

There's No History Without Drama

Liz Hartford Masterclass

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I feel incredibly privileged to be here at this forum to discuss how we can bring history to the screen in compelling ways. And certainly I've been lucky enough to be working in that area for the past five or six years, in British television. And one of the ways that has brought us some real successes recently is to tell our history through drama. And there's a real buzz about these programs. There's no doubt about that. It doesn't mean to say that the Schama style documentary series isn't being made. But there has been a real journey over the past five or six years, where we use drama elements in our story telling, right through to full blown drama, as a way of telling history on television. Now that's the good news; lots and lots of opportunities, lots of programs being made and commissioning editors on the look-out for strong, factual stories to be told in new and exciting ways. The challenge has really been that the budgets haven't changed. So really what we're looking at is high-end documentary budgets which we have to make stretch. These aren't drama budgets. The sort of budgets I'm talking about range from anything between 170,000 [pounds] per hour and 350,000 per hour, and this is the top end. And all the programs I'll be talking about today fit in within those bounds, except one. We have one exception here where we got a bit more. But finding ways to bring these programs to the screen from those kind of budgets has been an incredible learning curve. And along the way we've learnt a great deal about how to make programs efficiently, about the importance of taking risks, finding new ways, doing things that sometimes if you stopped to think about it, maybe you wouldn't dare do. And along the way, we've also forged some very fruitful relationships with people in drama departments. So there's been a real convergence of people with a factual background, working alongside people from drama background. I think that's one of the things that's really helped raise the bar on our productions.

As Alex said it really was about five or six years ago that history programming really took off—when we began to realise there was a huge appetite for stories from our past. But it's been relatively recently I would say, perhaps the past couple of years, where the kind of relationships that I've been talking about have formed. And I thought I'd start off by giving you a taste of where

this led to—an example of how this worked. The most recent project I was involved in is a good example of those new relationships. I obviously have a Factual documentary background as the executive producer. The director of this film had a drama background. The scriptwriter came from radio drama and the production coordinator was from feature films. The editor and the cameraman spanned both documentary and drama and the leading man had just made a movie with Scarlett Johansson. So we managed to get a really first rate actor as our leading man and I'll talk a little bit more about how you can entice really top notch acting talent when you haven't really kind of got the kind of money that you could imagine you could do that. Now this film was called *Princes in the Tower*, it's a medieval story from the 1490s and it's based around one of the great enduring mysteries of English history: what happened to the two sons of King Edward IV? They were two young princes, Richard and Edward, aged 9 and 12 and they were imprisoned in the Tower of London by Richard of Gloucester, their uncle, just before the eldest boy was about to be crowned king. And instead they were locked away, they were never seen again. No one knew what happened to them and Richard of Gloucester seized the throne and reigned as Richard III made so infamous by the Shakespeare play of that name. He has gone down in history as the baddie of the piece. However it is a mystery, no one really knows what happened. There's been many versions of the story explaining what might have happened. But more intriguingly as part of our research, we came across an irresistible story that took place fifteen years after the disappearance of the princes. And that was the story of a young man, who appeared in the courts of Europe, claiming that he was the younger of the two princes. He'd escaped from jaws of death, he'd gone into hiding and now he'd returned to claim the throne of England, just as the Tudors were establishing their dynasty with Henry VII. He convinced many people, he was charismatic, he managed to get together an army of foreign mercenaries, he invaded England three times. This went on for really a decade. Ultimately he was captured and imprisoned in the Tower of London where they hoped he would admit to being an impostor. He stuck to his story and in the scene you're just going to see, he has taken King Henry VII and his inner circle to the very room in the Tower where the Princes were imprisoned and where it was assumed they had met their deaths, to tell them what really happened.

[scene is played]

So that was a feature length film, it was two hours long. We had a budget (after deducting production fee and overheads) in total of 400,000. We had a medieval historian on board as an associate producer because the challenge obviously is to make something that is good drama as well as good history. So as well as rooting the drama in known historical facts, we were aiming for a strong narrative arc, very carefully constructed plot, high quality script, good actors, leading characters that go on a real journey. And I think that's why people responded to this episode in British history in the way that they did—and a period in our past that receives little attention on television—the pre-Henry VIII, pre-Tudor period. Now the story we focused on had a lot going for it dramatically. It had the elements of Anastasia story, *The Return of Martin Guerre* with a dash of *Faking It*. It's a good illustration of something I believe very passionately - which is that history has the best stories. And we can look beyond the obvious subjects to find them. There's something particularly affecting when you know that something did happen, that its not fiction. One of the programs I'll be talking about later on, is a real-life Agatha Christie style whodunnit—a murder mystery. One of the most powerful things about it is that you can actually go down to the house where it happened. You can see photographs of the main characters, you can really get a sense that this is not just about a writers imagination it happened to flesh and blood people in bricks and mortar. And I think that adds a whole other dimension to our experience of watching the programme.

I'd just like to go back a bit and talk about where this all started. As Alex said *A History of Britain* was a turning point for the many producers and directors involved in the project. We had fifteen hours of television to fill. It was extremely exciting, we were aiming for a Landmark Series. But it was also absolutely terrifying because we had one presenter, who although is a fantastic historian—you can't get much better than Simon Schama—was largely untried on television. We had no other contributors, no interviewee's. There was no archive film available into the last two programs. With the early programs, very little rostrum, relatively few artefacts—many locations no longer existed and we had a golden rule that we shot for the period. So if you were shooting a medieval programme we didn't see 20th century Britain. So we had fifteen hours to fill and a man in a field talking, however fascinating can only carry so much. So what to do? Well we decided straight away that

we really had to go into the relatively unexplored territory of drama reconstruction. Remember this is 1998, 1999, when we were planning this and I'd been working in history programs for about seven or eight years and I'd say 90% of what I'd been doing had been twentieth century history and mostly built on the two great foundations stones of history program making, archive and first person oral testimony. So this felt like a very risky venture and we did a lot of discussion as to how we were going to do these reconstructions. We were pretty aware of the pitfalls, especially on the kind of money we had. Nevertheless we had a lot of major battles to cover. You can't ignore the fact that the Norman Conquest is a turning point in British history and it did involve thousands of men. And we had a number of other landmark military engagements involving Romans, Celts, Vikings, Anglo Saxons that couldn't be ignored. Well one of the solutions we came up with, which we use quite a lot in the making of the series was to put it in crude terms the "job lot" shoot. We found a few acres of remote countryside with hills and forest and stream and different kinds of terrain. We got together a group of people from a reconstruction, a re-enactment group. I think you have them here. These are the guys that spend their weekends dressing up in different military outfits and re-re-act various historical battles and scenarios. Well we have a lot of those in the UK and we found one that described itself as an "early history group" and they had all the costumes from the Roman period through to the Middle Ages. So they brought everything together. And we squeezed every drop we could out of a number of set-ups. We had a main camera unit and then we had two members of the production team on super 8 cameras. We had someone from the production team who had been trained to use a Bolex. At the time our main unit was shooting 16mm and we had mini cams on the end of poles that we could put into the action. And over the course of this weekend, we shot at least five or six military actions ranging from major battles to skirmishes. And I had an extraordinary experience of standing on top of a hill one day, looking down and there was a Roman campfire down there. In the woods there was a Viking ambush, Battle of Hastings was just about to start somewhere else. And then there was one poor man walking his dog in the middle of it and he was probably thinking what the hell's going on here. Out of that we did get an enormous amount and I'd just like to show you a clip from the Battle of Hastings that we shot in this way.

[scene is played]

But maybe that gives an idea of some of the techniques we used in lots of fast edits. There were 300 edits in one particular minute. I think in that sequence, lots of close ups, quite a bit of layering, hand held, lots of movement. But within that choreographed moments there were two or three stunt men and stunt riders that came in to make sure that amongst the kind of re-enactment mayhem, we got some very precise kind of moments. So we did storyboard. I mean I guess now, six or seven years on, a lot of those techniques have now probably become clichés, they have been used many times now. It looks a little less fresh than it did. But at the time it felt like we were sort of dipping our toes in new waters there. And that approach of finding a location where you can really blitz, stood us in very good stead for later programs for the series. Finding a location where you can shoot sequences for different programs. We did that many, many times.

We also were very aware that you can fall into pitfalls with all this reconstruction. If you're not careful it can look clunky. We had this check we called "Python alert" where we tried to avoid anything that looked like it could have come from *The Holy Grail*. No baggy tights please! Whenever we'd gone out and shot reconstructions and made sequences, as a team of directors we would come together, watch each others stuff and really be quite hard on each other and say what worked and what didn't. It was a real learning process.

But one of the things that I really got from the *History of Britain* was to continually ask how can we make historical subjects appeal to a big audience. And one of the ways that we sought to do that was to really focus in on the powerful human stories and g. And Simon Schama very much felt that [unclear] history has been about story telling and that television can do that very well. And rather than trying to touch every base of British history, we should get under the skin of moments that really seem to matter. And really give you an insight into the bigger picture. But that was fantastic that we had someone on board who felt like that because that really helped with our filmmaking. Take the Norman Conquest, you realise that it went the way it did essentially, because there was a blood feud between two brothers in a powerful family. It's a real story of betrayal and revenge worthy of *The*

Godfather. That really gives you something to grab hold of as a program maker. And also helps you to empathise and engage with the past. And Simon Schama's mantra was that comprehensiveness is the enemy of understanding and that's something that we always kept in mind. As a result we did get the odd letter saying how come you didn't really do the Wars of the Roses properly? But that was very much our approach and something that we took away with us after *History of Britain*. And because the series rated so well—our first mid week outing reached 4.2 million and beat *The Simpsons*. So I remember Jane Root, in control of BBC2 was saying, "I don't know what this means but it's very important". I don't think any of us were expecting it to be honest. We just had no idea how this series was going to go down. But it did make us realise that we had found a way of engaging the audience and that we took away from that, this idea of using drama to inform our work. And certainly you did see an effect very quickly with the rise of the drama documentary. And that was the point I'd left the BBC and gone to work for an independent production company. We were making programs for BBC2, for BBC and for Channel 4. And we went armed with the knowledge that we could make stories using dramatic techniques on documentary budgets. And we knew a lot of great stories out there. And the next program I'll show you a clip from, is one that we made for a season called *The Georgian Underworld*, for Channel 4, where they wanted programs that got into the dark underbelly of the Georgian period. And we decided to explore a story which I'd come across making *The History of Britain* of an unsung hero called Thomas Coram, who was an ordinary sea captain. But when he retired and came back to London, was horrified to find the streets of London, littered with dead babies. At the time there was a huge increase in illegitimacy and there was no kind of social welfare. So mothers who couldn't look after their offspring, simply were dumping them in the streets, hoping someone might pick them up and if they didn't, they would die. Thomas Coram decided he had to establish a Foundling Hospital, a place where women could take their babies. It took him twenty years and it was a turning point in social history in Britain and attitudes towards the rich and the poor. In *A History of Britain*, we had wordless re-enactments, no one spoke. The only voice you ever heard was Simon Schama's and some v/o readings by actors. There was a fantastic written archive attached to this story of the foundling hospital. Mothers who'd written notes and diaries and letters, about how they felt about abandoning their children at the hospital. Records from people who worked in the hospital

when it first opened. Incredibly moving, powerful stuff. So we wanted to hear those words from the past and we wove it with interviews and with voice over. And here's a clip from that, just to show how we blended them together.

[scene is played]

Just a word on budget. We were given a 170,000 which I felt was just not enough bearing in mind the main location, The Foundling Hospital, no longer existed. So we ended up with 190 but it was still really tough making this one. We did have proper actors for the speaking parts. But we used extras literally from our office, from people we knew and out of work actors that would do it for a good rate. We were using school children from local schools, we had a director who could shoot some of his own digi-beta material. And when it came to costumes, we had a real problem because the foundling hospital children wore a very distinctive uniform. Very beautifully designed, very particular. Puffed sleeves, [unclear], fancy bonnets, whatever. We needed to have about thirty children just to give the feel of the school. So we couldn't afford to get them made so we had the costumes cut out, template made and then we literally glued the pieces together and those costumes held. I don't think you could tell and they're now in the foundling hospital Museum. When children come and visit they're allowed to try on the costumes. So I can testify to super glue when it comes to making costumes. But that's the kind of ways that we had to really do it in order to stick to this quite tough budget.

So the drama documentary was getting established at this time. Some were working better than others. It can be a bit of a jolt to jump between the period reconstructions and the present day stuff. And we were feeling that actually one way to go might be to keep that immersion in the drama. How could we do that? Could we do justice to the complexities of a story without pulling away from the drama to a presenter or an interview? In another program film we made for the Georgian underworld season we had on board a director who'd come from drama, who'd made a conscious decision to make that move. He'd done a lot of prime time soaps and stuff on ITV. He'd really learnt his craft. But he had a passion for history and had a desire to have more kind of control over his material, editorial say in what he was doing. And with him, we worked together on a 90-minute drama based on a very important but forgotten incident in British history, 'The Peterloo Massacre'. The Peterloo

Massacre took place in 1819. It happened in Manchester and it was in a way Britain's Tiananmen Square. It was at a time when working conditions, in the industrial revolution were extremely tough. The working man had no vote and there was a big call for things to change. A radical reformer came to Manchester, to St. Petersfield, to talk about amongst other issues, one man, one vote. It was a huge rally, fantastic response. Families came out, best Sunday clothes, bands. It was a big, big day out in Manchester; peaceful rally. However the authorities panicked. They saw crowd and then they thought this could turn into a mob. It was only thirty years after the French Revolution so they were paranoid about what could happen. So they sent in the Manchester Constabulary to arrest the speaker and to disperse the crowd. And the way they dispersed the crowd was to slash their way through. Along the way hundreds of people were maimed and eleven people died. Almost as bad as that was the cover up after the events when they tried to blame the crowd for the deaths. Now I'll just show you a clip of how we approached that story in *A History of Britain* and then I'll show you how we approached it the drama way. Just to show you how you can do the same story in different ways. And this is the History of Britain approach with a mix of wordless reconstruction, rostrum and presenter.

[scene is played]

So the Peterloo Massacre got six or seven minutes of screentime in *A History of Britain* but we felt it was worth a lot more than that. But again, how do you do something that involved thousands of people? It all happened on a hot summer's day—no guarantee of that in Britain. If you did manage to re-stage the massacre, it would probably pour down. It was very difficult to work out how to approach this through drama. Until, through our research, we found an amazing transcript from an inquest. The only inquest that took place after this massacre and reason being, it was an inquest into the death of a mill owner's son—in other words someone important enough to warrant an inquest. And soon as we read these transcripts, it told you so much about that event. You instantly could see the intimidation of witnesses, the attempts by the authorities to bribe witnesses, to give their own version of the truth, to stop the truth coming out. And we also found in there, a hero in the story in the form of a radical lawyer, who came from London to expose what really

happened and to represent the young man. And that was our way into what became a 90-minute drama.

[scene is played]

So that was 90 minutes made for about 380 grand. We shot that on DV and we had two cameras in the studio. That was a studio set and we didn't use a scriptwriter for this. The transcripts from the trial were very good—the producer and director adapted them taking out the antiquated language. But it just shows how you can dig deeper into the same story and find a new way into it. We also needed a bit of help with historical context here because as I said, it wasn't, although it's a very important event, it wasn't very well known. So we had a voiceover—the dead man's voice as if he's looking down on the events that took place after his death. As in *Desperate Housewives*—they clearly copied us on that one. But that really did help give some kind of context, moments where you need that to be sure you're rooted in the history, the known facts. So that was Peterloo.

I think it's true to say that increasingly drama departments were looking at what we were doing and how we were bringing in the stories that worked as dramas but at incredibly good value for money. They were also noticing that specialist factual commissioning editors were commissioning these docu-dramas, some of which, as in the case of Peterloo, were almost 100% dramas. So there seemed to be a lot of sense in really getting together and talking to each other and that's exactly what happened in RDF, the production company I was working for. We started brainstorming with the drama department and out of that kind of cross fertilisation, came the next program I really want to talk about. I think this is a good example of how a drama project with a documentary element to it works better than if you'd made this film as a pure documentary or as a pure drama. That the best way into this particular story was a kind of fusion of approaches. This film came about when we were talking with Julian Fellowes, the actor and screenwriter. He'd just won an Oscar for best screenplay for *Gosford Park*. And we'd interviewed him for something and realised he had a passion for history, he really wanted to get involved in some way in history programming. So we were looking to develop a series on great country houses or family dynasties—something that felt right for Julian and his knowledge to bring to the screen. And I had to read a

book about a gothic priory in South London where a famous unsolved poisoning had taken place—famous in the annals of crime history because the killer had never been identified and even Agatha Christie had become obsessed with “whodunnit?” This case was a true mystery, there were lots of suspects, a fantastic back story full of jealousy and adultery, disgruntled servants, mysterious companions. I mean it had the lot—some fabulous characters, crying out to be dramatised. But what to do about the lack of a conclusion—the fact that the murder was unsolved? I happened to mention the story to Julian because I just thought he may know about it and indeed he not only knew about it but he had a theory, very interesting one as to what had actually happened. And what he talked about the case, and what he thought motivated the characters, the historical context and what people were doing and why they were doing it, I just thought this is fascinating to hear him talk and this is wonderful stuff. Is there a way that you could marry Julian and his input with proper drama? We were lucky enough to get a commission from the BBC, who could see this had some potential and maybe it could then go into a series if it worked, if we got it right. So we were given primetime BBC1 slot, and we had a bit more money for this than the other programmes I’ve talked about—500,000 but after production fee etc, taken off, we had about 400,000 to play with. But that this was still less than half BBC usually gives to full-blown period drama. So the budget was a challenge. But interestingly, out of that challenge came the solution to the problem of how to marry Julian and the drama. One of the things we quickly realised was that it would help enormously to film everything in one location. So we plotted our way through the story and didn’t want to miss any of the twists and turns and the red herrings and we did come to the conclusion that there was a way of writing this that could contain the story within the walls of the gothic priory. And from that came the idea to Julian into the house at the beginning of the film and take him back in time almost as if he’s a ghost in the story. I mean not literally presenting as a ghost. He’s there as himself but at various moments in the film, we find him in the scene and we cut to him, he walks in and he gives you those moments of analysis, of insight, of wit and humour. He moves the story on and then finally he kind of takes over at the end when he reveals what he thinks really happened. We get the sense that he’s there observing everything but the actors can’t see him. Here’s a clip.

[scene is played]

Now there was a great deal written at the time about the poisoning of Charles Bravo. This was a big Victorian tabloid scandal. But our adaptation needed a scriptwriter. There was no doubt about that. It needed to be very carefully crafted. We needed a writer who could deal with the factual information, with the historical context because it needed to work as a piece of history as well. We didn't have the money for a big name TV scriptwriter so we found someone who had worked predominately in factually based radio drama. Julian was contracted to give the script a 'polish'—the BBC were very keen on making the most of his *Gosford Park* credentials. And Tina Pepler, our writer also had to work very much within the confines of the budget. That restricted her a great deal. We had to be very pared down in terms of character and also sets. I mean just to give you an example, there was a very important moment involving brushing down a horse in a stable with a poison. The house where we were filming had a stable. But we couldn't film in it because we didn't have the money to dress it or the time to light it. So we scrubbed the horse down in the courtyard and it worked perfectly well. But that's example where we had to be tough and say even though it's there we can't film in it. Similarly the house had a dining room and a sitting room. Ideally we would have liked to film in both but that meant time and moving from one room into the other. So one half of the dining room became the dining room and the other half became a sitting room. So we just had to turn around – we didn't have to spend time moving into another room. Those are the kinds of decisions we had to make because we had to shoot this in eleven days. It was very tight. So was the five-week edit. So we were under some pressure, there was no time for re-shoots if something hadn't worked. But what we did do was spend a lot of time on the script and also we made sure that when we did shoot, it looked right. Florence Bravo was a rich woman, we had to make everything look as plush as possible. So Nadia Cameron-Blakey who played Florence Bravo was wearing Nicole Kidman's frocks from *The Golden Bowl*. We used rich colours—lots of velvet and lots of gold, lighting which gave a rich lustrous look. And also we didn't spend a lot of money casting big name actors. But we got good actors. And of course Julian was our star. Although he was being himself in this we hoped his experience as an actor would make the blending of presenter and drama feel seamless. That was the thing that we had to make sure that audiences did accept. Anyway here's another clip that shows a bit more about approach.

[scene is played]

That one-off has now given birth to a series. We've got more unsolved murders for Julian to solve. The budgets have gone up—we made the point that not every unsolved murder can be told through only visiting one location and you just can't go on and on pulling in favours. So that's good news.

Obviously with this story we had had access to a large amount of information, which was used as a basis for the drama. But conversely, the opposite can sometimes lend itself to a drama approach as well. Going on now to *Princes in the Tower*, the film I started with. It's based on a historical mystery, its riddled with ambiguities, conflicting accounts, gaps in our knowledge, just in connection with the Princes in the Tower but also with the man who came afterwards, claiming to be one of the princes. A man who most historians agree was an impostor called Perkin Warbeck. But the story of the pretender to the throne did seem to beg lots of questions that we felt could be explored through drama. Who was he? Why did he do it? What effect did he have on the people around him when he came back especially on those who had known the princes as boys? Why did he finally confess after so long? And why, when he was executed, was his face beaten up and no other part of his body touched? The Tudor spindoctors have done their work well in that everyone had blamed Richard III. But there were a few writers around who thought someone else might have had something to do with the princes' death. And indeed there were a few historians thought that maybe there was more to Perkin Warbeck than meets the eye. And certainly we felt that this was good ground for us to approach the story with an open mind. And actually we thought the drama would be more satisfying in this case than documentary—the danger with the latter was that it would end up with a lot of historians disagreeing with each other. Whereas with this approach, we could take our own interpretation of what happened, show it dramatically, while making clear that this was one interpretation, possible interpretation of events. Also a chance to look at period in history that had received little attention. Henry VIII, well we all have a sense of what he was like through numerous screen interpretations. But Henry VII, one of the blander characters perhaps it seems. But when you dig a bit he's rather fascinating—intensely paranoid, superstitious, domineering mother, unhappy marriage, all good

material for character portrayal. So we worked very closely with a historian and with a scriptwriter and we focussed in on the dramatic possibilities of the Pretender, as he was known, his last interrogation leading up to his final confession. And that was a way of containing the budget. Because as I say we only had 400,000 to film two hours. But by hopefully making it into a courtroom thriller, part psychological drama, part exploration of the only Tudor dynasty. We could also make people forget while they're watching it, that the outcome is known. Obviously we know he didn't succeed because there was after Henry VII, there came Henry VIII. But if you're gripped enough by the story then you'll be hooked in and I'll show you a clip now. It's from half way through the drama. The interrogation hasn't been going well for the Tudors. Henry VII's wife, the Queen of England who was sister to the princess is beginning to think that it might be her brother after all. So Henry is on his way.

[scene is played]

Just going back to the beginning of that clip, historical purists would probably thrown up their hands and say, the king, riding on his own at night, that would never happen, he would have an entourage or whatever. Well the fact is we could only afford one horse. But we decided that actually it's a good way of showing Henry as the very isolated man at the top. But we also felt it captured something else about the period—the Tudors were pretty bankrupt when they came to the throne. This is a very different world from the world of Henry VIII [unclear] and frankly those were the kind of confines we were working to. We started this production in November and we were shooting in the first week of January. So we had just six or seven weeks to get from first draft script, to cast, location, design, the whole caboodle really. And then we had a twelve day shoot and an eight week edit. So it was very, very pared down. We had one rather depressing day when we had to cross out in the script all the sequences we couldn't afford—Queen arrives by boat, went, carriage arrives, crossed out, Ambassador arrives with entourage became Ambassador arrives alone.... But actually although at the time it felt tough, looking back I think the focus on the script that we did give this, was the right way to go. And we couldn't afford action sequences, therefore the words had to really work and the acting had to be good. And certainly the script had a key role in attracting the acting talent. We could only offer equity minimum. But a lot of the actors that came to casting said that they loved the script and

something to really get hold of here and certainly that's one of the reasons that Mark Umbers who was working in feature films was attracted to doing this. And also the time of year helped. We were doing it early January, whereas productions aren't up and running by then, we were. And also the location actually was another carrot I think. We had no luck finding anywhere in the U.K. to film this. It was rather worrying actually. Tower of London was quickly ruled out as far too expensive and also didn't really look medieval. We had a very similar experience throughout the south of England. The director, Justin Hardy, knew the Dordogne area of France and knew there were many medieval locations in that area. But we were making a low budget drama, how could we possibly shoot this in France? As it turned out, because we were filming in January, just after the holiday period, we had discount airlines. And they were actually offering flights for one penny from the south of England to the Dordogne. So that was fantastic news. So we were able to fly out all our cast and crew for less than a dollar. And then when of course we got there, we found a wonderful chateau, medieval rooms, which we hired for a few hundred pounds a day—half the price of anything we'd seen in England. It, had offices, had lots of open space, wonderful roads; perfect. And five star hotel down the road that was closed in winter. But when we said we could fill it, they opened for us at a fantastic rate. So we were able to say to the actors you'll be staying at a wonderful chateau. Can't pay you very much but look at the hotel! And so that, I think, also helped. Now we cast seven speaking parts and really we needed eight. So we made the eighth part mute because we couldn't afford a speaking actor and we had a very photogenic composer, who agreed to stand in as our mute monkish scribe—the man writing down everything that happens in the interrogation. And that turned out to be a good thing actually because then we were able to have a voiceover which was the voice you heard as the older Thomas Moore, where the young scribe be cast as Thomas Moore, the older Thomas Moore is looking back at this event that happened earlier in his life. That voiceover would come from a character in the drama—much more in keeping with our approach than the “voice of God” documentary style narrator. The v/o was able to give historical context and information as well as help build up the tension and a sense of what was at stake.

We had to shoot eight minutes per day, minimum, otherwise we were in trouble really. So that meant very tight scheduling. Other things we did to keep to budget included shooting on DV. We went handheld much of the

time—for speed and dramatic effect and DV is so light it makes that possible. We always lit for 360 degrees in a room as much as we could. So there was minimal resetting. We shot the rehearsals always. Sometimes we didn't get anything from it, sometimes you actually get the first half of the scene being covered. Because the actors were good actors, they're very good at finding the light, we tried to cast actors we thought would be helpful and have the right approach to making things work. They're incredibly helpful. And because we were away from home, it meant the night before we could iron out problems with the script, we could talk through the scene and make the necessary script changes. And we were ready to roll literally at seven o'clock in the morning. That wasn't the end of our problems. This was a story which involved someone's (apparent) memories, looking back at their childhood, looking back at events that happened earlier in their life. We had the money to do a B unit shoot. We couldn't afford to put the main unit onto the memory sequences and so we decided to take a leaf out of Steven Poliakoff's book and do the memories as stills. Which we felt could work, the sense of someone almost going through their photo album of memories. And our executive producer was a very talented photographer and so he took all the stills, the memories. And as far as design goes we were off to a good start because we had this fantastic medieval location, it already had the cobwebs, the dripping ceilings, the mice, the spiders, whatever. So it had great texture because the Tudors were at the time very poor, we didn't need all the kind of sumptuous trappings of royalty necessarily. So it was kind of dressed down Friday really for the Tudors. But we did go for historical accuracy—the design team were brilliant and really did their research. Even down to the eating sequences, getting the food right.

So really this is an example where we did get a few people saying this felt like it did have the texture of living, breathing history, which we hoped we did. . That seemed to be the reaction that we had. So this is certainly something that made us feel that it's worth taking the risk, going for broke, sticking your neck out. And if you can surround yourself with committed people and actors who are ready to act their socks off for you, then you can have a really rewarding experience. Thank you.