

‘VISIBLE’ AND ‘INVISIBLE’ PERFORMANCE: FRAMING PERFORMANCE IN 1970S TELEVISION DRAMA

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Introduction

Critical orthodoxies around television drama have tended to neglect its aesthetic qualities, leading to a tendency to characterize it as a medium for relay of ‘theatrical’ performance; paradoxically, it has also been categorized as a medium of the ‘intimate screen’ (Jacobs 2000) through the close-up of the face. While investigation of television performance considers the need to tone down ‘theatrical’ performance for this intimate medium, little consideration is given to the production processes by which the ‘intimate screen’ is generated. This chapter argues that the contribution of camera operators to the generation of that screen is a key element in the production of onscreen television performance. Using archival resources, textual analysis and practitioner interviews, the chapter considers the interaction of actor’s performance and camerawork in the 1970s multi-camera television studio, and elaborates on how the multiple understandings of and practices relating to this interaction were engaged with. The final section of the chapter examines a case study of 1970s television drama, using close analysis of the BBC’s *I, Claudius* (1976) to consider the proxemics of performance both in front of and behind the camera.

Cantrell and Hogg (2016) differentiate between ‘television acting’ (actors portraying characters), and ‘television performance’, that is, ‘adjacent performative components within the construction of text’ (285). They warn against the danger that ‘the particular contributions of the television actor become obscured within the larger technical mechanics of constructing

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a television performance' (286). This chapter, however, builds on Cantrell and Hogg's distinction of 'acting' and 'performance' to argue that the 'invisible performance' of camera operators can be as important as the 'television acting' of actors, and therefore demands further investigation. As well as furthering critical understandings of onscreen television performance, the chapter draws attention to the off-screen contribution of camera operators in the framing of performance in 1970s television drama. It therefore suggests that there are two categories of performance at work here in the interaction of actors and camera operators: 'visible' onscreen and 'invisible' off-screen performance.

Intimate screens and dramatic rooms

Assumptions about the limited aesthetic capability of television have meant a neglect of its production processes in favour of considering the writer as the creative figure in television. Academic orthodoxies consider television in general to be a visually impoverished medium (Geraghty 2003), whose multi-camera, vision mixed aesthetic and notan¹ lighting normatively generate only functional images within a tightly constrained frame. Helen Wheatley has pointed out the way in which theorists have privileged the 1960s studio as an innovative and dynamic space but dismissed the 1970s television studio as 'clumsy, dated and inexpressive' (Wheatley 2005: 145) with dialogue-driven close-ups confined to Williams's (1968) 'dramatic room'. However, as Panos and Lacey (2015) comment, studio multi-camera technique merits a critical reassessment:

Television scholars are increasingly returning to the electronic studio era and attempting to understand it on its own terms, tracing practical, material and conceptual factors that influenced studio production and drawing out the dramatic and aesthetic consequences of multi-camera recording and the studio as site. (Panos and Lacey 2015: 2)

Likewise, performance in television has been little studied. The teleological 'developmental model' assumes 'a broad movement away from the interior world of studio production, as also moving from a theatrical precedent' (Macmurraugh-Kavanagh and Lacey 1999: 60)

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comprising ‘moments of change’ in technology and aesthetics (ibid.). The ‘developmental model’ has implications for screen performance, assuming a move from studio’s ‘intimate screen’ model (Jacobs 2000) of dialogue-driven close-ups to a more naturalistic mode, as well as a tendency towards more ‘cinematic’ wide shots. However, theorists have struggled to find a critical vocabulary with which to investigate screen performance. As Bignell, Lacey and MacMurrough-Kavanagh put it, ‘[c]ritical discourses on British television drama, arising from studies of “Golden Age” drama like the *Wednesday Play* and *Play for Today* series, have been constrained . . . by questions of authorship, realism and communicative effects’ (2000: 81–2). John Caughie comments that criticism of TV drama seems ‘quite tongue-tied’ about acting (2000: 207).

Framing performance

Screen performance is characterized by the interaction of performers within a frame, and therefore, by the interaction of camera and performers. Lury (1996) suggests that television performance is a combination of technique and technology. Tucker (2003) discusses how actors scale performance to the size of the screen: performance is literally *framed* by the selection of details of bodily gesture and dialogue delivery within a chosen shot size. This is a collaborative process: Cynthia Baron comments *that*

the selection and combination of movements, gestures, and vocal/facial expressions are themselves mutually interactive elements in the performance montage that actors and directors create. When montage is understood as the process of both selection and combination in film, choices about framing, editing, production, and sound design can actually be seen as implicit choices about performance, and acting choices can be seen as implicit choices about other cinematic strategies. (2007: 33)

Performance then must be seen as one element in a matrix of creative and technical choices. However, most accounts of this collaborative process focus on the performer in front of the camera, rather than the activities going on behind it. In television studies, critical assumptions

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about television's aesthetic limitations have led to an almost total neglect of the role of camera operators in mediating pro-filmic performance.

Foucault (1980; 1991) and Bourdieu (1984) suggest that space and action are dialogically related, and this chapter therefore argues for an understanding of television's production spaces as Bourdieuan fields shaping the subjects and texts produced within them. Within this field, subjects position themselves hierarchically according to various forms of symbolic capital – taste, education, skills and so on (Bourdieu 1993; 1998). Camera operators are not passive functionaries, capturing pro-filmic 'theatrical' performance, but instead actively contribute to the generation of the screen within which performance is both figuratively and literally framed. While this research therefore considers the proxemics of the interaction between camera and actors, it also considers the neglected issue of 'embodied' performance on the part of technical crews as making an essential contribution to the poetics of the performed text; thus drawing a distinction between 'visible' and 'invisible' performance in 1970s studio drama.

Hierarchies of distinction

Even within the industry, 1970s multi-camera operators were dismissed by their peers. Within the mixed production ecology of 1970s television, it is generally the case that studio interiors were on videotape, and location exteriors were shot on 16mm film. A clear distinction (in various meanings of the word) existed between video camera crews and film cameramen. In the multi-camera studio, with a team of four or so camera operators each assigned to separate cameras, directors can select the output of each camera on monitors. The BBC film cameraman A. A. Englander argues that a key difference between studio production and location filming is that in the latter, the director cannot see the viewfinder picture. Englander suggests that the expertise of film cameramen means that they require

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little instruction from directors in framing images – hence the film cameraman’s dislike of electronic viewfinders which can be monitored by the team.

Film cameramen know about making compensation for movement, when to pan left or right, when to tilt up, how much headroom to give. This is one of the fundamental differences between the film cameraman and his electronic equivalent who is basically under orders from the studio gallery all the time. (Englander and Petzold 1976: 67)

In a startling dismissal of studio camera crews, Englander comments ‘in this context, cameraman is a really confusing term’ (Englander and Petzold 1976: 67). This comment identifies a key tension within the network of forces structuring the field of 1970s television production, between video and film, and exposes a rupture between the embodied cultural capital of multi-camera operators and film cameramen, within which the former are distinctly disadvantaged as contributors of ‘invisible performance’.

The scholarly neglect of the aesthetics of studio drama may in part relate to institutional attitudes to video camera operators. With notable exceptions² BBC studio cameramen were not named on programme credits, whereas film crews were credited by name. Producer Barry Letts suggests that this derives from BBC bureaucracy: ‘because they were trained originally with the engineers and so on, they were treated as engineers’. Letts recalls a work-to-rule by which studio camera crews demanded precise instructions from directors on framing and camera movement, resulting in ‘terrible terrible camerawork’ as cameramen tried to convince BBC management that they deserved status as ‘real cameramen doing real work as people doing compositions, and were artistic, artists you know. And they won the day, they didn’t change their grade, but they got their money.’ Director Timothy Combe recalls of this period: ‘the camera cards all had to be *exact*. Track in, on and you’d give them a cue. Track in, stop. It was hell!’³ The position of studio cameramen within television’s craft hierarchies was normatively low status, but this account demonstrates

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camera crews attempting to reposition themselves within this hierarchical structure through demonstrating embodied symbolic capital.

Intimate screens and spaces

Within the (much contested) developmental model, critical orthodoxies of a shift from 'theatrical' to 'cinematic' television categorize this as a move from a distant, observational camera to more involved, active camerawork. In many accounts, *Armchair Theatre*'s⁴ long takes and mobile pedestal camera transformed static 1950s multi-camera setups (Jacobs 1998, Caughie 2000, Wheatley 2007) and this transformation is an essential component of the development of television studio acting. Caughie comments:

What is striking is not that the space which is created by this depth of field has become 'real' in the Bazinian sense, but that the studio has become fluid and expressive, freeing the actors within the space. There is a sense that the actors inhabit a space, rather than being constricted within a frame [...]. Crucially for notions of realism in television, what is created in plays like *Lena, O My Lena*⁵ is a performative space – a space for acting – rather than a narrative space – a space for action. (2000: 77)

Ironically, and perhaps significantly, Caughie focuses on camera mobility, not acting, in his close analysis of the generation of this new televisual space in *Lena, O My Lena* (1960).

Cantrell and Hogg warn that 'observations about the actor's work regularly become entangled with the discussion of framing, editing, scripting and the overall production values' (2016: 286) and, as this book demonstrates, Caughie is not alone in his focus on camera mobility.

Individual directors are credited in practitioner discourses with revolutionizing the practices and aesthetics of television drama. Director Alvin Rakoff describes fellow Canadian Ted Kotcheff as 'a very violent mover of cameras' (Rakoff 2010). As director of the much-discussed *Lena O My Lena* (1960), Kotcheff – and the 'invisible performance' of his camera crews – has some responsibility for constructing what Caughie identifies as a 'performative space' (2000: 77).

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The development of this performative space is a heterogeneous one. Director Herbert Wise recalls the working practices of BBC studio camera operators in the 1950s:

When I first worked at the BBC senior cameramen would sit on their motorised cameras you know, the others would have to be the dollies, pushing used to be four members to a camera crew. And I stopped all that. I said, get off the motorised thing. They didn't like that. Why? I said, because it's too unwieldy! I want movement! Things have to be lively! I like developing shots, in other words, that you bring the actors to the camera and the camera to the actors, that the whole thing would have a fluidity. [...] my intention was to make things exciting, to make them live, to make them real. (Wise 2010)

The fluidity Wise discusses may be a desire to have the camera mimic the subjectivity of a human observer rather than an artificial movement of a mechanical camera mount, making the shot phenomenologically involving. In any case, Wise is clearly encouraging increasing dynamic, improvised interaction between actors and camera operators, in the face of some resistance:

If an actor would not be in a correct position, the cameraman would always say 'well I'm on my position' and I killed all that. I said there's no use talking to me like that. What matters is what comes out at the end. If the actor's not in the right position you have to chase it! Doesn't matter what your mark is! Go where the shot is! (Wise 2010)

While practitioner testimony should always be treated with some degree of critical suspicion, Wise's resistant studio crews evoke Bourdieu's 'struggle for the transformation or preservation of the field' (Bourdieu 1998: 40), suggesting a reluctance to change the nature of their professional practice to a more active, embodied form of 'invisible performance'.

Both academic and practitioner discourses in this vein suggest that camera mobility can result in greater viewer involvement in the onscreen drama. The tracking shot, with its changing parallax perspectives, arguably creates an impression of the viewer being present in dramatic events. Apparatus film theorists argue that the eye of the observer and the eye of the camera are roughly consonant, encouraging immersive viewing, although in future

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theory, edits make viewers aware of the frame (Friedberg 2006: 81). Multi-camera framing is usually roughly eye level – a convention which audiences take largely for granted, subliminally placing viewers in the action (Selby and Cowdery 1995). However, while camera mobility conveys the experiential topology of pro-filmic space better than static framing, its immersive *jouissance* is still delimited by the frame's edge (Friedberg 2006: 129); the 'spectatorial paradox' (ibid.: 145) of virtual mobility whereby movement in the frame is necessarily constrained by the generation of that frame.

Director Don Taylor also stresses the importance of framing and camera performance in his account of directing multi-camera drama, connecting the experiential qualities of visual style and aesthetics to narrative and performance:

The cameras *were* the story, they were the expressive instrument, as words were for the poet... They would get in among the sweat and the anger and the fear, they would *be* the sweat and the anger and the fear. They would go close to the actors, and inhabit their dilemmas, swirl and swing inside the action of the play, not on its periphery. (Taylor 1990: 22; emphasis in original)

This account seems to confirm the 'intimate screen' model: cinema does not operate in this mode because it does not offer continuous live (or as-live) performance; theatre cannot operate in this mode because in most theatre spaces the audience is at a fixed distance from the performers, denying potential for the close-up. Taylor's 'expressive' cameras 'swing inside' and 'inhabit' the action, constructing dramatic space in which camerawork and aesthetics contribute to the meaning and experience of the drama. Despite that movement however, the frame retains Friedberg's epistemic hegemony. While seeming to offer a phenomenological involvement which the contemplative still image or fixed camera cannot, the camera never breaks the Friedbergian epistemological frame because it necessarily generates that frame, offering an 'ontological cut' (Friedberg 2006: 157) which constantly develops as the camera moves. This underlines the contribution of camera crews – and thus

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the construction and development of the televisual frame – to the making of meaning in television performance. The persistent issue of intimacy in television drama then seems to be a function of the interaction of camera operator and performer: the intersection of visible and invisible performance.

Casting ‘invisible’ performers

As with the casting of actors, producers and directors sought to assemble effective teams behind the camera within the 1970s studio system. An important structuring feature of the BBC’s planning system then was the allocation of its human resources. While creative teams of writers, directors and producers shaped productions, those teams had limited control over which craft personnel they could secure for production teams.⁶ Former producer Jonathan Powell recalls:

it was just like an absolutely rigid machine. And your facilities were given to you by rote. And then you had to fit your project into that [...] they’d give you Joe Bloggs and you’d say but I don’t want Joe Bloggs and they’d say tough shit. (Powell 2009)

This situation applied to craft personnel in both studio production and location filming. When planning camera scripts, directors had to consider studio crews’ abilities and allocate complex shots according to a further hierarchy of distinction within the crew (usually comprising four camera operators, inevitably male). Director Waris Hussein recalls ‘The senior cameraman was the one who was the best – supposedly – then it went down and the fourth cameraman sometimes was a very new guy so what you’d try to do was give him the least amount of work’ (Hussein 2010). Depending on the quality of crew allocated, ‘the number one cameraman was not up to the demands’ (ibid.) in terms of their capacity for ‘invisible performance’, and tensions emerge here between ability and aspiration. On occasion this would not be apparent until camera rehearsal, when the director would discover that the planned choreography is beyond an operator’s performative skills: ‘I suddenly realise

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I've put too much effort and burden on one guy. Because I like to shoot continuously [] but in those days to have a camera dance around the actors was a tough call' (ibid.).

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A stylistic tendency to shoot continuously with developing shots on one camera places heavy physical burdens on individual camera operators, and industry myths have arisen around certain teams:

Crew Number Five, I'll never forget, a man called Jim Atkinson who was [] not only brilliant but unique. Everybody wanted his crew and you had to book them in advance. And a lot of the times he wasn't available, so you got another crew and then you didn't know who the senior cameraman was. (Hussein 2010)

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Camera script planning had to take into account crews' embodied performative abilities. A proponent of Atkinson's single camera, long take approach is Herbert Wise, with his penchant for unbroken developing shots. Wise claims some degree of patronage over Atkinson's career at the BBC:

I went to the authorities and said you've got to make him a number one, which they did and he became sort of my crew, he didn't do every single show I did at the BBC because it was impossible but he did a great many of them including the whole of *I, Claudius*. And his contribution was fantastic. (Wise 2010)

Given the stability of such discourses around Atkinson,⁷ and the critical neglect of multi-camera aesthetics, it is worth attempting to delineate the specificity of Atkinson's approach. Wise claims that Atkinson adapted the pedestal camera equipment to serve his vision of camera mobility and performance:

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They have a handle, and he broke the handle [] and he used to have the handle with the grip at the top on his, the lower arm on his sleeve [*HW mimes vertical forearm braced against vertical handle*] and if you then moved off you can move off without any jerk. (Wise 2010)

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The pedestal camera's articulated panhandle is normally extended (Millerson 1979: 32) and 1970s production manuals recommend starting camera dollying while off-shot to prevent wheel jerk (ibid.: 57). Adjusted to a right-angle in this way and parallel to the operator's arm,

the panhandle affords Atkinson closer physical contact with the camera and a more intimate, performative camera mobility. The camera functions as a prosthetic extension of the operator's performance, underlining the 'embodied' nature of Atkinson's professional distinction. Another distinctive element claimed of Atkinson was his investment in productions, exceeding the standard contribution given by allocated crews. Wise claims that some cameramen had the attitude of 'tell me what to do and I'll do it' (2010), thereby demonstrating limited creative input. Atkinson's status meant that he was allowed to transcend normal studio hierarchies as Wise's liaison:

I would not allow the cameramen to talk to actors about anything unless it went through me. But he had my permission to because he knew, we thought exactly alike. He would often say to actors, a bit to your right, a bit to your left, or just turn your head because it's a better angle. And he was very keen, he used to come to rehearsals [...] so that he had an idea what was required on the [studio] floor. (Wise 2010)

An Atkinson protégé, cameraman Bernard Newnham (2010), recalls Atkinson's 'endless rescuing of less talented but nevertheless famous directors – Rudi Cartier springs to mind' and remembers Atkinson as someone who

evolved techniques which took the available equipment to its limits. The pedestal based turret camera was never going to be more flexibly used than with Jim's fluid style, with whole scenes shot on one camera in a way rarely repeated until Steadicam.⁸ (ibid.)

Vision mixer Clive Doig notes of Atkinson's technique: 'the majority of the play would be on one continuous developing shot on his camera on a ped, albeit in a multiple camera "live" set up. No editing!' (Doig 2010). Again, Doig claims that Atkinson 'often directed the actors more on the studio floor than the director did from upstairs' (ibid.). Atkinson then is validated by his peers as possessing embodied cultural capital, making an active creative contribution which elevates him in the hierarchy of his field, and marking him out as a particularly dedicated and skilled 'invisible' performer. Doig's comment, like Herbert Wise's above, also

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suggests that access to actors and their performance process is a particular signifier of creative capital within the studio hierarchy.

The choreography of performance

The metaphor of choreography or a 'dance' between the visible and invisible performers in studio emerges repeatedly within practitioner discourses. For Waris Hussein, resisting multi-camera vision-mixing emerges as a key technique in the aspiration towards developing a distinctive studio aesthetic, with both framing and long takes maintaining the 'intimate screen' effect of the actors' unbroken performance: 'I like to shoot continuously without cutting [...] my technique is to try and shoot actors moving within the frame and the camera moving with them if necessary, in other words there's a kind of dance' (Hussein 2010). Hussein suggests a strategy whereby camera crews contribute creatively without the full knowledge of actors, making camera operators' performance 'invisible' in more ways than one: 'The cameraman knows it's a dance but the actors are moving according to the way you rehearsed. So they're doing their natural thing but I'm moving my camera' (ibid.).

Bazin (1971) argued that the long take is both more 'cinematic' than montage editing but also, in its exploration of temporal and spatial unities within a scene, underlines the perceived realism of a narrative. For Bazin, the edit compromises an event's unity, converting it from real to imaginary. The practitioners quoted here may be atypical in their 'cinematic' aspiration to Bazinian developing shots, given the shot-reverse shot rhetoric built into multi-camera vision mixing; but they also demonstrate a preference for sustained performance suggesting a habitus of cultural capital privileging the theatrical and therefore the spoken word. This, then, demonstrates a double aspiration, combining the perceived strengths of both theatre and cinema technique. This as-live Bazinian space is Caughie's live-seeming 'performative space – a space for acting' (2000: 77), suggesting that Caughie's model of a specifically televisual space for performance emerging around 1960 has some validity.

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As discussed, the long take places heavy demands on operators' 'invisible performance'. Ironically, given studio's persistent interiority, one challenge of the cabled pedestal camera is to represent fully *enclosed* spaces in three-walled studio set environments, materializing the 'fourth wall' in a continuous take. Waris Hussein recalls an example of expressive choreography of camera and performer in a production of *Hedda Gabler* (BBC 1972):

I wanted a sequence where [the] main character walks all the way around the room and I wanted to follow her on one camera. In other words they danced round each other and you saw all four walls. [...] But in those days for a camera to do that – we had to stop tape for that particular shot – the camera cable would have to be wound round and round and round and unwind with someone pulling it [...] it was a tough call but I did it because I was trying to be cinematic. (Hussein 2010)

Textual analysis of this sequence shows that, although the enclosed four-walled set and the use of a long take visually underpin the character's frustration, some slightly jerky camera movement and clumsy reframing draws attention to the ambition of the manoeuvre and highlights the demands placed on the embodied performance of camera operators. However, in its visual contribution to the play's theme of social and personal constraint, the shot demonstrates how this production is enhanced by the camera operator's 'invisible performance'.

The discussion so far in this chapter has demonstrated the performativity of camera operators, the embodied cultural capital for which they were known, and their placing on a hierarchy of abilities within institutional and practitioner discourses. It has also demonstrated how camera operators can contribute to the overall aesthetic and effect of a screen text through their embodied performance. Given the repeated appearance of Jim Atkinson's name in this research, particularly in association with the director Herbert Wise, this chapter now looks in depth at an example of a significant Atkinson/Wise collaboration.

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Through the keyhole: *I, Claudius*

The BBC's *I, Claudius* (1976) is a particularly effective example of the power of distinctive camerawork in the overall construction of a screen text. The serial was based on Robert Graves's historical novels *I, Claudius* (1953) and *Claudius the God* (1954), presenting the saga of the recently formed Roman Empire. The narrative covers the ambitions of Claudius's grandmother Livia to secure the Emperorship for her son Tiberius, the reign of the mad Caligula, and Claudius's own unexpected Emperorship. Scripted by Jack Pulman, produced by Martin Lisemore and directed by Herbert Wise, each episode of *I, Claudius* was recorded onto videotape across two studio days following a fortnight of outside rehearsal. Scenes were recorded throughout the studio day using rehearse-record technique (BBC WAC T5/2, 606/1).

Discussing the serial's studio production, Herbert Wise comments 'necessity is the best part of invention, I was forced to make use of the studio with all the complicated scenes that I had, particularly exterior scenes [...] things like battles or anything like that was absolutely out' (Wise 2010). As Sandra Joshel has argued (2001), the production context of *I, Claudius* results in a drama of interior states, with studio sets used to generate the psychological claustrophobia of the degenerating Imperial family. Adapting the novel's events for studio interiors and three-walled sets adds to the production's sense of constraining claustrophobia, and despite some aspiration to architectural spectacle, the tight framing on sets and faces illustrates Wise's realization that 'I must do the whole thing like looking through a keyhole' (2010). Helen Wheatley (2005) suggests that the room is 'television's definitive space' (145). Adapting the novels for the parameters of studio involves translating epic events into the scale of characters delivering dialogue in a room. The focus on studio interiors results in a focus on personalizing the events and themes of the novel, which means of course a focus on performance.

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A distinctive example of the interaction between onscreen and off-screen performance comes in episode 8 (*Zeus, By Jove!*). In the novel, Caligula crosses the Bay of Baiae on horseback over a vast bridge of ships, but it was clearly impracticable to achieve this in BBC Television Centre's Studio One. Caligula's excesses thus had to be demonstrated by other means. In the serial, Caligula's three sisters are combined into one, Drusilla, who embarks on an incestuous affair with Caligula. The novel's passing reference 'Drusilla died. I am certain in my own mind that Caligula killed her, but I have no proof' (Graves 1953: 342) was developed into a controversial scene where Caligula tears his unborn child from Drusilla's womb and devours it, with Claudius witnessing the gory aftermath (BBC WAC T41/502/1).

The death scene starts near the end of the episode, at 46.00, with a shot of the inside of the door to Caligula's bedroom, through which Drusilla (Beth Morris) enters.⁹ The tight framing here draws attention to the detail of the bolt on the door. In medium two-shot, Caligula (John Hurt) leads Drusilla to the bed and makes her stand on it, securing her wrists above her head with chains. The scene is framed mostly in medium two-shot until 46.46 when the camera pulls back to show the arrangement of the space and the proxemics of the characters within it. The camera then tracks in to a close up on Caligula on his line 'There'll be no pain, I promise.'¹⁰ The only vision mixed 'cut' in the scene comes as Drusilla looks down at Caligula, with a medium shot showing her face (lasting from 48.07–48.13). There is a cut back to Caligula as he disrobes Drusilla, the camera close on Caligula's face (left of frame, in three-quarter shot showing his expression) with Drusilla's midriff before him (right of frame, her back to camera). From 48.25, the camera tracks back to a long shot to show Drusilla standing on the bed with her back to camera, with Caligula before her as he explains: 'I must draw the child from the Queen of Heaven's womb and swallow it whole.'¹¹ Having established the spatial relations of the characters with this wide shot, from 48.46 the camera tracks back in to focus on Caligula's face in 'intimate screen' close-up as he picks up a knife.

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Almost exactly centred, the knife is the focus of the shot at this point. Caligula's face, in three-quarter shot so his expressions can clearly be read by the camera/audience, is left of frame with the knife held in front of his face, with Drusilla's naked body right of frame.

Zucker (1999: 159) notes the importance for television actors of recognizing the lens and framing used in order to modulate a performance for the intimate screen. The combination of framing, performance and soundtrack work together at the point of this close-up to signal Caligula's internal state. At 49.03, Caligula says, 'There'll be no pain, I know it' and hooves are heard on the soundtrack. The sound of hooves drumming in Caligula's head has affected his sanity and the combination of camera move, facial close-up, and soundtrack in combination with dialogue denote his madness. The camera holds on this arrangement until Caligula pushes the knife into Drusilla, at which point (49.12) the camera whip-pans left as Drusilla screams. The developing camera movement slows to crab left as the door to the room comes into view on the left of the frame. The camera tracks slowly in on the door and rests on the door's bolt, in a repeat of the shot which opened this scene. The fluid, observational feel of the camerawork up to this point is contrasted with the abrupt way in which it pulls away from the actual stabbing, as if a spectator snatching their gaze away from something horrible. Then, the almost leisurely pace of the track towards the door contrasts with the abrupt pan away from Drusilla's stabbing and the intensity of her screams on the soundtrack. This dramatically effective counterpoint between the unhurried camera move and the traumatic soundtrack demonstrates the affective potential of the camera operator's 'invisible' performance.

As the developing shot continues, the camera tracks very close to the bolt on the door, showing through this detail that the door is locked from the inside. This camera move suggests the desire to escape, to leave the gruesome scene, but the door is bolted, and with no agency in the scene, the viewer is unable to leave. The epistemic frame's shift from Drusilla's

body to the door means that this part of the scene is heavily driven by sound, including the drumming of hooves in Caligula's head (the only non-diegetic sound in the whole serial, which also features no incidental music), Caligula's verbalized explanation of what will happen, Drusilla's screams and the sound of Claudius (Derek Jacobi) hammering on the door outside.

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As a result, despite the sense of confinement inside the room, the viewer is still unsure what has happened. The camera's drifting move to the inside of the door denies a clear view. A cut to the other side of the locked door (49.34) aligns the audience with Claudius, demanding access and knowledge. From this cut, the remainder of the episode is also played as a continuous take. After Caligula emerges on Claudius's side of the door, bloodied beard hinting at gruesome events, Claudius puts his head through the doorway and, it is implied, sees Drusilla's ruined body. As the horrified Claudius withdraws his head and staggers out of frame, the camera starts to track in on the door, which is slowly opening to give a glimpse of the room beyond, at which point there is a cut to the end credits. The final shot, with a view of Drusilla's 'gory middle' (BBC WAC T41/502/1) was cut by management before transmission. Herbert Wise recalls:

We don't actually see what he was seeing, we just get it from his face and the door finally opened completely, and we get one glimpse of the woman hanging there. Now that was edited out the night before it went out, without my permission, consultation, or [producer] Martin Lisimore's. (Wise 2005)

Given the emphasis throughout the scene on obscured vision, the truncation of the final view of the disembowelled Drusilla is thematically consonant with the scene as a whole. The audience's view of Drusilla is snatched away twice, once by the camera move and once by the edit, and thus – although the edit is not part of Wise's intended design – underscores the production's sense of 'looking through a keyhole ... like a fly on the wall' (Wise 2010).

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This scene has lasted 4 minutes and 19 seconds with only three cuts: the six-second cutaway of Drusilla looking down at Caligula, and the cut to Claudius outside the room. In place of edits, the scene has relied instead on reframings and expressive camera moves to support the action and the actors' performances. This expressive camera movement is not merely about mediating the action. It is also about the mobility of the camera itself; in Jacobs's phrase, this is 'exhibitionistic camera movement, a mobility on display as mobility, and not motivated by performance, but *is* the performance' (2000: 144, emphasis in original). This chapter has described Wise's patronage of camera operator Jim Atkinson and their shared preference for fluid developing shots, and it seems likely that Atkinson was the camera operator for this scene. This embodied camerawork should be considered part of the scene's aesthetic and underscores this chapter's claim for the performativity of studio camera operators. Wise comments on the subjectivity and performativity of his camera:

With me, the camera is always an actor. It's very very rarely an observer. And [...] [it] particularly paid off in *I, Claudius* because I was able for the camera to tell the story as much as an actor would tell the story. It contributed as much. Because you can tell so much in a camera movement or a sudden cut to a close-up than you can do in words. (Wise 2002)

The expressive camera mobility discussed here both supplies and withholds information, and in addition conveys affect, with the shocked pull away from the stabbing, as the camera averts its eye from a sight too horrible to witness. The developing shots place the viewer inside the room and the move to the door suggests attempted escape, and entrapment within the dramatic room. The camerawork thus enhances the impact of the scene through framing, movement, and the operator's performance through continuous single-camera takes and embodied camera movement. In the production of *I, Claudius*, the usual vision-mixed multi-camera aesthetic is subverted through Wise's single-camera technique and Atkinson's performativity: '[m]ostly it was two cameras or one [...] it was all motivated by getting fluidity into the camera' (Wise 2010). There is a *jouissance* to the expressive performativity

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of this fluid developing shot; it is camera movement which complements visually the content of the scene, while the manipulation of the epistemic frame contributes extra layers of meaning and involvement.

Conclusions

This chapter has demonstrated the extent to which performance in 1970s television drama results from the ‘dance’ between actors and camera. To paraphrase Wheatley (2005), while the electronic studio may be dated and occasionally clumsy, it is certainly not inexpressive. The reliance of *I, Claudius* on camera mobility, the unbroken take, and the combinations of facial close-up with wider framings confirms Caughie’s view of the electronic studio as ‘a performance space – a space for acting – rather than a narrative space – a space for action’ (2000: 77). However, it could be argued that performance in the electronic studio *is* its action. This chapter has demonstrated the extent to which it is the combination and interaction of actors’ performance and camera performance which gives television studio drama much of its power.

Furthermore, the ‘performance space’ identified by Caughie is not merely a space for *acting*, but for other sorts of performance, both visible and invisible; both dramatic and technical. Performative camera movement can contribute ‘embodied expressionism’ (Jacobs 2003: 38) to the image, intersecting narrative and aesthetic through visual mobility and framing. The importance of the studio camera operator’s embodied symbolic capital is evident, although this creative contribution has not been recognized in television scholarship. This research therefore demonstrates the potential of studio as an expressive site and redresses institutional and critical dismissals of studio camera crews as engineering functionaries, repositioning them as creative artists giving a form of performance.

The chapter thus demonstrates the significance of camera operators in contributing to television drama’s aesthetic at the intersection of performance and frame, and complicates

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conventional notions of authorship in television. The repeated invocation of Jim Atkinson as a distinctively skilled camera operator in both institutional and collegiate discourses suggest that using his work as a case study could yield interesting data about individual visual style brought to television drama through the particular ‘invisible performance’ of a skilled camera operator. Examining a wider sample of Atkinson’s work could raise interesting questions about the possibility of a distinctive visual idiolect based in a set of embodied performative skills.

While analysis of television performance is itself relatively undeveloped, this chapter has suggested that such analysis could be extended from the interaction of performers in the frame to the interaction between performers and the camera operators who generate the frame itself, thereby understanding camera crews as contributing a form of performance to the process. Recognizing the performative quality of camera operators draws attention to camerawork and thus to the various levels of creative labour at work in the 1970s studio, thereby extending critical understandings of historical television aesthetics. By extension, this consideration could be applied to the interaction of actors and camera in the contemporary production context, suggesting ‘visible’ and ‘invisible’ performance as a useful framework for analysing any screen text.

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Videography

[Doctor Who and the Silurians. \(1970\) \[DVD\]. Commentary track.](#)

[Hedda Gabler. BBC 1972.](#)

I, Claudius. BBC 1976.

Romeo and Juliet. BBC 1978.

¹ i.e. overly bright, low contrast, diffuse lighting.

² For example, Jim Atkinson as senior cameraman on the 1978 BBC *Romeo and Juliet*.

³ Discussion in this paragraph taken from DVD commentary track, *Doctor Who and the Silurians*.

⁴ ABC/Thames Television, 1956–74, and heavily influenced stylistically by Canadian practitioners (White 2003).

⁵ This single and much-quoted example may be unable to bear the critical weight placed upon it (Ellis 2007).

⁶ See Irene Shubik's bitter complaints about the 'perpetual frustration' (87) of trying to assemble a creative team within the BBC's Fordist systems (Bakewell and Garnham 1970).

⁷ Panos (2015) notes a memo recording praise for Jim Atkinson on the physical effort involved in meeting the operational challenges of new, heavy colour cameras in the late 1960s.

⁸ A body brace supporting an arm with a free-floating gimbal to which a camera is fixed (Millerson 1979: 435), much used for mobile point-of-view shots and in action sequences.

⁹ The proliferation of scenes in *I, Claudius* which begin and end with shots of doors suggest a further debt to theatrical entrances and exits, as well as pointing up Wise's 'keyhole' approach.

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