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Catherine Johnson, 'The Continuity of 'Continuity': flow and the changing experience of watching broadcast television', *Key Words: A Journal of Cultural Materialism,* Volume 11, October 2013.

What is the nature of the experience of watching television? Perhaps the most famous answer to this question is Raymond Williams' theorisation of 'flow', in which he argued that broadcasting introduced a fundamentally different experience to the discrete activities of reading a book or watching a play by unifying different forms of communication into a singular continuous flow.[1] Yet, when Williams was writing in 1974, the landscape of television broadcasting was quite different from the one in which I am writing. In the UK there were only three television channels, all of which were regulated as public service broadcasters. In 2013, the number of channels has vastly increased with the rise of non-public service, commercial subscription services and viewers can access programmes beyond the broadcasters' planned sequence of flow through on-demand services.

The debates about the continued significance of flow in television and media studies have largely concerned the extent to which a concept developed in relation to linear broadcasting can be adapted to the digital era. Brooker notes that the experience of engaging with television frequently 'overflows' the bounds of broadcast flow onto other platforms and media, while Mittell and Bennett

[1] Raymond Williams, *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* (1975; London: Routledge, 1990), p.87.

point to television's transformation from linear flow to files selected by viewers through an interface.[2] Indeed, Oswald and Packer argue that with the rise of cable, satellite, internet and mobile devices for viewing television it is hard to argue for Williams' notion of flow or his approach to analysing it as adequate tools for media studies.[3]

However, while it is important to recognise the new texts, practices and experiences generated by the uptake of digital technologies for distributing and receiving television, we need to be wary of suggesting that broadcast television is dead, or that there is no continued significance in understanding or examining *broadcasting* as a cultural form. As Evans argues, 'the development of the internet and mobile phone as television platforms does not make television redundant. Instead they are integrated into a complex and shifting media landscape that includes both television and earlier media forms'.[4] Indeed, while scholars may be particularly attuned to new developments and changes in the media, research suggests that for most viewers in the West broadcast television still forms the primary means through which television is watched.[5] As Max

[2] Will Brooker, 'Living on *Dawson's Creek*: teen viewers, cultural convergence and television overflow', *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 4, 4 (December 2001). Jason Mittell, 'TiVoing Childhood: time shifting a generation's concept of television', in Michael Kackman, Marnie Binfield, Matthew Thomas Payne, Allison Perlman, and Bryan Sebok (eds.), *Flow TV: television in the age of media convergence* (New York: Routledge, 2011). James Bennett, 'Introduction: television as digital media', in James Bennett and Niki Strange (eds.), *Television as Digital Media* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2001). It is notable that both Brooker and Mittell draw on the experiences of younger generations (children and teens). While this may evidence a generational shift, equally it may evidence the different needs of younger audiences.

[3] Kathleen F. Oswald and Jeremy Packer, 'Flow and Mobile Media: broadcast fixity to digital fluidity', in Jeremy Packer and Stephen B. Crofts Wiley (eds.), *Communication Matters: materialist approaches to media, mobility and networks* (London and New York: Routledge, 2012), p.279-80.

[4] Elizabeth Evans, *Transmedia Television: audiences, new media and daily life* (New York: Routledge, 2011), p.176.

[5] Research from Eurodata suggests that linear television viewing is increasing across the world ('One TV Year in the World: 2012 or the multiple TV experience', Eurodata, 21 March 2013 [online], http://www.mediametrie.com/eurodatatv/communiques/one-tv-year-in-the-world-2012-or-the-multiple-tv-experience.php?id=831, accessed 29 March 2013). Meanwhile reports from Ofcom and Nielsen about UK and US television viewing respectively indicate that the linear broadcasting is still the primary way of watching television (Ofcom, 'C. PSB viewing: reporting BARB data on PSB viewing', *Public Service Broadcasting Annual Report 2012,* June 2012. Nielsen, *The Cross-Platform Report*, 2011).

Dawson has persuasively argued, in the attempts to understand the changes that have taken place to television, television studies itself has tended to privilege 'change over continuity, emergence over residuality, and the technological proclivities of the limited number of statistical outliers who have embraced digital platforms over the many millions who have not'.[6]

Arguing that broadcasting remains the primary means of viewing television, does not, however, mean that the experience of watching broadcast television remains unchanged. Broadcasters have adopted new scheduling strategies in response to the increasingly competitive marketplace that emerged over the 1990s.[7] Meanwhile, new strategies in the structuring of the broadcast flow have been designed to retain audiences amidst the increasingly numerous calls on their attention.[8] If broadcasting is still the principal way in which television is viewed in the digital era, television broadcasters now have to function within a landscape in which the potential experiences of television have changed and multiplied.

I want to argue, therefore, that in addition to examining the new technologies, cultural practices and textual forms that are emerging in the digital era, to understand fully the changes that are taking place to contemporary television we

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[6] Max Dawson, 'Television Between Analog and Digital', *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 38, 2 (2010), p.98.

[7] Julie Light, *Television Channel Identity: the role of channels in the delivery of public service television in Britain, 1996-2002*, unpublished PhD thesis (University of Glasgow, 2004). John Ellis, *Seeing Things: television in the age of uncertainty* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2000). Espen Ytreberg, 'Continuity in Environments : The Evolution of Basic Practices and Dilemmas in Nordic Television Scheduling', *European Journal of Communication* 17, 3 (2002), pp.283-304.

[8] Susan Tyler Eastman, Jeffrey Neal-Lunsford and Karen E. Riggs, 'Coping with Grazing: prime-time strategies for accelerated program transitions', *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media* 39, 1 (1995), pp.91-109. Susan Tyler Eastman, Gregory D. Newton, Karen E. Riggs and Jeffrey Neal-Lunsford, 'Accelerating the Flow: a transition effect in programming theory?', *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media* 41, 2 (1997), pp.265-83. Catherine Johnson, *Branding Television* (London and New York: Routledge, 2012). Hilde Van Den Bulck and Gunn Sara Enli, 'Bye Bye ''Hello Ladies?'' In-Vision Announcers as Continuity Technique in a European Postlinear Television Landscape: The Case of Flanders and Norway', *Television and New Media* (17 October 2012) [online], DOI: 10.1177/1527476412462143.

also need to examine the changes to broadcast television itself. To demonstrate the ways in which broadcasters have adapted linear television flow to respond to the changes of the digital era, I want to focus on one specific aspect of the broadcasting, the junctions or interstitials between the programmes. Although in Williams' analysis the interstitials (defined as internal publicity and commercials) accounted for around 1 per cent of the output of non-commercial UK broadcasters and around 13 per cent for commercial broadcasters, he maintained that they formed a fundamental part of the experience of broadcasting, stemming from the 'decisive innovation' in the development of broadcasting as flow, namely the emergence of commercial television.[9] Previous to this both radio and television broadcasting in the UK had included intervals between programme units, such as 'the sounds of bells or the sight of waves', and the BBC avoided continuity in order to encourage discriminating listening and viewing.[10] The arrival of commercial television (ITV) in the UK challenged this emphasis on selective listening and viewing in public service broadcasting. Although the intervals between programmes were the obvious site for the placement of advertising, they also emerged a problematic site where viewers might be lost to the competition. In an attempt to retain viewers for a whole evening, broadcasters constructed the experience of television as a continuous sequence of flow in which the 'interruptions' between programmes (such as adverts, trailers and idents) were experienced not as 'a programme of discrete units with particular insertions, but a planned flow, in which the true series is not the published sequence of programme items but this sequence transformed by

[9] Williams, *Television*, p.90.
[10] Williams, *Television*, p.90. Paddy Scannell, 'Public service broadcasting and modern public life', *Media, Culture and Society* 11, 2 (April 1989), p.149.

the inclusion of another kind of sequence, so that these sequences together compose the real flow, the real "broadcasting"'.[11]

Programme trailers and other promotional material produced by the broadcasters themselves are designed to encourage viewers to remain tuned in to a particular channel or, to quote Williams, 'to sustain that evening flow'.[12] These elements of the broadcast flow became a particularly important site after the uptake of the remote control in the 1980s. For William Uricchio the remote control 'signalled a shift from Williams' idea of flow to flow as a set of choices and actions initiated by the viewer'.[13] The junctions served as the battleground within which this shift in control over flow from television programmer to viewer was enacted, emerging as a central site through which to examine the changes to flow from the broadcast to the digital eras.[14]

Yet, Williams stressed that flow cannot be explained simply as a means through which broadcasters attempted to retain viewers, arguing that 'the flow offered can also ... be related to the television experience itself'.[15] In this sense, the interstitials could be said to contribute to what the media scholar, Paddy Scannell, has termed the 'communicative ethos' of broadcasting. Scannell argues that because broadcasters cannot control the context within which their

[11] Williams, *Television*, p.90. Under pressure from commercial broadcasters the 'toddlers' truce' in which no television was broadcast between 6pm and 7pm was abandoned in 1957 and both the BBC and ITV had to compete more directly for the attention of viewers.
[12] Williams, *Television*, p.93.
[13] William Uricchio, 'Television's Next Generation: technology/interface culture/flow', in Lynn Spigel and Jan Olsson (eds.), *Television After TV: essays on a medium in transition* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2004), p.170. Uricchio perhaps underplays here the significance that Williams places on broadcasters' desire to prevent viewers from switching over to the competition in the development of flow in the first place. In this sense, the battle between the programmers' and the viewers' control over flow identified by Uricchio is inherent in Williams' original formulation.
[14] Ytreberg ('Continuity', p.286-7) demonstrates that these changes are not unique to the US and UK, noting that the rise of multichannel television across Europe over the 1980s and 1990s made the junction points in the schedules more important.
[15] Williams, *Television*, p.94.

broadcasts are viewed or listened to, 'the burden of responsibility is ... on the broadcasters to understand the conditions of reception, and to express that understanding in language intended to be recognized as oriented to those conditions.'[16] This 'communicative ethos' is made up of both 'a series of structuring temporal arrangements', such as the creation of schedules attuned to the perceived daily rhythms and yearly rituals of private and public life, and 'a communicative style' adapted to the perceived audience for particular times of day or genres of programming.[17] While Scannell focuses primarily on 'talk' and the verbal ways in which the viewer is addressed by the broadcaster,[18] the junctions between programmes are also key to television's communicative ethos. The junctions act as the site where the broadcaster has the opportunity to communicate directly with the viewer, shaping the tone of address for a particular broadcaster and/or channel as well as communicating the structuring patterns of broadcasting to viewers.[19] As such, the junctions play a central role in constructing and explaining the value and experience of television to the public and to key decision-makers (such as regulators and politicians).[20]

While elsewhere I have analysed the broader shifts in the function of the interstitials from the 1980s to the present day, this largely focused on explaining the differences in the communicative ethos of UK and US television and the role of the junctions in the branding strategies of broadcasters. In this article I want to undertake a more detailed and nuanced analysis of the junctions, focusing less on branding and more on the role that they play in structuring, shaping and

[16] Scannell, 'Public service broadcasting', p.149.
[17] Scannell, 'Public service broadcasting', p.152.
[18] See Paddy Scannell, *Radio, Television and Modern Life: a phenomenological approach* (Cambridge, MA and Oxford: Blackwell, 1996).
[19] Van Den Bulck and Enli ('Bye Bye') make similar arguments about the role of continuity announcers in European television.
[20] Johnson, *Branding*, p.138.

communicating the broadcast flow. If, as Williams argues, analysis of broadcast flow allows us to understand the characteristics of the experience of television viewing, then I want to suggest that focusing on the junctions allows us to identify the ways in which broadcasters have altered the communicative ethos of broadcasting in response to the new experiences of television in the digital era.

Borrowing from the methodology used by Williams in the 1970s I want to focus here on two moments from the broadcast flow from one channel (BBC One), one from 14 February 1985 and one from 15 June 2010. Williams argues that this kind of detailed close-range analysis of the succession of words and images is necessary in order to see the real character of television flow. While this addresses Corner's criticism that academic uses of flow tend to pull towards the macro at the expense of the specific, it also runs the risk of taking one broadcaster as paradigmatic of broader change.[21] Although I will be focusing on two specific examples they are drawn from a broader analysis of whole evenings of UK public service television taken at five-yearly intervals from the mid-1980s to 2010 and have been chosen as indicative of the broader communicative ethos in UK broadcast television.[22] However, comparison will be made throughout to research from other countries in order to broaden out the relevance of this analysis.

Thursday 14 February 1985, BBC One, 11.15pm (1 minute and 46 seconds):

i. *Question Time* studio with presenter, panellists and studio audience. Presenter mentions who will be on the next episode and when it will be broadcast. End credits and title music.

[21] John Corner, *Critical Ideas in Television Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).
[22] For the contemporary period examples have also been taken from commercial non-public service television channels.

ii. Fade to black.

iii. Fade up to still image: BBC One logo with the text '*This Week Next Week*' and close-up of David Dimbleby. Male voiceover describes the programme, ending with title, day, time and channel of broadcast (Sunday at 1pm on BBC One).

iv. Fade to black.

v. Electronic graphic of 'Monday BBC 1', brief burst of electronic score and upbeat male voice (used across v. to xi. and different to iii.) introducing the 'new look to Monday evening entertainment on BBC One'.

vi. Checkerboard wipe to a short montage of Terry Wogan on the set of *Wogan* overlaid with a graphic of the programme title and time of broadcast (7pm). Brief description by the male voiceover with *Wogan*'s title music behind.

vii. Electronic graphic of 'Monday BBC 1' zooms in. Checkerboard wipe to clip from *Fame* overlaid with a graphic of the programme title and time of broadcast (7.40pm). Brief description by the male voiceover with *Fame*'s title music behind.

viii. Electronic graphic of 'Monday BBC 1' zooms in. Checkerboard wipe to clip from *Are You Being Served?* overlaid with a graphic of the programme title and time of broadcast (8.30pm). Brief introduction by the male voiceover with the title music behind before cut to a brief clip from the series.

ix. Electronic graphic of 'Monday BBC 1' zooms in. Male voiceover mentions the news at 9pm.

x. Checkerboard wipe to clip from *Panorama* overlaid with a graphic of the programme title and time of broadcast (9.25pm). Description of the topic of investigation by male voiceover with the *Panorama* title music behind.

xi. Electronic graphic of 'Monday BBC 1' zooms in as orchestral music fades up. The male voiceover states that the Monday film *Dirty Harry* will round off the evening as the screen wipes to reveal the a graphic of the schedule for the evening with times and programme. The male voiceover ends by proclaiming 'this is the new look for Monday evenings on BBC One'.

xii. Fade to black.

xiii. Fade up to BBC One ident (rotating globe) with BBC One logo from iii. underneath. Male voiceover from iii. states 'now on BBC One the first of eight programmes on making rock music: *Rock School*'.

xiv. Cut to programme titles and theme tune.

As with Williams' analysis of flow on US and UK television in the mid-1970s, here we can see the characteristics of speed, variety and miscellaneity. A range of different genres are represented, from serious current affairs, to comedy, to chat shows, alongside graphics related to the channel and programmes being broadcast, all within 1 minute and 46 seconds. Despite the variety of texts the organising feature of the flow is based on two elements: time and information. The junction exists to give us information about the temporal flow of broadcast television, telling us which programmes are on when. In doing so, the junction communicates the temporal as the major organising feature of television flow, exemplifying Mary Ann Doane's argument that 'The major category of television is time'.[23] Time, Doane argued, only exists because something happens and so

[23] Mary Ann Doane, 'Information, Crisis, Catastrophe' in *Logics of Television: essays in cultural criticism*, (London: BFI, 1990), p.222.

television fills time by organising it around happenings or events. Writing in 1990, Doane claimed that television offered three different modes of apprehending these events, the most common of which was information – the daily stream of newsworthy events characterised by regularity or even predictability. As such, we can understand information and time to be inextricably linked in the communicative ethos of broadcast television and this is evident throughout this junction. Each element of the flow of the junction combines descriptions of *what* will be on with information about *when* it will be on: the still image promotes a programme that will be on at 1pm the following Sunday, the trailer indicates the temporal flow of Monday evening's broadcast ending with a still image of the schedule, and the continuity announcer concludes the junction by stating 'and now...'. The junction, as well as filling the time between programmes, also communicates and illustrates to the viewer the *ways* in which television itself fills time. [Figure 1 near here: 'Graphic of the schedule for Monday nights on BBC One, 14 February 1985'] As Ytreberg argues in relation to Nordic television, the temporal flow of information supports a public service remit by constructing television viewing as a 'balanced diet' of demanding and entertaining content.[24]

The emphasis on temporality is reinforced by the direct address of the continuity announcer so that this interstitial serves as a reminder or insistence of television's presence, both at the moment of broadcast and (in terms of the trailers for forthcoming programmes) in the future. Indeed, Van Den Bulck and Enli argue that across Europe continuity announcers ensured the semblance of broadcast flow and stressed the 'here and now' of television.[25] Even on the UK

[24] Ytreberg, 'Continuity', p.291.
[25] Van Den Bulck and Enli, 'Bye Bye', p.3-4.

public service commercial channels where the adverts could be understood as an interruption, the structure of the junctions functioned to integrate them into the informational flow by inserting them into the middle of the junction, surrounded by promotion and continuity. In this way the viewer was encouraged to experience the adverts as a continuation of the promotional texts within the junctions.[26]

These junctions, then, communicate to the viewer a conception of broadcast television as a medium that exists as, and can be experienced as, a continuous flow, demonstrating the 'always on' way in which television fills time. The emphasis here on the continuity of broadcast flow is perhaps unsurprising given that 'continuity' is an industry term used to describe the announcers and texts that emerge within the junctions. By 2010 the interstitials on BBC One had changed significantly, according more with another industry term used for the work of the junctions – 'presentation'.

<u>Tuesday 15 June 2010, BBC One, 9pm</u> (2 minutes 20 seconds):

i. End credits for *Holby City* with theme music over.
ii. The theme music fades down and the *Holby* credits are squeezed to a box in the bottom centre of the screen against a red background. In sequence, three boxes fade up above the *Holby* credits, each described by a male voiceover; the first a red box with 'Next *Crimewatch*' and the BBC One logo, the second a turquoise box with 'Now *Tribal Wives*' and the BBC Two logo, and the third a black box with 'Now *Rude Britannia*' and the BBC

[26] This does point to one of the key differences between European and US television. The latter does not have the same tradition of using continuity announcers and, as Williams' memorable description of watching US television attests, it is common to cut straight into ad breaks without any surrounding promotion or continuity. See Williams, *Television*, p.91-2 and Johnson, *Branding*, p.130-37.

Four logo. The *Holby* credits then zoom out to fill the screen as the theme music fades up and the credits come to an end.

iii. Cut to the image of a man's shadow with the BBC One logo bottom centre. An instrumental version of the Kaiser Chief's *Underdog* plays as the sequence rapidly cuts between a number of different images: an anxious couple sitting next to a pool of water, Sherlock Holmes (Benedict Cumberbatch) smiling, a man shouting 'anybody' in a dark corridor, a woman's face in close-up turning and pulling the hair from over her ears, and so on, as snippets of dialogue are cut together. As the music continues we cut to a series of montages of a number of different dramas (*The Silence*, *The Deep* and *Sherlock*) each signalled by a graphic of the programme's title in the top left hand corner. We then cut to a final montage of a women looking through a car window and two people walking through a dark corridor as the voice of Watson (Martin Freeman) asks, 'What are we dealing with?' Fade to black and then fade up to a close-up of Holmes exclaiming 'Something new'. Wipe to a red background with the BBC One logo in the centre with the text 'New Drama Coming Soon' underneath.

iv. Cut to a blue screen as a graphic 'World of Wonder. Science on the BBC' slowly zooms towards the camera. Lines and circles grow out of the title graphics as a hypnotic electronic score cuts in. Cut between a slow pan away from a woman's face describing a scientist watching oil travel through a maze, and close-ups of a gold globule travelling through a clear Perspex maze. Bottom left is the BBC Radio 4 logo. The sequence ends as the globule travels out of the maze across the text 'the best stories are real' and turns into the BBC Radio 4 logo as the programme title (*Material*

World) and time of broadcast (every Thursday at 4.30) fade up to its right with the BBC Radio 4 url underneath. A female voiceover states 'Science on BBC Radio 4' and gives the programme title and time of broadcast.

v. Cut to a close-up of a woman blowing a kiss to the camera. Over a montage of different female opera singers a female voiceover exclaims, 'BBC Two invites you to meet the greatest sopranos in the world'. The montage continues, intercutting short excerpts of interviews explaining what makes a great soprano with the female voiceover describing the programme, ending by providing the programme title (*What Makes a Great Soprano?*) and time of broadcast (Saturday 9pm). Cut to a black screen with a graphic of the season title (Opera on the BBC), the programme title and time of broadcast, a url for the season and the BBC Two logo.

vi. Cut to a long shot of a lighthouse in the middle of the sea as a helicopter flies into shot with an electronic musical refrain under. Cut to a series of close-ups of the helicopter ending on an overhead shot as the helicopter comes to land on a circular heliport at the top of the lighthouse. The BBC One logo fades up centre screen as a red line traces the circle of the heliport. A male voiceover briefly describes the next programme, ending 'now on BBC One, *Crimewatch*'.

vii. Cut to *Crimewatch* opening titles.

If the junction from 1985 emphasised temporality as the key experience of television flow, this junction from 2010 presents the experience of watching television spatially as well as temporally. This is perhaps most apparent in the change to the BBC One ident. The simple graphic representation of the spinning globe has been replaced by a series of idents that depict the channel as a space

of magical transformation where the familiar world distorts and is unified through the visual symbol of the circle; from the heliport transformed into a circle, to a forest scene in which branches bend to create a circle circumvented by fairies, or an underwater shot of hippos swimming in a synchronised circle. [Figure 2 near here: 'BBC One's heliport ident'] Although the extent to which channel design has been prioritised in European broadcasting varies, this is not unique to BBC One or public service broadcasting and can be seen in the idents for the UK commercial broadcaster Sky One and the commercial Italian digital channel La7.[27] Ytregerg notes a similar shift in Nordic broadcasting where there has been a 'turn from scheduling for continuity towards designing environments' as competition has increased the need for the construction of a distinctive brand environment for television channels.[28]

The spatialisation of the experience of television viewing is also apparent in the replacement of still images providing information about the trailed programmes with what is referred to in the industry as an 'end credit squeeze' (ii.). This functions to visually represent the parallel journeys that the viewer could take to watch television programmes across different channels or platforms, and has become a common feature of broadcast television in the digital era.[29] [Figure 3 near here: 'BBC One's use of an 'end credit squeeze' from 15 June 2010'] The rhetorical address to embarking on a journey is also apparent (albeit more implicitly) within the trailers that invite the viewer 'to meet the greatest soprano in the world' or offer to transport the viewer to a 'World of Wonder'. The

[27] Again, US television differs significantly with short graphic channel logos largely featuring briefly at the end of programme trailers. See Johnson, *Branding*, p.132-33.
[28] Ytreberg, 'Continuity', p.299.
[29] The end credit squeeze is a controversial strategy within the UK and not used by all broadcasters. Van Den Bulck and Enli ('Bye Bye', p.13) note the use of the end credit squeeze in Norwegian commercial television and it is a common feature of US television in the digital era.

temporal is not absent here, but increasingly the experience of television is being framed through a set of spatial, as well as temporal, metaphors. The emphasis on television's perpetual presence remains, but it is a presence that is now articulated more overtly in both space and time.

Daniel Chamberlain has noted that digital television has heralded the rise of new screen interfaces that act as intermediaries between individuals and content, such as the menus associated with electronic programme guides, personal video recorders, online databases like YouTube and portable media devices.[30] While Chamberlain argues that these new screen interfaces offer personalisation and control as a challenge to the liveness and flow of broadcast television, across this junction an attempt is made to create a sense of control through an explicit address to viewer agency. The end credit squeeze, for example, displays an array of choices to the viewer and invites them to decide where and what to view next. Meanwhile, the voice-over for the opera trailer appeals to agency in 'inviting' the viewer to meet the greatest sopranos in the world. This is quite different to the junction from 1985 which did not include any explicit address to viewer agency. Although it offered a menu of choice in the guise of the Monday evening schedule, this was presented as a linear sequential experience rather than as a list of alternative options. If the junctions are concerned with communicating the experience of television viewing then in 2010 part of the value and pleasure of television presented here is agency and choice, albeit choice specifically limited to BBC brands.

There is something paradoxical at work in this appeal to viewer control within a sequential flow created by broadcasters. The flow of broadcasting has particular

[30] Daniel Chamberlain, 'Scripted Spaces: television interfaces and the non-places of asynchronous entertainment', in Bennett and Strange (eds.), *Television*.

ideological importance to the BBC, and BBC One in particular, because of the significance of the mixed programme schedule to public service broadcasting. Much of the ideals behind the mixed programme schedule – that it might help viewers to encounter programmes that they would not usually encounter – are undermined in the digital era's focus on the values of individual choice. The junction, taken as a whole, has the potential to act as a microcosm of the mixed programme schedule, offering choice while simultaneously acting as an invitation to try something new. The junction in 1985 presented the mixed programme schedule in a linear form, demonstrating the way in which one evening of viewing could include a chat show, US musical drama series, comedy, current affairs programme, Hollywood film and news. In 2010 there are trailers for a range of media (television and radio) and programmes (drama, documentary, science, opera), across a number of channels and services, all presented to us after a soap opera. As such, while there is an emphasis here on agency and choice, there remains an appeal to the values of the mixed programme schedule. Indeed arguably the range and variety of programmes trailed in 2010 is broader than 1985.[31]

The appeal to viewer agency also has to be balanced against the need for the junctions to capture and retain viewer attention. In 1985 this was most evident in the inclusion of a trailer for the current affairs show *This Week Next Week* immediately after a programme within the same genre, *Question Time*. Generically linking the trailer to the programme that preceded it and trailing a sequence of programmes together as a whole evening both function to retain

[31] This is a feature that distinguishes the junctions of public service broadcasters from non-public service broadcasters. For public service broadcasters media planning has to balance ratings with public service values. Ytreberg ('Continuity') and Johnson (*Branding*) both claim that this makes the junctions particularly important for public service broadcasters.

viewer interest by linking apparently disparate elements into a coherent whole, reinforced through the consistent use of the same voiceover. The voiceover both unifies and humanises the channel, addressing the viewer as a representative of the broadcaster itself and contributing to the construction of an identity and personality for the channel. In line with Scannell's analysis of broadcasting's communicative ethos and Van Den Bulck and Elin's analysis of Flemish and Norwegian in-vision continuity announcers, the voiceover is polite but also 'relaxed, natural and spontaneous', creating a sociable and accessible experience.[32] By 2010, the strategies to capture and retain viewer attention have changed. This is perhaps most evident in the end credit squeeze where the attempt to retain viewer engagement has blurred into the programme itself. However, it is also evident in the increased televisuality of the junctions.[33] The BBC drama trailer, for example, overtly draws attention to the sophistication of its editing in both the use of music and the intercutting between and within each drama. The trailer corresponds with Lisa Kernan's observation that the selection and combination of images in US movie trailers functions to 'privilege the spectator's attention over sustaining narrative coherence'.[34] The trailer invites us to see links between these different dramas without offering any clear story and playfully encourages us to guess which images come from which programme. However, beyond this it also functions to construct an aura of complexity and sophistication around BBC drama in general. [Figure 4 near here: 'BBC One's drama trailer from 15 June 2010'] This is a far cry from the BBC One Monday night trailer in 1985, where a single clip or still image was used to illustrate each programme, clearly separated by graphics. As Caldwell argues of televisuality

[32] Scannell, 'Public service broadcasting', p.152, Van Den Bulck and Enli, 'Bye Bye', p.4-5.
[33] John Thornton Caldwell, *Televisuality* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1995).
[34] Lisa Kernan, *Coming Attractions: reading American movie trailers* (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 2004), p.7.

more broadly, the texts within the 2010 junction invite attentive viewing in a way that was not so evident in the junction from the mid-1980s. Indeed, the lack of voice-over in the BBC drama trailer demands that it be watched. The interstitials in 2010 need to be more entertaining because they can be more easily avoided. As Charlie Mawer (Executive Creative Director, Red Bee Media) claims of his work creating idents and trailers: 'our job is to reach them [audiences] in different ways and to be more engaging when they are watching so that they don't flick'.[35]

These two elements point to two potentially divergent aspects of the interstitial; that it is both communicating something about the experience of watching television, while also attempting to persuade or control the behaviour of viewers. While Lisa Kernan notes that US film trailers are explicit in their promotional intent and actively work to keep the viewer aware of the promotional message, UK television junctions attempt to obscure their purpose or provenance as promotional texts.[36] If in 1985 the promotional purpose of the junction was obscured through 'continuity' or an emphasis on informing the viewer, in 2010 it is obscured through 'presentation' or attempts to construct these promotional texts as pieces of entertainment in themselves. This differs from Van Den Bulck and Enli's analysis of continuity in Flemish and Norwegian television, which they argue has become more overtly promotional, particularly in the increased presence of cross-promotions for sister television channels and radio stations.[37]

These two junctions, therefore, illustrate a number of changes in the communicative ethos of UK broadcast television from 1985 to 2010. As the sites

[35] Interview with the author, 21 May 2010.
[36] Kernan, *Attractions*.
[37] 'Bye Bye', p.12-13.

for television viewing have increased, the experience of television is communicated through spatial, as well as temporal, metaphors. With the development of new interfaces that offer audiences control over their viewing experience, there is an increased appeal towards agency as part of the pleasures of television viewing, albeit limited to BBC brands. And with more calls on viewer attention, the junctions themselves are constructed not just as informational texts, but as pieces of entertainment in their own right. However, while the junctions have altered in response to the challenges of the digital era, flow remains a fundamental element of broadcast television. Indeed, it could be argued that the movement of promotional texts into the ends of programmes heightens the experience of flow by further reducing clear distinctions between programme and interstitial. This is also apparent on commercial channels were advertisers are adopting new strategies to respond to the ease with which viewers can avoid advertising. For example, in 2009 Max Factor produced three 90 second adverts shown over consecutive junctions featuring a competition winner being given a makeover, effectively aping the episodic structure of serialised television narratives in an attempt to encourage viewers to watch through the ad breaks. This is not to argue, however, that adverts, trailers and interstitials are not experienced as interruptions, as Williams concedes.[38] But it is to argue (as Williams does) that to see these texts only as interruptions is to fail to recognise and explore the ways in which broadcasting is planned and experienced as a flow.

The extent to which these changes are characteristic of broadcast television beyond the UK is difficult to judge given the methodological difficulties of gaining access to archive records of broadcast television junctions. As I have argued

[38] Williams, *Television*, p.93.

elsewhere, the communicative ethos of US broadcast television is quite different from the UK, prioritising the maintenance of viewer attention over channel design.[39] Yet as in the UK, these strategies only serve to further blur the distinction between programme and interstitial. The primary studies of European continuity tend to focus on the north of the continent and reveal many of the same changes as in the UK, particularly the increased emphasis on environment design in channel branding and cross-promotion in response to commercial competition from the 1980s.[40] Certainly more detailed research is needed if we are to understand more fully the ways in which the junctions shape the experience of television viewing beyond the UK context.

The need for such detailed research becomes even more important when considering the continuities and similarities between the television junctions from 1985 and 2010. These reveal a surprising consistency in the way in which broadcast flow is structured and organised. While the number and type of texts within the junctions has changed, the overall structure is largely the same. At the end of each programme information is given about forthcoming programmes by a continuity announcer, accompanied by a graphic. This is followed by trailers before ending with an ident as the continuity announcer returns to introduce the next programme. And this structure is broadly consistent across all channels in the UK. There is an emphasis here on repetition which exists not just in the consistency of this structure over time (and the way in which it is repeated for each junction) but also in the repetition of trailers and idents across an evening and over the subsequent days, weeks and even (in the case of idents) years of television viewing. Roger Silverstone argued that television functions as a

[39] Johnson, *Branding*, p.137-39.
[40] Den Bulck and Enli, 'Bye Bye', Ytreberg, 'Continuity'.

transitional object providing ontological security by being constantly available, invulnerable and dependable. He pointed to 'the place of television in the invisible and hidden ordering of everyday life; in its spatial and temporal patterns, as a contributor to our security'.[41] Similarly, Scannell argues that in their dailiness radio and television 'help to constitute the meaningful background of everyday existence which they themselves have foregrounded.'[42] Although the centrality of television to the experience of everyday life is threatened (but not, as yet, undermined) by the emergence of new forms of media, the interstitials act as potential reassurance of television's invulnerability. The continuities and similarities in the structure and organisation of the interstitials over the past 25 years makes the experience of UK television familiar and predictable, reminding the audience that television is constantly available both spatially and temporally.

Such continuities are apparent not only in the junctions between programmes in linear broadcast television but also in the new interfaces for on-demand television. William Uricchio argues that 'we have seen a shift in the form of the viewer-television interface – particularly in the notion of flow – that has slowly transformed from being centred on programming to active audience to adaptive agent' as our experience of television is increasingly shaped by automated recommendation services based on metadata and algorithms.[43] However, in practice these developments are cumulative, rather than sequential. For example, in the redesign of its on-demand service iPlayer, the BBC is placing particular emphasis on the way in which the content is 'curated' in order to 'recreate the environment for serendipitous discovery'.[44] These 'new junctions'

[41] Roger Silverstone, *Television and Everyday Life* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), p.19.
[42] Scannell, *Radio, Television and Modern Life*, p.177.
[43] Uricchio, 'Next Generation', p.180.
[44] Victoria Jaye, Head of IPTV and TV Online Content, BBC Vision, interview with the author 2 July 2012.

for the digital era draw on the skills of media planning, scheduling and channel curation developed for linear broadcast television. While other broadcasters may rely more on the automated recommendation technologies highlighted by Uricchio, it is important for the BBC to retain curatorial control, not only to prevent poor automated recommendations but also to support the values of public service broadcasting.[45] The example of the BBC, however, does point to the ways in which competing paradigms of flow continue to co-exist. Here flow is *simultaneously* programmed by broadcasters, controllable by viewers and shaped by metadata and filtering technologies. These new junctions continue to communicate television as a medium that is 'always on'. While the flow here may demand more viewer interaction (I need to decide and select a programme to move through the flow) in many ways this call to agency is simply an extension of the rhetorical work of the broadcast junctions in presenting choice and control as key pleasures in television viewing.

It is clear, therefore, that Williams' theorisation of flow, formed as it was in an era of linear broadcasting, cannot fully account for the contemporary experiences of television in the digital era. At the same time, however, we cannot argue that linear flow is no longer a significant aspect of the experience of broadcast television or that Williams' notion of flow has no relevance to understanding the contemporary television landscape. Indeed, we need to be as attuned to the continuities and similarities as the differences in flow from the broadcast to digital era if we are to truly understand the new experiences of watching television.[46]

[45] Victoria Jaye (ibid.) gives the example of an automated algorithmic recommendation service suggesting *Terminator* after the family drama *Merlin* because both featured 'monster' in their metadata.

[46] This article stems from research funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council.