State of Play
Robin Nelson

This book updates and develops the arguments of TV drama in transition (1997). It sets its analysis of the aesthetics and compositional principles of texts within a broad conceptual framework (technologies, institutions, economics, cultural trends). Tracing ‘the great value shift from conduit to content’ (Todreas, 1999), the book's view is relatively optimistic about the future quality of TV drama in a global market-place. But, characteristically taking up questions of worth where others have avoided them, it recognises that certain types of ‘quality’ are privileged for viewers able to pay, possibly at the expense of viewer preference worldwide for ‘local’ resonances in television. The mix of arts and cultural studies methodologies makes for an unusual approach.

The world of enterprise: myths of the global and global myths (Star Trek)
Geraldine Harris

This chapter explores various accounts of what the role television is thought to play in the processes of globalisation with particular reference to the issue of ‘cultural imperialism’. It questions the manner in which the postcolonial theories of cultural hybridity and diaspora can function within postmodern narratives of globalisation to produce a generalised concept of ‘new global subjectivity’. The chapter then pursues these ideas in relation to an examination of the status of Star Trek as a ‘franchise’ owned by a giant transnational corporation, as a myth of
the global and as a global myth and a metanarrative no more or less ‘imaginary’ than as given in many academic accounts. This moves through a discussion of the impact of a ‘postmodern aesthetic’ on the series Voyager and Deep Space Nine and then to an analysis of the first season of Enterprise as a nostalgic and conservative postmodern return to the style and period of Star Trek: The Original Series.

Singularity sustained
Robin Nelson

in State of Play: Contemporary 'High-end' TV Drama

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This chapter discusses some instances of a sustained singularity in British TV drama to reflect upon how traditions may successfully adapt to new circumstances without altogether abandoning cultural heritage. It considers three examples of recent British TV drama which reflect notable strands in British television and develop them for new times—Blackpool, Casanova and State of Play. Though each drama is distinctive, there are some links between them in terms of the personnel involved. The three examples suggest that, despite the pull of global marketing in TV3, British TV drama sustains a distinct identity. None of these would have been made in the USA and, although they are potentially exportable, their production has not been led primarily by transnational commercial imperatives. With the worldwide industry tending towards quality programming, particularly at the ‘high end’ of TV drama, and with the key restraints on the dissolution of British television identity in place, the prospect for the future of drama on television looks reasonably bright.