour Shakespearean play you probably would have twelve weeks of rehearsal, certainly of preparation and rehearsal; it would be a massive rehearsal period. (Author interview 2011)

This would seem to support Roger Lloyd Pack's assertion that material written specifically for the stage required greater preparation than television scripts, but according to Harper the rehearsal period allocated even for the latter also allowed time for work beyond blocking alone: 'You discussed with the director everything; every aspect of the character, etc.' (ibid). It is possible that former child actor Harper valued the process of discussion during rehearsals more than colleagues who did not share his stage background, and approaches to rehearsal and recording varied depending on individual directors. Harper, for example, was one of the earliest at the BBC to direct from the floor when production moved into the studio, rather than remaining separate from the cast in the gallery, thus maintaining the close working relationship established in rehearsals. Louise Jameson, who began her television career in 1971, cites *Survivors* director Pennant Roberts, with whom she later worked on *Doctor Who* (BBC, 1963-89) and *Tenko* (BBC, 1981-84), as another director whose presence on the studio floor could make a significant difference to the performance dynamic: 'For my money the best directors come down on the floor and talk to you personally, so you've got an eye-to-eye, you've got a debate going' (Author interview 2011). According to Jameson, gallery direction - in which the director's instructions are relayed via the floor manager - for actors represents 'the art of surrender... hit your mark, don't forget your lines, do the best you can' (ibid).

While it is difficult to date precisely when the practice of directing from the floor began, it is clear that by the mid-1970s directors were beginning to challenge the established processes and procedures employed at the BBC since the 1930s, as Denis Lill affirms:

There were new generations of directors who were employed by the BBC. They'd come along and they would say: 'This is madness; it's absolutely ludicrous that you should spend all day doing camera rehearsals, then go and have a huge great meal, then turn round and have to do a performance' - because by the time it actually came round to it, you were absolutely knackered. (Author interview 2010)

Such changing attitudes were facilitated by the evolution of the rehearse/record process. Although studio recording would still be preceded by rehearsal at Acton, scenes would no longer be recorded in story order:

It just seemed to make more sense that you got into the studio, you rehearsed a particular scene and then you recorded it. Then you'd say: 'Right, thank you, that's in the can. Now we'll move on to the next one.' (ibid)

To actors emerging into television, the old studio process of daytime technical rehearsals and evening recording made little sense, as Kevin McNally relates:

People were set in that thing... There was a feeling that you did all the work in rehearsals and then you just literally went in and got it on tape, which now seems a bizarre way to work... It was ridiculously counter-productive, in a way; I often wonder why it lasted as long as it did. (Author interview 2010)

When the rehearse/record process did begin to be employed it seems to have been welcomed by the majority of actors, but its use was dependent on directors' preferred modes of working, which as Patrick Malahide confirms makes it difficult to date the inception of the procedure at Television Centre:

My impression is that if the directors had done any kind of film drama they would come in and do rehearse/record. And I remember thinking:

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“Thank God for that!” because rehearse/record was so much more efficient... I can’t put a date on that... it seemed gradually to go from one thing to another. (Author interview 2011)

Following location filming and rehearsal at Acton, studio work for ‘The Fourth Horseman’ began with eight hours of camera rehearsal at Television Centre on Tuesday 18 February 1975, starting at 2pm. According to the camera script (BBC Written Archives Centre/Survivors: The Fourth Horseman/BBC1/16/04/1976), another seven hours of camera rehearsal were allocated the following day between 11am and 6pm, with VTR⁶ planned from 7.30 to 10pm. It is not possible to state whether Pennant Roberts deviated from this plan in favour of an entirely rehearse/record procedure, but breaks were scheduled in the script between different scenes, indicating that the intention was to record them separately rather than continuously.

An early sequence, in which housewife Abby (Carolyn Seymour) is discussing the impact of the virus - the seriousness of which is not yet known - with her businessman husband David (Peter Bowles), provides an example of the way many actors were by now honing their performances to the exigencies of the multi-camera recording process. The sequence, which takes place in the kitchen, is covered by three cameras; it consists of sixteen shots, of which the longest is 56 seconds and the shortest two, with an ASL⁷ of around fourteen seconds. The languid rate of the cuts reflects the relaxed pace of the conversation, and the actors’ performances are timed to accommodate both the lengthy expositional material - delivered with the casual familiarity of a couple who have been together for several years - and the limited scope for real time cutting between cameras offered by the size and design of the set. For example, when David pours a drink the camera slowly pans across and down to his hand on the whisky decanter as Abby asks (off-camera), ‘How bad do you think it is?’ Bowles is forced to delay the delivery of his

line while the camera pans back up to his face. The potentially dislocating effect of this slight hesitation is covered by Bowles visibly pausing, as if to consider the question, until his face is once again in shot.

Such technical demands were endemic to multi-camera recording, and this particular scene is further complicated in that throughout the majority of the sequence Abby/Seymour is actually cooking David's bacon and eggs in real time. Had any mistakes been made, a re-take of the entire scene would have been the only option.

Watching the sequence for the 2003 DVD commentary, Pennant Roberts recalled:

It was certainly planned that way; whether we did it more than once, I don't know. But certainly it would have been designed to play continuously. With only two and a half hours to record the lot in, including costume changes, then you would try and rehearse to such a degree that you would get it right first time. (Roberts 2003)

Bowles and Seymour's body language and delivery throughout this scene combine to convey their characters' gradually mounting sense of unease. Seymour's movements are notably enervated, dabbing at David's bacon and eggs in a manner that hints at her character's lack of appetite, her strength already being sapped by the virus with which she is unknowingly infected.

Bowles keeps David's movements fluid and loose, as exemplified by his practised pouring of whisky, but is seldom still for long. After seating himself he twice rises, first to obtain the radio and then to re-fill Abby's glass, joining her at the cooker and taking a brief, listless turn at the cooking while she lays the table. His posture alters while vainly seeking a news broadcast, clutching the radio tightly with his left hand and tilting it towards his craned head. Despite such 'performed' moments as these - Bowles' rigidity suggesting his character's growing tenseness - there are also moments where the actor

employs more naturalistic touches, such as the slight extension of his tongue to indicate concealed amusement when David teases Abby over the 'secret mission' with which their son Peter has entrusted him regarding her birthday present. Whether Bowles prepared and rehearsed this tiny gesture or not it is one that seems to emerge spontaneously from the situation and David's coy amusement, rather than having been grafted on as a coded signifier.

The actors' vocal work complements their physical, adjusting the volume of their voices to a level slightly above that which would normally be used by two people mere feet apart in order for the boom microphone to pick up their dialogue clearly. However, the projection used is not so strong that it seems abnormally loud; the slight additional volume was by now a convention of studio work, and the actors knew that it would be accepted as such by contemporary audiences. Bowles, often belying his character's confident stance with small sighs and half-laughs, only lowers his voice to become intimate and confiding on the closing lines, coinciding with the first time that David and Abby make sustained eye contact and allowing the viewer to understand that his certainty is waning.

Seymour and Bowles' performances are well adapted to the requirements of the studio, representing several key characteristics of the television acting style which had evolved by this point: they are thoroughly rehearsed, with great attention to technical detail and blocking; there is sustained continuity of performance (Seymour noticeably blinks when fat from the frying pan hits her in the eye, but continues undaunted); and there is an anti-naturalistic clarity to the delivery of lines - with no overlapping dialogue, for example - that is designed to facilitate audience understanding of substantial exposition.

This performing style, born of the established external rehearsal and studio performance process, would change significantly when production shifted to an entirely OB location model.

Case Study 2: 'Law and Order'

As an alternative to location film, OB presented both advantages and disadvantages. Of primary importance to *Survivors* was the faster turnaround; in 1979 the average rate of daily OB footage was six minutes, as compared with two and a half minutes for film (Sutton 1982: 99). Video was quicker and easier to edit (De Vere Cole 1985: 44), and as the programme was being made less than three months ahead of transmission this would have been a definite advantage. However, while videotape was more suited to location conditions in that it could accept greater variables in lighting and weather (Sutton 1982: 100), the images which it produced could look flat compared with film, as Shaun Sutton affirmed: 'It is certainly true that tape pictures can be *too* good, unnaturally sharp and precise, with a depth of focus stretching to the horizon. Such perfection can have a false look' [emphasis his] (ibid: 101). In addition, the video unit required greater personnel than film (De Vere Cole 1985: 44), though for Lucy Fleming the sense of the unit as a 'travelling circus' was a bonus:

The whole thing was like a great caravanserai. Once we arrived at a place, they set up the scene, we rehearsed it and did it; like filming... We used to just arrive at the hotel and they'd say: 'Here's your call; you've got to be somewhere at six.' (Author interview 2010)

Although the new generation of OB Emitron cameras in use by the mid-1970s could be hand-held (Smart 2010: 316), Pennant Roberts later recalled them as having limited mobility:

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All pictures were routed back to the 'scanner', and even with 1,000 yards of cable on the wagon, locations had to be easily accessible. Each episode was recorded in 4.5 days, so that a scheduled unit move for the 'short' day was tolerable, but time lost in unloading and loading vehicles constituted a powerful disincentive against split-location days. (Cross and Priestner 2005: 8-9)

Roberts and his fellow directors would often be separate from the cast on location, watching from the control room; according to William Smart, this physical separation made OB 'less of an auteur medium for directors than either the studio, where they had greater ability to control and react to events, or film, where they could reshape material in postproduction' (2010: 318). However, on occasion it was possible to set up temporary monitors 'in the field' (Cross and Priestner 2005: 34), where directors and cast could together watch instant playback of scenes just recorded; another of videotape's advantages over film. Series one regular Julie Neubert welcomed this opportunity to discuss her performance with the director close at hand: '[He] could point out what was wrong with the scene... I found that very helpful... It was a bit intimidating, but quite a learning experience' (ibid: 34).

One immediate effect of the move to OB was the abandonment of rehearsals at Acton when it was realised that blocking would best be conducted on the location at which scenes were to be recorded, as Roberts later related: '[Actor] Talfryn [Thomas] kept stepping over the rehearsal room tape into the "river". And then I realised that my concern was totally pointless; that once he was on location all would be well' (Cross and Priestner 2005: 31). Although Carolyn Seymour later recalled still having two days' rehearsal at Acton prior to shooting on location⁸, and Kevin McNally remembers 'a few days... chatting, not really blocking' (Author interview 2010) before travelling to the shoot, the bulk of rehearsal was done *in situ*. This was a major change to the studio rehearse/record system, for which full prior rehearsal at Acton was vital. Director

Pennant Roberts found the new system much more satisfactory: ‘The actors were able to take the real surroundings into consideration and make constructive suggestions’ (Cross and Priestner 2005: 31).⁹

As opposed to the rigorous blocking and repetition of the Acton Hilton, the type and amount of rehearsal on location was dependant on the material to be recorded, as Denis Lill describes:

It wasn’t an officially designated rehearsal period. You know, provided you got a certain number of scenes shot during the day, provided you stuck to the call sheet and worked it all out, but some scenes need more rehearsal than others... Some scenes you didn’t need to rehearse; you just got on a horse and did the stuff. And there were other scenes that might have involved one or more cameras - more than one camera, anyway - which did involve rehearsals, because of course cameras had to know where to cut and what to focus on and the rest of the stuff. Some of them, if they were shooting in small confines, in a very small room, with a lot of characters, a lot of speeches, that sort of stuff obviously needed more rehearsal than others. (Author interview 2010)

Lill’s comments indicate that, even with OB location, rehearsal was still something primarily necessitated by camera positioning, rather than a process that was intended to benefit performance. However, the pressures of on the spot rehearsal and recording seem to have been a positive factor for the cast, as Lill relates:

The directors really had to make it up as they went along... It was quite exciting, but we did establish a pretty good regime of rehearse/record, basically. We would turn up on location, we would run through the scene, then we would record it, and it got down to a pretty effective and pretty efficient organisation.’ (Author interview 2010)

Lucy Fleming also appreciated the immediacy of location recording: ‘They just pointed the camera at you and you did it, unlike modern filming where it’s very much inter-cut and cut and inter-cut... It led I think to very realistic acting, which I enjoy’ (Fleming 2003). Fleming’s remark indicates that OB recording retained stronger links with the

studio process - where performances of scenes were given in continuity in their entirety - than with the more piecemeal and repetitive film process, while retaining the advantage of being evolved and taking place on site, providing a greater degree of spontaneity than the pre-prepared studio recording.

An early scene from 'Law and Order', by which time Abby has become the leader of a small group of survivors, illustrates the difference in performance which could result from the shift to location. In order to facilitate comparison with the kitchen sequence from 'The Fourth Horseman' this is a similarly domestic scene, in which the newly-founded community discuss their next move over breakfast. On location it was usual to use two OB cameras (Cross and Priestner 2005: 9); due to the length of the room used the cast are recorded simultaneously in two groups, one seated at either end of the table.

As with the kitchen sequence in episode one, the early section of this scene at least was clearly recorded in continuity, as signified when the wheelchair-bound Vic Thatcher (Terry Scully) moves seamlessly from one camera to the other to corral the children Lizzie (Tanya Ronder) and John (Stephen Dudley) into attending their morning lessons. The relative immobility of the OB cameras compared with their pedestal-mounted counterparts at Television Centre meant that some longer than average scenes would be recorded in a single take on location (Cross and Priestner 2005: 34), although the subsequent use of alternate groupings from different angles, interspersed with medium close-ups, indicates that either the entire scene - or sections of it - were enacted more than once for different camera set-ups.

A later section of the sequence relies on a more multi-camera style of recording, when Greg (Ian McCulloch) forbids Jenny (Lucy Fleming) to risk her life by going in search

of supplies. The first part of the discussion is covered by a three-shot of Greg, Jenny and Paul (Chris Tranchell), in which Jenny criticises Greg's authoritarian attitude as sexist, before cutting to a medium close-up of the latter as he irritably responds: 'You're not going, and that's that!' Director Pennant Roberts then cuts to a medium close-up of Lucy Fleming for Jenny's cowed, wordless reaction.

With the actors mainly seated throughout, blocking here is minimal compared with the kitchen scene. Instead of painstakingly working their actions out in rehearsals before transferring them to the set, the cast would have run through the scene with the director at the same location in which they were going to record, the faster OB turnaround meaning that they had to adapt quickly to the room's layout and furniture. The result is less pre-planned movement for its own sake; as Pennant Roberts later highlighted, with multi-camera recording 'finding reasons to cut between the cameras was sometimes a headache' (Roberts 2003). Although less dynamic than the studio session, which sought to make use of the space in as visually engaging a way as possible, this OB sequence offers, in a sense, a less practised performance, providing an arguably more realistic depiction of people conducting a conversation in a domestic scenario. The interior OB scenes on this first series of *Survivors* are notably more static than their studio counterparts; a later scene from 'Law and Order', in which Wendy, Charmian (Eileen Helmsby) and Emma (Hana Maria Pravda) prepare food for a party, is filmed entirely with a single camera. After an initial close-up of Wendy chopping lettuce, it pulls back to provide a three-shot of the women's brief conversation around the table, offering little of the movement or variety seen in the kitchen scene between Abby and David. William Smart accounts for such lack of visual interest in OB work as a result of camera crews' 'inexperience in working with multiple angles and set-ups, or dramatic framing and grouping, these techniques not having been needed in their experience of

recording sports and events' (2010: 318). As a result, many such scenes were recorded primarily in long-shot (Sutton 1983: 103).

One similarity between the breakfast scene and the kitchen sequence is their heavy dependence on dialogue, but there is a notable difference in the level of vocal projection between the two. Whereas in the earlier scene Carolyn Seymour spoke at a volume slightly above the normal conversational level, her voice is less noticeably projected here, and the same applies to the other actors in the scene. This could be a psychological effect of removing the cast from a performance space such as the studio, where performances were pitched to the technological requirements of the site, and into a real location, to which such technology was not endemic. Although boom microphones could be employed for both types of recording, in the studio they would be seen as part of the established technology, whereas on location they would be - like the actors themselves - an additional to the natural environment, to which both actors and technical crew were forced to adapt. William Smart has highlighted the fact that OB sound recording often utilised radio mikes, providing 'a sense of immediacy', while at the same time 'running the risk of dialogue becoming muffled by simultaneous local sound such as wind, footsteps, or the echo of location interiors' (2010: 34). Such factors mark OB sound recording as distinct from both location film, where redubbed and post-synching were common (ibid), and the studio, which provided a more aurally controlled, antiseptic environment.

There are of course other determinants at work with OB recording; the more natural quality of lighting, no longer provided by a battery of overhead lamps, provides a definite contrast with the bright, flat studio palette. However, several of the cast were clearly beginning to scale down their performances as a result of the move, and have

since indicated that the simple fact of working in a real environment - as opposed to the constructed, three-walled sets of the studio - influenced their acting. According to Roger Lloyd Pack, location work 'is more likely to bring a truthful performance, in terms of cinematic truth. It's sort of shaping the truth, because a truthful theatre performance wouldn't necessarily read in the cameras' (Author interview 2011). Lloyd Pack here echoes Stanislavski when he states that 'if you were theatrical out there [on location] it would be rather obvious, and jar in a way that it may not in the studio' (ibid). For Lloyd Pack, working in the studio 'is like a stage; very rarely can they get behind you, or if they do it's a separate take. And it's usually quite a conventional set-up... it's always rather the same; to me that can get a bit tedious' (ibid). For Lucy Fleming, multi-camera studio's stage antecedents are not a disadvantage, providing 'a continuity... like theatre; you're telling the story all the way through' (Author interview 2010). However, the actress also appreciates the benefits of location work: 'You don't have time to get bored or think it through too much; you kind of just do it instinctively and naturally' (Author interview 2010). Denis Lill claims that working in a real environment helped actors

to play down and to set the piece to a much more realistic style. I mean, it was real just to be out in the open air; to be there, on your horse, doing the stuff. And there's no substitute for that; it is the ultimate realism, really. (Author interview 2010)

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Statements such as Lill's would seem to indicate that location work resulted in more 'realistic' performances, yet understandings of realism are informed by time, place and medium - what is accepted as 'realistic' in one arena of performance does not necessarily transfer to another - and therefore open to a variety of interpretations. Raymond Williams describes realism in the arts as 'a set of formal representations, in a

particular medium to which we have become accustomed. The object is not *really* lifelike but by convention and repetition has been made to appear so' [emphasis his] (1983: 261), while Roberta Pearson highlights the fact that any such representation of reality becomes 'a cultural construct, a matter of commonly held opinion rather than that which is presumed to have some objective existence outside the text' (1992: 28).

However, the case studies provided here present a definite distinction between the realism in performance which could result from all-location work and the style of acting employed for the studio. The evolution of each form, and the transition from one to the other, were gradual, and in constant states of flux due to such other variables as direction, actor training and experience, which were simultaneously at work. Nevertheless, from the evidence presented here it is possible to outline the key elements for two distinct paradigms, which can then be applied for the analysis of television acting: studio realism and location realism.

In studio realism, actors are working primarily in a constructed performance space, i.e. the studio set, providing a link with the traditional practices of theatre performance. Performances are not evolved 'on site'; they are prepared in advance in a separate area such as the rehearsal room, and representation of reality is mediated by both space (typically an artificial, three-walled set) and technology. Use of voice and body are scaled down from the level of projection required for the stage, but still feature a greater degree of projection than would be employed in real life, while movement is often designed to provide visual interest rather than deriving from character objectives. Clarity of diction is paramount, and gesture is employed selectively to signify meaning and intent, though on a smaller scale than that used in the theatre.

In contrast, with location realism actors are working primarily in a 'real', i.e. non-constructed location, whether exterior or interior, as opposed to a performance space created for that purpose.¹⁰ Performances are evolved 'on site', with little or no prior preparation, allowing actors to respond to the environment in which they are working. Representation of reality is still mediated by technology, but is less constrained by the use of an artificial or constructed performance space. Body and voice are used on a scale similar to that which would be employed in real life, and movement derives from the situation and character objectives, rather than the need to provide visual interest. Clarity of diction is not always required, and gesture designed purely to signify meaning and intent is minimal.

My terminology is not intended as definitive, but the scenes from *Survivors* examined here provide clear evidence of the differences in acting which can result from studio and location work. Although the OB production format adopted was not typical of its time - and, as already seen, was employed for logistical reasons rather than any creative imperative - subsequent decades would see an increasing move away from the studio, resulting in the growing dominance of the location realist model.¹¹

Conclusion

As already stated, location is one of a number of determinants which influence the type of acting seen on television drama. However, the case studies presented here demonstrate the ways in which production environment - in particular, taking performers out of an established performance space such as the studio - can produce intimacies or intensities of performance particular to the physical site in which they are located.

Roberta Pearson (1992: 99-119) and Sharon Marie Carnicke (2006: 29) have highlighted the risks of identifying actors with one particular style, and as we have seen examples of studio and location realism in their purest forms would be difficult to locate. While it would be limiting to offer the formulation of studio and location realism as an all-inclusive binary, I believe that by identifying the key elements underlying each it is possible to provide a starting point to consider at least the significant trends of change for acting in British television drama; a hitherto neglected field to which this study is intended to make an opening contribution.

Notes

¹ At the time of writing important work is, however, being conducted by the Spaces of Television project at the Universities of Leicester, Reading and Glamorgan.

² In which one camera is employed to film a scene repeatedly, in its entirety or in shorter segments, from different angles. The resulting footage is subsequently edited together in post-production.

³ In which up to five cameras are used simultaneously to record a scene in its entirety. Only one image is being recorded at any one moment, as a vision mixer 'edits' in real time, cutting between the various cameras from the studio gallery in accordance with a camera plan previously prepared by the director.

⁴ Prior to this rehearsals had been conducted at various church and drill halls leased by on a short-term basis.

⁵ These timings do not include the opening and closing title sequences.

⁶ Video Tape Recording.

⁷ Average Shot Length.

⁸ http://www.survivorstvseries.com/Carolyn_Interview.htm.

⁹ For the first few episodes of the second series rehearsals briefly returned to Acton, but thereafter were conducted entirely on location (Cross and Priestner 2005: 96).

¹⁰ Although sets are still used for some modern television drama, they are now more likely to be soundstages of the type traditionally used in film-making than the smaller TVC studios, providing the space for designers to avoid the 'three-walled' constructions traditionally associated with television studio drama. In addition, sets which are frequently re-used are often left as free-standing, permanent features, arguably becoming locations in their own right as opposed to temporarily erected artifices.

¹¹ The location work which has predominated since the early 1990s employs single camera film and latterly HD video as opposed to OB, but the reduction of external rehearsal is also a key feature of modern television production in the UK.

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