



## Media Language

### You will need to consider:

- How the different modes and language associated with different media forms communicate multiple **meanings**
- How the combination of elements of **media language** influence meaning
- The **codes and conventions** of media forms and products, including processes through which **media language develops as a genre**
- The **dynamic and historically relative nature of genre**. The processes through which meanings are created through **intertextuality**
- How **audiences respond to and interpret** the above aspects of media language
- Narratology (including Todorov)
- Genre (including Neale)
- Structuralism (including Lévi Strauss) at A level
- Postmodernism (including Baudrillard) at A level



### Analytical toolkit for television

You will need to analyse television texts in terms of media language

This will include:

- Technical Codes
- Visual Codes
- Genre
- Narrative

Mindshower – what would you expect to include for each of these headings.

Then use the digital resource ‘Analytical toolkit’ to compare your answers with those suggested.

### Technical codes recap quiz

Use the digital resource - ‘Technical codes Blockbusters’



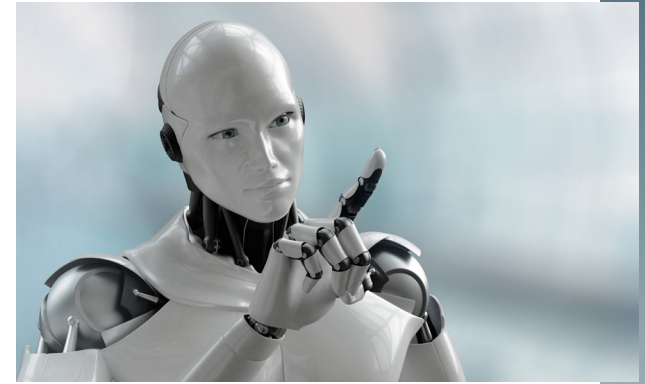
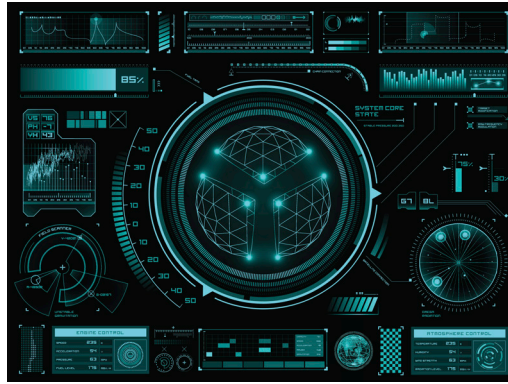


### Task: Genre – What are the codes and conventions of a science-fiction text?

- Think **RESISTS**
- Recurring situations
- Elements of narrative
- Style
- Iconography
- Settings
- Themes
- Stock characters



A science fiction text is one which has science (often in a fantastical form) as its central construct





### Task: Watch “Humans” Episode 1 and identify the generic signifiers in the text

What other genres/generic features are evident? What makes it “different”?

Find 5 things for each of the RESISTS codes/conventions that audiences would expect to find in a science fiction. Check your answers against the list in the interactive resource ‘Genre codes and conventions’

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| Recurring situations  |  |
| Elements of narrative |  |
| Style                 |  |
| Iconography           |  |
| Settings              |  |
| Themes                |  |
| Stock characters      |  |

### Task: Sci-fi sub-genres – To what sub-genre do the following programmes belong?

| Programme (s)   | Sub-genre |
|---|-----------|
| Roswell, Torchwood, Colony, V, The X-Files  |           |
| Star Trek, Firefly, Red Dwarf, Blake's 7  |           |
| Doctor Who  |           |
| Almost Human, Real Humans   |           |
| Transformers, Westworld   |           |
| Smallville, Ultimate Spiderman  |           |
| Defiance, Survivors, Falling Skies  |           |
| The Sarah Jane Adventures, Ben 10, Fairly Odd Parents, Power Rangers, Teen Titans |           |



### What types of hybrid science fiction can you identify?



The following hybridise science-fiction with which other genre (s)?

| Text            | Sci-fi and ..? |
|-----------------|----------------|
| Red Dwarf       |                |
| Making History  |                |
| Westworld       |                |
| Stranger Things |                |
| The Flash       |                |
| Heroes          |                |

### Genre task – the development & context of science fiction (Neale)

- Watch the clips from the science fiction documentary <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AcgwfsBbkpA> (13')
- and Treksperitise - What is Science Fiction? by David Brin <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jl9lVkjdlf4> (6'14")
- What conventions are evident?
- Steve Neale suggests that genres exist within particular contexts and develop through borrowing from other texts. What evidence is there for this?
- How has the development of science-fiction reflected contemporary ideologies and concerns? Give examples.



### Task: Hybridity & Intertextuality

Identify any intertextual elements within Episode 1 of “Humans”. Look at these elements and consider how they work in terms of media language (creating meaning), genre and audiences. How do these bring ‘difference’ to the text (Neale)?

Write your answers here and then compare with the digital resource.





### Task: Genre – Repetition and Difference (Steve Neale)

Use the review below as a starting point. What is “old” in terms of genre and what is new? Why has the genre changed/developed?

‘Last year’s launch of *Humans* – a stylish series about the rise of Artificial Intelligence as demonstrated by eerily anthropomorphic robots called “synths” – was a big hit for the broadcaster, netting its highest ratings for a drama since *The Camomile Lawn* way back in 1992. Now, for its second series, *Humans* has widened its scope with an admirably ambitious opening episode that hopped between the UK, the US, Germany and Bolivia, telling a panoramic story of man versus machine. One of the rogue synths released a secret software upgrade that gave their fellow machines human consciousness. Around the world, synthetic slaves began waking up and threw off their chains of bondage.

For a show about robots, *Humans* had perceptive things to say about humanity – as its title suggests. Feelings were described as “contradictory data – an excess of sensory feedback that makes no sense and serves no useful function.” “Emotions have functions, you’ll see,” said sage synth Max (Ivanno Jeremiah). Unusually for a dystopian drama, the script was stealthily funny. “I haven’t decided on my name yet,” deadpanned one newly liberated synth. “I’m oddly attracted to the word ‘radiator’, although I understand this is not considered a name.”

As with the debut series, it was the women who shone brightest, especially Emily Berrington and Gemma Chan as fugitive synths Niska and Mia. The willowy pair blended blank-faced impassivity with flickers of burgeoning humanity. Mia relished feeling the wind in her hair. Niska smiled at a headline reading: “Synth tram driver abandons passengers to look at the birds”. Josie Lawrence made a scene-stealing cameo as a robotic marriage counsellor, adopting a soft Edinburgh accent to put clients at ease. Meanwhile, *The Matrix*’s Carrie-Anne Moss also joined the cast, replacing William Hurt as the token Hollywood star. As a synth-sympathising US scientist, Moss was all furrowed brow and hard-bitten cynicism.

This second run will inevitably be compared to big-budget US import *Westworld*, which launched earlier this month on Sky Atlantic. Both shows explore the themes of artificial intelligence and malfunctioning technology. However, *Humans* is a different beast. It’s primarily a domestic drama, a story about families – be it the human Hawkins clan, whose lives were irrevocably changed by Mia, or the bond between sentient synths. This is sci-fi with heart and soul’

Michael Hogan The Telegraph <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/tv/2016/10/30/for-a-show-about-robots-humans-has-a-lot-of-heart---channel-4-se/>

30 OCTOBER 2016





### Post-modernism & ‘Humans’

Baudrillard argues that the media create hyperrealities based on a continuous process of mediation.



What is encoded as ‘real’ (and what we decode through media products) is not ‘real’ but instead a ‘simulacrum’ which offers us a hyperreality (“A real without origin or reality” – *Jean Baudrillard*) that we accept as real because we are so consistently exposed to it.

Thus media images have come to seem more “real” than the reality they supposedly represent

‘Our mental pictures of the perfect body, house, meal and sexual relationship have been created through exposure to constantly recycled media depictions that have no basis in fact – but it is these images that create our expectations’ (*Em Griffen (2012) A First Look at Communication Theory, p319*)

Lévi-Strauss suggested that media texts are now made up of “debris” that we recognise from other texts and these are combined – “bricolage”. This may be heard in e.g. a musical “mash-up” or remix.

### Post-modernism

Some features of a postmodern text:

- Intertextuality – acknowledgement of existing media texts
- References to popular culture
- Bricolage
- Self-reflexive
- Parody/Pastiche (“pasted”)/Homage
- Irony
- Ambiguity
- Narrative fragmentation or temporal distortion
- Anti-realist

Give examples of these features in “Humans”



### Post-modernism & 'Humans'

How far is 'Humans' a post-modern text?

- Read the following link to support your answer
- <https://www.theguardian.com/science/2016/oct/19/stephen-hawking-ai-best-or-worst-thing-for-humanity-cambridge>

How could we apply the concept of "simulacra" to 'Humans'? Is what we are seeing hyperreal?

Write your answer here and then compare with the digital resource



### TASK: Narrative – Tzvetan Todorov

Can you identify the various stages of the narrative in Episode 1 of *Humans*?

- EQUILIBRIUM: The given state or balance of affairs before the.....
- DISRUPTION: Disruption of the equilibrium (may stem from a catalyst)
- RECOGNITION: That there has been a disruption
- RESOLUTION: The attempts to restore the equilibrium
- EQUILIBRIUM: Restoration of a similar or changed state of affairs after the disruption has been resolved
- Are all these stages completely realised in Episode 1? Why?
- The Todorovian narrative model is linear. Is this the case here?
- There should be cause/effect links throughout the narrative. Can you identify these?

### Can you identify the various stages of the narrative in Episode 1 of *Humans*?

TODOROVIAN STRUCTURE –

- EQUILIBRIUM –
- DISRUPTION –
- RECOGNITION –
- RESOLUTION –
- EQUILIBRIUM –
- Would we expect full closure in an episodic drama?
- Are there non-linear elements within the episode?
- Are there obvious cause/effect links set up through e.g. Barthesian action codes?



### Binary opposites (Levi-Strauss)

Binary Opposition (defined by Levi-Strauss) – many oppositions are set up to drive the narrative and we watch to discover which side “triumphs” in the end.

Can you identify what is in “opposition” to the first word within the text?

Man v

Anita v

Captivity v

Progress v

Family v institution

Individual v

Conscious v

Past v

Male v

Old v

Appearance v

### Story arcs/character arcs

There are several story arcs and narrative strands – can you identify them?





### Narrative – ‘Humans’

Key Questions for Class Discussion:

- Is the narrative entirely linear? If not, why not? Give examples
- Does the episode have a flexi-narrative?
- Are there story arcs which run across the series/franchise?
- Are there obvious codes (Barthes) around which the narrative is structured? Give examples
- Is it realist?
- How are time and space manipulated within the narrative?

### Narrative – Points you may have made

- 3 Act Structure? Part of larger narrative - only the beginning
- Linear/non-linear - is it? Manipulation of time and space challenges audiences
- Surreal /anti-realist elements at times. Flashbacks and montages
- Intellectual puzzle for an active audience. Not “easy” viewing
- Often Proppian roles
- Plot driven, punctuated by clues which become narrative markers- enigmas/hermeneutics throughout.
- Lacks denouement and satisfying conclusion
- Narrative - Is it a flexi-narrative? Characters are complex, storylines interweave, we question what is real and what isn't, it challenges the audience through enigma, confusion
- Complex cross - cutting between past/present and lines of action
- Journey/quest structure – to find the synths, for family harmony- link to Campbell/Vogler.