conflict between a state committed to extending the free market into all areas of social life, no matter what the cost, and the defenders of the inevitable casualties. The contradictions here are within the institution itself. These are apparent in the early episodes of *Casualty*, which typically placed its embattled medical staff in conflict with hospital administrators. However, the struggles that powered these narratives were between groups that the series identified as 'good' and 'bad', and the villains were often 'outside' the casualty room – it was, once more, us-versus-them drama, with clear points of identification and an unambiguous moral viewpoint. These are the tropes of political melodrama (and it has, perhaps, been easy to lose the 'political').

World Productions' generic drama series work, by and large, in a different way. These series are concerned with the everyday routines and practices of institutional life, which, in Gramscian terms, are ideological in their ways of working; that is, they embody ideology both at the level of explicit ideas and values and at the level of the practices that govern their operation. Institutions are, from this perspective, one of the main ways in which 'private' individuals negotiate, resist or enact the 'public' discourses of politics, and the potential for exploring this connection is written into the conventions of the form of the workplace drama series. Therefore, not only are individuals pitted against the institution, but the workplace setting is the means by which individuals are connected to their social context and political responsibilities in complex ways. However, the contract between individuals and the institutions in which they operate is not between equals, and this explains some of the pessimism that seeps into, say, *Cardiac Arrest* and *The Cops*. At their best, these series do not simply pit an individual against the state, but rather explore how actions and decisions, even the private and subjective ones, are impregnated with the ideologies of institutional practices.

The police and society – the society of the police: *Between the Lines* and *The Cops*

Charlotte Brunsdon has argued that police series in the 1990s staged 'the trauma of the break-up of the post-war settlement' (2000: 196). On the one hand, this trauma made manifest a crisis of authority that was one result of the managed dissensus of the 1970s. On the other, it connected to the changing nature of crime itself in the 1980s and early 1990s: as the ravages of long-term unemployment and social collapse were etched into the social fabric, a new iconography of drug dealing,

joyriding and casual, indiscriminate violence and theft soon found its way into police series. In the 1980s, the police were also placed in openly political confrontations between the government and those it had designated a threat – anti-nuclear protesters, demonstrators against the poll tax and striking miners. Yet, at the same time, the conduct of the police themselves was called into question, and the early 1990s saw a series of miscarriages of justice that called the integrity of the police into question (those imprisoned for two IRA-inspired bombings, for example, the Birmingham Six and the Guildford Four, were released on appeal).

It is no surprise, then, that Garnett and World Productions should look to the world of the police precinct as a source for realist genre-based drama, and World's first major drama series in the 1990s, *Between the Lines*, concerned the police. Commissioned by the BBC for its main channel in a prime slot on a Friday evening (9.30 p.m.), *Between the Lines* (*BTL*) ran for three series annually from 1992–94. It was created and overseen by J. C. Wilsher, who had had been a long-running contributor to *The Bill*. Wilsher wrote many of the episodes across all three series and created a single narrative arc for each, providing a framework for other writers. *BTL* has been placed alongside *Hill Street Blues* (Saynor 1993), Troy Kennedy Martin's *Edge of Darkness* (Nelson 1997) and Lynda La Plante's four-part police series *Prime Suspect* (Granada 1991) (Brunsdon 2000). What made *BTL* different, however, was its focus on the Criminal Investigations Bureau (CIB), whose job it is to investigate corruption in the police force.

At the centre of a large and changing cast was a trio of CIB detectives headed by Tony Clarke (Neil Pearson) and including Maureen 'Mo' Connell (Siobhan Redmond) and Harry Naylor (Tom Georgeson). Throughout the first series, the story arc that unites all thirteen episodes concerned an investigation into corruption at the police station at which Clark has recently been based. The centre of corruption, it emerges in the final episodes, is Deaken (Tony Doyle), the boss of CIB itself. The second series was more concerned with the relationship between the police and other enforcement agencies, especially the Special Branch and the secret service, MI5. The third saw its main protagonists now out of the police and pursuing crime as private investigators. The third series was generally regarded as being less successful than the previous two – perhaps one reason why Garnett became reluctant to push other series beyond what he and his collaborators regarded as their natural life span.

Police genres are often seen as conservative, in the sense that their central motif, the solving of a crime, the rooting out of a transgression and the subsequent restoration of the social order, serves to validate the

status quo and offer reassurance that it will survive (see Bignell and Orlebar 2005: 64–5). Such guarantees may be particularly attractive at times of social change and anxiety. As Garnett put it, 'when people are worried about crime, they want to see crimes being solved on the screen ... the less confidence people have in the solving of crimes in the real world, the more they want television shows where crimes are *always* solved' (Garnett 1998 unpaginated). *BTL* is one of the first of a new generation of police series, however, that exploited the widening gap between generic expectation and perceptions about the 'real' world, rendering the genre increasingly unstable and hybridised.

The series posed a number of questions concerning the nature of policing in the early 1990s, notably who is fit to police? And where there is uncertainty about this, who polices the police? By putting the CIB at the centre of the narratives, the nature of corruption could be explored in a complex manner: as Garnett put it at the time, 'we can put corrupt police officers on the screen every week' (Saynor 1993: 11). However, the series repeatedly asks its viewers – and its characters – to question what corruption is, how it might be separated from acceptable 'rule-bending' and what actions are permitted to root it out. As Eaton notes, 'The CIB works against two prevailing values of the Met and other police forces. The first is the widespread belief that it is acceptable to break the rules to bring villains to justice, the second that it is not acceptable to betray a colleague' (Eaton 1995: 179). One of the main concerns of the CIB, and therefore of *BTL*, is this 'canteen culture' which constitutes the informal, 'common-sense' values of everyday policing, linking institutional ideologies to individual dilemmas. The way that these values are enacted, challenged and renegotiated generates much of the narrative action, especially in the first series. One of the main strategies the series uses to open up the habitual ethics of policing is to challenge the generic character stereotypes.

The protagonist of many police series, especially those that feature detectives, is often an outsider, a maverick, who bends the rules to catch criminals usually despite the institutional bureaucracy that acts as a break on initiative. The aggressively masculine Jack Regan (John Thaw) in the highly popular (especially with the police) *The Sweeney* (Thames 1975–78) is one key example here. In the context of the early 1990s, however, with new anxieties about the conduct and efficiency of the police emerging in public discourse, the 'outsider' was cast in a different mould, responding to new political and cultural concerns. As Mike Wayne has argued apropos the new hero/heroine of series such as *Prime Suspect*, 'the central characters are outsiders not because they bend the rules but rather because they are black, or are women,

encroaching into the bastions of white male power ... the outsider is someone who believes in the effectiveness of the law as an *institution* and practices its legal procedures (Wayne 1998: 29–30). It is not so much Tony Clark, however, who occupies this role in *BTL*, but Mo Connell. Mo, it emerges through series two, is a lesbian, a radical decision for the time. Indeed, her sexuality is confirmed explicitly, in a way that parallels the depiction of heterosexual sex in the series, drawing attention to just how rarely such equality of representation is allowed on screen. Mo Connell, more than any other character in *BTL*, carries moral authority, aware of the institutional culture of the force in a way that Clark and Naylor often are not. Connell's role is in no small measure the result of her being excluded from the dominant, masculine police culture. This culture saturates the narrative action of all three series, and includes drinking, clubs and suggestions of Masonic intrigue. It is part of both the densely realised narrative world that the series creates, and an object of reflection within it. The inescapable conclusion of the series is that this canteen culture produces corruption, and this seeps into professional behaviour and private conduct.

However, the series maintains an ambivalence about canteen culture, and the tensions between older and newer ways of operating are often unresolved. As Brunsdon points out, *BTL* provides a 'demotic history' of 'older' forms of policing that cuts across individual stories (Brunsdon 2000: 211). This tension is a central one for Tony Clark, who is both a problematic 'hero', in the eyes of the series' creators, and someone who is ambivalent about where his allegiances lie. Clark's conduct, especially his sexual behaviour, is repeatedly called into question as its consequences unravel (in series one, for example, he is having an affair with WPC Jennie Dean, who commits suicide). Garnett has said that he had to fight the temptation amongst the writers to make Clark a more unambiguously heroic figure (Wayne 1998: 29–30), in recognition of the pull towards identification within the genre. In addition to his questionable personal conduct, Clark remains constantly uncertain about what is happening, his power to solve crime and effect change limited by the actions of those above him. This is especially true of the second series, where the plot lines deal more with the connections between the police and other agencies of the state.

Canteen culture has its attractions for Clark, who is pulled in two directions; by the need to do his job and his affection for the camaraderie he will inevitably leave behind. One of *BTL*'s achievements is that it shows how the inextricable connections between professional practice and personal conduct lead to compromise. This linking of

public and private morality is especially clear in Clark's sexual adventurism in series one. When questioned about his relationship with WPC Dean, Clark says it will not be barrier to his promotion, for 'she knows the score'. 'Knowing the score' is a phrase that resonates across the series. It is more than a private understanding between lovers, and means accepting the rules of the institutional culture that operate in favour of men like Clark – rules that eventually drive Dean to kill herself. *BTL* demonstrates that there is a cost to placing yourself outside the embrace of the institutional culture of the police. For Clark, who by the end of series one has made his choice, 'knowing the score' is unavoidable, but carries with it its own private and professional grief.

The next time Garnett and World Production returned to the police as a source for drama was in 1998 with *The Cops*.[10] The first episode begins with the following sequence. We are in a club, and a young woman is picked out on the dance floor; she later snorts cocaine in the toilets with friends before leaving, panic-stricken, on learning that it is now 5.00 a.m.; the camera follows her to a taxi, which takes her to her place of work, whilst she removes make-up and a navel ring; as she rushes from the taxi into an anonymous brick building the audience realises that we have arrived at a police station, and the woman, Mel Draper (Katy Kavanagh), is a policewoman. The sequence, part of which the BBC used as a trailer, illustrates graphically that *The Cops* is not going to be a conventional police series. It also indicates one of its central contentions – that the police are *part of* the society they have responsibility for, and this will structure the tension between the police *and* society and the police *as* a society.

Set amongst the uniform police in a fictional northern town, Stanton (in reality Bolton), *The Cops* ran over three series between 1998 and 2001 in hour-long episodes. The idea for *The Cops* had been around for at least three years, but its realisation was delayed by the second series of *This Life*. Garnett was fully involved in all aspects of devising and producing the series, and this is perhaps the main reasons why *The Cops* had a distinctive 'authorial' stamp. *The Cops* returns to some of the same questions as *Between the Lines* – to do with the nature of policing and the relationship of the police to society beyond the police station – but poses them in a different policing context. Whereas *BTL* was socially and geographically rootless, the precise setting of *The Cops* was very important to its fictional unity and its socio-political concerns. More than any other popular police drama in the period, *The Cops* is firmly on the terrain of social realism, thematically and stylistically. Its northern, working-class setting immediately signalled its antecedents, and each series' narratives of drugs, theft and violence are seen to come

out of, and impact upon, a class-based community in crisis. 'This is not really a cop show at all,' Garnett commented, 'it is certainly not about solving crimes or catching villains' (Garnett 2000b). Cop show or not, it achieved critical and popular success, and was praised across the reviewing spectrum for its realism and narrative energy, winning BAFTAs for best drama series in 1998 and 1999.

Garnett's comments suggest that he had another agenda; there was another agenda for the broadcasters as well, for whom the need to find new takes on familiar genres was pressing. The story of how the show was commissioned offers an object lesson in how the conditions of late 90s broadcasting might be opened up for this kind of project. BBC2, under the leadership of its then Controller Michael Jackson, was attempting to broaden its audience appeal and 'needed *The Cops* to be different'. Garnett noted:

> With every other channel having a cop show, questions would be asked about why BBC2 was doing one *unless* it was different in some way. This was an invitation to me to do more or less what I wanted. You don't often get these chances in television, and there are not many times in your working life when you're given the kind of support that BBC2 gave me on this project. (Garnett 1998: unpaginated)

The support, which was also freedom from interference, enabled Garnett to produce another example of 'trojan horse' drama, in which the forms of popular generic drama are used to convey more uncomfortable observation. Garnett has commented on this process in revealing detail:

> [W]hat I really wanted to do was a show that allowed us to go into parts of our society that are not shown on television, and which are not the experience of the middle classes who are watching. The society we wanted to represent in *The Cops* is one where 'sink-estates' show the results of grinding poverty through the generations: it's a society we where there's no hope or expectation, and a society where all sense of community and stability has disappeared.
>
> Now if I'd gone to the BBC or Channel 4 and said 'I'd like to do a series about social workers', or a similar group of people that would naturally access this context, they'd have thrown me out of the room; but by going in and saying 'I want to do a show about cops' [...] I could be sure of an enthusiastic response. They're *very* interested then [...] So I thought, if we do this show in uniforms, I can get the show made and I can get an audience to watch it, but the uniforms will take us into parts of society that we usually don't enter. (Garnett 1998: unpaginated)

Garnett's tactics indicate unwillingness amongst broadcasters in the 1990s to countenance social class (especially the working-class) as a subject for television drama. Despite evidence that the gap between the rich and poor increased between 1980 and the early 2000s, working class experience has, as Rowbotham and Beynon have pointed out, 'become peculiarly unmentionable, politically and theoretically [and] enveloped in a fog of confusion' (2001: 3). This has its origins in the undermining of familiar and established notions of class identity by the economic transformations of the previous decade, notably the decline of British manufacturing, the traditional centre of working-class cultural and political identity and the source of much of the imagery of class, and the remorseless transfer of employment from manufacturing to the service industries. These have had an impact on the way that social class has been thought about and represented. The embarrassment in talking about class also stems from the greater visibility of other, previously marginalised, social categories, such as race and gender, which have produced their own forms of radical drama, and a new imagery to place alongside, or replace, that of social class. Depictions of class, meanwhile, have often originated in pessimism and a sense of decline and crisis in the working class and its communities. Certainly a great deal of social realist cinema of the 1990s has been preoccupied with schism, fragmentation and personal and social crisis (often of masculinity itself), even when it has aimed at humour (*Brassed Off*, 1996, and *The Full Monty*, 1997, for example).

Entering the world of the contemporary underclass via the police was a complex matter. Garnett's usual research methods were used once again; all the writers who contributed to *The Cops* spent at least two weeks on the streets with uniformed police (initially, the Bolton police force, but they withdrew their co-operation after the first series). Directors and actors were similarly required to engage in first-hand research; as Garnett put it, 'I didn't want actors who had no idea about even how to put on the uniform. It's the practical things that matter: how do you get in and out of a car with all that equipment around you? ... How do you arrest somebody?' (Garnett 1998: unpaginated). Garnett was not involved in the process himself, taking the role of final arbiter between the 'truth' of the story and the demands of series narrative. He also established an inflexible rule for writers: every scene is either set amongst the police or, where a wider society is involved, motivated by the entrance of a policeman or woman. The narrative, and therefore the audience, always followed the actions of the police, and each episode is structured around an 8-hour shift. The idea was to create a sense for the viewer that she or he had accompanied the police on their journey

through a society, experiencing the violence, poverty and social disintegration as they did. This approach also created tensions around different kinds of point of view: the narrative and literal one, associated with the filming strategy described, and what Garnett terms the 'editorial' one – that is, the socio-political viewpoint of the series, which is not consistently aligned with the police.

Reviews of *The Cops* predictably picked up on the series' antecedents amongst Garnett's work, alongside more recent fiction/documentary hybrids – docusoaps and 'reality shows' of different kinds – which were generally found wanting in comparison. Several reviewers noted a similarity to US series such as *NYPD Blue* (ABC 1993–), which adopted a restless, hand-held shooting style. Garnett, though an admirer of the narrative economy and realism of US police series such as this, explicitly denies an influence, finding the camerawork occasionally mannered (that is, pursing its own form and purpose rather than following the action). It may be, however, that no matter how much *The Cops* looks unlike conventional television drama, US series, as well as contemporary fly-on-the-wall documentaries, provide an interpretative context for the audience if not the film-makers. This also indicates the changing connotations of 'hand-held' camerawork, which increasingly signifies not only documentary, and therefore realism, but also a certain kind of 'quality' popular television drama (and some independent cinema), marked out by its self-conscious difference from established practices.

The Cops, then, challenged many of the increasingly elastic conventions of police series, whilst seeking to offer many of its pleasures. This is apparent in the way that it treats the police themselves. There is no 'hero' in *The Cops*, not even a Tony Clark-type anti-hero, and the series is, as its title suggests, an ensemble piece with multiple, overlapping plot lines. Garnett has described this strategy as a way of deflecting the pull towards identification with a single figure who then becomes the point of entry into the fictional world. Refusing this option is a kind of 'alienation effect so that the audience can be persuaded to move beyond its fixation on a hero and instead move towards an examination of its own judgements' (Garnett 1998: unpaginated).

At each stage, especially in series one and two, personal dramas are played out against the larger social dramas of Stanton and its underclass. The uniformed officers in *The Cops* exist in a world in which the corrosive influence of poverty shapes the crimes they must deal with, but rarely 'solve' in any conventional sense. In the first episode, Mel investigates the death of an elderly man, whose daughter, it transpires, is an addict who has been taking his prescription. There is

no easy moral judgement to make, however, for either Mel or the viewer, since it is clear that the poverty and neglect that allows the old man's death to go undetected until his decomposing remains leak into a neighbour's flat, is also responsible for the lack of support available to his daughter. By positioning the viewer alongside the uniforms, *The Cops* also demonstrates aspects of the canteen culture of policing at this level, presented as a series of assumptions, habits and attitudes, often revealed casually through local argot. For example, the inhabitants of the Skeetsmore estate, the source of most of the crime we witness, are referred to ubiquitously as 'scroats', and much of the series is concerned with low-level warfare between scroats and police over drugs, petty crime and violence (some of it by the police). The series is saturated with the many ways in which dealing with crime and criminals is normalised in police practice – black humour and sexual innuendo in particular – its low-key style inviting the viewer to observe an alien culture in action. This informal culture exists within, and sometimes in opposition to, an official power structure, headed by Chief Inspector Newlands (Mark Chatterton). Newlands represents the new order of accountability and bureaucracy (he has a photograph of Tony Blair on his wall), his presence signifying metonymically the locus of power which shapes all their actions. The gulf between Newland and his men is understated but unmistakeable, and is registered, like much else in the series, through language. Newlands' preferred speech register is a management-speak, in marked contrast to the demotic of his officers.

However, the engagement with a society under pressure is, as the series develops, largely refracted through narratives that focus on the Stanton police themselves, and the moral and social implications of the way they exercise power. This is an aspect of a form of gravitational 'pull' within the series form towards an interest in individuals and their interaction, as the audiences become familiar with, and assert a preference for, certain characters. J. C. Wilsher recently lamented that all series drama eventually mutated into soap opera (quoted in Creeber 2004: 1), melodramas of the self and family. *The Cops* does not exactly follow this trajectory, but the police *as* a society increasingly supplants the police *in* a society. In one episode, a known criminal is 'fitted up' for a crime he did not commit by police officers, in an echo of the main plotline in *Law and Order*. In another, Sergeant Giffen (Rox Dixon) puts pressure on a vulnerable young woman, who is also an addict, in order to get to her partner's family. She commits suicide, a fact that he initially withholds from her partner, hoping to gain more information. Here, as throughout the series, *The Cops* asks difficult questions about

how failing communities such as the Skeetsmore estate are to be policed. The acceptability within the canteen culture of the police of rule-bending, if it produces results, has already been noted (Eaton 1995), and Garnett has said that focus groups formed to discuss *The Cops* seem to share these values (there was considerable support for the rough-and-ready policing tactics employed by one veteran constable, Roy Bramell (John Henshaw)) (Garnett 1998: unpaginated). This apparent consensus between police and public is challenged across the series by demonstrating that the line that separates police from criminal can be easily crossed. The police force is not an agent of state repression, therefore, but rather a moral and political battlefield where allegiances are impossible to adhere to, and where there are no final victories. *The Cops* ends pessimistically, and the last scene in the final episode concerns two characters, Roy and Mel, who have become the centre of attention, both morally if not structurally. Mel, it is suggested, will leave the police and give up on the struggle that was so clearly signalled in the series' opening. The decision, like the murder of the kestrel at the end of *Kes*, does not resonate symbolically but it does indicate a defeat, not only for Mel but also for the police.

Working in institutions: *Cardiac Arrest* and *Buried*

The police are not the only source of generic drama that World Productions has engaged with. The second major popular drama series that Garnett launched in the 1990s was set amongst the other half of the generic tagline – docs, rather than cops. *Cardiac Arrest* ran over three series from 1994–96 on BBC1 in half-hour episodes to an average of eight million viewers. It was written by Jed Mercurio, a junior doctor in a NHS hospital. The story of how he came to write it is illustrative of the ways in which Garnett tried to ensure that his series were grounded in research and the personal experience of the writer. Island World placed an advertisement in the *British Medical Journal* asking for expressions of interest from doctors with an interest in writing a sitcom about hospitals and the NHS. The brief emphasised that direct experience of the health service was necessary, in preference to experience of writing for television. Mercurio, who had had no work broadcast previously, was duly hired (though he wrote under the name of John MacCure, as he was still working as a junior doctor at the time). He successfully resisted the idea that *Cardiac Arrest* should be a sitcom, despite its half-hour format, arguing for something altogether darker and more partial.