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The performing lives of things: animals, puppets, models and effects

Jonathan Bignell

In the first episode of the adventure series *The Prisoner* (1967-68), the unnamed protagonist (Patrick McGoohan) finds himself a vantage point so he can look out over the village to which he has been abducted. A long shot from his point of view takes in the main square, whose ornate Mediterranean-style buildings frame a grassy lawn with a central fountain. Colourfully-dressed people stroll around it, but suddenly the villagers are instructed to freeze by an authoritative male voice over a public-address system. They all stand stock still apart from one man who runs frantically across the square. A small white bubble or ball appears on top of the water spouting from the baroque stone fountain, inflating rapidly until it is about two metres in diameter. The Prisoner looks on as the ball leaves the fountain and, seemingly of its own volition, chases the fleeing man, skimming along across the grass, halting him and appearing to incapacitate him by covering his face so that he cannot breathe. This is one of the first sinister and puzzling events in The Village, where the protagonist, known only as Number 6, is repeatedly interrogated and his attempts to escape are continually frustrated.

The white ball, known as Rover, appears in nearly every episode of the series and makes a similar kind of pursuit in a later episode, 'Checkmate', but mainly it acts as a physical obstacle that blocks a person's path or forces them to move in a certain direction; it is a threat more than an active aggressor. It behaves as if it can respond interactively to its victims, anticipating their actions so as to prevent or modify their behaviour. It is aware of its

own spatial position, the positions of others, and the possibilities for action presented by the local environment. It polices and monitors the prisoners in the Village, like the guards in a wartime internment camp, and like a guard dog or sheepdog it can harass, chase, block or attack its victims. It is occasionally glimpsed sitting passively in the ball-shaped Aarnio chair usually occupied by Number 2, who runs the Village from his underground control room. Occasionally it sits in the corner of a room, or glides without apparent purpose around the Village. Like a gun-dog, it can retrieve the victims of its attacks, appearing to transport their unconscious bodies back to the Village from where they have been incapacitated in the adjoining sea or on the wooded perimeter. In the final episode, 'Free for all', three small Rovers work in a group to transport the Prisoner across the sea to the Village after he is recaptured. In the same episode, Rover is encircled by four men, seated with their arms folded, each gazing at its luminescent surface in an underground chamber cut out of the rock beneath the Village. Here, Rover is something like a television set, or perhaps some kind of meditation device with which the men have a mental connection. Across the series, it functions like a human character, like an animal, and like an object or machine.

Rover is not a character in a conventional sense, but this chapter addresses how critical analysis might describe and evaluate such non-human "performances" in television fiction, and how they affect distinctions between actor and role, and between character and narrative function. Across the history and genres of television, there have been very many "objects" that narratives make expressive but that are not human, nor even, in some cases, alive at all. The white balloon-like Rovers of *The Prisoner*, if they are to play their part in the fictional world, need to function as expressive "performers". In a way that incidental props or scenic components do not, such non-human performers need to seem like subjects as well as objects, so that they can play a part in storytelling rather than forming part of the backdrop against which action happens. So, the chapter has questions in common with those addressed

by the discipline of Animal Studies, which includes investigation of how creatures that have hitherto been treated as objects by dominant human subjectivity might be thought of subjects too (Derrida 2002). If those creatures that were formerly other become comparable with or even equivalent to humans, the boundaries between self and other, human and non-human, are destabilized (Haraway 1991, 2003). People become more like things, and things acquire some of the attributes of people; theoretical work on pets and artificial creatures (such as cyborgs) has debated the recasting of unexamined cultural and political hierarchies that this reconsideration produces. This chapter develops some of these ideas in relation to performance by asking how animals and objects behave in programmes as if they were characters, and how this affects the building of fictional worlds in those programmes.

It is customary to assume that one of the qualifications for action to become a performance is that there is an intention to express, whether by an actor performing a role or a non-actor in an unscripted self-presentation on a game-show or in a documentary. Objects and animals problematize this assumption of intention, and the chapter focuses on how the relationship between viewer and non-human performance renders boundaries between self and other, or alive and inert, fluid. For this chapter, the key issue is not intention but the embedding of animals within mise-en-scène, troubling the distinction between the living and non-living components of the fictional world. The chapter returns to inanimate objects later, to consider puppets and models that are integrated into created settings and combined with human voice-over performances in the action series *Thunderbirds* (1965-66). The series has an explicit focus on action, vehicles and special effects and it is the significance of integration into narration and setting, the work expended to fit "things" into mise-en-scène, that the chapter highlights. The "performance" of animals presents some of the same problems of intention, expressivity and embedding, and in keeping with the 1960s period of the other examples, the chapter addresses the Australian filmed series *Skippy The Bush*

Kangaroo (1968-70) whose modes of performance followed from earlier adventure series featuring expressive animals, such as *Lassie* (1954-73) and *Flipper* (1964-67).

Semioticians interested in animals' effective use of systems of signs sometimes reject the distinction between natural behaviour and staged performance (such as Paul Bouissac's work on circus (1981), showing that animals repeat behaviours natural to their species within a location marked out by humans for performance). Skippy the kangaroo was portrayed as an intelligent, helpful and usually compliant companion to nine-year-old Sonny Hammond (Garry Pankhurst), living with his father Matt (Ed Devereaux) the Head Ranger at Waratah National Park Wildlife Reserve, north of Sydney, Australia. Storylines in *Skippy* concerned rescues, encounters with visitors to the Park, protecting the park from rustlers, smugglers and escaped prisoners, and the domestic tensions between Sonny, his father, and Sonny's older brother Mark (Ken James). In the pilot episode, 'Man from Space', for example, Sonny sends Skippy to fetch help when they discover a downed pilot in the park whose parachute is stuck in a tree. Skippy exhibits the capacity to move, think and communicate, and to engage in planned sequences of action, pretence or play, for example. She is at an intersection between a human world and the wildness of the Other. Like a human character, the camera attributes her with a point of view, and she sometimes becomes a subject who can look at and look back at other performers, as well as being an object of the camera's and other characters' looks. She is a companion and helper for humans in the series, with agency and character, but always subject to narratives driven by people rather than herself.

Skippy's role is somewhat like that of a family pet, living with the Hammonds, their workmates, and pseudo-familial female characters, teenage house-guest Clarissa 'Clancy' Merrick (Liza Goddard) and potential love-interest research scientist Dr Anna Steiner (Elke Neidhardt). But Skippy is intelligent; her actions protect the family and the park against threats from outsiders, such as Dr Alexander Stark (Frank Thring), the owner of a private zoo

who attempts to kidnap her. She can not only understand instructions, and communicate by means of gesture and vocal sounds, but also in later episodes she is able to open doors and operate the buttons and knobs of the radio in the Ranger Station (to communicate with Ranger helicopter pilot Jerry King (Tony Bonner), for example), tie and untie knots to facilitate outdoor rescues, and play the drums in a comic musical sequence. Skippy's role was performed by moving around in outside (and sometimes interior) locations, adopting static poses for shot reverse-shot exchanges and implied point-of-view shots, and details of action in close-ups involving her arms and claws. In other words, the conventional rhetoric of continuity editing and the hierarchy of long, medium and close shots in a coherent filmic space were used to suture the kangaroo into the narrative like a human character.

Thunderbirds is set in 2064, and concerns the activities of the secret International Rescue organisation, operating from a Pacific island. In response to natural disasters and failures of technology the Thunderbirds rescue vehicles piloted by the sons of former astronaut Jeff Tracy perform extraordinary feats in the air, in space, underwater and by tunnelling underground to rescue survivors. The human characters are "performed" by puppets, in highly detailed sets, and the advanced aircraft, monorail trains, mining machines and space satellites featuring in the storylines are represented by models. The puppets of *Thunderbirds* are also shot following the conventions of continuity editing, and human speech and familiar sounds are used to stitch together a coherent fictional world. The conventions of vocal modulation for relative distance from the camera point of view, for example, are adapted into the model environments. Bodily and environmental sounds correspond with physical action, such as footsteps matching puppet movement, and characters emit cries when falling or being shot, laugh or grunt with exertion. The futuristic vehicles make sounds deriving from library recordings of 1960s cars or jet aircraft, for example, and there are numerous sound effects for models representing hydraulic ramps,

electrically powered elevators, and the frequent explosions in disaster sequences use stock sound effects of dynamite blasting. This sonic material produces an impression of veracity, yet it potentially emphasises how familiar sounds have been contained, reprocessed and adapted for a new context. The fictional world is co-terminous with the real, because there is resemblance but also distinction between them, and each fiction is at one level self-reflexive in its performance of verisimilitude and world-building.

The models and puppets in *Thunderbirds*, representing people living with supremely capable machines embedded in a flawed technological utopia, express and explore relationships with commodities and the lives of the things that humankind makes. The life of things was an aspect of Marx's analysis of the commodity in *Capital* (1954) where he argues that in capitalism the things made by human labour seem alive, inasmuch as they have social meaning and mediate relationships between people. Inanimate things take on a life that derives from the accumulated human labour that made them, but which is hidden from view. People and their labour, by contrast, are occluded, perceived in terms of quantitative measures like labour costs and productive value, and seem like things. This chapter aims to show that things on screen work over the problem of the otherness of the non-human, and what such a relationship with the other hides and shows. Flipper is not simply a dolphin, and Skippy is not just a kangaroo; rather, each is represented as a part of the natural world that is sufficiently self-aware and intelligent that it can take part in television storytelling, though the stories are always about a human world. Similarly, in *The Prisoner*, Rover is not simply a white ball, but enacts the power of the Village's controllers over its inhabitants and is a means for the narrative to express that power concretely.

The series themselves are commodities, made for a transnational television market. *Skippy*'s creator Lee Robinson designed the format for sale to the USA as well as the relatively small domestic Australian market, in which imported US drama predominated. On

a research visit to the USA he was inspired by *Flipper*, in which a widowed park ranger and his two sons befriend a dolphin (Anon. undated). Placing a kangaroo at the centre of Robinson's format, prominently featured in the series' opening credits, signified Australian distinctiveness alongside cultural values of outdoor vigour and male sociality ("mateship") announced in the whimsical but jaunty banjo theme song naming Skippy as "our friend ever true". Australian TV mogul Frank Packer financed the series, which sold to 128 countries. Both *The Prisoner* and *Thunderbirds* were made with the backing of the television mogul Lew Grade, who ran the British ITV company Associated Television (ATV) and whose Incorporated Television Company (ITC) was at the forefront of programme export to the USA (Bignell 2005). Grade produced *Danger Man* (1960-68) in which McGoohan starred as a secret agent for NATO, and having sold the series internationally Grade backed McGoohan's concept for *The Prisoner*, which could be regarded as a follow-up with the same protagonist. The creators of *Thunderbirds*, Gerry and Sylvia Anderson, had been making puppet series in the popular genres of the Western and science fiction as a low-budget way to enter live-action television production. But the lucrative merchandising of toys and licensed products from their puppet action series *Supercar* (1960-61) and the sale of *Fireball XL5* (1962) to the US NBC network led to the creation of *Thunderbirds*, aimed at the international market. The focus of this chapter is on the "things" that appear in programmes, but it is also germane that storytelling about those things was a successful economic strategy to create value by disseminating television programme commodities for international trade.

Framing performance

The representational illusion of screen fiction, in claiming to offer the presence of a character on screen, is potentially fractured by the awareness of performance as the medium through which this representation has been created. But the predominant illusionism of television

fiction makes representations work hard to seem like presentation, occluding the work done to create an illusion (Heath 1981: 113-130). It follows that acting, as one of the crafts comprising filmmaking, should conceal conscious effort or self-consciousness. The problem with human actors is that they are self-aware, Lev Kuleshov (1974: 99) proclaimed, arguing that natural movement on film could be best exemplified by the deft and economical motion of a skilled factory worker, or "the filming of children or animal movement" because of its "profound innocence, naturalness, and simplicity". The point is to eschew exaggerated theatrical posturing, so that body, setting, and perspectival space in general could be an energised, organic unity oriented for the spectator, organised by a master point of view as established by Renaissance perspective. Whether naturalness is achieved by extreme self-consciousness (using and controlling the body as object or instrument), or extreme consciousness (embodying, being or becoming the character) the aim in conventional screen acting is to merge actor with role. Mechanical, animal or inhuman action most appropriately serves the ideologies of filmic representation that are their master, implying an unmarked power dynamic that underlies the effectiveness of the ideal cinema that Kuleshov describes.

The disavowal of the self-consciousness and conventionalisation that performance requires was emblematized for Kuleshov by animals, children or workers wholly absorbed in a task. Such absorption minimises the distinction between the performance and activity before and after it, when the performer is not in role. Jean-Louis Comolli (1978) makes the distinction between the body of the actor in a historical film and the person that the actor is playing. He argues that there will always to some degree be a split in the spectator's belief, between accepting that the body on-screen is the character being portrayed, and on the other hand the awareness that there is an actor with a life outside the role. There is "a body too much", and the two bodies are in tension with each other, producing a potentially critical space for the spectator's awareness of the work of cinematic signification (Bingham 2010).

Moreover, nuances of performance result from the specific, detailed choices made by actors, because of their specific life-histories, professional training regimes and specific bodily characteristics and capabilities (de Cordova 1991: 119). These particularities are exposed by the 'commutation test' (Thompson 1978) that analyses a performance by imagining how a role would be different if adopted by a different actor. For animal and puppet performances, there can be no commutation because the things in the role are either unique or replaceable by an almost identical copy. It does not matter how many weather balloons were used in *The Prisoner* to embody Rover, nor how many kangaroos were used in the filming of *Skippy*, because to most viewers the balloons and kangaroos are indistinguishable one from another. It does not matter which of the differently-scaled puppets of the Tracy family is used in particular shots in *Thunderbirds* because they are made to be exchangeable with one another. This seems to suggest that animals and things cannot perform as actors, because they have no unique identity to bring to the role they play. In this sense, they cannot be performers, but in another important sense they fulfil the ambitions that screen acting theorists like Kuleshov have had for a century. Animals and puppets become embedded seamlessly in the mise-en-scène, taking part in performance in the sense that performance means the total signifying world within the frame.

Rover belongs in the world of *The Prisoner*, inasmuch as some of its characteristics align aesthetically and functionally with other aspects of the Village. As Mark Bould (2005) points out, Rover matches the circles and spheres in *The Prisoner*'s production design, seen in the Village emblem of the penny-farthing bicycle, the circular control room, the Aarnio ball chair, spherical camera mountings and aerial shots of unfurled umbrellas. Rover is something like a beach ball, and The Village seems designed to resemble a seaside holiday camp in which the inhabitants live in chalets, take part in organised leisure activities, adopt a colourful and casual slacks-and-blazer dress code, are addressed by a loudspeaker system and

may use canopied bicycles. All of these features of The Village were true of Butlins and Pontins holiday camps in 1967, for example, like the one at Pwlleli a few miles from *The Prisoner*'s Portmeirion location. The Village might be run by the British spy organisation to which we assume Number 6 belonged before his abduction, and connotations of Englishness include college scarves, seaside deckchairs and the clipped upper-class tones of the public-address system's announcements. All these details might be a ruse in order to manipulate captives, however, with the Village an internment camp like the one at Inverlair Lodge in Scotland that suggested the *Prisoner* format to its creators, McGoohan and George Markstein. Certainly, Portmeirion, a coastal estate in Wales built by the eccentric architect Clough Williams-Ellis in the 1920s, confuses geography by whimsically blending buildings that pastiche architectural styles from different periods and regions of Mediterranean Europe. Moreover, interiors in *The Prisoner*, shot in a studio, have modern, fashionable and technologically advanced furnishings, and the Village control room is distinguished by its metallic polished surfaces, large projected images and surveillance equipment, together with machines for mind control and remote manipulation. The confusing spatiality of The Village and the hi-tech apparatus in it alongside a whimsical and often traditional appearance, together with the repeated failure of the fictional world to conform to the expectations of consistency and plausibility, place the viewer in the same situation as Number 6 himself. He is repeatedly frustrated in his attempts to find out geographically and existentially where he is and what his experiences mean, producing a hesitation (Todorov 1975) about whether the drama should be framed within the conventions of fantasy, reality or allegory. Rover takes part in producing this uncertainty, for it exists and acts in the fictional world in uncanny ways and its nature is never explained. Like the Village as a whole, it is a given fact and also an enigma suggesting that there is a greater but unseen significance to which it points.

The design aesthetic of *Thunderbirds*' fictional world combines the influences of 20th century aircraft design and Modernist architecture, as does much television science fiction of the era (Britton 2009: 342). The Thunderbirds rescue craft have streamlined, smooth surfaces and swept-back wings designed for high-speed flight, and the space-rocket Thunderbird 3 drew on visual references to the clustered boosters of the Russian Soyuz spacecraft of the 1960s, for example. But the vehicles' appearance also departed from functionalism in order to portray character, most obviously for Thunderbird 2 whose stubby wings signify its support role in heavy lifting and cargo carrying. The architecture of the Tracy Island complex from where International Rescue operates, and other buildings such as airports, military bases and hotels in the series very closely matches the unornamented, geometric steel, glass and concrete construction of twentieth century buildings. On the other hand, the Palladian style of the mansion inhabited by Lady Penelope Creighton-Ward, International Rescue's London agent, was based closely on the eighteenth-century Stourhead House in Wiltshire in order to signify upper-class Englishness. The colour palette used in *Thunderbirds* emphasizes the strong colours of blue, red, yellow and green, and the silvery polished metal alloys from which its vehicles are supposedly made. But although the series primarily has a techno-utopian aesthetic its makers were careful to add realistic detail such as dust and tyre marks on roads and runways, and smoke stains on engine exhaust manifolds. The premise of *Thunderbirds* is that, as in real life, machines are subject to breakdowns, malfunctions, accidents and sabotage that cause them to fail and endanger humanity, but the Tracy family group of more capable humans, with their more capable machines, preserve a fragile international world order based on mid-twentieth century ideologies projected into its futuristic setting (Bignell 2011).

Skippy belongs in the landscape of Waratah National Park in a way that human actors do not; like Rover in *The Prisoner*, the kangaroos in *Skippy* are part of the represented

fictional world, appearing natural and embedded in it, in contrast to the human performers. In *Thunderbirds*, the human characters of the stories are represented by puppets who mediate between living bodies and constructed objects. Indeed, close-up sequences in *Thunderbirds* feature human hands operating telephones or opening drawers, for example, suggesting the unmarked equivalence of the human body and the puppet body. In his classic study of film acting, James Naremore (1988) distinguishes between presentational and representational kinds of performance. Presentational performance, as in comedy or the musical, shows an awareness of the performance being directed towards an audience, and sometimes even an address directly to the audience present in the cinema (Brown 2012). By contrast, the majority of narrative films are representational, in the sense that there is no acknowledgement of an audience and performance is naturalised as part of the fictional world. Animals are both presentational and representational performers simultaneously. The same can be said of objects like Rover, which show off what "things" can do, but at the same time are part of the world in which they exist, because they are not aware of what they are as objects, characters or performers. Acting might seem to be a secondary mode of being that is built on top of an authentic self, the actor, whose body and voice are used to create an alternate fictional identity. But, as Philip Auslander (1997) argues, the notion of the real actor is projected backwards as an anterior reality created by the performance that it supposedly underpins. In works using non-human figures, an anterior, enfolding reality is over-signified in order to create the impression of the real, by means of detail of setting, sound and voice.

Theories of performance do not always assume intention (Carlson, 1996: 39-41). As long ago as Erving Goffman's *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959), work on performance has stressed the audience rather than the actor, defining performance as activity that occurs over a specified period of time, during which there are observers who witness the action. The actor does not need to be conscious of his or her role, and the important factor is a

relationship between performer and audience that enables the observers to recognise what they see according to a particular set of social rules about behaviour and its contexts. The audience's knowledge of these rules, and their invocation of them, creates performance. It is not necessary to assume that the actor is presenting deliberately to a spectator, nor adopting a specific role of which he or she is conscious. For Goffman, it is the act and process of staging for someone, of framing something (on stage, in a framed image) that defines performance. It is this approach to performance that this chapter adopts, because it stresses that performance is a kind of making, shaping and showing that foregrounds mise-en-scène.

The work of mise-en-scène

The notion of mise-en-scène, combining the meanings of putting on stage, placing into a setting or directing a show, draws attention to the fact that television programmes are a work of labour aimed towards an audience; they are a showing for someone. To be interesting and dramatic, animals and machines need to be embedded as part of a naturalised world in which they are believable, even ordinary. But on the other hand, they are protagonists or antagonists, and as such they are motors of narrative rather than merely aspects of setting, unlike the other contingent objects or props that surround them as the given circumstances of their "lives". So, attention is always drawn to them. Because of the limited degree to which animals and machines can be expressive, there is excessive expression in the television programmes in other ways. The actions of animals and machines are enfolded with music, sound effects, point of view and shot reverse-shot patterns that provide narrative tension, pace and dramatic shape. Storylines are designed to offer sequences in which the animals and machines can show off their capabilities and perform, against the backgrounds of realist settings surrounding them, but this also produces a tension between non-human performance and the human. In representational performance, there is a tension between the body of the

actor and the belief in the presence of the character on-screen; a 'body too much'. Naturalistic storytelling reduces this as much as possible, but the outcome might be that the technique of performance is foregrounded as much in its concealment as in its overt presence. This is the contradiction at the heart of Method acting, in which the ability to merge with the role is precisely an attribute associated with star actors (like Dustin Hoffman or Robert de Niro, for example). The technique and provenance of the performance become dominant. With animals and machines, there is no story of human training or experience to form this provenance. But instead, there is craft and preparation. The labour of production and the skill of its achievement are on show, and are occluded by illusionistic representation at the same time.

The original design for Rover in pre-production was that it would be an autonomous vehicle or robot about half the height of an adult, running on wheels (Pixley 1988: 11). It would have been circular, with an inflatable skirt like a hovercraft, with a black-and-white domed cupola top. This specially built prop sank during the filming of test sequences in the sea off Portmerion, and was replaced by a white latex weather balloon controlled by long, thin wires that allowed it to be dragged across land or water. Its movement could sometimes be made very rapid or its wobbling oscillations uncanny by speeding up film or running it backwards. Its thin, flexible skin allowed internal luminescence to be seen, achieved by back-lighting, and post-produced roaring sounds were added for shots of it moving. Each of these features adds to the impression that it is alive and autonomous, able to move equally quickly over land or water, or through the air, over long distances and at a speed faster than a running man. Its relationship with the controllers of the Village is clarified when they declare an 'Orange Alert', when the formation and return of the Rover is projected on a giant screen in the Village control room. The screen shows a repeated stock shot of an underwater location, presumably representing the sea near the Village, from where Rover inflates from the sea

floor, detaching itself and floating quickly upwards. In the episode 'Free for All', Rover returns to this underwater location (the inflation sequence runs in reverse), and in the final episode, 'Fall Out', it moves down into a hole or tunnel into a cave where it deflates to a smaller size and stays at rest. Making Rover's performances seem plausible took considerable work, which is concealed when the finished sequences appear in the series, but on which the foregrounding of the Village's distinctive uncanniness depends. Rover's apparent lightness, plasticity and insubstantial form, potentially signifying its vulnerability, become all the more menacing and uncanny when hidden labour succeeds in giving it the apparent ability to move independently, initiate and respond to situations strategically, and enact violence on Village inhabitants.

The world on-screen is a performative space, whereas the space of production is a working, craft space. The aim of that craft is to create performance, in a way that is believable, by screening off, out of frame, the labour of production and the time before and after the performance. For *Skippy*, New South Wales Minister for Lands, Tom Lewis, heading the newly-established National Parks & Wildlife Service, gave permission to film and to build standing sets in Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park north of Sydney. The Hammonds' house, with associated roads, helipad, power and water supplies, was built amid 24 acres of land, with access to a further 500 acres. Animal trainer Scotty Denholm used nine female kangaroos to portray Skippy, keeping each one dormant in a sack until needed because of their tendency to run off into the bush. As well as shooting the kangaroos static and moving on location, a stuffed kangaroo was used for rear shots, and kangaroo forearms (sold as souvenir bottle openers) were manipulated by the crew in close-up shots requiring specific, dextrous actions (BBC 2010). The crew gave the kangaroos chocolate, gum or grass to chew, and occasionally wrapped an elastic band around the animal's lower jaw, so that Skippy would appear to vocalise. Skippy's communication by making clicking sounds was a

post-produced effect, and dramatic music stings and music matching physical action ("mickey-mousing") pointed-out turns and moods in the narrative. It is the tension between foreground and background environment, and between the non-human characters' ability to act as well as to be acted upon, that makes these programmes pleasurable and potentially troubling. It also makes them potential resources for critique of conventional expectations about living presence, performance and the body, and the ethical relationships of human to non-human bodies and the "things" in our environment.

Thunderbirds was made in elaborate sound-stages, because the emphasis on colour and visual detail in the mise-en-scène required shooting on high-speed 35 mm film and high-powered lighting. There was one soundstage for models and special effects, and two for puppetry (Richardson 1991: 6). A gantry for up to seven puppeteers was built to a height of nearly 3 metres above the floor so that puppeteers did not have to stand next to a puppet to operate it, and thus much larger sets could be built. The need for vehicles at (usually three) different scales, for shooting in long, medium and close-up shots, meant considerable workload for the model-makers, and for the puppets portraying the 13 regular characters there would be heads with three different expressions so that they could be changed during shooting, and a backup set in case of damage or malfunction (La Rivière 2009: 110). Shallow water tanks were built for the establishing shots of *Thunderbirds*' Tracy Island and seaborne rescues, as well as flat rostra surrounded by cycloramas of sky for land-based action. As early as 1957, the company had developed video assist so that the production crew could see what the film camera was recording (Sellers 2006: 80), invented electronic lip-synch to match a pre-recorded voice track to the solenoids activating the puppets' mouths, and for *Thunderbirds* a rolling road was created for sequences of vehicle movement. Three different rolling surfaces could be used, in the extreme foreground, middle ground and background. When moving at different speeds (the closest to the camera moving fastest) and shot from a

low angle, a strong sense of depth perspective is created, like a deep focus tracking shot in a live-action film. While the visual grammar and soundscapes of *Thunderbirds* aimed to conform as closely as possible to existing convention, this required significant technical innovation.

Television as a technology of representation and as a cultural form (Williams 1974) with its attendant ideologies and conventions is a condition of, and conditions, how performance on screen works. The performance of objects or animals in fictional drama depends on finding or constructing something that will then be put on show. This kind of showing changes what is put before the audience, producing an expectation of significance over and above what it meant in ordinary social reality. Issues of context and the delimited location of performance activity are explored in Goffman's *Frame Analysis* (1974), in which framing draws on Gregory Bateson's 'A theory of play and fantasy' (1954). Both play and performance are framed by rules that allow them to be non-referential, and the actions they comprise can be potentially socially unacceptable in ordinary life. The numerous violent acts, destructive events and inter-personal cruelties of television fiction are enabled and constrained by the modalities of play and fantasy whose framing makes them acceptable to their audience. Moreover, the metaphor of framing links nicely to the physical frame of the television screen, which demarcates a spatial boundary in which representation, fiction, performance and relayed actuality are made possible subject to the codes and conventions of the medium.

As an analytical concept, framing brackets off the question of intention in order to focus on the relationship between the audience and the performance, as a relationship in which meaning is actively made by the spectator. It alludes to the compositional frame of the television image and the processing of visual and aural information geared towards the production of fictional, entertaining and engaging storytelling within the conventions of

television formats and genres. Furthermore, the concept of framing demarcates the specific professional, institutional and technological activity of making programmes in a medium embedded within the cultural forms of a specific society. Goffman's version of framing is similar to the concept of ostension developed by Umberto Eco (1977) which addresses everyday behaviour in light of comparisons with theatre. Adopting a version of semiotics closer to Charles Pierce's notion of language use than Ferdinand de Saussure's approach to language as system, Eco focuses on how performance places something on view for an audience to perceive. Ostension is a kind of showing, in which something is selected, and treated by processes of dressing and arrangement so that an audience will be able to decode its meanings. Like framing, ostension draws attention to the spatial and temporal specificity of a performance event, and how it is set within particular social and cultural codes. The ostended object or animal is not only there in itself, but invites the audience to consider how it may link outwards beyond itself to a greater significance, with a representative, exemplary, symbolic or metaphorical significance. For *The Prisoner*, Rover emblematises the perverse but purposive constraint of individual action by the institution of The Village, which itself has connotations of Cold War political totalitarianism and existential anxiety. Skippy the kangaroo is tame but wild, a character and an instance of inhuman Nature, and an icon of the many meanings of Australian-ness. The puppets who play the Tracys in *Thunderbirds* are objects like the machines they use and the settings in which they "live", but the role of those humans is to master machines and futuristic environments in order to rescue other humans from the threats they pose.

The mise-en-scène of the programmes I have referred to is a precondition for their non-human (and human) performances. Strong lighting, bright colours and voice, sound and music matched to action show off the detailed materiality of the performing "things", and their settings and background effects. The performances are set within spaces that are shaped

to make the most of meticulously crafted models and professionally trained and managed animals. Each of the programmes discussed here uses extensive "practical", functioning effects; sequences shot as-live in front of the camera (not post-produced electronic effects) that equally require the expertise of a team of specialist workers. In addition to the performances of the animals and the objects on screen, these programmes display the skills of those workers to the audience. The performances of animals and objects work together with visual design, sound effects and music to establish their distinctiveness as television fiction, but within the broad generic conventions of live-action adventure drama. There is a politics of this kind of performance, but it is often unremarked and this chapter has begun to address the ways in which such a focus might be developed. Attention to the detail of mise-en-scène in these programmes can show the potential troubling of boundaries between subjects and objects of the camera's look, and between human and non-human others, that is largely contained by strategies of storytelling and world building that master it. The performing "lives" of "things" work with and through questions of aesthetics and representation that are central to the forms of work, value, organization and articulation in television fiction.

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