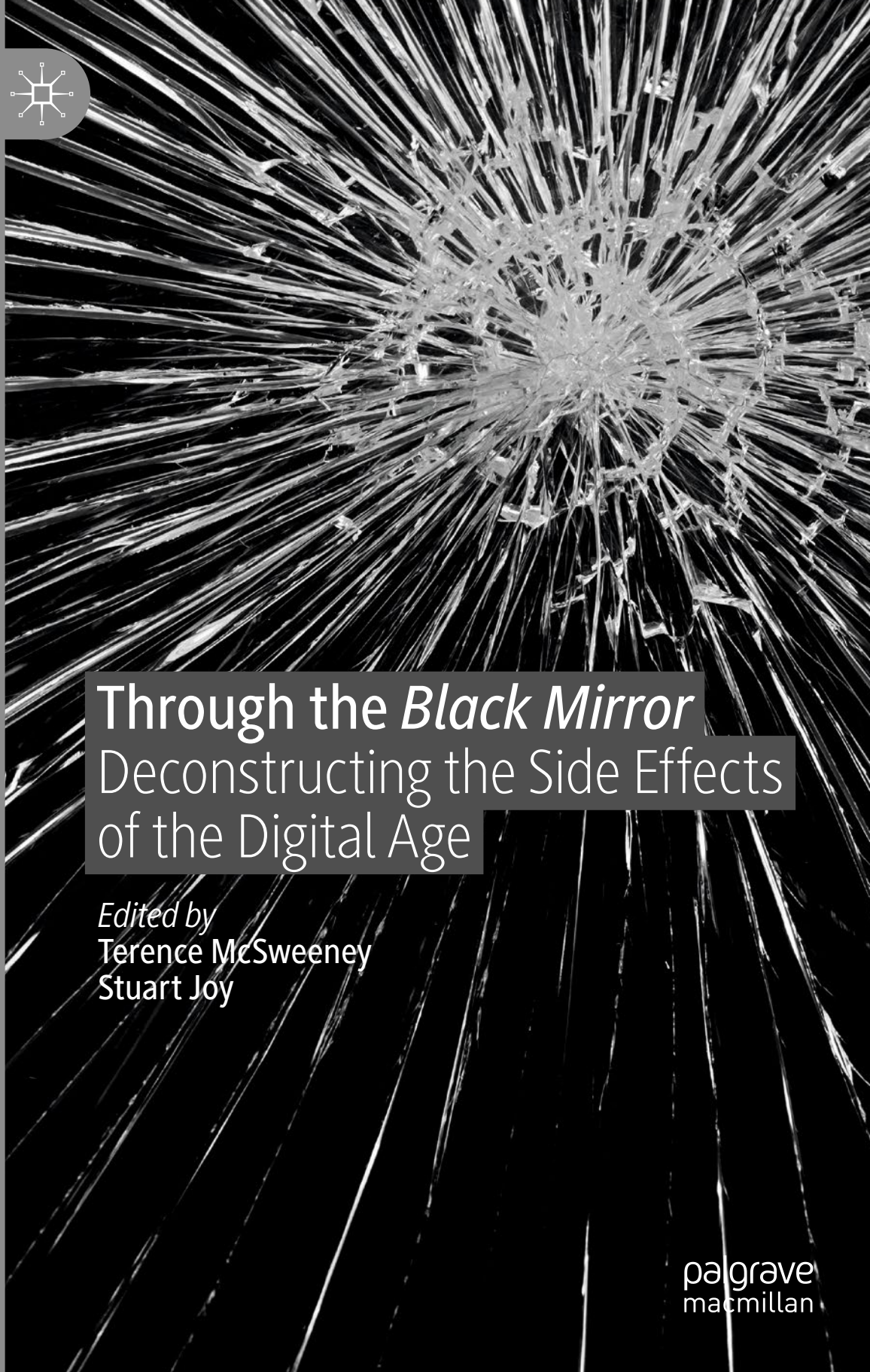

Through the *Black Mirror*
Deconstructing the Side Effects of the Digital Age

Edited by
Terence McSweeney
Stuart Joy

palgrave
macmillan

Through the *Black Mirror*

Terence McSweeney • Stuart Joy
Editors

Through the *Black Mirror*

Deconstructing the Side Effects of the Digital Age

palgrave
macmillan

Editors
Terence McSweeney
Southampton Solent University
Southampton, UK

Stuart Joy
Southampton Solent University
Southampton, UK

ISBN 978-3-030-19457-4 ISBN 978-3-030-19458-1 (eBook)
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-19458-1

© The Editor(s) (if applicable) and The Author(s), under exclusive licence to Springer Nature Switzerland AG 2019
This work is subject to copyright. All rights are solely and exclusively licensed by the Publisher, whether the whole or part of the material is concerned, specifically the rights of translation, reprinting, reuse of illustrations, recitation, broadcasting, reproduction on microfilms or in any other physical way, and transmission or information storage and retrieval, electronic adaptation, computer software, or by similar or dissimilar methodology now known or hereafter developed.
The use of general descriptive names, registered names, trademarks, service marks, etc. in this publication does not imply, even in the absence of a specific statement, that such names are exempt from the relevant protective laws and regulations and therefore free for general use.
The publisher, the authors and the editors are safe to assume that the advice and information in this book are believed to be true and accurate at the date of publication. Neither the publisher nor the authors or the editors give a warranty, express or implied, with respect to the material contained herein or for any errors or omissions that may have been made. The publisher remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

Cover illustration: Stocksolutions / Alamy Stock Photo
Cover Design: eStudio Calamar

This Palgrave Macmillan imprint is published by the registered company Springer Nature Switzerland AG
The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

To Joan, Tom, Barry, Den and Kay, gone but never forgotten.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the staff at Palgrave Macmillan for their help and support putting this large and ambitious project together. Of course, none of this would have been possible without the contributors themselves. We thank you for your work, your creativity and your contributions to the field, one and all. We would also like to thank the staff and students at our home institution, Solent University, Southampton.

Terence: Special mention should also be reserved for the IAS (Institute of Advanced Studies) at UCL, where much of my contribution to this volume was written and edited during my tenure as Visiting Research Fellow during the academic year 2018–2019. Thank you to my family, to Olga, Harrison and Wyatt, who continue to inspire me every second of the day, especially when life feels more and more like an episode of the show at the centre of this collection with every day that passes.

Stuart: I want to express my deep thanks to Terence McSweeney, my co-editor, without whom this book would not have been possible. Your motivation and work ethic are a continuous source of inspiration. Thanks also to my close friend Kierren Darke for being an eager soundboard for my ideas and for providing excellent advice. Lastly, special thanks to my wife Sophie for her patience, encouragement and emotional support—you are a constant reminder of everything that is beautiful in this world.

Contents

Introduction: Read that Back to Yourself and Ask If You Live in a Sane Society

Terence McSweeney and Stuart Joy

Gazing into the *Black Mirror*

Has there ever a been a television show more intrinsically connected to the fears and anxieties of the decade in which it was produced than Charlie Brooker's *Black Mirror* (2011–)? Across the diverse tapestry of its episodes it has both dramatised and deconstructed the shifting cultural and technological coordinates of the era like no other programme and in years to come when people want to know what we talked about and what we were afraid of in the new millennial decades, they could do a lot worse, and not much better, than begin with *Black Mirror*.

Through the Black Mirror: *Deconstructing the Side Effects of the Digital Age* charts the first four seasons of *Black Mirror* and beyond from its opening episode "The National Anthem" (01.01) broadcast on Channel Four on 4 December 2011, a provocative and wildly caustic statement of intent in the form of a forty-four-minute self-contained drama which memorably featured the prime minister of Great Britain having sexual intercourse with a *sus scrofa domesticus* live on television and the internet for the whole world to see. As a body of work these nineteen episodes and the "interactive movie" that is *Bandersnatch* (2018) are, without exception, vivid, visceral and disorienting texts, frequently challenging at the level of both form and content. This disorientation might be considered to even begin with the title of the show, after all, what exactly is a "black mirror"? Charlie Brooker, the show's creator, producer and writer, has suggested "The 'black mirror' of the title is the one you'll find on every wall, on every desk, in the palm of every hand: the cold, shiny screen

T. McSweeney (✉) • S. Joy
Southampton Solent University, Southampton, UK
e-mail: terence.mcsweeney@solent.ac.uk; stuart.joy@solent.ac.uk

© The Author(s) 2019

T. McSweeney, S. Joy (eds.), *Through the* Black Mirror,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-19458-1_1

of a TV, a monitor, a smartphone" (2011). The mirror that Brooker refers to certainly is a screen, but it also refers to a surface that reflects, and not just the faces of those that peer into it, but also the culture and times in which it was made. As Elise Morrison wrote in her *Discipline and Desire: Surveillance Technologies in Performance* (2016) the title also refers to "dark surfaces that reflect our faces, expectations, desires, hopes, and anxieties" (2016, p. 183) and in *The Age of Perversion: Desire and Technology in Psychoanalysis and Culture* (2017) Danielle Knafo and Rocco Lo Bosco observed that "These cultural changes take place alongside the growing omnipresence of the black mirror—the dark screen of our televisions, computers, tablets, and smartphones—technological devices that we rely on to search for answers to questions both banal and profound" (p. 237). These writers, and many of those who contribute to this volume, articulate the parameters of the show, and it is a series which continues to interrogate our contemporary "expectations, desires, hopes, and anxieties" at the same time as participating in a "search for answers to questions both banal and profound". Yet perhaps what is most important about *Black Mirror* is the fact that it never provides answers to the contemporary conundrums and ethical quandaries it raises. Instead, the series encourages audiences to contemplate the moral issues raised by each episode. In "The Entire History of You" (01.03), for example, audiences are invited to consider the ethical implications of a technology that allows characters to record, store, replay and share their most intimate memories. "Shut Up and Dance" (03.03) and "Crocodile" (04.03) take this notion further in asking us what steps we might take to stop our darkest secrets from becoming public. Along similar lines, "Arkangel" (04.02) asks us how far we might go to protect our children, while "White Bear" (02.02) challenges viewers to empathise with a character whose moral compass is revealed to be deeply flawed. In "Be Right Back" (02.01) viewers are encouraged to speculate whether they would subscribe to a service that enables a character to recreate a lost loved one in digital form, whereas "San Junipero" (03.04) probes viewers to consider if, given the choice, they would upload their consciousness to a computer so that they might live forever. Similarly, "White Christmas" (02.04), "USS Callister" (04.01), "Hang the DJ" (04.04) and "Black Museum" (04.06) all, in various ways, ask the viewer to draw a line between what constitutes a living organism and a digital recreation. These episodes ultimately blur the line between our physical and virtual identities in ways that allow the viewer to contemplate perhaps the most fundamental question of all, what does it mean to be human?

Between Light and Shadow, Between Science and Superstition

As a frame of reference for what the episodes of *Black Mirror* offer audiences, one might suggest the likes of *The Twilight Zone* (originally CBS, 1959–1964), *Tales of the Unexpected* (ITV, 1978–1988) and the short-lived *Hammer House*

of Horror (Hammer films/ITC, 1980), all of which Charlie Brooker has gone on record as stating influenced his approach to the creation of the show (see Brooker, 2011). Undoubtedly these series provide something of a model for what Brooker embarked on in Season One of *Black Mirror* and the most often remembered episodes of *The Twilight Zone* are as intimately connected to the Cold War as *Black Mirror* is to the first decades of the twenty-first century, exploring the fears and anxieties of their own tumultuous era in fondly remembered episodes like "Time Enough at Last" (1959) in which Henry Bemis (Burgess Meredith) finds himself the sole survivor of a nuclear holocaust; "The Monsters Are Due on Maple Street" (1960) where aliens arrive in small town America, exploring what happens when the thin veneer of civilisation is fractured, revealing a Hobbesian world underneath, an episode which Steven Rubin in his *The Twilight Zone Encyclopedia* (2017) argued that "perfectly encapsulates how fear of the unknown can sink into a typical American neighbourhood" (p. 91); "The Invaders" (1961), where what initially appears to be another extra-terrestrial invasion ultimately challenges our notions and preconceptions of both self and the Other.[1] These episodes are intrinsically connected to the defining fears of the Cold War also dramatised within the frames of films like *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (1951), *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956) and *The Thing from Another World* (1951) (see Lipschutz, 2001; Seed, 1999). The original series of *The Twilight Zone* ran from 1959 to 1964 and was composed of 156 episodes, 92 of which were written or co-written by the show's creator Rod Serling, who Steven Rubin argued "often exploited his show's fantasy milieu and allegorical approach to storytelling to evade the censorship that constrained more realistic programmes" (p. 169). Ultimately though *The Twilight Zone* provided audiences with what Don Presnell and Marty McGee described as "lessons on what it means to be human" (1998, p. 7) and one might say the very same thing of Charlie Brooker's show, but its frame of reference is a very different one to that of the initial run of *The Twilight Zone*. Brooker is, without a doubt, the Rod Serling-esque figure behind *Black Mirror*, of the twenty entrants to the *Black Mirror* world produced at the time of writing, Brooker has either written, co-written or received a "story by" credit on every single one with the exception of "The Entire History of You" and "Nosedive" (03.01).

The Fears and Fantasies of *Black Mirror*: From "The National Anthem" to *Bandersnatch*

Black Mirror charts and deconstructs the fears of the modern world, like those explored in Douglas Rushkoff's insightful *Present Shock: When Everything Happens Now* (2014). Rushkoff asserts that our obsessive reliance on new media technologies has led to the new millennial collapse of traditional

[1] These three episodes were all considered to be the top ten best of the series in an article by Gilbert Cruz (2009) in *Time* called "Top 10 Twilight Zone Episodes".

understandings of the world which has resulted in the emergence of very real phenomena like "digiphrenia" (a dislocation caused by the attempt to live in the real and digital simultaneously), "fractalnoia" (an attempt to understand everything only in the present tense) and "overwinding" (an attempt to reduce what should be longer experiences into brief more instantaneous shorter ones). He writes, "Instead of finding a stable foothold in the here and now, we end up reacting to the ever-present assault of simultaneous impulses and commands" (p. 4). These fears then can be located in episodes like "Fifteen Million Merits" (01.02), a scathing satire of modern consumer commodified culture and unchecked corporate capitalism in the digital age, which has fundamentally impacted on the way we view and interact with the world around us both figuratively and literally, or the dystopian (not too distant) future of "Nosedive" in which almost every aspect of society is based on peer ratings that can dictate the job we have, the amount of friends and even the property we are allowed to buy, emblematic of our obsession with interacting with modern technology and what has been referred to as the gamification of modern society by a variety of authors (see Bishop, 2014; Burke, 2014).

As with these two episodes mentioned above, the vast majority of *Black Mirror* explores and examines the various ways that new media technologies can shape and transform our understanding of the world while, at the same time, often raising philosophical questions about the complexities of identity and social relationships in the digital age. "Be Right Back", for example, depicts a vision of a posthuman reality in which it is possible to reanimate lost loved ones using an advanced artificial intelligence (AI) designed to mimic their exact likeness. Similarly, "White Christmas", "Black Museum" and the award-winning "San Junipero" each present a transhuman future where devices can enable human consciousness to be uploaded to a computer.[2] In these episodes, technology ultimately challenges what constitutes the essence of identity when the mind can exist independently from the body. Several other episodes also explore concepts relating to identity albeit through the prism of gaming: "USS Callister", "Nosedive" and "Hated in the Nation" (03.06), for instance, consider the divisions between online and offline identities and their impacts on real-world social interactions, whereas "Playtest" (03.02), "Men Against Fire" (03.05) and "Hang the DJ" examine the potential moral and ethical implications of virtual, augmented and simulated realities, respectively. While several of these episodes raise questions that are primarily philosophical in nature, others are more closely related to questions that are connected to broader social and cultural issues. Episodes such as "The National Anthem" and "The Waldo Moment" (02.03) foreground the impact of new media technologies on politics. "Fifteen Million Merits" draws attention to the exploitation of the working class for mass media entertainment and

[2] "San Junipero" earned *Black Mirror* its first Primetime Emmy Awards in the categories of Outstanding Television Movie and Outstanding Writing for a Limited Series, Movie or Dramatic Special.

"White Bear" offers a commentary on the sensationalism of tragedy. "The Entire History of You", "Shut Up and Dance", "Arkangel", "Crocodile" and "Metalhead" (04.05) are united by their shared focus on issues relating to surveillance and privacy. In these episodes, a range of technological devices enable users to track and monitor each other in ways that suggest even our most intimate moments can be used against us. Nevertheless, even though technology is an intrinsic element throughout the series, Brooker insists that the show doesn't view technological progress as a threat. Speaking at a Television Critics Association press tour, Brooker noted that "Technology is never the villain in the show, it's about human failings and human messes" (N'Duka, 2016). *Black Mirror*, then, reminds the audience that perhaps the greatest thing they should fear is not technology but rather themselves. As a result of this the fears that the show mines, as topical as they are, are also deeply rooted in universal themes. So, while episodes like "Arkangel" and "Hang the DJ" deal with very contemporary developments in modern technology, as do "Hated in the Nation" and "Playtest", they each explore timeless issues relevant across cultures and decades: like the ethical responsibilities of good parenting, fears of death and dying, of what constitutes good relationships, notions of shame and the consequences of one's actions.

These themes can be seen as early as the very first episode, "The National Anthem", which Brooker revealed that he had been inspired to write after the brief but heated controversy of Labour prime minister Gordon Brown being recorded calling a sixty-five-year-old pensioner, Gillian Duffy, a "bigoted woman" on a Sky News microphone after he was heckled while conducting a television interview in Rochdale, England, in April 2010 in the lead up to the general election. Brooker wrote:

> Set slap-bang in the present, The National Anthem, starring Rory Kinnear and Lindsay Duncan, recounts what happens when fictional royal Princess Susannah is kidnapped and prime minister Michael Callow is presented with an unusual—and obscene—ransom request. The traditional media finds itself unable to even discuss what the demand is, while the Twittersphere foams with speculation and cruel jokes. As the ransom deadline nears, events start to gain a surreal momentum of their own. This was inspired partly by the kerfuffle over superinjunctions, and partly by the strange out-of-control sensation that takes grip on certain news days—such as the day Gordon Brown was virtually commanded to apologise to Gillian Duffy in front of the rolling news networks. Who was in charge that day? No one and everyone. (2011)

On the decision to use a pig rather than any other animal in the episode he stated "You needed something that straddles the line between comic and horrifying" (qtd. in Benedictus, 2015), and this rather throwaway line might be applicable to the *Black Mirror* experience as a whole. "The National Anthem", as many episodes of the show have been, was later regarded as being prescient a few years after when prime minister David Cameron became embroiled in what was widely referred to as the "Piggate" scandal when allegations arose

concerning initiation ceremonies for the men-only dining club known as the Piers Gavetson Society, which was detailed in Michael Ashcroft and Isabel Oakeshott in their *Call Me Dave: The Unauthorised Biography of David Cameron* (2015).[3] Brooker added:

> The first question people were asking me was, Did I know anything about it? And the answer is no, absolutely not. I probably wouldn't have bothered writing an episode of a fictional comedy-drama if I'd known. I'd have been running around screaming it into traffic. It's a complete coincidence, albeit a quite bizarre one. (qtd. in Benedictus, 2015)

From Channel Four to Netflix: *Black Mirror* in the Global Age

Since its launch in 1982 as a publicly owned not for profit broadcaster, Channel 4 has garnered a widespread reputation for the production and distribution of distinctive British content across both film and television. It is unsurprising, then, that some of the earliest episodes of *Black Mirror*—which premiered on Channel 4—have a noticeably British cultural emphasis. "The National Anthem", for example, focuses on the relationship between the British public and a fictional British prime minister. "Fifteen Million Merits" offers a critique of reality-style talent shows such as *Pop Idol* (ITV, 2001–2003), *The X Factor* (ITV, 2004–) and *Britain's Got Talent* (ITV, 2007–) that became particularly prominent features of the television landscape in Britain during the mid-2000s. In Season Two, the episode titled "White Bear" draws a significant parallel between the sustained media coverage and public outcry associated with numerous high-profile child murder cases in Britain such as those involving Ian Brady and Myra Hindley and Fred and Rosemary West. Season Two culminates in an episode that has since been interpreted as a prescient exploration of the rise of populism across the political spectrum—especially in relation to Donald Trump's ascendancy to power in the United States (see Cillizza, 2015; Doran, 2016). However, in "The Waldo Moment", the profane cartoon bear that attempts to run for political office in a local by-election was in fact modelled on the British politician Boris Johnson (Singal, 2016).

The emphasis in Seasons One and Two on various aspects that are nationally specific and recognisably British is further enhanced by the casting of both well-known and emerging British actors such as Rupert Everett, Daniel Kaluuya, Jessica Brown Findlay, Toby Kebbell, Hayley Atwell and Lenora

[3] The idea of *Black Mirror* being prescient or able to predict the future has been applied to several episodes including "The Waldo Moment", "Hated in The Nation" and "Nosedive" among others from both technological and cultural perspectives (see Weller, 2018).

Crichlow. By comparison the casting of an award-winning[4] American actor, Jon Hamm, alongside Rafe Spall in the one-off Christmas special, was perhaps an acknowledgement of the programme's increasing popularity in the United States of America which was belatedly broadcast there during the latter part of 2013 via DirecTV's Audience Network. Nevertheless, despite the presence of an established American star, the episode's thematic emphasis on separation, loss, loneliness and isolation is largely consistent with an underlying melancholy evident—notably in soaps—across numerous staple British television programmes shown throughout the festive period (Moore, 2014, pp. 115–116). Following the release of "White Christmas", the announcement that Netflix had successfully outbid Channel 4 for the worldwide exclusive distribution rights to the series not only signposted an ostensible shift away from the distinctly British emphasis of Seasons One and Two, but also marked a significant historical turning point in the global expansion of online streaming platforms. The deal, worth a reported $40 million (Plunkett, 2016), was the first time that a subscription video-on-demand (SVOD) provider had outspent a public service broadcaster in the pursuit of an original production. Channel 4 had commissioned and developed the first two seasons of *Black Mirror in* 2011 and 2013 as well as the one-off Christmas special in 2014 but was unable to retain the show in the face of competition from Netflix. In a statement, Channel 4's chief creative officer Jay Hunt said:

> *Black Mirror* couldn't be a more Channel 4 show. We grew it from a dangerous idea to a brand that resonated globally. It's disappointing that the first broadcast window in the UK is then sold to the highest bidder, ignoring the risk a publicly owned channel like 4 took backing it. (Plunkett, 2016)

Regardless, the show's creator Charlie Brooker has described Netflix as "the most fitting platform imaginable" (Plunkett, 2015), emphasising the streaming service's ability to reach a global audience as well as remarking elsewhere on the suitability of the series' anthology format to Netflix's content distribution model (Landau, 2017, p. 286).

Unlike the multi-episode series and serial dramas of conventional broadcast television that evolved from the more traditional plotted narrative of radio, the earliest anthology series were predominantly influenced by the traditions of theatre (Barnouw, 1970, p. 26). Programmes such as *The United States Steel Hour* (ABC, 1953–1955; CBS, 1955–1963) and *Playhouse 90* (CBS, 1956–1960) differed from their long-form counterparts by offering a unique standalone drama each week featuring varied casts, writers and directors. They frequently pushed the boundaries of television drama either in style, length, production values or content—with the latter often addressing pressing social and political issues of the time. However, this focus was eventually perceived to

[4] In 2008, Jon Hamm won the Golden Globe for Best Performance by an Actor in A Television Series—Drama.

be incompatible with the demands of network sponsors. As the broadcasting historian Erik Barnouw points out, the writers behind some of the earliest iterations of the anthology series populated their dramas with problems that made the commercials "seem fraudulent" (1970, p. 33). Sponsors, therefore, became increasingly uneasy about the messages conveyed within these programmes and responded by demanding extensive script revisions, a factor that inadvertently necessitated a shift away from the apparent confines of realistic dramas to the more flexible opportunities offered by science fiction and fantasy. These genres afforded the writers of programmes such as *The Twilight Zone* and *The Outer Limits* (ABC, 1963–1965) with allegorical, metaphorical and symbolic frameworks to examine a variety of social issues while avoiding the oppressiveness of network censorship (Angelini & Booy, 2010, pp. 19–20).

Returning to *The Twilight Zone*, as Brooker himself has periodically done since Season One of *Black Mirror*, its creator Rod Serling famously observed that "a Martian can say things that a Republican or Democrat can't" (qtd. in Javna, 1987, p. 16). Clearly, early anthology series were compromised by the commercial conditions under which they were conceived and produced. *Black Mirror*, of course, has not experienced the economic system encountered by these early anthology series. Channel 4's public service remit, for example, to be "innovative and distinctive" (Channel 4, n.d.), means that it is responsible for commissioning content that would otherwise struggle to secure a broadcast platform. Likewise, Netflix's revenue stream is currently derived solely from monthly subscription fees meaning that writers, directors and producers are offered a significant degree of creative control. In both instances, *Black Mirror* has been fortuitously positioned to benefit from the industrial context of its conception and production. It might be argued that that the science fiction emphasis and context of the show allows it more freedom to be critical of the culture in which it is made, something that is returned to by more than one author in this collection. Although one might point out that it is problematic to call many of the episodes allegories given they are so close to reality the term does not seem quite enough. As Knafo and Bosco wrote, "The plight of characters is easy to relate to because some of what they experience is happening in our own world" (2017, p. 237). Thus Brooker's comments about Rod Serling then are relevant for his own creation "If he [Serling] wrote about racism in a southern town, he had to fight the network over every line. But if he wrote about racism in a metaphorical, quasi-fictional world—suddenly he could say everything he wanted" (2011). This freedom gives Brooker leave to confront and explore media hypocrisy, the rise of celebrity and superficiality in "The Waldo Moment", the reliance on technology which is distorting both ourselves and how we relate to one another in "Arkangel".

While Brooker's dark, often dystopian, and frequently disturbing parables for modern society initially suited the innovative and experimental brand identity associated with Channel 4, it is Netflix's rejection of traditional broadcast patterns in favour of one dictated by audiences increasing demands for original

content that means *Black Mirror*'s anthology format is particularly well-suited to the streaming platform. Discussing the challenges of working on an anthology series for a traditional broadcaster, Brooker foregrounds one of the main problems of audience retention when he asks "how do you bring the audience back? There's no impetus to return, because you're in a completely different world with a new set of characters next week" (qtd. in Landau, 2017, p. 286). Elsewhere, as part of a panel discussion organised by the London Film Festival in 2016, Brooker addressed the shift from Channel 4 to Netflix noting that "shows that reinvent themselves every week have struggled in the ratings. And ratings were king for years" (BFI, 2016).[5] By comparison, he remarks, "the advent of streaming platforms has brought [anthology series'] back into fashion. You no longer have to worry about an audience coming back week on week; it's all just there in the magic streaming cupboard" (qtd. in Lampert, 2017). Nonetheless, for Brooker, the show's departure from Channel 4 led to the criticism that the series had become too Americanised. For the show's producer Annabel Jones, however, the notion that Netflix's involvement has resulted in a dilution of the "Britishness" perceived to be at the heart of the series stemmed from their own assumptions that it would function as a potential source of national identity in the global age. She says, "We thought it was a very British show, but actually everyone around the world was experiencing technology at the same speed we were" (qtd. Temperton, 2016). Likewise, Brooker has also commented upon the surprising global appeal of the show: "It has travelled a lot more than I thought it would. It's big in China, it's big in Spain…It's obviously not as colloquial as I thought it was" (qtd. in Mellor, 2014). He goes on to say, "It's because technology is a global thing and wherever you go, people are prodding the same devices and worrying in the same way and have had their lives slightly altered in the same way". The perceived "Britishness" of *Black Mirror*, then, is secondary to the more relatable fears and anxieties associated with the impacts of globalisation, most notably the increased use of new media technologies in everyday life.

Welcome to the *Black Mirror* Universe

One might persuasively argue that the feature-length Christmas special "White Christmas", which was produced and broadcast after two seasons comprising three episodes each, marked a turning point for the show in a range of ways: not only is it the final episode produced and broadcast by

[5] The anthology series has become increasingly popular in recent years with shows such as *High Maintenance* (HBO, 2016–) *Room 104* (HBO, 2017–), *The Guest Book* (TBS, 2017–) and *Electric Dreams* (Channel 4, 2017–) demonstrating a resurgent interest in short-form storytelling. Elsewhere, the self-contained mini-series format of *American Horror Story* (FX, 2011–), *Fargo* (FX, 2014–), *True Detective* (HBO, 2014–) and *The Girlfriend Experience* (Starz, 2016–) provides further evidence of a sophisticated and demanding audience.

Channel Four before the move to Netflix for Season Three, but also because of its acknowledgement that every episode is indeed set in the same diegetic world, what we might call the "Black Mirror universe". Initially these Easter Eggs had been regarded by Brooker as "just a bit of fun" (qtd. in Strause, 2017), but by the time of "White Christmas" they had become one of the defining elements of the show. Thus, the events that take place in the first episode of the series "The National Anthem" are mentioned again in "Shut Up and Dance" where the headline "PM Callow to divorce" is shown and also in "Nosedive" where an onscreen tweet from Callow reads "Just got thrown out of the zoo again"; the protagonist of "White Bear", Victoria Skillane, is mentioned in "White Christmas", "Shut Up and Dance" and then in "Hated in the Nation" which informs us of her appeal being thrown out of court.[6] After "White Christmas" each episode then seems to be self-consciously constructed as part of this "Black Mirror universe": like the fact that the television show at the centre of "Fifteen Million Merits" is seen in "White Christmas", referenced in "Shut Up and Dance", "Men Against Fire" and later in "Crocodile" and "Black Museum". These are certainly examples of what Henry Jenkins, who himself provides the chapter on "The Entire History of You" in this volume, termed "participatory culture" which "contrasts with older notions of passive media spectatorship" in his influential volume *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (2006, p. 3) as audiences are encouraged more than ever to experience media texts in ways which are transforming with every year that passes. In an interview with *The Hollywood Reporter* Brooker confirmed:

> It always used to be that it's just a bit of fun. But then sometimes we've done some things where we did explicitly refer to other episodes. I think the rule is that when a character says something that explicitly refers to something else, it's canonical. Also, they follow the same dream universe. That's the other thing that I tend to say. (qtd. in Strause, 2017)

By the time of the release of the fourth season of the show on Netflix in December 2017 the idea of a *Black Mirror* universe had been completely embraced in ways it had not been before. This took the form of background details like the naming of characters or places like the planets Rannoch B and Skillane IV in "USS Callister" after the two murderers from "White Bear"; or posters in the background of "Arkangel" showing the rapper Tusk from "Hated in the Nation" and the video game *Harlech Shadow* from "Playtest", but arguably reached a metatextual apogee in the concluding episode of Season Four "Black Museum" in Rolo Haynes' eponymous museum, which he describes as containing "authentic criminological artefacts", the majority of which are

[6] In "Hated in the Nation" there are two other references to her: one in a Twitter hashtag "#deathto" and another when the police office Blue (Faye Marsay) says she worked on the "Ian Rannoch case".

explicitly drawn from the previous eighteen episodes: the artist Carlton Bloom responsible for the plot at the centre of "National Anthem", a video screen showing Victoria Skillane, the perpetrator of the crime at the centre of "White Bear", the fact that Rolo worked for TCKR, the company which built the device in "San Junipero", the exhibit even contains the dresses worn by Yorkie and Kelly, a bee from "Hated in the Nation", the bloody bathroom from "Crocodile", the smashed tablet from "Arkangel" and even Tommy's lollipop from "USS Callister". The meta-textuality of these referencing is dizzying then and perhaps is only surpassed by one moment from Season Four which would have been missed by all the most devoted of fans: in "Crocodile" one of the characters briefly holds up a printed out article during which one can read the information written on it *but only if one pauses the screen*. Part of the text reads "Of course the real question is 'why would anyone pause what they're watching just to read a sentence in a printed out newspaper article', says a voice in your head—before advising you to share this finding on reddit". As one might expect, shortly after the image was *actually* shared on reddit with contributors gleefully deconstructing and commenting on it as they have done on every addition to the *Black Mirror* universe.[7]

It seems warranted to refer to the show not just as a success but as a phenomenon which is reflected not just in the ratings it has secured around the globe, the headlines it has inspired and also the wealth of awards it has been nominated for and in many cases won, the variety of which is symptomatic of its own range: from BAFTAs, to Peabodys, International Emmys, Screen Actors Guild Awards, NAACP Image Awards, Hugo and GLAAD. In years to come audiences will turn to the episodes of *Black Mirror* as some sort of cultural barometer, one which has embedded within it many of the defining anxieties of the times which produced it. Indeed, an exploration and interrogation of what these anxieties might tell us is the central aims of *Through the* Black Mirror: *Deconstructing the Side Effects of the Digital Age*. Given his central importance to *Black Mirror*, it seems fitting then to give the final words of this introduction to the show's creator, Brooker, who memorably stated:

> We routinely do things that just five years ago would scarcely have made sense to us. We tweet along to reality shows; we share videos of strangers dropping cats in bins; we dance in front of Xboxes that can see us, and judge us, and find us sorely lacking. It's hard to think of a single human function that technology hasn't somehow altered, apart perhaps from burping. That's pretty much all we have left. Just yesterday I read a news story about a new video game installed above urinals to stop patrons getting bored: you control it by sloshing your urine stream left and right. *Read that back to yourself and ask if you live in a sane society.* (2011, emphasis added)

[7] See, for example, AFellowOfLimitedJest.

References

AFellowOfLimitedJest. (2017, December 29). [S04E03] [EASTER EGG] "'Of Course the Real Question Is Why Anyone Would Pause What They're Watching Just to Read a Sentence in a Printed Out Newspaper Article', Says a Voice in Your Head—Before Advising You to Go and Share This Finding on Reddit." Retrieved from https://www.reddit.com/r/blackmirror/comments/7mv2yn/s04e03_easter_egg_of_course_the_real_question_is/.

Angelini, S., & Booy, M. (2010). Members Only: Cult TV from Margins to Mainstream. In S. Abbott (Ed.), *The Cult TV Book* (pp. 19–27). London: I.B. Tauris.

Banks, M., Irwin, C., & Jones, P. (Producers). (2007–). *Britain's Got Talent*. [Television series]. London: ITV.

Barnouw, E. (1970). *The Image Empire: A History of Broadcasting in the United States. Volume III: From 1953*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Benedictus, L. (2015, September 21). Charlie Brooker on Cameron and #piggate: 'I'd have been screaming it into traffic if I'd known'. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/shortcuts/2015/sep/21/pigs-prime-minister-black-mirror-ashcroft-allegation-charlie-brooker.

BFI. (2016). Charlie Brooker at the *Black Mirror* Q&A: We Wanted to Not Always Fling You into a Pit of Despair. Retrieved from http://www.bfi.org.uk/films-tv-people/57fcf0fa53be2.

Bialic, G. (Producer). (2016–). *High Maintenance*. [Television series]. New York City, NY: HBO.

Bishop, J. (2014). *Gamification for Human Factors Integration: Social, Education, and Psychological Issues*. Hershey, PA: IGI Global.

Bridges, W., & Brooker, C. (Writers) & Haynes, T. (Director). (2017). *USS Callister*. [Television series episode] In L. Sutton (Producer). *Black Mirror*. Los Gatos: Netflix.

Bridges, W., & Brooker, C. (Writers), & Watkins, J. (Director). (2016). *Shut Up and Dance*. [Television series episode] In L. Dyke (Producer). *Black Mirror*. Los Gatos: Netflix.

Brooker, C., & Huq, K. (Writers) & Lynn, E. (Director). (2011). *Fifteen Million Merits*. [Television series episode] In B. Reisz (Producer). *Black Mirror*. London: Channel 4.

Brooker, C. (2011, December 1). Charlie Brooker: The Dark Side of Our Gadget Addiction. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2011/dec/01/charlie-brooker-dark-side-gadget-addiction-black-mirror.

Brooker, C. (Writer), & Bathurst, O. (Director). (2011). *The National Anthem*. [Television series episode] In B. Reisz (Producer). *Black Mirror*. London: Channel 4.

Brooker, C. (Writer), & Foster, J. (Director). (2017). *Arkangel*. [Television series episode] In K. Pitt (Producer). *Black Mirror*. Los Gatos: Netflix.

Brooker, C. (Writer), & Harris, O. (Director). (2013). *Be Right Back*. [Television series episode] In B. Reisz (Producer). *Black Mirror*. London: Channel 4.

Brooker, C. (Writer), & Harris, O. (Director). (2016). *San Junipero*. [Television series episode] In L. Borg (Producer). *Black Mirror*. Los Gatos: Netflix.

Brooker, C. (Writer), & Hawes, J. (Director). (2016). *Hated in the Nation*. [Television series episode] In S. Wohlenberg (Producer). *Black Mirror*. Los Gatos: Netflix.

Brooker, C. (Writer), & Higgins, B. (Director). (2013). *The Waldo Moment*. [Television series episode] In B. Reisz (Producer). *Black Mirror*. London: Channel 4.

Brooker, C. (Writer), & Hillcoat, J. (Director). (2017). *Crocodile*. [Television series episode] In S. Wohlenberg (Producer). *Black Mirror*. Los Gatos: Netflix.
Brooker, C. (Writer), & McCarthy, C. (Director) (2017). *Black Museum*. [Television series episode] In I. Hogan (Producer). *Black Mirror*. Los Gatos: Netflix.
Brooker, C. (Writer), & Slade, D. (Director). (2017). *Metalhead*. [Television series episode] In L. Sutton (Producer). *Black Mirror*. Los Gatos: Netflix.
Brooker, C. (Writer), & Tibbetts, C. (Director). (2013). *White Bear*. [Television series episode] In B. Reisz (Producer). *Black Mirror*. London: Channel 4.
Brooker, C. (Writer), & Tibbetts, C. (Director). (2014). *White Christmas*. [Television series episode] In B. Reisz (Producer). *Black Mirror*. London: Channel 4.
Brooker, C. (Writer), & Trachtenberg, D. (Director). (2016). *Playtest*. [Television series episode] In L. Borg (Producer). *Black Mirror*. Los Gatos: Netflix.
Brooker, C. (Writer), & Van Patten, T. (Director). (2017) *Hang the DJ*. [Television series episode] In N. Pitt (Producer). *Black Mirror*. Los Gatos: Netflix.
Brooker, C. (Writer), & Verbruggen, J. (Director). (2016). *Men Against Fire*. [Television series episode] In L. Dyke (Producer). *Black Mirror*. Los Gatos: Netflix.
Burke, B. (2014). *Gamify: How Gamification Motivates People to Do Extraordinary Things*. New York: Bibliomotion.
Channel 4. (n.d.). What Is Channel 4? *C4 Corporate*. Retrieved from https://www.channel4.com/corporate/about-4/who-we-are/what-is-channel-4.
Cillizza, C. (2015, September 8). Donald Trump's Troll Game of Jeb Bush: A+. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2015/09/08/donald-trumps-troll-game-of-jeb-bush-a/?utm_term=.2fd5886e73a1.
Cowell, S., Holloway, R., Hart, B., Sidaway, M., Davies, C., McNicholas, L., & Mackenzie, I. (Executive Producers). (2004–). *The X Factor* [Television series]. London: ITV.
Cruz, G. (2009, October 2). Top 10 Twilight Zone Episodes. *Time*. Retrieved from http://entertainment.time.com/2009/10/02/top-10-twilight-zone-episodes/slide/the-monsters-are-due-on-maple-street-1960/.
Doran, S. (2016, November 11). Black Mirror, President Trump and Prophecy—Can TV Really Predict the Future? *The Radio Times*. Retrieved from http://www.radiotimes.com/news/2016-11-11/black-mirror-president-trump-and-prophecy-can-tv-really-predict-the-future/.
Fuller, S. (Associate Producer). (2001–2003). *Pop Idol*. [Television series]. London: ITV.
Garcia, G. T., & Jaffe, A. (Executive Producer). (2017–). *The Guest Book*. [Television series]. Atlanta, Georgia: TBS.
Hawley, N., Cohen, E., & Cohen, J. (Executive Producers). (2014–). *Fargo*. [Television series]. Los Angeles, CA: FX.
Javna, J. (1987). *The Best of Science Fiction TV*. New York: Harmony.
Jenkins, H. (2006). *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York: New York University Press.
Jones, R., & Schur, M. (Writers) & Wright, J. (Director). (2016). *Nosedive*. [Television series episode]. In L. Borg (Producer). *Black Mirror*. Los Gatos: Netflix.
Kirchner, D. (Associate Producer). (2016–). *The Girlfriend Experience*. [Television series]. Toronto: Starz.
Knafo, D., & Lo Bosco, R. (2017). *The Age of Perversion: Desire and Technology in Psychoanalysis and Culture*. London and New York: Routledge.

Lampert, N. (2017, December 6). The Future Is Now. *Drama Quarterly*. Retrieved from http://dramaquarterly.com/the-future-is-now/.
Landau, N. (2017). *TV Outside the Box: Trailblazing in the Digital Television Revolution*. New York: Focal Press.
Lawrence, B., & Reid, D. (Executive Producer). (1980). *Hammer House of Horror*. [Television series]. London: Hammer films/ITC Entertainment.
Lipschutz, R. D. (2001). *Cold War Fantasies: Film, Fiction, and Foreign Policy*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.
Lowther, G., Kondolf, G., Jamison, M., & Janis, H. (Executive Producers). (1953–1963). *The United States Steel Hour*. [Television series]. New York City, NY: ABC/CBS.
Manulis, M. (Producer). (1956–1960). *Playhouse 90*. [Television series]. New York City, NY: CBS.
Matheson, R. (Writer), & Heyes, D. (1961). *The Invaders*. [Television series episode]. In B. Houghton (Producer). *The Twilight Zone*. USA: New York City, NY: CBS.
Mellor, L. (2014, December 16). Black Mirror Interview: Charlie Brooker, Jon Hamm, Rafe Spall. *Den of Geek!* Retrieved from http://www.denofgeek.com/tv/black-mirror/33368/black-mirror-interview-charlie-brooker-jon-hamm-rafe-spall.
Moore, T. (2014). *Christmas: The Sacred to Santa*. London: Reaktion Books.
Morrison, E. (2016). *Discipline and Desire: Surveillance Technologies in Performance*. Ann Arbour: University of Michigan Press.
Murcia, J. (Associate Producer). (2017–). *Electric Dreams*. [Television series]. London: Channel 4.
Murphy, R. (Producer). (2011–). *American Horror Story* [Television series]. Los Angeles, CA: FX.
N'Duka, A. (2016, July 27) 'Black Mirror' Reflects on Technology and the Modern World, but Not David Cameron, Creators Say – TCA *Deadline*. Retrieved from http://deadline.com/2016/07/black-mirror-season-3-netflix-tca-1201793916/.
Nyby, C. (Director), & Hawks, H. (Producer). (1951). *The Thing from Another World*. [Motion picture]. USA: RKO Radio Pictures.
Pizzolatto, N. (Executive Producer). (2014–). *True Detective*. [Television series]. New York City, NY: HBO.
Plunkett, J. (2015, September 25). Netflix to Air Next 12 Episodes of Charlie Brooker's Black Mirror. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/media/2015/sep/25/netflix-to-air-next-12-episodes-of-charlie-brookers-black-mirror.
Plunkett, J. (2016, March 29). Netflix Deals Channel 4 Knockout Blow over Charlie Brooker's Black Mirror. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/media/2016/mar/29/netflix-channel-4-charlie-brooker-black-mirror.
Presnell, D., & McGee, M. (1998). *A Critical History of Television's the Twilight Zone, 1959–1964*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company.
Romary, T. (Producer). (2017–). *Room 104*. [Television series]. New York City, NY: HBO.
Rubin, S. (2017). *The Twilight Zone Encyclopedia*. Chicago: Chicago Review Press.
Rushkoff, D. (2014). *Present Shock. When Everything Happens Now*. New York: Penguin.
Seed, D. (1999). *American Science Fiction and the Cold War: Literature and Film*. Keele: Keele University Press.
Serling, R. (Executive Producer). (1959–1964). *The Twilight Zone*. [Television series]. USA: New York City, NY: CBS.

Serling, R. (Writer), & Brahm, J. (Director). (1959). *Time Enough at Last*. [Television series episode]. In B. Houghton (Producer). *The Twilight Zone*. USA: New York City, NY: CBS.

Serling, R. (Writer), & Winston, R. (Director). *The Monsters are due on Maple Street*. [Television series episode]. In B. Houghton (Producer). *The Twilight Zone*. USA: New York City, NY: CBS.

Siegel, D. (Director), Mirisch, W., & Wanger, W. (Executive Producers). (1956). *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*. [Motion picture]. USA: Allied Artists Pictures.

Singal, J. (2016, July 27). *Black Mirror* Creator Charlie Brooker on Predicting Trump, Brexit, and How the Internet Is Making Us Crazy. *Vulture*. Retrieved from http://www.vulture.com/2016/10/black-mirror-charlie-brooker-c-v-r.html.

Stevens, L. (Executive Producer). (1963–1965). *The Outer Limits*. [Television series]. New York City, NY: ABC.

Strause, J. (2017, September 3). 'Black Mirror' Bosses on "San Juipero" Sequel and an Unpredictable Season 4. *The Hollywood Reporter*. Retrieved from http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/live-feed/black-mirror-season-4-episodes-charlie-brooker-annabel-jones-interview-spoilers-1033807.

Temperton, J. (2016, October 11). Charlie Brooker on Where Black Mirror Will Take Us Next. *Wired*. Retrieved from http://www.wired.co.uk/article/black-mirror-technology-changing-lives.

Weller, C. (2018, January 12). 14 Terrifying Predictions from 'Black Mirror' that Could Become Reality. *Business Insider*. Retrieved from http://uk.businessinsider.com/black-mirror-predictions-reality-2016-10/#the-national-anthem-1.

Welsh, B. (Writer), & Armstrong, J. (Director). (2011). *The Entire History of You*. [Television series episode] In B. Reisz (Producer). *Black Mirror*. London: Channel 4.

Wise, R. (Director), & Blaustein, J. (Producer). (1951). *The Day the Earth Stood Still*. [Motion picture]. USA: 20th Century Fox.

Woolf, J. (Executive Producer). (1978–1988). *Tales of the Unexpected*. [Television series]. London: ITV.

PART I

"The National Anthem", Terrorism and Digital Media

Fran Pheasant-Kelly

Introduction

"The National Anthem" (01.01), the first episode of Charlie Brooker's television anthology series, *Black Mirror* (2011–), deals with a number of contemporary issues, namely, public reactions to, and fear of, terrorism, and the democratising power of social media. Specifically, it explores how the potential for psychological manipulation of both individuals and the masses has increased with the development of digital technology. Indeed, while such technology has the capacity for enhancing communication between physically remote individuals, there is increasing recognition that it also provokes a number of side effects, including a propensity for loneliness, persecution and exploitation of vulnerability (see, for example, Brewer & Kerslake, 2015; O'Keefe, Pearson, & Council on Communications and Media, 2011). As Mark Andrejevic observes in relation to this shift in the perceived value of social media, "[t]here is a progression apparent here, from a celebratory sense of the potential of new media (as a means of expanding social networks and experimenting with personal identity) to a savvy wariness toward forms of deception they facilitate, and finally to a sense of personal risk" (2007, p. 37). Moreover, and linked to the aforementioned issues, especially the exploitation of vulnerability, Brigitte Nacos (2016) argues that there is a symbiotic relationship between the media and radicalisation/terrorism, with each depending on the other to reach its audiences.

While Pierlugi Musarò (2016) analyses the episode's portrayal of communication and power in the network society by examining issues of privacy, spec-

F. Pheasant-Kelly (✉)
University of Wolverhampton, Wolverhampton, UK
e-mail: f.e.pheasant-kelly@wlv.ac.uk

© The Author(s) 2019

T. McSweeney, S. Joy (eds.), *Through the* Black Mirror,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-19458-1_2

tacle and performance, to date, there has been limited consideration of the side effects of the digital era in respect of surveillance. This essay therefore makes an original intervention in analyses of the series by focusing on surveillance in relation to cultural humiliation and terrorism. Engaging theoretically with the work of Thomas Mathiesen (1997) on synoptic spectatorship as well as that of Nacos (2016) in relation to mass-mediated terrorism, it examines the tensions between these aspects via narrative themes, cinematography and aspects of the *mise-en-scène* to argue that there are several repercussions of internet and social media usage not yet explored in this episode. These include an apparent democratisation of power, via what is termed here as "synaptic surveillance", that exists in tension with accepted models of surveillance described by Michel Foucault (1991) and Thomas Mathiesen (1997); an accelerated pace of events; the propagandist potential and capacity of digital media for "fake news"; and the ready malleability of public opinion and resultant collective agency via emotional response rather than rational process. Effectively, the episode, while fictionalised, illustrates the real-world complexity of multiplatform media, with one individual controlling the consciousness of the many and these, in forming synaptic connections with others, ultimately mandating the actions of another character.

Power, Society and Surveillance in "The National Anthem"

Originally airing on 4 December 2011 on Channel 4 in the UK, "The National Anthem" is a political drama that follows the course of events after a princess is kidnapped, and the unusual ransom demand that the Prime Minister has sex with a pig, an event that the ransom states must be viewed publicly. Despite feverish attempts to locate the kidnapper, the Prime Minister, Michael Callow (Rory Kinnear), is eventually coerced by public opinion into committing the act. The episode, aside from its taboo content, became notorious for its connections to later unfounded allegations made against former British Prime Minister, David Cameron, which came to light in 2015 in an unauthorised biography by Michael Ashcroft and similarly became highly mediated (see Khomami, 2015; Hooton, 2015). It therefore explores the influence of the public, the power of synoptic viewing and issues of cultural humiliation. The drama's numerous references to terrorism also connect such degradation with the equally culturally humiliating experiences of detainees at Abu Ghraib and other detention camps set up following 9/11. While this parallel might not be explicit, it is hinted at by Brooker who, in interview, compares the "pig scene" to 9/11, stating "It's a 9/11—you don't want to watch it [but you do]" (Bathurst, 2012a). The allusions to Islamic culture, 9/11 as media event, the narrative's political targets, Jihadism and terrorist execution point more distinctly towards post-9/11 allegory. Furthermore, "The National Anthem" aired just following the tenth anniversary of 9/11, and in the same year as Bin Laden's execution, an event from

which the episode appears to draw. Effectively, while Foucault is concerned with the exercise of power in panoptic surveillance, and Mathiesen describes synoptic viewing (whereby the few still exert power), the episode illustrates how the combined effects of traditional and new media nuance power and viewing relationships.

The notion of one/few watching and controlling the consciousness of the many is explored by Foucault in *Discipline and Punish* (1991) in which he proposes that institutions such as the prison, school and hospital are typically organised according to a panoptic model. Such an arrangement pivots around a central tower which facilitates specific modes of surveillance. Drawing on the work of Jeremy Bentham, who originally put forward the design, Foucault explains that the way in which the institution regulates bodies through its physical architecture establishes an inherent relationship between space, surveillance and control. While institutions are sites implicitly concerned with the enforced discipline of the body, Foucault suggests that the typical panoptic structure of the institution also controls consciousness (1991, p. 201). This is because inmates do not know exactly when they are being observed and therefore adjust their actions regardless. Even though Foucault's concept is based on physical space rather than cyberspace, and scholars such as David Lyon and Zygmunt Bauman now refer to the "post-panoptical powers of liquid modernity" (2013, p. 13), panopticism nonetheless retains contemporary currency in the widespread use of CCTV. As will be argued, it also remains potentially relevant to digital media, illustrated by the way that the masses are manipulated in "The National Anthem".

In contrast to the work of Foucault, Thomas Mathiesen (1997) describes a synoptic model which he suggests has developed alongside panopticonism, stating that "as a striking parallel to the panoptical process, and concurring in detail with its historical development, we have seen the development of a unique and extensive system enabling *the many to see and contemplate the few*, so that the tendency for the few to see and supervise the many is contextualized by a highly significant counterpart [original emphasis]" (1997, p. 219). He contends that such mass viewing typically occurs in relation to television and terms the outcome of this concurrent two-way panoptic/synoptic system of observation as a "viewer society" (1997, p. 219). Less obviously than in panopticonism, power and control are also features of synoptic viewing such that "in synoptic space, particular news reporters, more or less brilliant media personalities and commentators who are continuously visible and seen are of particular importance … They actively filter and shape information … they produce news … they place topics on the agenda and avoid placing topics on the agenda" (Mathiesen, 1997, p. 226). As well as personalities exerting specific power over viewers, the media in general also effect control and Mathiesen states that "synopticism, through the modern mass media in general and television in particular, first of all directs and controls or disciplines our *consciousness* [original emphasis]" (1997, p. 230).

However, at the time he published this article, the Internet was in its infancy and social media relatively undeveloped. Therefore, alongside the panoptic process described by Foucault and the synoptic model outlined by Mathiesen, a third variation has emerged, involving multiple interactions between many individuals/groups in what might be described as "synaptic surveillance" and that is consistent with the development of the Internet and social media. Lyon (2011, p. 13) refers to this phenomenon as rhizomatic surveillance and notes that "[p]ost-panoptic surveillance is deterritorialized as well as rhizomatic and as such resists exclusionary control strategies" (2011, p. 13). In a related way, Mark Andrejevic describes it as a lateral watching, and suggests that it involves "a displacement of the figure of 'Big Brother' by proliferating 'little brothers' who engage in distributed, decentralised forms of monitoring and information gathering" (2007, p. 239). Andrejevic draws further comparisons with Foucauldian surveillance, noting that

> [i]n an era of distributed surveillance, the amplification of panoptic monitoring relies on the internalised discipline not just of the watched, but also of the watchers … At the same time, we are becoming habituated to a culture in which we are all expected to monitor one another—to deploy surveillance tactics facilitated at least in part by interactive media technologies—in order to protect ourselves and our loved ones and maximize our chances for social and economic success. (2007, p. 239)

This point is amplified by Ivan Manokha, who describes a comparable "chilling effect" following the Edward Snowden revelations whereby one's free speech is curtailed in a raised awareness of possibly being watched (2018, p. 228). In a similar vein, and highlighting issues with Mathiesen's pre-Internet viewpoint, Aaron Doyle states that "[m]odern, disciplinary surveillance is being overlaid. Likewise, with the evolution of the Internet and its intertwining with other mass media, the notion that 'the many' watch 'the few' through the mass media has become increasingly problematized" (2011, p. 293).

It is with these three options that "The National Anthem" is concerned: first, in relation to the Foucauldian control exercised by a single individual, an artist, who engineers the bizarre ransom demand and effectively manipulates the consciousness of 1.3 billion viewers; second, regarding the synoptic viewing by these viewers (who are influenced via a combination of the Internet and television news coverage) of the protagonist engaging in a culturally humiliating act; and third, what is here termed "synaptic surveillance" with respect to the collective agency/intelligence of those engaged with the Internet and social media. Despite Doyle's reservations about Mathiesen's model, the manipulation of viewers' consciousness via the media in this episode initially suggests that Mathiesen's approach remains appropriate, whether the media is traditional or otherwise. However, their decision is effectively orchestrated by a single observer whilst a third layer of surveillance is in operation whereby the public is swayed by lateral networks. Overall, the various processes of surveillance occur simultaneously: the controlling artist, the voyeuristic watching as a communal mass and synaptic networking (whereby each individual responds to others) to generate a consensus and wield power.