

‘I’m a Copper not a Welfare Officer’: Emergent Feminist Thought in *Hunters Walk* and 1970s British Police Series

Ben Lamb

Media Studies, Teesside University, UK

Abstract

This article uses what was a very popular programme, *Hunters Walk*, to challenge dominant understandings of the British police series in the 1970s. Studies of British television drama often characterise this genre as being epitomised by *The Sweeney* throughout this decade; remembered for its use of film cameras on location to regularly depict action sequences in a somewhat escapist fashion. This article complicates such a dominant critical opinion by drawing attention to a popular series shot in the studio with video cameras and analysing its engagement with feminist concerns and representations of gender, a trait usually attributed to soap operas at that time.

Keywords

ATV, *Hunters Walk*, Ted Willis, British Police Series, British Crime Drama, Feminism, Ewan Hooper.

Studying British police series, within television scholarship, traditionally involved conforming to a canon of key texts as part of a development model. Although this has faced scrutiny in recent years Alan Clarke's (1992) academic analysis of the British police still remains to be influential. Clarke collated a staple of programmes he believed were integral to the genre's progression based on their ideological makeup, utilisation of production technology, and how this impacted upon their inherent popularity. Following Clarke's analysis of the police genre it was often accepted throughout historical studies of British television that *Dixon of Dock Green* (1955-76) was the first major police series success on UK television. Attracting 14 million viewers each week on average *Dixon* was critically lauded for treating crime 'in complex ways' and for considering 'the underlying causes of the action' (Clarke, 1992: 236). *Z Cars* (1962-78) is often considered to be the next significant British police series on account of its 'brisk pace' (Cooke, 2007: 104) and heightened sense of social realism in a 'dry-eyed lament for life as it is messily lived in Britain in affluent 1962' (Lewis, 1962: 310). ITV's transmission of *The Sweeney* (1975-78) is then cited as a focal programme for harnessing the full potential of film technology to ensure police procedurals were 'shaken out of the "drama documentary" format of slow moving narrative and static camerawork' (Clarke, 1992: 237). Following *The Sweeney*, both studio-shot, *Juliet Bravo* (1980-85) and *The Gentle Touch* (1980-84) are identified as being essential British police series for casting women in a lead role, thus representing a more 'orderly, gentler world of crime' (Clarke 1992, 248). Lastly, *The Bill* (1983-2010) with its multitude of characters, and distinct use of video cameras on location, ushered in the verisimilitude of contemporary police series as they are recognised today.

Hunters Walk (1973-76), however, is a pivotal series that was overlooked by Clarke and other subsequent influential historical studies of British television, including those written by John Caughie (2000) and Lez Cooke (2003). This is surprising given that *Hunters*

Walk was able to attract up to sixteen million viewers. A muted critical response from the newspapers throughout the programme's run has been largely responsible for its disappearance from cultural memory. The only mention *Hunters Walk* received in a national newspaper, outside of the television listings pages, was a rhetorical question posed by *The Times* that asked 'What is the difference between *Hunters Walk* and *Dixon of Dock Green*?' (Crewe, 1974: 11). Journalist Quentin Crewe's view was that each programme represented 'acts of cowardice' and 'copies of tried formats' (Crewe, 1974: 11). *Hunters Walk* is referenced by Crewe as a means of challenging Lord Annan's Committee on the future of broadcasting and its decision to welcome the opinions and comments of members of the public. Such a comment epitomises the critical consensus amongst the national press. Often what it saw as unremarkable lowbrow drama did not warrant comment or sustained coverage. Similarly the production company responsible for *Hunters Walk*, ATV, adopted a corresponding view as each episode was systematically wiped.

Despite such an ambivalent reception from the press and ATV, *Hunters Walk* did receive regular coverage in the *TV Times*. Articles published on the programme include; a piece on how leading actor Ewan Hooper's earnings from ATV are paid directly into his Greenwich Theatre company (Cotton, 1974: 11-17); the work undertaken by the programme's police advisor, ex-detective superintendent Stanley Woolfenden (Deane Potter, 1976: 15-16); and the duties carried out by unit co-ordinator Ben Bentley (Lee, 1973: 16-18). This exposure characterises *Hunters Walk* as a series that conforms to the usual ideological formula of the male oriented police series. Each article is interested in the work undertaken by prominent male figures in the production team. With Woolfenden quoted as saying 'the village PC should have a wife. She is part of the job. Like a doctor's wife, she has to be available to answer the telephone and to take messages when he is off on his rounds' (quoted in Deane Potter, 1976: 15) *Hunters Walk* appears to be yet another police series that

characterises women as being subservient to men. Although the *TV Times* published an article on actress Ruth Madoc, it is primarily interested in her relationship to her on-screen and off-screen husbands and her family life in a way that is not asked of the male actors in their respective articles (Block, 1974: 18-24). These *TV Times* articles represented the only form of insightful access to *Hunters Walk* until its 2011 DVD release; on face value the programme does not appear to be one that is interested in feminist debate and it is clear why it has evaded a feminist analysis. It is the view of this article that *Hunters Walk* was significantly ahead of its time and its representation of gender paved the way for later popular police series such as *Juliet Bravo* and *The Gentle Touch*. Because *Hunters Walk* was shot in the studio with video cameras instead of being shot on film on location, supposedly the dominant practice of pioneering British police series in the 1970s, it is difficult to fit the programme into Clarke's established development model. Therefore, analysing this series will open out the debates surrounding British police series aesthetically, thematically and culturally.

The approach this article uses to challenge the widely accepted understanding of the genre's development, and broader feminist studies of television, combines a cultural and legislative context with a close textual analysis. The following analysis of *Hunters Walk* will provide an overview of how feminist works and movements infiltrated mainstream cultural thought and government implemented legislation regarding sexual discrimination issues including equal rights, domestic abuse, and rape. Like previous landmark feminist studies of the soap opera this article will ensure that this context informs the close textual analysis of key scenes that debate the same issues. This will determine how *Hunters Walk* intervened in societal debate. Rather than exclusively examining the police officer characters, as is common with police genre criticism, this article will analyse civilian characters who make one-off appearances on an episodic basis. Focusing on the perpetrators and victims of crime

in relation to the police officer characters will ensure that this article makes the case that what is simplistically considered to be a masculine series was in fact using the domestic setting as a means of addressing political and social debates regarding women's rights.

Production Context

Invented by *Dixon of Dock Green* creator Ted Willis, who had no regular input into the programme beyond designing its format, *Hunters Walk* was shot on video cameras at ATV's Birmingham studios. The series follows Detective Sergeant Smith (Ewan Hooper) and uniformed associate of equal rank Sergeant Ken Ridgeway (Davyd Harries) policing a fictional Midlands town called Broadstone. Both Detective and Sergeant operate from a small-scale station equipped with two PCs and a DC to protect their rural community. In comparison to the urban-based hard hitting filmed crime dramas of the same era there is a relaxed dynamic between Ridgeway's uniformed division and Smith's CID. Both branches are not in conflict with one another and each episode is based around lengthy discussions between Smith and Ridgeway on how to deal with the public effectively. Often a crime has not technically been committed and both men have to discuss how best to keep their community at peace. Erratic behaviour from an unhinged or misunderstood individual needs to be suppressed appropriately and each quibble is successfully resolved by the conclusion of each episode.

Although film cameras are used to capture exterior locations of Rushden in Northamptonshire, it is the studio method of production that dominates the programme's audio-visual composition. The observant video cameras are predominantly interested in the

process of crime prevention and debates that unfold between CID, the uniformed officers and the public in order to reach the appropriately measured response to breaches of the peace. During these station-based discussions, characters with opposing views are given a relatively equal number of close-ups and time to argue their side of the argument without the series necessarily displaying bias towards any one view. Such a visual style is consistently upheld in the private domestic spaces of the officers as well as in the station. In the episodes that survived being wiped, viewers are repeatedly given access to the family life of Smith, Ridgeway, and younger recruit PC Fred Pooley (Duncan Preston). In such scenes we see; Betty Smith (Ruth Madoc) discuss how to best discipline her and Smith's children; Brenda Ridgeway (Diana Rayworth) suffering from her husband's illicit affairs and subsequently summoning the confidence to divorce him; and how Pooley's partner Maggie (Sally Watts) copes with her husband's line of work amongst her judgemental friends. Although the series focuses largely on an all-male police station it is the consistent access to these domestic spaces populated by women where *Hunters Walk* engages with feminism's emergence into mainstream UK culture.

Feminism and the 1970s

As *Hunters Walk* was being broadcast, a string of legislation and anti-discrimination laws implemented by the 1974 Labour government addressed women's lack of equal rights. The Sex Discrimination Act, passed in 1975, made it illegal to treat anyone on the grounds of their sex less favourably than a person of the opposite sex would be treated in the same circumstances. Within the same year, the 1975 Social Security Pensions Act ensured that women out of employment, because of home responsibilities, would retain full pension rights. The Employment Protection Act of 1975 made paid maternity leave a statutory right,

as employers were required to give mothers their jobs back within twenty nine weeks of childbirth. The 1976 Domestic Violence and Matrimonial Proceedings Act made it easier for women to have violent partners restrained and arrested. However, the most important legislation that initiated this string of developments was the 1970 Equal Pay Act, eventually implemented on 1 January 1976. This particular piece of legislation had an impact in real terms as women's pay gradually increased from 64.5% of men's earnings in 1970 to 75.7% in 1977 (Rowbotham, 1999: 413).

The women's liberation movement was active in lobbying the government into these changes. This was largely possible due to the coming together of the middle class academic strand of second wave feminism, grounded in the writings of Juliet Mitchell (1971) and Sheila Rowbotham (1971), with a grass roots working class industrial movement. Following industrial action in 1968, where one hundred and eighty seven women sewing machinists at the Ford motor factory in Dagenham, Essex, downed tools which pressurised the government and Employment Secretary Barbara Castle into introducing the 1970 Equal Pay Act, a group of trade unionists formed the National Joint Action Campaign for Women's Equal Rights (NJACWER). Then, in February 1970, the first National Women's Liberation Conference, held at Ruskin College Oxford, had six hundred attendees from a number feminist liberation groups across the country including NJACWER. Here, both strands of the feminist movement came together to plan proposals to lobby for the Sex Discrimination Act of 1975. Out of this conference, a National Women's Coordinating Committee was formed and campaigns to achieve equal rights at work in this autonomous political movement 'increasingly brought the women's liberation movement into contact with the trade unions' (Coote and Campbell, 1987: 33). On 16 February 1974, the Feminist Women's Rights Unit of the National Council for Civil Liberties held a women's rights conference at the headquarters of the Trades Union Congress, to which delegates were invited from the unions and from women's groups. This

was ‘the first time that feminists and trade unionists had met together in any substantial numbers’, and ‘the first occasion on which representatives of the two movements explicitly recognised each other’s strategic importance’ (Coote and Campbell, 1987: 33). No longer was industrial action within the public domain perceived to be a male endeavour fought exclusively amongst men. Barbara Castle was a significant figure in this respect.

As a result of emerging feminist political thought, and its ability to influence mainstream politics, from 1976 to the mid-1980s a body of feminist television scholarship brought a feminist discourse into the academy. Influential writings by Carole Lopate (1977), Tania Modleski (1979), Richard Dyer et al. (1980), Ellen Seiter (1982), and Patricia Mellencamp (1986), all took issue with the ‘existing critical work on television that disregarded femininity, gender, and sexuality in discussions of the “political”’ (Brunsdon et al., 1997: 5). As in other disciplines, the agenda of these feminist critics was to broaden the meaning of the term ‘political’ to ‘include a general interest in everyday life, especially the female-associated spheres of domesticity and consumerism’ (Brunsdon et al., 1997: 5). All of these authors examined the soap opera as a means of challenging television’s reproduced ideology of separate spheres, which ‘sees the home as a space of femininity and leisure and the public world as a place of masculinity and work’ (Brunsdon et al., 1997: 19).

In more recent years however, feminist scholarship no longer exclusively examines programmes with a particularly wide appeal for women. Studies now often consider how feminist pressures have impacted upon depictions of women in traditionally ‘male’ genres such as Deborah Jermyn’s (2008) and Julia Hallam’s (2000, 2005) works on Lynda La Plante and Lynn Thomas’s (1995) examination of *Inspector Morse* (1987-2000). There is, however, hardly any detailed analysis of gender, particularly regarding depictions of women, in British police series that predate *Prime Suspect* (1991-2006). Dramas before this series are presumed to be ‘co-opted by the ideology of sexism’ (Gamman, 1988: 11). It is important to remember,

though, that depictions of women did in fact exist in the police genre before *Prime Suspect* and are worthy of study in how they were able to challenge a dichotomy between the public and private spheres and played an integral part in this on-going debate.

Recent developments in television scholarship are remedying this oversight specifically recent works by Sue Turnbull (2014) and Helen Piper (2015). Turnbull acknowledges that Tennison is the yardstick that ‘portrayals of female detectives, on both sides of the Atlantic have been judged’ (Turnbull 2014, 18). Turnbull’s study questions the notion that the genre ‘has often been assumed to be addressed to a masculine gaze’ and largely focuses on popular American police series including *Police Woman* (1974-8), *Charlie’s Angels* (1976-81) and *Cagney and Lacey* (1982-8) to argue that ‘women have always been at the front of if not quite at the centre of the genre’ to address ‘ongoing debates about women and crime’ (Turnbull 2014, 18). Similarly Piper examines a collection of mainstream British detective series broadcast between 1992 and 2012 including *A Touch of Frost* (1992-2010), *Lewis* (2006-), *Cracker* (1993-2006), *Prime Suspect*, and *Life on Mars* (2006-07) to chart the detective genre’s ‘aesthetic directions’ and to categorise the types of dissident voices that have been central to the genre for the past twenty years (Piper 2015, 2). This provides some much needed context to the gender politics of *Prime Suspect*. However, neither study provides a sustained analysis of *Hunters Walk* or 1970s British police series, thus overlooking the lineage of influential series that predated and informed such dramas.

The Women of *Hunters Walk*

Hunters Walk captures this changing public attitude towards women’s rights by examining predominantly middle class families in Broadstone exclusively through a collection of women’s perspectives. There is a desire in the series to actively reformulate private domestic

settings as sites of political struggle. Of the ten episodes that survived being wiped, five focus on women characters that either commit, or are victims of, crime. Events are focused upon, exclusively, from the perspectives of women. In one episode ('Vanishing Trick', 1973, 1:5), Sally Lawrence's (Zuleika Robson) father is killed in a car crash and the focus of the narrative is on how Sally copes looking after her younger brothers and reconciling her relationship with her mother. Similarly, in another episode broadcast just over a year later ('Kids', 2:13) sees a primary school child Stephanie Coe (Patricia Smith) steal money from her mother Mrs Coe (Shirley Cain). The focus of the episode is on Mrs Coe's attempts to get her daughter Stephanie to explain her sudden misbehaviour. Compared to previous British police series, there is a desire to observe women in domestic spaces free from men. A predominant interest of the series is the pressures facing women in the 1970s, thus broadening the term 'political' to include notions of domesticity and consumerism like soap operas at the time.

The first episode broadcast ('Disturbance', 1:1) focuses upon the pressures placed on Janet Kenwright (Helen Fraser), who wants to divorce her husband Dennis Kenwright (Doug Fisher). In a pivotal scene halfway through the episode, Janet invites her husband round to inform him that she has filed for a divorce. Thinking she has invited him over to salvage their marriage, Dennis has arrived in a suit to woo his wife back. The scene begins after she has disclosed this news off camera. In a close-up Dennis sits on a chair talking about how his hopes have been dashed. Looking ahead, as if in a daydream, he recounts how he dressed and rushed to the house at the prospect of good news. As his speech unfolds, Janet leans into the frame to dust the coffee table. The camera tracks back to bring her into focus and fill the frame as she continues to furiously dust. She then undercuts his soliloquy asking 'what was the alternative?' Her interaction with the table instigates a camera movement that refocuses a viewer's attention towards her suffering and entrapment.



As the camera zooms out from Dennis, Janet dominates the frame. The focus of our attention is now drawn to her entrapment. Network DVD 2011.

Once Janet undercuts her husband's self-pitying rhetoric, both visually and then verbally, the camera cuts to an over the shoulder shot. Framed by a high angle shot she looks down at her husband as she states 'somebody had to do something' which he dismisses with 'not me, never me'. As Dennis says this, the camera pans following Janet, as she walks behind the sofa, and then stops to zoom in on a cushion. She picks up the cushion and punches it with the flat of her hand once, in a pressing motion; a strong, direct and sustained action. Although this action is intended to plump the cushion, it is an action signifying her repressed frustrations against her husband. Punching it once, in the centre, with great force whilst he speaks, reveals her contempt towards him. Following this action, Janet replies to her husband in a more forceful manner claiming; 'Listen to us, we talk round and round in circles. What's the point?' She raises the tone of her voice to a loud shrill signifying the extent of this stress. She then turns around on the spot and dusts another coffee table, placed behind the sofa.

Throughout this scene, Dennis sits on the chair looking ahead. He talks about himself whilst his wife rarely remains still, constantly cleaning and priming the space. This living

room is a space of work for her, yet throughout the episode it has been a space of recreation for her male partner. She is positioned in between the table and sofa by the end of the scene, thus signifying how she is trapped by such chores. In a previous scene, the sofa was a space of relaxation for her new partner Ted Peters (John Ringham), as he and Dennis argued for ownership of the household.



Janet's movements are constricted by the surrounding furniture in relation to Dennis' freedom of movement. Network DVD 2011.

The use of space in this scene now reveals the cracks in Janet's relationship with Peters and her role as a housewife. This punch and then subsequent constricted movements signifies her entrapment. This new interaction with the sofa breaks the thread of what has occurred beforehand. The lounge is no longer a space of relaxation, nor is the living room used as a space for men to argue over its ownership; it is now a space of imprisonment and work signified through Janet's cleaning and spatial positioning.

Reading the use of props and other elements of the *mise en scène* in this manner draws an audience's attention towards the priorities of feminist political campaigns. As noted above, feminists at the time of filming were reformulating private domestic spaces as a site of

political struggle. The Kenwrights' living room, framed as a space of work and imprisonment, echoes Rowbotham's *Women's Liberation and the New Politics* (1971). *Hunters Walk*, like Rowbotham, links housework to 'unequal rights at work' (Coote and Campbell, 1987: 9). By its broadcast, the 1970 Equal Pay Act had been passed and the first National Women's Liberation Conference had begun lobbying for the Sex Discrimination Act of 1975. These public debates regarding women were concerned with their equal political and economic rights. *Hunters Walk* frames domestic spaces as oppressive spaces of housework as discussed in works including Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) and Germaine Greer's *The Female Eunuch* (1970). Friedan describes 'cooking, cleaning, washing, bearing children' as 'a pattern by which all women must now live or deny their femininity' (Friedan, 2010: 29). Similarly Greer states 'Mother is the dead heart of the family, spending father's earnings on consumer goods to enhance the environment in which he eats, sleeps and watches television' (Greer, 2008: 251). The British police series in this era has so far been described as a genre that allows 'the feminine' to be excluded from what is 'a primarily masculinist discourse' (Sydney-Smith 2002, 168). With regards to the civilian spaces of *Hunters Walk* this is not quite the case.

'Local Knowledge'

Using the *mise en scène* of a domestic space to foreground women's entrapment as part of a wider public debate is a common device used throughout *Hunter's Walk* and is particularly poignant in the second episode ('Local knowledge', 1:2). Here an audience's focus is placed on rape victim Christine Lewis (Frances White). Significantly, her husband Phillip Lewis (Ian Thompson) is depicted as being a villain for being neglectful and holding his reputation

within Broadstone in higher regard than his wife's suffering. The Lewis' front room is dominated by a large window that covers most of the wall. Whenever the curtains are opened all that is visible are two semi-detached houses. Although placed across the road, the houses are in very close proximity to the window and add to the feeling of Christine being caged in. The front room has the appearance of a showroom designed for people to peer in. Christine is imprisoned as the room has a typewriter, symbolising the work she undertakes for her husband's company's magazine, at one end, and the judgements of neighbours, represented by the big window, at the other. Not being able to relax in the space is what causes her to go for a walk in the early hours to clear her head, which results in her coming across her attacker.

For Christine there is seemingly no escape. The centrepiece to the room is decorated with exotic travel memorabilia. A woven Cordoba emblem is mounted on the wall, next to a wooden hand crafted drinks cabinet and porcelain horse. Significantly there are no photos of the couple in Cordoba because Phillip visited Cordoba alone. These possessions function as a status symbol to the Lewis' neighbours, signifying Philip's wealth and well-travelled lifestyle. This showroom, designed so that all the neighbours can see their patterns of consumption, is where Christine lives on a daily basis whilst her husband fleetingly visits from endless work trips. It is upon the news of Christine's attack that her husband returns home and cuts a work visit short. When they first share the space, Christine sits on the sofa opening her arms for an embrace, but instead Philip walks to the drinks cabinet and stands by his travel memorabilia causing each character to be framed by two separate shots. Philip's movement, interaction and positioning within the space, changes its macro meaning from one of initial reconciliation to division. Christine is treated as a possession. Following the attack, she claims people look at her like she is an 'exhibit', unaware that she has always been treated like one.



Philip avoids his wife to stand by his exotic travel memorabilia. Network DVD 2011.

Public/private dichotomy

Such depictions of domestic spaces not only brings to light the oppression experienced by middle class women but also critiques how domestic crimes were trivialised within British law practice. Although the series was transmitted before some of the previously mentioned acts were implemented, it still draws attention to the fact that criminal law was not operating in women's best interests and domestic problems were not considered to be as important as other public order crimes, despite the emerging change in public opinion regarding gender roles.

The Domestic Violence and Matrimonial Proceedings Act of 1976 did manage to empower magistrate courts to 'make an order excluding the aggressor from the home' (Edwards, 1989: 5). Similarly, the 1978 Domestic Proceedings and Magistrates' Courts Act, in response to criticisms of the 1976 act, gave 'magistrates in the lower courts the power to make an order for the protection of a party to a marriage' and the ability to 'evict the violent

spouse under an exclusion order' (Edwards, 1989: 56). However, it is worth pointing out that 'violence committed against wives, cohabitees, girlfriends or lovers in the privacy of the home, unlike violence against strangers or acquaintances committed in private or public' was 'rarely dealt with in criminal courts' (Edwards, 1989: 73). Therefore, a public/private dichotomy in law was firmly in place as only dealing with such offences in civil law courts reaffirmed 'the belief that martial violence was indeed different from other violent crime' (Edwards, 1989: 54). There was a clear problem: Women's Aid, the refuge movement for women and their children who left home to escape physical, sexual, or mental abuse grew from two refugees in 1971 to almost two hundred in the UK by 1977 (Hanmer, 1989: 90). Essentially:

The home office took no interest in this newly rediscovered social problem and neither Women's Aid nor the parliamentary select committee saw the police and criminal justice system generally as part of the state able to offer a helping service to women (Edwards, 1989: 91)

What the Women's Aid refuge movement demonstrated was that women could offer support in a context where they felt the authorities were not doing so adequately.

This public/private dichotomy was particularly prominent with regards to how rape gradually became to be understood as a crime against women through feminist lobbying in the 1970s and 1980s. A combination of 'Reclaim the Night' marches, rape crisis centres and consciousness raising groups, which emerged in Britain in the 1970s, impacted on public perceptions of rape. Before this feminist intervention, rape was often considered a personal

problem where ‘women nearly always blamed themselves for being raped, and consequently remained silent out of shame and guilt’ (Bevacqua, 2000: 61). Challenging commonly accepted myths surrounding rape provided the ‘conceptual framework for the development of a new belief system’ (Bevacqua 2000, 58) that helped to change perceptions throughout both the British public and the mass media. The assertion that rape was a crime of violence provided feminists with a whole new framework to remove blame from victims. Feminists redefined rape as ‘any form of unwanted sexual contact’ (Bevacqua, 2000: 58). Similarly, the common misconception that rape was a rare occurrence committed by ‘sexual psychopaths whose desire to rape emanates from a psychiatric disorder that drives them to commit sadistic acts’ (Bevacqua, 2000: 62) was called into question. Feminists instead advanced the notion that ‘any man can commit the crime, regardless of his status in the community’ (Bevacqua, 2000: 63).

This tension regarding the public/private dichotomy in the law was pertinent with regards to women’s safety on the streets. Following the Yorkshire Ripper’s twenty three attacks on women from 1969 to 1980, the West Yorkshire Police advised women to stay indoors at night time. As a result of this advice, activist women’s groups organised ‘Reclaim the Night’ marches in Leeds throughout the 1970s. The police’s persistent failure to capture the ripper led the public to question their ability and where their priorities lay, given the resources put into building various squads such as the Flying Squad, Serious Crimes Squad, and the Robbery Squad to pursue a particular type of crime.

The significant shift in the public’s understanding of rape was a particular concern for studio-shot police dramas. Again, ‘Local Knowledge’ is an important episode in this regard as it devotes the majority of its running time to the suffering experienced by rape victim Christine over the process of pursuing the rapist. Christine suffers from her husband’s lack of support and understanding. Phillip is of the view that she is to blame for leaving their house

alone in the early hours of the morning. Their private domestic space is presented as a political space as it is here she faces judgement from those closest to her. The consequences of treating rape as a personal problem, where the woman is incorrectly blamed, are revealed.

The Smiths

This private/public dichotomy in British law practice is examined further in 'Local Knowledge' through domestic scenes that unfold between Det. Sgt. Smith (Ewan Hooper) and his wife Betty Smith (Ruth Madoc). When the rapist, Shepard (Graham Ashley), has been arrested, Smith prolongs leaving his home before he begins the interrogation process at the station. Smith deliberately uses this tactic to unnerve Shepard. Before leaving his home the establishing shot shows that the front room of the Smiths' house is divided into two areas. A kitchenette and a lounge area are separated by a counter top with shelving placed directly above it. Initially, both Smith and Betty share the space. The camera is placed in the lounge area so that Smith is positioned in the immediate foreground whilst Betty is standing in the background behind the shelving. Whilst Betty stirs some ingredients in a bowl Smith finishes fixing the iron in the lounge area. Once the iron is repaired, Smith puts on his coat to leave for the station to interrogate Shepard. Smith puts the mended iron on the countertop that separates the kitchen from the lounge. He puts it here as if to place it back in his wife's territory. It is an implement she uses as a housewife and something he does not interact with beyond its servicing.

This brief scene alone initially seems to suggest that both characters are happy to conform to the roles expected of them as part of a sexual division of labour. Smith is the breadwinner leaving the house to earn his income whilst his wife stays at home, visibly caged by the shelving and rooted to the kitchen as a housewife. Betty is ostensibly content as she

stirs her cooking mixture. This visual imagery also keeps Betty behind a series of bars. She is placed behind something as if protected by her husband who is on the other side. Betty is happily conforming to Smith's earlier advice that she should not leave the house unattended, particularly after dark. Although 'Reclaim the Night' marches would not be staged until later in the decade, in response to the police's advice for women to stay indoors on a night time to avoid being attacked, debates surrounding rape were beginning to emerge in the public domain and are an integral aspect of this configuration of gendered space.



Smith and Betty happily conform to traditional gender roles. Betty is protected by the kitchen area. Network DVD 2011.

This initial dynamic does alter. At the end of the episode Smith sits on a chair in the lounge area, with his back to the kitchenette, looking ahead into the camera. Betty sits on an adjacent chair in another separate close-up shot. Betty asks Smith questions about the case as she looks over the top of her magazine. Upon hearing the suspect is likely to get ten years in prison she asks him, 'it's not him though is it, really. His wife, the woman, their families. Once something like this happens. How many men did you interview, five? What about their

families?’ Immediately after asking these questions Betty walks into the kitchen area directly behind Smith. She moves away from Smith because the conversation has become too tense to bear. Smith, so far, has been speaking through gritted teeth hastily trying to end the conversation with one word answers such as ‘right’. Betty appears upset that the police do not seem to consider the wider sociological implications of their actions.

Betty’s statement draws attention to the fact that many women did *not* see the police and criminal justice system working for women in vulnerable situations. However, this question does cause Smith to momentarily reassess his methods, claiming in a rather inquisitive tone ‘I’d never even thought about it’. He then swiftly qualifies his point of view with a firmer and authoritative statement claiming ‘I’ve got a job to do. I do it the only way I know how. I’m a copper not a welfare officer’. Once Smith has made this statement the camera cuts to a close-up of Betty’s face as she sighs and tilts her head to one side, looking over her husband from the kitchen area. This motion of her head tilting is then matched cut with the action of Philip, husband of rape victim Christine, downing a glass of whisky alone in his front room. As Philip drinks, the camera cuts to his wife getting into bed upstairs on her own. As this is the last image of the episode, Betty is ultimately proven to be right, as the Lewis family are isolated from one another and are without the necessary support they need despite the apprehension of the rapist. Smith’s self-assured authority, advice and support, as a member of the British Police Force, is questioned and challenged.



As Betty tilts her head to the left whilst sighing and looking over her husband, the next immediate shot is of Philip tilting his head backwards in the same direction as he downs a glass of whisky. Network DVD 2011.

Gendered divisions exist within the Smith's household as Betty is usually rooted to the kitchen whilst Smith has the freedom of the lounge. In this scene, however, both characters are framed in their own close-ups. The camera observes Betty giving her the final say through her dismissive body language that undercuts Smith's viewpoint. Betty is never excluded from view or side-lined to focus on Smith. Betty provides a credible and alternative viewpoint, reminding Smith and the viewers at the time that families of criminals and victims of crime required more support. She implies that women and families were being forgotten by the criminal justice system. This had rarely been considered before in a British police series in this manner, and here Betty informs audiences that the story does not end with the guilty suspect being arrested. Betty is given an equal share of the camerawork that provides her with a space to voice her opinions. She is considered as an equal in the household, thus providing an alternative to the way in which women are treated in the other civilian spaces of *Hunters Walk*.

Betty is a vital character of the series. She is a member of NUT (National Union of Teachers) and attends meetings independently. Although she never discusses what is said, the

very fact she is a member of a union means that the series recognised that union membership, and possible strike action within the public domain, was no longer perceived to be a male endeavour fought exclusively amongst men. As a member of a union, who is of a lower-middle-class social standing, her character symbolises the coming together of working-class trade unionists and middle class liberals. It was in the early 1970s that feminists and trade unionists were meeting in substantial numbers and recognising each other's tactical importance. Whilst being a member of a union Betty is also interested in women's 'day to day experiences' (Coote and Campbell, 1987: 5) as a form of political struggle, as was being discussed in groups of women across Britain.

Hunters Walk was informed by the arguments made by feminist groups that helped reformulate society into understanding rape as a crime against women. 'Local Knowledge' contributes to this debate by providing access to the shame and guilt Christine is pressured into experiencing by those closest to her. It also dispels the myth that rape is a rare occurrence committed by psychopaths, as rapist Sheppard is a tradesman and fully functional member of the community. *Hunters Walk* addresses these complex debates and seems to endorse keeping women safe at home in their domestic spaces on the evenings. However, at the same time it draws attention to the women and victims the law does not represent, address or help.

Conclusion

Traditionally it is the soap opera that is regarded as the television genre that challenged a sexual division of labour throughout the 1970s. It is often seen as one of the few forms of drama that tested television's frequently reproduced ideology of separate spheres in relation to programming that characterised the home as a feminine space of leisure compared to the

public arena of masculinity and work. Christine Geraghty in particular has argued how *Coronation Street* and *Crossroads* (1964-88) in that time period overturned a 'deeply entrenched value structure based on oppositions of masculinity and femininity' (Geraghty 1991, 41) as 'external power relations' are 'either ignored altogether or translated into personal relationships' (Geraghty, 1991: 56). In recent years, feminist television criticism has begun to accept that crime dramas can now engage with feminist concerns following the pressures of feminism and the transmission of programmes such as *Prime Suspect*.

However, the police series has been interested in feminist concerns since the 1970s, and it is not solely interested in depictions of men as traditionally perceived. By analysing *Hunters Walk*, this article has shown how a genre traditionally cited as being predominantly interested in depictions of masculinity was also concerned with the perspective of women characters, and how the domestic space could be entrapping and oppressive to varying degrees. *Hunters Walk* played an integral part in the then ongoing debate concerning gender roles, as it was not only sympathetic to feminist concerns through its depictions of domesticity, but also questioned the methods and attitudes of a male dominated police force and their disposition towards tackling public, over private, matters. The inclusion of Smith's wife as a character is particularly important in this respect as she provides a counter opinion to her husband rather than allowing herself to be dismissed.

ITV's *The Sweeney* is often considered to be the defining police series of the 1970s in its utilisation of film technology to quicken the narrative pace and increase the range of camera angles. However, just before its transmission there was a successful programme, second only to *Coronation Street* in terms of its ratings, that could provide more open ended, balanced and complex sociological discussions, like that of soap operas, that were all but ignored in other popular police series of that time.

References

- Bevacqua M (2000) *Rape on the Public Agenda: Feminism and the Politics of Sexual Assault*. Boston: Northeastern University Press.
- Bill, The* (1983-2010) ITV. Thames Television.
- Block D (1974) Ruth Madoc's Road from Wales to Hunter's Walk. *TV Times*, 18 - 24 May, 24.
- Brunsdon C and D'Acci.J (1997) (2nd ed 2008) Introduction. In: Brunsdon C, D'Acci J and Spigel L (eds) *Feminist Television Criticism: A Reader*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 1-16.
- Brunsdon C and D'Acci.J (1997) (2nd ed 2008) Introduction to Part 1: Housewives, Heroines Feminists. In: Brunsdon C, D'Acci J and Spigel L (eds) *Feminist Television Criticism: A Reader*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.19-22.
- Brunsdon, C (2010) *Law and Order*. London: BFI.
- Cagney and Lacey* (1982-88) CBS. CBS, Filmway Pictures, Orion Television.
- Caughie J (2000) *Television Drama: Realism, Modernism, and British Culture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Charlie's Angels* (1976-81) ABC. Spelling-Goldberg Productions.

Clarke A (1992) “You’re Nicked”: TV Police Series and the Fictional Representation of Law and Order. In: Strinati D and Wagg S (eds) *Come on down? Popular Media Culture in Post-War Britain*. London, New York: Routledge, pp. 232-253.

Cooke L (2003) *British Television Drama: A History*. London: BFI.

Cooke L (2008) The Crime Series. In: Creeber G, Miller T and Tulloch J (eds) *The Television Genre Book*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 29-33.

Coote A and Campbell B (2nd ed 1987). *Sweet Freedom: The Struggle for Women's Liberation*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Corner J (ed) (1991) *Popular Television in Britain: Studies in Cultural History*. London: BFI.

Coronation Street (1960- present) ITV. Granada Television.

Cotton I (1974) Ewan Hooper...Knocking Down Brick Walls to Make a Dream Come True. *TV Times*, 24 May, 11 – 17.

Cracker (1993-1996, 2006) ITV. Granada Television.

Creeber G, Miller T and Tulloch J (eds) (2008) *The Television Genre Book*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Crewe Q (1974) Time to Spring A Surprise. *The Times*, 27 July, 11.

Crossroads (1964-88) ITV. Associated Television (ATV).

Dixon of Dock Green (1955-1976) BBC.

Deane Potter J (1976) Potato Poaching is Just One More Burden for the Village Bobby. *TV Times*, 29 May – 4 June, 15-16.

- Dye R, Jordan M, Lovell T, Paterson R, Stewart J and Geraghty C (eds) (1980) *Coronation Street*. London: BFI.
- Edwards SSM. (1989) *Policing 'Domestic' Violence: Women, the Law and the State*. London: Sage.
- Feasey R (2008) *Masculinity and Popular Television*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Friedan B (2010) *The Feminine Mystique*. London: Penguin Classics.
- Gambaccini P and Taylor R (1993) *Television's Greatest Hits: Every Hit Television Programme Since 1960*. London: Network Books.
- Gamman L (1988) Watching the Detectives: The Enigma of the Female Gaze. In: Gamman L and Marshment M (eds) *The Female Gaze: Women as Viewers of Popular Culture*. London: Women's Press, pp. 8-26
- Geraghty C (1991) *Women and Soap Opera: A Study of Prime Time Soaps*. Oxford: Polity.
- Greer G (2008) *The Female Eunuch*. London: HarperPerennial Modern Classics .
- Hallam J (2000) Power Plays: Gender, Genre, and Lynda La Plante. In: Bignell J, Lacey S and MacMurrough-Kavanagh M (eds) *British Television Drama: Past, Present and Future*. Basingstoke: Palgrave, pp. 140-49.
- Hallam J (2005) *Lynda La Plante*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Hanmer J (1989) Women and Policing in Britain. In: Hanmer J, Radford J and Stanko E (eds) *Women, Policing, and Male Violence: International Perspectives*. London: Routledge, pp. 90-124.

Hunters Walk (1973-76) ITV. Associated Television (ATV).

Inspector Morse (1987-2000) ITV. Central Television, Carlton Television, Zenith Entertainment.

Jermyn D (2008) Women with a Mission: Lynda La Plante, DCI Jane Tennison and the Reconfiguration of Crime Drama. In: Brunson C, D'Acci J and Spigel L (eds) *Feminist Television Criticism: A Reader*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 57-71.

Juliet Bravo (1980-1985) BBC.

Lee S (1973) So *Hunters Walk* Goes on the Map. *TV Times*, 9 -15 June, 16 -18.

Lewis (2006-present) ITV. Granada Television, ITV Studios et al.

Lewis P (1962) *Z Cars*. *Contrast* 1(4): 301-315.

Life on Mars (2006-07) BBC. BBC, Kudos Film and Television et al.

Lopate C (1977) Daytime Television: You'll Never Want to Leave Home. *Radical America* 11(1): 32-51.

Mellencamp P (1997) Situation Comedy, Feminism and Freud: Discourses of Gracie and Lucy. In: Brunson C, D'Acci J and Spigel L (eds) *Feminist Television Criticism: A Reader*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 60-73.

Mitchell J (1971) *Woman's Estate*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Modleski T (1997) In Search of Tomorrow in Today's Soap Operas: Notes on a Feminine Narrative Form. In: Brunson C, D'Acci J and Spigel L (eds) *Feminist Television Criticism: A Reader*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 36-47.

Piper H (2015) *The TV Detective: Voices of Dissent in Contemporary Television*. London: I.B.Tauris.

Police Woman (1974-76) NBC. Columbia Pictures Television.

Prime Suspect (1991-2006) ITV. Granada Television.

Rowbotham S (1971) *Women's Liberation and the New Politics*. London: Spokesman Books.

Rowbotham S (1999) *A Century of Women: The History of Women in Britain and the United States*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Seiter E (1982) Promise and Contradiction: The Daytime Television Serials. *Screen*, 23 (Winter): 150-63.

Sweeney, The (1975-1978) ITV. Thames Television, Euston Films.

Sydney-Smith S (2002) *Beyond Dixon of Dock Green: Early British Police Series*. London: I. B. Tauris.

Thomas L (1997) In Love with Inspector Morse. In: Brunson C, D'Acci J and Spigel L (eds) *Feminist Television Criticism: A Reader*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 184-204.

Touch of Frost, A (1992-2010) ITV. Yorkshire Television, ITV Productions.

Tulloch J (1990) *Television Drama: Agency, Audience, Myth*. London: Routledge.

Turnbull S (2014) *The TV Crime Drama*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Z Cars (1962-78). BBC.