

**How Shane Meadows
Blurs the Boundaries
between Realism and
Reality in the Film
and TV Series
*This Is England***

Sophie Yapp

BA (Hons) Fashion Journalism

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Introduction

“If someone, like, had never been to England and they had to draw a picture, this is exactly what they’d draw.” (*This Is England '90: Episode 2*, 2015)



Figure 1. *This Is England '90* (2015)

Few quotes could be more emblematic of England in the ‘90s than those uttered by focal character, Kelly, in *This Is England '90*, while staring hazily at the picturesque woodland scenery in a post-euphoric comedown, fuelled by prior ecstasy-induced highs. Whilst fictional – and steeped in irony following the felonious antics prior to such an utterance – this quote is also symbolic of director Shane Meadows’ own drawn ‘picture’ of England, as depicted in the film and TV Drama miniseries *This Is England*. Albeit, Meadows’ ‘drawing’, so to speak, could be considered significantly less aesthetically desirable and substantially grittier than that which Figure 1 would suggest. The series follows the lives of a group of northern young adults, epitomizing the hardships and often less-than-desirable circumstances to befall them in 1983 – when the original film is set – to its miniseries predecessors set in 1986, followed by 1988 and lastly, 1990.

To many, what could be considered most interesting about Meadows’ creation is how he presents a credible representation of working-class Thatcherite Britain, whilst interweaving a range of storylines that reaches out to many viewers. Such storylines

are dealt with a consistency of solemnity for the more explicit topics, counteracted by scenes of light-heartedness and humour.

To me, what is most alluring about the series is how Meadows encapsulates the essence of the characters' lives and delivers so convincingly. As a follower of the series, I regard Meadows' insightful account into the lives of the characters as captivating as it is compelling. Through the supplement of scene-setting, styling and directorial techniques, the division between realism and reality diminishes.

Subcultural references are heavily depicted in the series, and this dissertation will partly explore how Shane Meadows represents post-war subcultures such as Skinheads, Mods and Ravers. Through the prominent inclusion of subcultures, it raises the question: how does the styling of characters reflect on theories of post-war subcultural styles and values? Another question that this dissertation will investigate is how does the provision of social issues in storylines – such as rape, sexual violence, depression and drug misuse – instigate viewer involvement and concern for character welfare? Lastly, the remaining question that will be examined within this dissertation is how is it directed to seem real? Specifically, how does the raw, gritty documentary effect of filming, combined by scene setting, free use of improvisation and the juxtaposing of catalytic scenes separate the film and series from its fictional nature?

Ultimately, this dissertation will examine the ways in which Shane Meadows blurs the boundaries between realism and reality in *This Is England*, by focusing intently on the integrating of post-war subcultural style, humanising of characters and the effect upon audiences, and how this is conducted through techniques of directorial realism.

Literature Review

In *This Is England*, subcultures are a manifestation of working class British culture, with the characters at the lower end of the scale. The general consensus amongst theorists is that subcultures emerged as a result of class division; namely Dick Hebdige, who states that they evolved from a society that functions through a “finely graded system of divided labour” (Hebdige, 1979: 14) and through society’s unequal restraints (Gelder, 2005: 52). Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson state that people are born into struggles of hegemony, dominated by the ruling class, creating class division (Hall; Jefferson, 1993: 11-12). Subcultures defied the ‘norms’ through their clothing, creating upheaval and subsequently violating the symbolic order (Hebdige, 1979: 18-19), which is particularly shown through the working-class Skinheads in *This Is England*, who express an ‘us versus them’ attitude through their attire.

Sarah Thornton argues that class isn’t the root cause of subcultural differences; rather, they aimed to separate themselves from the “parent class” (Thornton, 1995: 12). All subcultures share a common preference in devoting their time and money into leisure, refusing to accept responsibilities of the “work world”, or be a part of the society that undermines and tries to control them (Thornton, 1995: 101-102), which relates to the Ravers in *This Is England ‘90*, who attend raves and consume alcoholic and narcotic substances.

Through the intensity of storylines and evocative performances, such as Lol’s psychological illness and suicide attempt in *This Is England ‘88*, or Kelly taking heroine in *This Is England ‘90*, it would be hard for viewers not to experience some level of engagement. Ien Ang states “it is impossible to watch a television serial without some degree of personal involvement” (Ang, 1985: 28) and that depending on how “lifelike” and genuine the actor is and the more credible the performance seems, “the distance between actor and character is minimalized” (Ang, 1985: 30). Lesley Henderson reasserts this, indicating that audience engagement occurs as a result of how the actors carry out the issue, rather than the issue itself (Henderson, 2007: 59).

The taboo subjects featured in *This Is England ‘86*, including rape and sexual violence, are prime examples of how fiction transmits messages to the audience, to

then instigate an emotional response. Sue Thornham and Tony Purvis believe this is because television acts as a metaphor “for contemporary cultural life” which often creates a huge impact from heavy social issues in storylines (Thornham; Purvis, 2005: 11). Despite not being an exact “‘mirror’ of society”, Henderson argues that television fiction touches issues that occur in real life, with increased added dramatic effect (Henderson, 2007: 25), while providing a platform for viewers to see such issues from “behind closed doors” (Henderson, 2007: 107).

Essentially, the sense of credibility Shane Meadows provides in terms of scene setting, indication of time period, and genuine nature of storylines, comes down to his authentic representation of such. Julia Hallam and Margaret Marshment present the argument that realism is achieved through a variety of strategies used by filmmakers to convey characters and situational circumstances by means of portraying a realistic worldview (Hallam; Marshment, 2000: 123). Anne Jerslev argues that our experiences of realism are “intricately tied to the impression that the events and persons depicted are somehow real”, implying that viewers acknowledge the events and characters’ experiences as real, despite being aware of its fictional nature (Jerslev, 2002: 93).

Meadows’ coalescence of historical references with narrative social circumstances in *This Is England* creates a sense of authenticity. John Hill argues that the role of film must “tell a story” for viewers to transmit with the “conventions of the narrative”, which ultimately transcends into the “fulfillment of an audience’s desire for pleasure” (Hill, 1986: 53). Bill Nichols states that the “blurred border zones of realism” supplies sensual “aesthetic pleasure”, while interweaving historical aspects and knowledge of the world into fiction (Nichols, 1994: 119).

Method of Approach

The first chapter will explore Shane Meadows' depiction of post-war subcultures in *This Is England*, particularly through cast styling and intertwining of historical references, alongside comparatively reviewing the work of theorists such as Dick Hebdige (1979), Steve Redhead (1993), Stuart Hall (1993) and Tony Jefferson (1993). Using stills from the film *This Is England*, I will firstly assess Meadows' depiction of Skinhead style and racist values. I will then move on to analyse the representation of Mod revival by denoting to stills from *This Is England '86* to discuss Mod style, values and caricatures created by media coverage. Subsequently, I will investigate Meadows' portrayal of Ravers through stills from *This Is England '90*, reflecting on Ravers' style, as well as drug association and reference to 90s raves.

The second chapter will discuss the impact fictional storylines has on viewers and, in turn, how it initiates viewer involvement through studying scenes of this nature and evaluating the work of theorists' amongst the likes of Ien Ang (1985), Lesley Henderson (2007), Sue Thornham (2005) and Tony Purvis (2005). The first part will allude to stills from *This Is England '86*, covering taboo scenes of rape and sexual violence, elucidating how viewers are impacted by such issues being expressed through fiction as well as how a music score contributes to this. The second part will draw on stills from *This Is England '88*, examining how psychological illness and attempted suicide are approached and how credibility of acting generates emotional alignment with characters, particularly when combined with emotive music. The final part will focus on stills from *This Is England '90* conveying use of heroine; discussing how viewer engagement is created through the actor and performance, rather than the issue itself.

The third chapter will assess directorial techniques used to achieve the effect of realism, whilst addressing academic theorists' work, including Julia Hallam (2000), Margaret Marshment (2000) and Anne Jerslev (2002), who deliberate techniques used in film and television to generate the impression of realism. It will focus on techniques used to exemplify the element of veracity, beginning with the use of improvisation in *This Is England '90*, whilst also referring to cast interviews regarding this method of direction. It will then go on to discuss stills that encapsulate

Meadows' use of scene setting, followed by the raw, gritty, documentary effect of filming. Conclusively, the last part will study Meadows' juxtaposing of catalytic moments, using scene stills from *This Is England '86* to evaluate the impact of such.

1. Subcultural Styling

“Subcultures represent ‘noise’ ... interference in the orderly sequence which leads from real events and phenomena to their representation in the media.” (Hebdige, 1979: 90)

This Is England is set between 1983 and 1990, and part of what makes it so effective in its interpretation of youth culture in this period is the depiction of subcultures that had so prominently emerged at a time where youth had become a culture in itself (Redhead, 1993: 1). The formation of subcultures is established based on those in a position of power being open to more opportunities than those who were not (Gelder, 2005: 52). Subcultures express the tension and division between the working class and those in power who consider the classes below them as subordinate; such tensions are expressed through style (Hebdige, 1979: 132). Visually, members of the cast are styled to convey post-war subcultures as perceptively as possible, supplemented by a demonstration of historical acknowledgement within storylines, and this chapter will examine how Meadows portrays this.



Figure 2. *This Is England* (2006)

Arguably one of the most pertinent of the subcultures to have been conveyed within *This Is England* is that of the Skinhead culture, who are renowned for using their style to communicate qualities of hardness and masculinity by means of reinforcing their

working class status (Hebdige, 1979: 114). Figure 2 shows Woody and Lol, two Skinheads from *This Is England*, alongside Rude Boy, Milky, which is crucial in exemplifying where elements of Skinhead culture originated from, as it was formed from a combination of Jamaican culture and British working-class (Polhemus, 2010: 101). Skinheads both respected and imitated essences of Rude Boy culture by favouring the “no-nonsense rhythms” consisting of Jamaican ska, rocksteady and bluebeat (Polhemus, 2010: 98) and with these different subcultures being in the same friendship group, Meadows indicates Skinheads’ acknowledgement of the black presence situated predominantly amongst white working class areas, with intent upon regenerating stability and continuity with a broken past (Hebdige, 1979: 57).

Figure 2 also demonstrates how *This Is England* cast members are styled to present the classic “bovver boots and skinned-head” (Hall; Jefferson, 1993: 54) characteristics; with all characters embodying shaven heads and a “uniform” of button-collar shirts, Levis Jeans and heavy boots (Christopher, 2006: 184); a look that visually defined Skinheads. The Skinhead aesthetic was described as “Modernist sharp, Rude Boy cool and working class tough” (Polhemus, 2010: 98) and the cast are styled to channel this through the wearing of Ben Sherman shirts, bleached jeans and Doctor Martens. Meadows goes to great lengths in signifying how Skinheads tried to retain “socially cohesive” aspects that were destroyed in the parent culture (Gelder, 2005: 89) through this unanimously worn uniform. Primarily, however, it represented the self-image of working class youths, though often distorted through perceptions of the middle class (Gelder, 2005: 91). Through this group cohesion, Meadows addresses how symbolic objects such as appearance and rituals in the group were formed around a sense of unison concerning group relations, resulting in the group’s defined identity (Hall; Jefferson, 1993: 56), which, as true of all subcultures, is why the group of Skinheads in *This Is England* act and appear the same.

Despite theories indicating that girls were not present amongst subcultures as a result of the term ‘subculture’ having acquired “such strong masculine overtones” (Hall; Jefferson, 1993: 211), and the assumption that this is because boys spent more time and money on leisure (Thornton, 1995: 13), Figure 3 depicts Shane Meadows’ acknowledgement of girls within subcultures.



Figure 3. *This Is England* (2006)

Skinhead culture was assumed to be predominantly masculine (Hall; Jefferson, 1993: 214), but Meadows' inclusion of female Skinheads in *This Is England* are proof of their existence. It's suggested that their presence was understated because they dressed and acted almost identically to their male Skinhead boyfriends and friends (Hall; Jefferson, 1993: 214); as shown through the wearing of Fred Perry/Ben Sherman shirts and braces, as well as their shaven-head attributes, which differed only slightly to their completely-shaven head male peers by having fringes and excess bits of hair. In this still, you can see them shaving newly appointed Skinhead, Shaun's hair off so he's officially a Skinhead, reinforcing the sense of group unison.



Figure 4. *This Is England* (2006)

Shane Meadows also alludes to the racist values acquired by many Skinheads in *This Is England*, where Combo returns from prison after three years, having obtained

extreme right-wing views, causing the Skinhead group to split (see Appendix 1). Those in agreement with Combo considered those of different ethnicity to pose a significant threat, be it through stealing ‘their’ jobs or houses or, in their minds, devaluing England. This scene of Combo holding a machete to the throat of an Asian Shop-keeper in Figure 4 refers to this racist aspect of Skinhead culture, where many Skinheads were renowned for attacking blacks and Asians (Christopher, 1999: 184). The term acquired the name ‘Paki-bashing’, which was their attempt to aggressively defend the community against “its most obviously scapegoated outsiders” (Hall; Jefferson, 1993: 102). Shane Meadows’ insinuation of this is pivotal with regards to providing an accurate representation of Skinheads, conveying the ‘hardness’ of the working class to substitute for the real decline of working class community (Hall; Jefferson, 1993: 99).

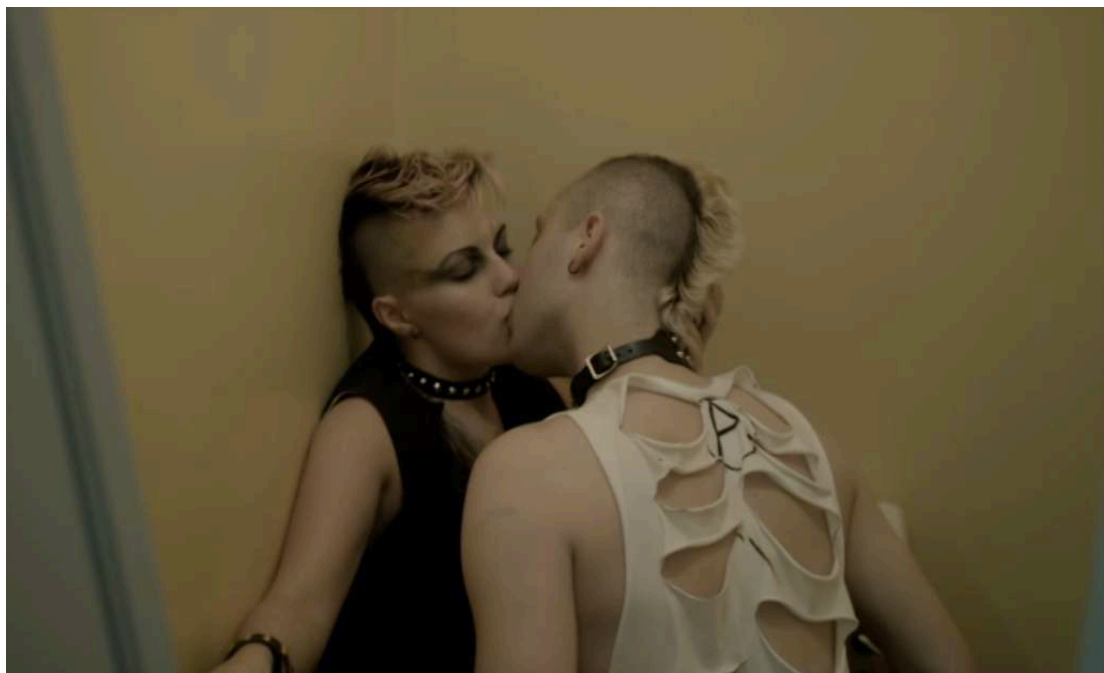


Figure 5. *This Is England '86* (2010)

This understanding of racist values associated with Skinheads is explored further in *This Is England '86*, where Meadows makes reference to ‘Oi!’s’. This was the emergence of a new type of Skinhead that combined the shaven head with colourful Punk-like mohicans, alongside traditionally associated Skinhead attire, such as Doctor Martens (Polhemus, 2010: 101), the aesthetic of which can be seen in Figure 5. Punk’s arrival in 1976 caused many Skinheads to align with them, contrary to seemingly opposite style differences (Polhemus, 2010: 101) and despite original

Skinheads’ “respect bordering on reverence” for the Jamaican culture in which their music taste and style originated from, many of the Oi!s became associated with extreme-right wing views and political groups. This, in turn, is how Skinheads acquired their synonymous association with racism (Polhemus, 2010: 101).



Figure 6. *This Is England '86* (2010)

This Is England '86 drifts away from the Skinhead subculture that was so prominent in the film and explores a sense of Mod Revival, focusing much more intently on characters that, whilst present in the film, were not as focal. Meadows explores both the idea of “pure, unadulterated style” (Hall; Jefferson, 1993: 93) being of importance to original Mods, alongside caricature Mods created by media. This is channeled predominantly through focal character, Woody, who embodies the ethos and way of life of many Mods – that being, “the mod lived now and certainly paid later” (Hall; Jefferson, 1993: 92). On multiple occasions, Meadows shows how Mods were renown for indulging in the free time that the weekend provided, making the mundane Monday morning’s resumption of work (Hall; Jefferson, 1993: 48) marginally more meaningful (Hebdige, 1979: 53). Figure 6 demonstrates how Woody balances work and leisure; doing so on a very fine line, often turning up to work late or hung-over, or alternatively, trying to take his job seriously and this having a knock-on effect on his social life. Thus, Meadows refers to the unemployment of the 80s, and how money placed a strain on relationships in this period (see Appendix 2).

Figure 7 alludes to Meadows' acknowledgement of original Mods (Polhemus, 2010: 98), who wore traditional suits in an array of colours, and were renowned for being "fastidiously neat and tidy" (Hebdige, 1979: 52) alongside caricature Mods created by media, who were often thought of as roughening the pristine style of original Mods (Hebdige, 1979: 122). Meadows frequently refers to original Mods throughout the series, where Woody is seen to be wearing the associated Mod combination of a parka coat, suave suits and Fred Perry sportswear (Christopher, 1999: 198). Woody demonstrates how Mods would appropriate every-day commodities to redefine their original uses or values by applying a new meaning in a different context (Hall; Jefferson, 1993: 93). For instance, Figure 7 shows how Mods redefined the Lambretta scooter (Christopher, 1999: 183) epitomizing how a mode of transport became an appropriated symbol of cohesion and solidarity amongst fellow Mods (Hall; Jefferson, 1993: 93).



Figure 7. *This Is England '86* (2010)

Yet, while Meadows makes reference to Woody dressing like an original Mod, he also explores the sense of caricature Mods created by the media. Mass media coverage progressively created caricatures and transformed subcultures from resistance to becoming a marketing device in which advertisers exaggerated (Redhead, 1993: 1). The media focused their attention on the younger generation trying to revive the style, wearing grubby – and often scruffy – parka coats adorned in badges rather than the pristine and immaculate aesthetic channeled by original Mods

(Polhemus, 2010: 78). Figure 7 shows how Woody seems to embody a combination of the two, but mainly the latter, as he would only wear the pressed suits to special occasions, and would predominantly be seen with the latter scruffy parka coat and scooter (Hall; Jefferson, 1993: 54) the rest of the time. Unlike that of the original Mods, caricature Mods were much less interested in looking immaculate than they were in messing around (Polhemus, 2010: 77), and whilst Woody reflects essences of both original and caricature Mods, besides the suits, Woody could mostly be perceived as a caricature.



Figure 8. *This Is England '86* (2010)

Similarly to the Skinheads in *This Is England*, three years later, there was still a noticeable element of subcultural style cohesion between genders. Mod styles enabled female Mods to resemble their Male Mod peers, which – shocking as it was to older generations – became a fashion style in itself (Christopher, 1999: 183). Such similarities between males and females led to the diffusion of Mod styles, which instigated the Unisex device within the fashion trade (Hall; Jefferson, 1993: 217). Figure 8 demonstrates this, which is a scene from their Wedding Day in *This Is England '86*. Lol is wearing what could be appropriated as male Mod clothing rather than a Wedding dress, which, alongside her androgynous, short hair, insinuates Meadows' recognition of what had previously been a male-orientated subculture now included a “strong female contingent”, which had fast developed into a hugely influential unisex style (Polhemus, 2010: 77).

In *This Is England '90*, Meadows fixates on the broad range of British youth (Thornton, 1995: 16) in the late 80s proceeding to the early 90s who regularly partook in what was referred to as “Club Culture” by attending raves and clubbing, acquiring the name ‘Ravers’ (Thornton, 1995: 3). Meadows explores this transition from the Acid House oblivion of the 80s (Redhead, 1993: 36) to the sense of community and loving that ecstasy provided Ravers with in the 90s, and how opposite subcultures would join as one for such occasions (Redhead, 1993: 3-4).



Figure 9. *This Is England '90* (2015)

Instead of focusing on the media’s perception of Ravers, consisting of the renown Smiley logo, psychedelia, and hallucinogenics that are so tightly affiliated with Ravers (Redhead, 1993: 13), Meadows reflects on the “scallies” and “Perries” (Polhemus, 2010: 176) culture associated with northern Ravers, who wore baggy clothing such as flares (Redhead, 1993: 23) or tops emblazoned with logos or names of popular northern Indie bands (Redhead, 1993: 139) such as Harvey’s (right) *The Stone Roses* t-shirt. Such youths had shifted from the glorified clean-cut style of the Casuals and were now channeling a “tramp” look. They were renown for being working class and “intensely regionalist and dismissive of everything that came from London” (Polhemus, 2010: 176). In terms of style, it could easily have been suggested that there was no real sense of style at all. Ravers of both genders would wear baggy clothing; be it oversized tops, tracksuit bottoms, loose trousers and even shapeless hairstyles, prioritizing comfort and practicality over anything else (Redhead, 1993:

52). This is depicted in Figure 9, where cast members are seen to be wearing the described attire. It reflects on the idea that Ravers could be perceived as overgrown toddlers, stemming from their refusal to grow up as well as their lack of interest in style (Redhead, 1993: 54). Needless to say, their lack of finance and interest in rigorous dancing and consuming dance-fuelling narcotics played a huge part in their choice of attire (Redhead, 1993: 53).

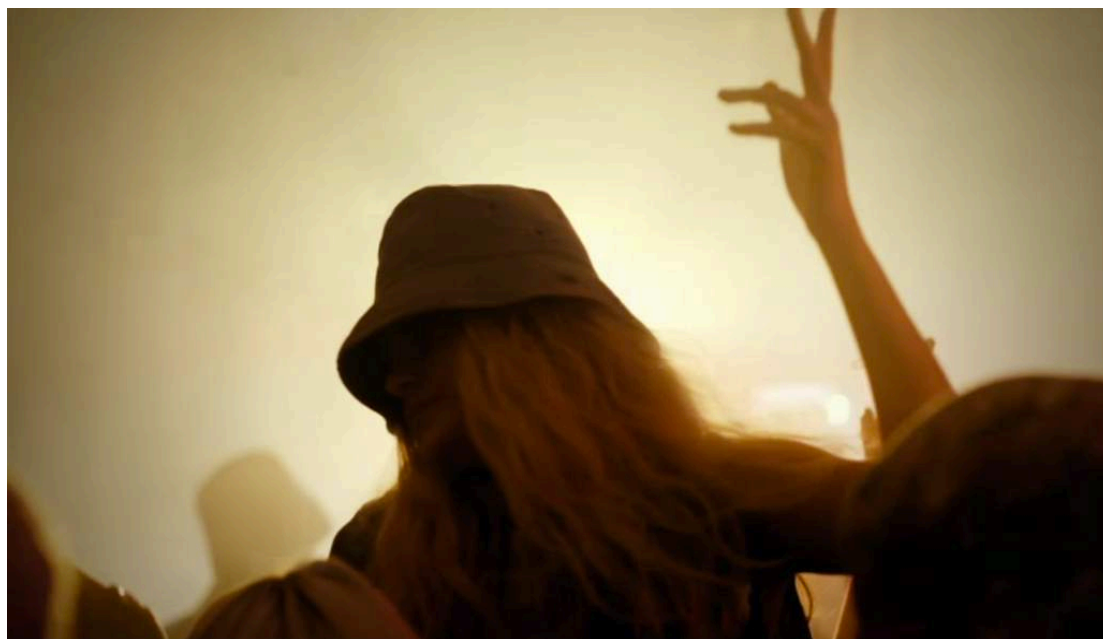


Figure 10. *This Is England '90* (2015)

Meadows lays great emphasis on how widely used MDMA and ecstasy was by Ravers, particularly in Episode 1 of *This Is England '90*. Figure 10 is a still from the 'Madchester' discotheque scene, portraying how attendees would dance to sound-systems playing "cherished northern bands" (Polhemus, 2010: 176) such as *The Happy Mondays* and *The Stone Roses*, whilst drinking and taking drugs. Meadows refers to how synonymous ecstasy became with the 'Madchester' scene (Redhead, 1993: 11), also indicating how the combination of rave culture and ecstasy complimented one another like "hand in glove" (Redhead, 1993: 12-13). This is depicted in Figure 10, where Kelly is dancing freely and intensely under the influence of MDMA (Redhead, 1993: 42). For many ravers, taking these types of drugs for the purpose of dancing was considered as a "pleasure for its own sake in times when moral regulation of youth is pervasive and deep economic recession is life" (Redhead, 1993: 7).

Meadows continues to show 90s rave culture in Episode 2, where the group drive to attend one of the secret-location raves organized in “true Thatcherite spirit” (Redhead, 1993: 47) by undeterred promoters (Stewart, 2013: 303). In this episode, Meadows signifies how groups of Ravers would car-share, hoping to join the thousands of others by following maps to vague destinations such as unused industrial estates or open fields in the middle of nowhere (Stewart, 2013: 303). However, as was often the case, the group end up getting lost, and instead stumble across a micro-festival held by New-Age travellers (see Appendix 3). This conveys how a mutual interest in narcotics and dancing “went a long way towards smoothing over regional rivalries” (Polhemus, 2010: 176).



Figure 11. *This Is England '90* (2015)

Figure 11 is taken from one of the scenes where the Ravers join the New-Age Travellers, and is an example of where Meadows alludes to the time where Travellers were struggling to stage their festivals as sound systems were being confiscated and raves were being shut down (Polhemus, 2010: 176-178). Regardless, the northern-based Ravers – who had nowhere to go – and the Travellers – who saw it as a way of life – would conjoin for the sake of a good time. This draws on how originally implausible subcultures would put aside their differences, with ecstasy being “undoubtedly the catalyst of this coming together.” (Redhead, 1993: 36).



Figure 12. *This Is England '90* (2015)

“If club culture had before celebrated an ecstasy of selflessness and oblivion, the new ecstasy was one of belonging and togetherness” (Redhead, 1993: 36). Figure 12 displays close friends, Kelly and Trev, showing their affection towards one another whilst heavily under the influence of ecstasy. The episode shows this on a number of occasions, emphasizing how ecstasy was considered as the “friendly drug” (Redhead, 1993: 12), due to its instigation of human empathy and compassion towards fellow Ravers. Such Ravers would express a substantial amount of affection towards one another, initiating a sense of unison and togetherness whilst dancing together “as a mass of joyful individuals” (Stewart, 2013: 301).

To reflect on the opening words of Dick Hebdige, subcultures do, as stated, represent ‘noise’ and interference in the orderly sequence (Hebdige, 1979: 90). Be it through the racist values and working-class nature of Skinheads, the leisure-seeking attributes of Mods, or even the drug-taking and raving lifestyle of Ravers, Meadows insinuates the great lengths these post-war subcultures went to by means of interfering in society’s orderly sequence. This simultaneously resulted in media coverage, which is true even of today’s depiction of post-war subcultures, where even Shane Meadows uses the media of film and television to exemplify them.

2. *Humanising Characters*

“No fictional narrative is wholly separate from the realities of the world in which the narrative circulates.” (Thornham; Purvis, 2005: 37)

Dramas containing a social message, in both film and television, have acquired a “unique position in British broadcasting culture” (Henderson, 2007: 22). Particularly in television, such dramas have proven their ability to construct a parallel reality of the real world through television fiction (Hallam; Marshment, 2000: 100) and despite its fictional nature, the visual and cultural content hosts a strong resemblance to aspects of our society (Thornham; Purvis, 2005: 37). Due to such credible depictions produced by filmmakers and actors, it has been suggested that as viewers, we can even lose sight of the way of our own world (Jerslev, 2002: 104). This chapter will examine how specific scenes in *This Is England '86*, *This Is England '88* and *This Is England '90* explore social issues amongst storylines, and the impact this has upon viewers.

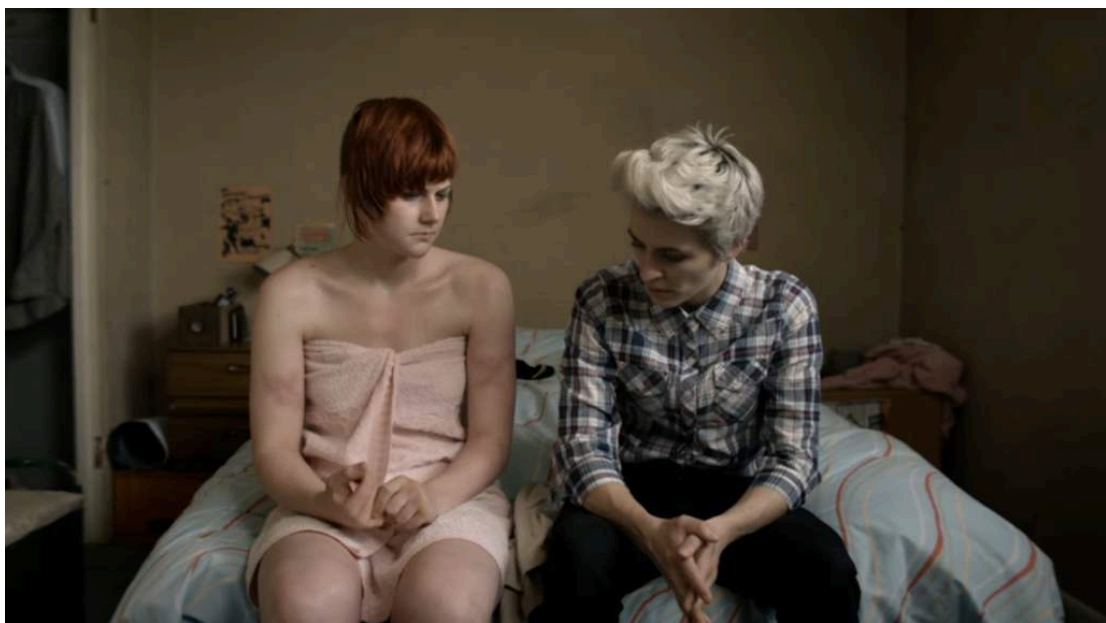


Figure 13. *This Is England '86* (2010)

In Episode 3 of *This Is England '86*, Trev is raped by Kelly and Lol’s father, Mick (see Appendix 4). Figure 13 is taken from a scene in the following episode, where she confides in Lol, who used to be sexually abused by him as a child (see Appendix 5). Prior to this, the rape scene itself is extremely explicit, containing graphic and violent

imagery and, overall, screening Trev's fear and discomfort throughout the entirety of the scene. Since the 1970s, representations of rape convey the women as "sexually victimized", portraying assaults or abuse towards women (Projansky, 2001: 95), not to mention the expressing of "hatred and violence against women" during the scene of rape, which can be uncomfortable for many viewers (Projansky, 2001: 95). This can be portrayed during the scene, where Mick is as verbally abusive as he is physically, shouting phrases such as "This could either be the best fuck you ever had, or the worst" (*This Is England '86: Episode 3*, 2010).

The scene in Figure 13 is the moment where Trev has showered after the incident, and is a common example of demonstrating a woman's perspective after being raped in fiction, suggesting that women feel "perpetually dirty" afterwards (Projansky, 2001: 108). Despite scenes of this nature being profoundly undesirable to watch (Brandt, 1981: 32), Meadows' inclusion of it adheres to the theory that social issues should not be prevented from being shown on television as this instigates the "ventilation of public issues" (Brandt, 1981: 32). As such, these issues would get pent up within society, should they not be displayed or addressed using the media of film and television. It has been argued that television fiction informs us of the social problems that need to be addressed in society, offering an insight into the viewing of important issues and struggles (Henderson, 2007: 25). Rape is a subject that everyone is aware of, and this scene is a prime example of how television fiction can impact audiences and "communicate messages about a traditionally taboo topic" (Henderson, 2007: 178) even if viewers cannot relate the topic to that of their own experiences.

Another scene in which Meadows establishes this connection between social issues in fiction and society is the scene depicted in Figure 14, where Lol takes it upon herself to kill Mick upon learning that he had raped Trev. However, Mick seizes the opportunity when Lol turns her back for a split second and attacks her (see Appendix 6). At the moment when Lol turns her back, viewers can see that Mick is about to attack her, which is a significant example of how fiction instigates viewer concern, and in turn, creates the inclination to warn the protagonist whilst waiting to see their response to the situation, to see if the distress is mutual (Jerslev, 2002: 94). The scene is both parts sexually violent and intense, the intensity of which is heightened by

“camera close-ups and cut-away shots” to not only draw in audiences, but also enhance the tension (Henderson, 2007: 106).



Figure 14. *This Is England '86* (2010)

The building up of tension through “suspense and narrative pace” is frequently used in storylines of sexual abuse (Henderson, 2007: 66) as they allow for the reader to be taken on the same journey as the victim. This, accompanied by the track *Fly* (Einaudi, 2006) from Ludovico Einaudi’s score, elevates the scene, proving how – with regards to the schema theory – schema guides and fixates viewer attention to parts of the visual imagery in the scene that shares consistency with it (Tan, 2007). From the moment Lol pulls out the hammer, the score begins to play and escalates at the same pace as the scene and violence within it. Eventually, the aggressive dialect between the two fades out completely, leaving only the fast-paced, intensifying score to cohere with the equally fast-paced violent visual imagery of Mick’s abusive actions. This proceeds up until the climaxing moment where Lol reaches for the hammer that she had previously dropped, and hits him over the head repeatedly until he dies. As the scene fades, so does the score, which is a key example of how the soundtrack aligns viewers’ understandings of the visual content to be in correspondence with the score (Tan, 2007). This moment where Lol is able to defend herself elucidates the theory that rape, or the threat of it, has the ability to transform a vulnerable victim into a powerful woman who can protect herself (Projansky, 2001: 100).

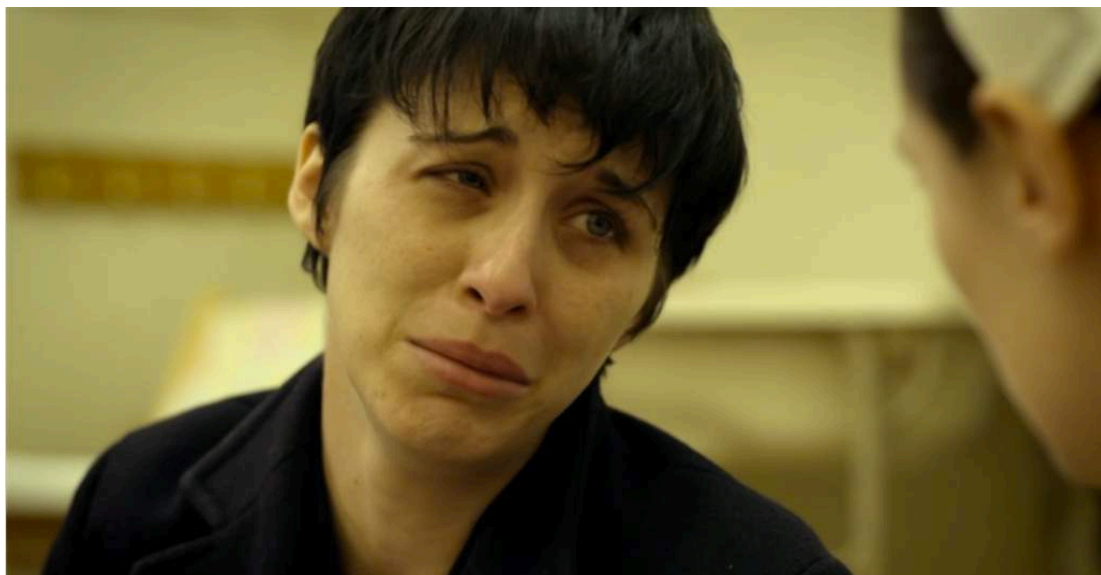


Figure 15. *This Is England '88* (2011)

Figure 15 is taken from Episode 2 of *This Is England '88*, where Lol is completely distraught and confides in Helen, a nurse, about having visions of her dead father (see Appendix 7). The scene consists of raw emotion as Lol completely breaks down, coming to terms with the fact that she is severely depressed and psychologically ill. When Lol tells Helen that she was sexually abused for a very long time, Helen says, “That’s absolutely not something you should carry around. It can destroy a person” (*This Is England '88: Episode 2*, 2011), and in this scene, viewers can see that it already has. The score in this scene also contributes to the impact on audiences, where another of Ludovico Einaudi’s tracks, *Solo* (Einaudi, 2009) is played at the moment where Lol is completely consumed by emotional trauma and begs for Helen to help her. With regards to the relationship existent between the visual content, score and audience (Tan, 2007), music has proven to have a significant impact on the way viewers interpret visual content (Tan, 2007), thus, also influencing viewers’ attitude towards the characters on screen. This is a particularly powerful scene with regards to the conjoining of score and narrative to achieve dramatic effect. Whilst the acting is the main essence that reaches out to viewers, it is enhanced by the evocative score to “underscore dramatic effect” (Hallam; Marshment, 2000: 6), and the combination of the two takes the scene to another level in terms of elevating it from its fictional stance.

The “lifelike acting style” (Ang, 1985: 30) on behalf of Vicky McClure, who plays Lol, eliminates the distance between actor and viewer. In turn, such “psychological

credibility” (Ang, 1985: 64) brings her character to life and separates her from the narrative situation, making her seem like a real person for which viewers can generate real empathy for (Ang, 1985: 30). This term is referred to as “emotional alignment” (Hallam; Marshment, 2000: 136) and occurs when viewers experience the same, or similar, emotional responses as those shown by the characters on screen. Such alignments can be caused on an intellectual level, or on a level of concern (Hallam; Marshment, 2000: 136).

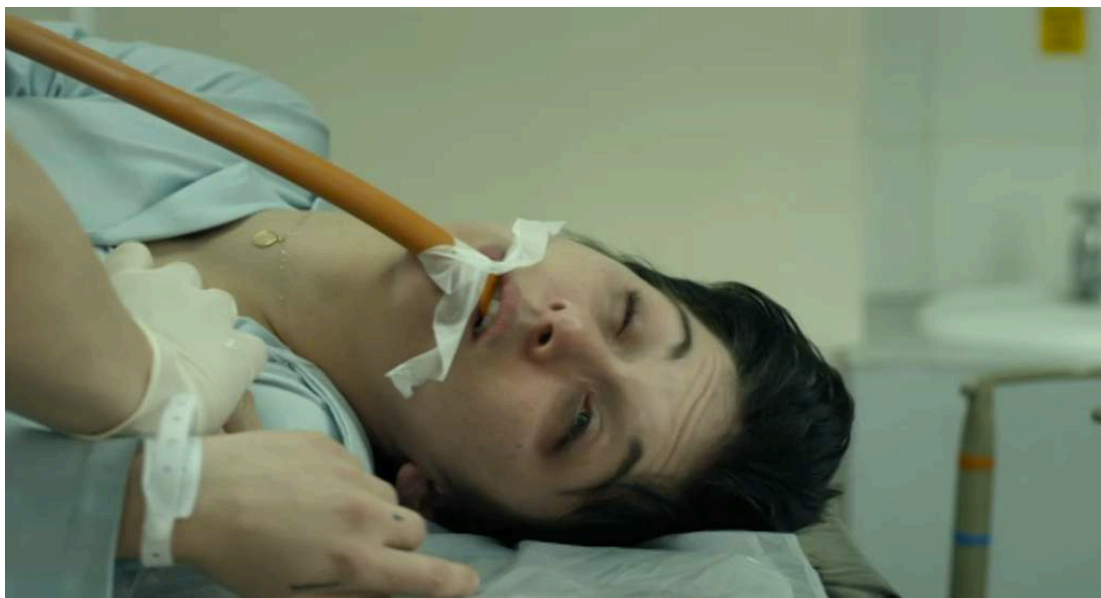


Figure 16. *This Is England '88* (2011)

Figure 16 is taken from a subsequent scene from the previous still; in Episode 3 of *This Is England '88*. It conveys Lol being resuscitated after her attempt to take her own life by taking an overdose on paracetamol as a result of her psychological breakdown and gradual lapse into depression (see Appendix 8). This scene demonstrates how television fiction is often used as a means of presenting social concerns and messages to large numbers of viewers (Henderson, 2007: 180). With that in mind, viewers can only feel involved or moved by an actor’s portrayal of social issues if they interpret the fiction as “genuine” and truly believe in the character on screen, which, to an extent, can lead to the character seeming real (Ang, 1985: 34). With attempted suicide being such a sensitive subject for any number of viewers, it is crucial that such a renowned social issue represented by the drama needs to have acknowledged and addressed elements of sensitivity in order to preserve audience credibility (Henderson, 2007: 101). Meadows succeeds in doing this by conveying

Lol being released from the cruel confinements of her own conscience, rather than prolonging her traumatic experience. The stomach pumping acts as a metaphorically cleansing of the trauma that has consumed her, reviving her from the “abhorrent events” (Sutton, 2011) in her life, as shown in a video montage that intersects with the visuals of stomach pumping, acting as her catharsis.



Figure 17. *This Is England '90* (2015)

In Episode 3 of *This Is England '90*, Lol discloses that she was sexually abused by their father, Mick, throughout her childhood, and how this, combined with his raping of Trev, caused her to kill him, unbeknown by Kelly until this catalytic moment (see Appendix 9). In an emotional eruption of both despair and denial, Kelly angrily storms out, packs a bag and runs away, which can be seen in Figure 17. Beside herself with grief and distress, and not knowing how to cope with such shocking revelations, she resorts to heroine as an escape from such undesirable circumstances. Through the “psychological construction” of a focal character (Hallam; Marshment, 2000: 135), the audience can identify with the character and their situation, despite not necessarily having had the same experiences as the character on screen (Hallam; Marshment, 2000: 132), which, with regards to this storyline, is an experience that most viewers won’t have had. The significance of using focal character, Kelly, to depict this social issue is pivotal with regards to the audience being able to understand – or find reasoning – with her motives, having had to take in such excruciating news. Through watching previous episodes, the audience will already have been able to identify how Kelly is struggling, so they can understand that this was the tip of the iceberg for her.

Particularly in this scene – and throughout – Meadows lays emphasis upon the actor using their own psychology as the dynamic force for depicting character (Hallam; Marshment, 2000: 84) by producing realistic characters, such as Kelly, that don't merely function to the narrative circumstances, and are able to provide response to the fictional circumstances as a result of conveying psychological incentives and motivations (Hallam; Marshment, 2000: 84).



Figure 18. *This Is England '90* (2015)

Figure 18 is taken from the aforementioned scene where Kelly takes heroine in Episode 3 of *This Is England '90*. The scene shows Kelly sneaking into the bathroom and smoking heroine. As she inhales, *Whirlwind of Rubbish* (Clark, 2015) plays in the background, delivering the haunting – and circumstantially appropriate – lyrics, “the old life is over” (Clark, 2015) as Kelly initially starts spiraling downwards from the life she thought she once knew. Heroine is perceived as the definitive “closure of relations” from society (Hall; Jefferson, 1993: 117), and for many, it was negatively thought of, much like those who took acid, except with heroine, you had not only taken drug use to such an extreme level, “you had burnt your boats and could not return” (Hall; Jefferson, 1993: 117). This goes some way to indicating why Kelly – who is evidently undergoing a crisis point in her life – uses heroine as a coping mechanism, considering it to be her only means of escape from her bleak reality. A scene from the following episode shows Harvey walk into the bathroom while Kelly is sat on the edge of the bath about to smoke heroine. He is anything but sympathetic, and furiously makes her pack her things and leave (see Appendix 10). This

corresponds with the theory that “there was no real pity for the person totally hooked on heroine” (Hall; Jefferson, 1993: 116).

With the use of heroine being an extreme length to go to and one in which very few viewers would be able to agree with, it adheres with the theory that it is the character that audiences engage with, as opposed to the issue itself (Henderson, 2007: 59). However, with that in mind, social realist dramas like *This Is England* establish viewer involvement with not just the characters, but also the situations and events that they endure (Hallam; Marshment, 2000: 194). As such, they allow viewers to comprehend that characters within the drama are usually “victims of circumstance, unable to extricate themselves from situations that trap them in” (Hallam; Marshment, 2000: 194). Meadows’ inclusion of this storyline allows audiences to acknowledge the scene as realistic, which, once this is achieved, can lead viewers to consider it “emotionally engaging” (Jerslev, 2000: 108).

With regards to Sue Thornham and Tony Purvis’s opening words “No fictional narrative is wholly separate from the realities of the world in which the narrative circulates” (Thornham; Purvis, 2005: 37), Meadows elucidates this through his presentation of social issues throughout *This Is England*. Through the combination of this with emotive music and genuine credibility of acting, both the involvement and engagement of viewers is established, all while Meadows reflects on the aspects of society that lies beyond the realms of fiction.

3. Directorial Realism

“Realism articulates a relationship between the conscious, perceiving individual and the social world, activating a mental mise-en-scene of memory, recognition and perceptual familiarity” (Hallam; Marshment, 2000: 125).

Realist representations in film and television reflect on society and act as a mirrored reflection of aspects of the world, conveying attributes of society that are contingent with society on both a social and historical level (Hallam; Marshment, 2000: 10). Every part of a film or drama has a purpose, resulting in the unrolling of the story right before our very eyes, creating the overall impact of realism (Ang, 1985: 39). Through the combination of authenticity and narrative, realist dramas and films adequately represent the world (Thornham; Purvis, 2005: 71-72) and this is usually attained through a combination of “photographic realism” and coherence with reality in terms of storyline and appearance (Thornham; Purvis, 2005: 65). Shane Meadows uses a range of directorial techniques throughout the series with the intent of portraying the effect of realism. Such techniques are coherent with the visual and narrative content, and this chapter will explore some of the types of directorial techniques used by Meadows to achieve the effect of realism.

Throughout the series, Meadows freely uses and encourages the use of improvisation, which creates a genuine feel and consequentially succeeds in generating the impact of realism. Improvisation is “an infusion of energy” that extends characterization, supplements relationships and aligns objectives (Kingdon, 2004: 149), whereby the sole component of characterisation is carried out through the actor’s experiences and psychology (Hallam; Marshment, 2000: 84). Meadows consistently uses improvisation, with barely any of the scenes being scripted (*Working with Shane*, 2010), which allows the actors to tell the story (*Behind the Scenes: Ep2 - Summer*, 2015). Even off set, cast members are kept away from each other in order to stay in role, such as in *This Is England '88*, where Joe Gilgun, who plays Woody, and Vicky McClure, who plays Lol, don’t interact for two of the three episodes in the series, and wouldn’t leave their trailers unless everyone is out of the way (*Interview: Chanel and Danielle*, 2011).



Figure 19. *This Is England '90* (2015)

Figure 19 is a still taken from the scene in Episode 3 of *This Is England '90*, where – as Combo is finishing his prison sentence – Lol and Woody have to break the news to those gathered around the dinner table that it was Lol who killed Mick, and that Combo had taken the fall for her (see Appendix 9). Meadows’ method of improvisation creates a much more authentic performance than if it were to be scripted, as it relies on the fusing of actors and characters together by drawing upon the actors’ own experiences (Hallam; Marshment, 2000: 84) as opposed to responding to a script. The scene was shot in one take, and producer, Mark Herbert, states “it just got years of rehearsals of preparation and a really tough day of getting them into that position” (*Behind the Scenes: Ep3 – Autumn*, 2015), the results of which is “just like throwing a hand grenade into these people and seeing it explode” (*Behind the Scenes: Ep3 – Autumn*, 2015), and any viewer can see this is a metaphorically accurate description.

With phrases such as, “I actually feel like I can’t see in this room” (*This is England '90: Episode 3*, 2015), the scene succeeds in providing emotional and explosive performances as a result of the actors’ sustained thirty-minute performance (*Behind the Scenes: Ep3 – Autumn*, 2015). When a viewer identifies footage as realistic, it’s not solely down to the film’s practices of “recognitional capacities”, but that a proportional amount of identification of realism comes down to what can be considered as “emotionally engaging” (Jerslev, 2000: 108). As a viewer, you find yourself gripped and very much engrossed amidst the traumatic experience projected

by the cast as a result of their genuine reactions to one another, consisting of tears and heated dialogue, which makes it feel genuine. By using this method of improvisation, Meadows enlivens the character interactions, and once this is accomplished, creating other scripted incidents would only weaken the impact and effect on viewers (Kingdon, 2004: 152). In this scene alone, Meadows exemplifies the sense of realism that is created by improvisation, proving how scenes of this nature “flourish best in an atmosphere of freedom” (Brandt, 1981: 30), as the cast are very much left to their own devices.



Figure 20. *This Is England '90* (2015)

Another key directorial technique used by Meadows to achieve the impact of realism is scene setting. Figure 20 is a prime example of how scene setting is used to provide viewers with a sense of understanding and authenticity, with regards to it seeming realistic. In Figure 20, the shot is taken from behind the bar in a traditional northern pub, as Kelly is waiting to buy a drink in the middle of the day in *This Is England '90*. The union jack flag bunting epitomizes the British nature of the series and, combined by the surrounding classic pub scenery, is symbolic of most British northern pubs. In this context, the sense of realism is created through a projection of ‘Britishness’ in that it depicts a British character in a setting that can be perceived as familiar to all audiences, particularly those who have been in such environments (Hallam; Marshment, 2000: 33). As a result of this, Meadows successfully encapsulates the British values associated within this environment (Hallam; Marshment, 2000: 34);

values that are tightly associated with the majority of characters, too. Consequentially, the scene succeeds in persuading viewers that this is the type of environment that the characters would inhabit if they were real, as it reflects on real environments associated with real people outside of fiction, (Hallam; Marshment, 2000: 81) once again reinforcing the British nature and visually and culturally establishing authenticity within the scene.



Figure 21. *This Is England* (2006)

Another example of how Meadows uses scene setting to provide a realistic feel to the series is shown in Figure 21 from *This Is England*. The still conveys a neglected Church positioned in the middle of a dilapidated council estate, with the words 'Maggie is a Twat' sprawled on with graffiti, posing an ironic statement just metres below the sign that reads 'Church of Christ'. This example of location shooting is one of the most effectively shot in terms of scene setting, as *This Is England* was set in 1983, under Margaret Thatcher's leadership, and the working class inhabitants were anything but happy about it, what with the Falklands War that is referred to during the film and the increase in unemployment and inflation that was present during this period (Vinen, 2010: 103). "Even Thatcher's friends were often at a loss to find anything good to say about her government" (Vinen, 2010: 102), and most people who fell short of anything below middle class, such as the characters in *This Is England*, were in unison with the fact that removing Thatcher as leader would be the best thing that could happen to them economically (Vinen, 2010: 103). Yet again, this

succeeds in creating a realistic approach as through the documentary style of filming, it creates a “historically verifiable” link between our world and that which is conveyed on screen (Wood, 2012: 43) as well as drawing upon specific qualities of society that surround viewers, yet again showing how filmmakers intertwine “historically situated encounters” and create a link between the real world and that which is depicted in the film (Nichols, 1994: 101). This example of location shooting is one of the most genuine forms of realist mise-en-scene, as it presents an existing part of the world inhabited by real people, as well as the fictional characters, which subsequently provides credibility (Hallam; Marshment, 2000: 80).



Figure 22. *This Is England '88* (2011)

Throughout the series, Meadows uses a raw, gritty, documentary effect of filming, which contributes to the overall impact of realism. As a result of this, he successfully portrays and expresses scenes of a gritty and mundane nature, sustained over a range of “photographic, cinematic and televisual aesthetics” (Hallam; Marshment, 2000: 97). Figure 22 is an example of Meadows’ documentary-like footage – it conveys the group eating at an 18-hour café in *This Is England '88*, angled in such a way that it feels authentic, almost shot from the perspective of the viewer. Most of the series is shot in this style, which forges a connection between the viewer and characters, as it truly seems like you’re spectating their lives. By using such documentary-style footage, the scene permits elements of “truth around which the cinematic fiction persistently circles” (Black, 2002: 12). This essence of documentary realism refers to

a variety of conventions affiliated with the “gritty look” of film and television (Hallam; Marshment, 2000: 97), which invariably depicts scenes and character actions as if they were genuinely to occur. The raw and grittiness coheres with the social realism nature of *This Is England*, as it is linked to revealing reality and focuses viewer attention on what truly exists (O’Connell, 2008). This demonstrates how film replicates real circumstances, with the “distinctive characteristic of realism” being used to comparatively convey reality through revealing things as they are (Hill, 1986: 57).



Figure 23. *This Is England '88* (2011)

Taken from *This Is England '88*, Figure 23 also demonstrates this raw and gritty documentary effect of filming, as this scene is angled to show the dingy, derelict and barely decorated flat with plastered and undecorated walls, symbolizing a sign of the times, as Lol is a depressed, single mother and struggling on her own. Furthermore, the raw and gritty nature of the drama is closely associated with the word ‘natural’, in terms of how a scene is portrayed, and the “no frills” style in which it is shot (Hallam; Marshment, 2000: 192). Needless to say the words ‘raw’ and ‘gritty’ both imply the nature of the scene content and the psychology of characters, too (Hallam; Marshment, 2000: 192). This can be seen in Figure 22, which depicts Lol, just moments before holding her breath and going under the water.

Realism relies on conventions that are considered realistic by viewers (Hill, 1986: 57), and one of these conventions is the juxtaposing of catalytic scenes. This method is frequently used by Meadows, and results in the presenting of parallel storylines

occurring against one another (Kingdon, 2004: 378). Influenced by Russian montage, the juxtaposing of scenes creates a connection between different scenes occurring unanimously, achieving a sense of continuity between them (Kingdon, 2004: 377). As a result of Meadows' inclusion of this directorial technique, viewers can then forge connections between the shots, which can be interpreted in the sense that the scenes seem as though they are occurring in real-time and in coherence with one another (Smith, 2011).



Figures 24-27. *This Is England '86* (2010)

Figures 24-27 are all taken from scenes in Episode 3 of *This Is England '86* where this use of juxta-posing of scenes occurs. Each scene is juxta-posed simultaneously in between one another, switching between the catalytic scenes as they occur at the same time during the England Vs Poland '86 final group football match. Figure 24 (top left) consists of the traumatic scene where Mick rapes Trev, whilst Figure 25 (top right) displays the group in a state of euphoria and patriotism watching the game at the pub. Another scene is shown in Figure 26 (bottom left) where a virtually unconscious Combo staggers and collapses into Shaun's house after disappearing for three years, followed by Figure 27, where Lol is drunk in the toilets at the pub after Milky had just ended their affair (see Appendix 2). All the scenes contrast in emotion, and as well as occurring at the same time, the overall impact of juxta-posing these catalytic scenes helps depict details that convey character and narrative revelations (Hallam;

Marshment, 2000: 106), developing the element of continuity that heightens the scenes from their fictional form (Smith, 2011).

Julia Hallam and Margaret Marshment state, “Realism articulates a relationship between the conscious, perceiving individual and the social world, activating a mental *mise-en-scene* of memory, recognition and perceptual familiarity” (Hallam; Marshment, 2000: 125). Through the use of directorial techniques such as improvisation, scene setting, raw/gritty documentary effect of filming and juxtaposed catalytic scenes and the intertwining of such techniques with profound recognition to society, Meadows prove that this is the case. Thus, realism is indisputably established.

Conclusion

To conclude, Shane Meadows blurs the boundaries between realism and reality in *This Is England* in numerous respects; from subcultural styling, to humanising characters through the depicting of an insightful array of social issues, or through an acute assortment of directorial techniques.

With regards to his representation of post-war subcultures, the styling characterizes the visual styles that these subcultures embody, intertwined with significant historically aligned storylines. Meadows' depiction of Skinheads conveys both male and female characters with shaven heads, wearing a coherent 'uniform' to symbolize their working class status, as well as referring to the racist association with Skinhead culture. With regards to his depiction of Mod Revival, Meadows draws on their leisure-seeking nature, signifying their immaculate style, alongside caricature Mods created by media and the emergence of unisex style. Lastly, Meadows channels the drug-taking antics of Ravers, focusing on the tramp-ish style of the northern 'scallies', who wore baggy clothes for comfort purposes, insinuating the Manchester and secret-location rave scene and how ecstasy, considered as 'the friendly drug', smoothed over regional rivalries between opposing subcultures. Such historically and stylistically accurate portrayals enable the series to be indicative of its time period, subsequently then seeming realistic.

Meadows extends this sense of realism through the incorporation of social issues within storylines. Accompanied by emotive music and credible acting performances, audience engagement and alignment is achieved. The graphic portrayal of taboo subjects is uncomfortable for many viewers to watch and impacts them regardless of whether they share the same experiences, but Meadows illustrates the importance of addressing and informing viewers of these social issues in fiction, rather than dismissing them. Through the combination of camera angles with a coherent film score, tension is built, and viewers' understanding of visual content coheres with the score. Belief in the character presenting these issues instigates viewer concern for character welfare, reached by building on the psychological construction of a focal character. This demonstrates how audiences engage with characters rather than the issue, once considered emotionally engaging. Through these methods, Meadows

establishes a connection with the audience, which then corresponds to seeming authentic.

This Is England proceeds to seem realistic as a result of Meadows' directorial techniques. The first of which is improvisation, which enables actors to draw on their own experiences to tell the story, rather than a script, providing a sense of genuineness. Scene-setting provides viewers with a sense of understanding and creates a historically verifiable link between the world on and off screen, indicating how these real locations are the types of environments these characters would inhabit if they were real. The raw, gritty, documentary effect of filming draws attention to truth and creates a natural effect, appearing like they are genuinely occurring. Conclusively, through the juxtaposing of catalytic scenes, continuity is established between scenes, making it seem like they are happening at the same time and carried out in real time, allowing viewers to forge a connection between the scenes.

To reflect on the opening quote, "If someone, like, had never been to England and they had to draw a picture, this is exactly what they'd draw" (*This Is England '90: Episode 2*, 2015); consider it drawn by the hand of Shane Meadows. Be it through his meticulous representation of British post-war subcultures; his rigorous reflection of social issues; or his faultless use of directorial techniques that elevate scenes from their fictional confinements; this is one of the most visually and culturally accurate 'drawings' that could be produced. This is the epitome of British working class youth culture. *This is England*.

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Appendix

Appendix 1: This is England (film)

The Skinhead gang is caused to divide when former Skinhead, Combo, returns from Prison after three years. He returns with extremely racist views, and makes them choose whether or not they want to join him and make a stand for the mass unemployment he believes is caused by blacks and Asians. Those in agreement with him attend a National Front meeting and then proceed to carry out their bitterness by being aggressive and racist towards blacks and Asians they meet in the street, threatening them with knives and stealing from a corner shop owned by an Asian man, holding a machete to his throat whilst voicing their disgust and hatred towards him. The film ends with Combo beating Milky, a Jamaican, nearly half to death after him talking about his Jamaican family and background, causing Combo to get angry because he thought he was rubbing it in his face.

Appendix 2: This is England '86

Woody works in a factory, and tries to stay on good terms with his boss in the hopes of getting a promotion. However, he often turns up late or hung-over, following drunken antics from the night before. When Woody does decide to take his job seriously, it backfires on him with regards to his personal life, such as dismissing Lol when she needed him, leading her to have an affair with his best friend, Milky, or having to work during the England Vs. Poland final match, so not being able to watch the game with everyone down the pub.

Appendix 3: This is England '90

The younger generation of Ravers car-share to attend one of the illegal raves in a secret location. Gadget can't follow the directions on the map, causing Harvey, who's driving, to angrily throw the map out of the window. The group drives around for hours and end up getting lost, so decide to take ecstasy anyway and spend a night in the woods. However, they hear the distant thumping of a sound system and run down the hill towards it, only to find that it's a micro-festival held by New-Age Travellers. They join them anyway, and take ecstasy with the New-Age Travellers. The different subcultures get on fine with one another and everyone seems to be heavily under the influence and having a great time, apart from Kelly who starts having a bad trip. She spends the latter half of the episode away from the group, completely out of control of her own self as a result of the drugs and lured into a caravan with three of the seedier travellers who take advantage of the situation, by offering her heroine and having sex with her simultaneously one after the other.

Appendix 4: This is England '86

While the majority of them are at the pub watching the England Vs Poland final group match, Trev calls for Kelly at her house. Kelly and Lol's father, Mick, is the only person in the house and lets Trev in, telling her that Kelly had just popped to the shop and will be back soon, despite knowing full well that Kelly was already at the pub. Trev awkwardly sits there watching the match with him, until Mick starts makes

inappropriate comments. She feels uncomfortable and gets up to leave, but Mick forcefully stops her and rapes her.

Appendix 5: This is England '86

Lol's dad, Mick, reappears after having left the family years ago and moves back in, despite Lol's mum, Chrissy, knowing Mick had sexually abused Lol as a child, little to younger sister Kelly's knowledge. When Lol goes to pick up some belongings after having moved in with Woody, she walks in to see Mick sat with them and makes bitter remarks about him going into little girls' bedrooms and that she knows what he is, before Chrissy calls her poison and tells her to get out, leaving Kelly unsure what to believe.

Appendix 6: This is England '86

Trev confides in Lol about Mick raping her. Lol is livid that he has put someone else through such a traumatic experience, but comforts her and lets her shower and fall asleep in her bed, before angrily storming out. Mick, who is packing his bags up ready to do another runner, walks into the lounge to find Lol waiting for him. The two heatedly exchange hateful words and Lol pulls out a hammer from under her coat, but makes the mistake of turning her back for a second, leading Mick to jump on her and tackle her to the floor. He starts forcefully removing her clothes whilst aggressively shouting at her as she tries and struggles desperately to push him off. Eventually, she manages to pick up the hammer from the floor and knocks him over the head with it several times until he dies. Combo – who had reappeared after 3 years - walks to the house to see if Lol was in. With no answer, he peers through the window and sees Mick's body. Combo kicks the door down and assesses the situation, seeing Mick motionless, covered in blood and Lol sitting there with her head in her hands, completely traumatized. As Combo is the only person Lol told about Mick sexually abusing her as a child, he knew instantly what had happened, so reassures and comforts Lol who is in a state of shock, telling her that he will take care of it. He makes it look like there had been a fight between himself and Mick by punching, biting and kicking Mick's dead body. He then puts his coat over Lol to keep her warm and hugs her, saying, "Let me do a good thing." Knowing he has nothing to lose after coming back to find his mum had died and wanting to protect Lol, Combo willingly takes the fall by turning himself in for Mick's murder, and is sent to prison for manslaughter.

Appendix 7: This is England '88

Lol and Woody are no longer together, as she is a single mum to Milky's mixed-race child, which is how Woody had found out about their affair. After killing her dad, Mick, in the first series and dealing with the guilt of letting Combo take the fall, Lol becomes isolated, severely depressed and psychologically ill by constantly having visions of her dad. She opens up to a Nurse, Helen, who had noticed that Lol is depressed, but can tell it's not post-natal depression anymore. Helen asks if its because of the family bereavement, to which Lol explains that she's glad he's dead as he used to sexually abuse her. She then goes on to say how she can tell she's not well, as she can see visions of Mick, and hear him talk to her. Lol completely breaks down and begs for Helen to help her, who promises she will.

Appendix 8: This is England '88

On Christmas Eve, Lol tries to shrug off another vision of her dad as she goes to see Shaun's play with the rest of the gang. Despite being with them, she still can't take her mind off the visions of Mick and instead of going out with them after the play; she decides to go home in the early hours of Christmas morning. On her way home, she overhears carol singing in a church so decides to go in. At first it seems like a relief, until she ends up seeing a vision of Mick again. Helpless and completely haunted by her thoughts and visions of her dad, she leaves. When Kelly and Trev get in later, they sneak upstairs to see Lol's daughter, Lisa, where Kelly then goes over to check on Lol who she assumes is sleeping, but finds a note addressed to her. She reads it and discovers that Lol had attempted to commit suicide by taking a paracetamol overdose. Lol is rushed to the hospital where the doctors plunge the pills out of her body. Trev tells Woody, who frantically drives them to the hospital. The two rush up flights of stairs and run into the room to find the others sat round an empty bed. Assuming the worst, Woody completely breaks down, until Chrissy explains that she's not dead, but downstairs smoking. Woody rushes down to see her, and Lol tells him that she was the one who killed her dad and Combo had just taken the fall. Woody starts crying, devastated that she had to go through all that on her own. The two reconcile, in emotional agreement that they can't live without one another.

Appendix 9: This is England '90

Combo is finishing his sentence after taking the fall for Lol, and needs somewhere to stay. With that being the least she can do to repay him for what he did for her, she knows she has to tell her family and a select few others what really happened, given how he beat Milky up nearly to death in 1983 and that everyone thinks he killed Mick. Lol and Woody arranges them to come round for dinner, where they will then break the news. After eating, Chrissy and Kelly ask what the occasion is, assuming it's good news. Woody tells them that it's not good news. Lol confesses that she lied in court, then looks to Trev and asks if she's okay, as Trev knew what she was about to say. Kelly picks up on this, asking Trev if she knew what this was going to be out, where Lol then explains that Mick raped Trev and that she killed him because of it. Kelly bursts out crying, refusing to look at Lol or anyone, then lashes out at the others, saying while they've all had each other and known about this, she's had nobody. Still refusing to believe it, she gets angrier and angrier, and Lol tries to tell her that she was sexually abused by him for years, to which Kelly refuses to believe and storms out. Lol begs Chrissy, their mum, to explain how it's true, as she had known Mick used to do that to her. Kelly storms back in shouting their mum wouldn't have married a rapist, to which Chrissy tells her its true, she was just too afraid to stop him as he used to beat her. Lol says he didn't lay a finger on Kelly because he loved her, causing Kelly to lash out again shouting "he loved you more, didn't he?" to both Trev and Lol whilst trying to hit them both as Woody holds her back. She then storms out, packs her things and runs away from home to stay with Gadget and Harvey.

Appendix 10: This is England '90

After the explosive scene at the dinner table, Kelly sneaks into the bathroom at Gadget and Harvey's and smokes heroine. Harvey walks in on her in the bathroom, as she's sat on the edge of the bath about to smoke it. Furiously, he takes it off her and tells her she has to leave. When Gadget gets back, Harvey tells him what happened

and that he chucked her out. The two fight, and Gadget goes out to look for her. Eventually, he finds her, but she lashes out at him and tells him to leave her alone, before moving in with a group of people, who all take heroine, that she assumedly knows through her dealer. A few weeks pass until Lol and Woody's wedding day, and Kelly shows no signs of turning up after not having made contact since the situation at the dinner table. After having had time to think about everything, Kelly stops taking heroine and makes sense of it all, realizing Lol told her the truth, so goes to the Wedding after-service to leave Lol a letter she had written on the side outside the room everyone is in. As she is about to leave, she sees Lol sat outside, who had been having a moment to herself. The two emotionally talk it over, and Lol holds Kelly's hand and takes her into the room to be reunited with everyone.