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# 10

## 'Charm, Bowler, Umbrella, Leather Boots': Remaking *The Avengers*

Stephen Longstaffe

To judge from the responses to the 1998 film *The Avengers*, one thing you should not do is mess with the postmodern past. Critics and *Avengers* fans alike had nothing good to say about the film: 'no story, no dialogue, no content, no point, no good', 'this film is an insult to cinema', 'a big fat gob of maximum crapulosity'.<sup>1</sup> This is despite considerable alterations made to the film after unfavourable preview screenings in the US. The general release version lacks crucial linking and contextualising material, as is clear both from the original movie screenplay and the website, which carries photos of scenes shot but missing from the final cut. The film was a financial failure, and has since become a byword for 'the archetypal Hollywood disaster'.<sup>2</sup>

One reason for critical sniffiness about the film is that it was seen to signify a characteristically Hollywood combination of voracity and lack of imagination. As a remake of a successful TV series, it sits alongside remakes of European films, costume dramas and formulaic star vehicles as proof of the creative sclerosis of the mainstream. Philip French, for example, identified *The Avengers* as part of history repeating itself as 'big screen spin-off': 'in the wake of major movies inspired by *Star Trek*, *The Brady Bunch*, *Mission: Impossible*, *The Saint* and *Lost In Space*, the whirligig of time brings in *The Avengers*'.<sup>3</sup> If these films are 'spin-offs', however, they are clearly different in kind from the *X-Files* movie (1998) (or, for that matter, the TV spin-off of 1995's *Clueless*). In the latter cases, the 'original' audience still exists and the 'spin-off' product is simply an attempt to repeat the success of the source film in a different medium. The films listed by French seek rather to reconceive and recombine the elements of their originals (actual or implied) for a new audience.

Some remakes seek to update their originals in a fairly straightforward way, ensuring that they fit a contemporary audience's expectations in terms of hardware or special effects. Others, recognising

that one generation's sublime is the next generation's ridiculous, have a more critical attitude to their subject matter. *The Brady Bunch Movie* (1995), for example, re-imagines the original's down-home American family of the 1970s as a kind of latter-day Addams Family, standing in the same relation to its original as Uncle Fester, Lurch and the others did to the terrors of the 1930s generation. For both, the animating question is 'How did people take this seriously?' These remakes are both satirical commentaries on changing fictional conventions, and forms of generational one-upmanship.

The *Avengers* movie, however, fits neither of these paradigms. While most of the TV series mentioned above by French were committed to realism, within the limits of their respective generic conventions, the 1960s *Avengers* in its 'classic' incarnation was heavily committed to camp, pastiche and parody. Remaking *The Avengers* therefore involves pastiching the parodic impulse of its 'original'. In this the 1998 film differs from the reappropriations of another iconic camp 1960s series, *Batman*. Tim Burton's two *Batman* films (*Batman* (1989) and *Batman Returns* (1992)) turned the tables on the 1960s, taking Gothic rather than camp as their key to the original comic's excesses. Whereas the 1960s TV series implied that the original *Batman* had been taken too seriously, the 1980s films countered that the original *Batman* had not taken itself seriously enough.

Of course, identifying the TV *Avengers* simply as parody misses much of its appeal. For a start, there is its M Appeal, especially as personified in Honor Blackman's Mrs Cathy Gale and Diana Rigg's Mrs Emma Peel. At a time when women in adventure series did little but scream and be rescued, both Gale and Peel employed martial arts against their attackers. More broadly, the sexual and non-sexual dynamics of the Steed–Gale/Peel/King relationships have been widely appreciated for their subtlety and playful pushing of boundaries. Such elements obviously depend to some extent on the performers, and a remake without the original cast finds it hard to reproduce some of the original's key virtues. Some of the animus directed at the 1998 film was clearly rooted in the perception that, for example, Uma Thurman is nothing like a Dame Diana Rigg.

Along with a different cast came a retreat from the 1960s *Avengers*'s playfulness regarding gender. Screenplay writer Don Macpherson's reading of the original TV series is that 'over and above everything else, *The Avengers* was really a romance about an unconsummated love affair'.<sup>4</sup> The TV show certainly hinted about

the on- and off-screen relationships between Steed and Mrs Gale or Mrs Peel, but was more playfully indeterminate in its commitment to love (and, indeed, non-consummation) as a central dynamic. When Patrick Macnee was selling the show to US TV executives in the 1960s, *his* summary was that ‘*The Avengers* is about a man in a bowler hat and a woman who flings men over her shoulders’.<sup>5</sup> The 1998 *Avengers*, by contrast, opted for more traditional gender roles, splitting Mrs Peel into a Good Emma (who was not violent) and a cloned Bad Emma (who was). Good Emma practised her fencing against Steed, but only used martial arts once, on parallel wires suspended several hundred feet above the ground, where it mutated into a kind of aggressive gymnastics. Bad Emma shot Steed several times as well as knocking him out, and used her martial arts skills – presumably derived from her ‘original’, Good Emma – to kill scientists.<sup>6</sup>

However ambivalent it was about a heroine flinging men about, the 1998 film did keep the bowler hat. That *The Avengers* is particularly associated with this item can be confirmed by noting that in both France and Germany it was included in the show’s title. In France it was known as *Melon Chapeau et bottes de cuir* (Bowler Hat and Leather Boots) and in Germany *Mit Schirm, Charme, und Melone* (With Umbrella, Charm and Bowler). The bowler hat is a particularly appropriate symbol for *The Avengers*, given its status as a signifier of both High Englishness and surrealism, the combination of which is one of the show’s (and the film’s) most interesting features. Steed’s Englishness of dress and manner, combined with the show’s budget-driven tendency to set its exterior scenes in those prettier parts of the rural English home counties near to the studios, ensured that, visually, the show was strongly differentiated from other mid-1960s espionage/adventure shows such as *Batman* or *The Man from UNCLE*. Indeed, as Toby Miller perceptively notes, ‘in many ways, *The Avengers*’ clothes and accessories *were* the gadgets that marked them out from US rivals’.<sup>7</sup> The show’s construction of images of England and Englishness during its ‘classic’ period was clearly influenced by the requirements of the American market, where the show was networked from the fourth series onwards. Toby Miller reports Patrick Macnee commenting that once the show began to be made in the knowledge that it would be sold to the States (that is, from the fifth series, which was the first to be made in colour) he felt he was working for a US network.<sup>8</sup>

However, the show was sold to the US well after the Steed persona was established. Although at first Macnee's Steed visually resembled Ian Hendry's Dr Keel, he quickly mutated into a quasi-Edwardian dandy once he became the show's lead male character. Steed 'embodied tradition and all that people associated with the British way of life'

gracious living; a London home full of family heirlooms and handsome antiques; a cultivated appreciation of food, wine, horseflesh and pretty women; proficiency at gentlemanly sports such as fencing, archery and polo; exquisite tailoring; a high-handed way with underlings and an endearing eccentricity which manifested itself in such preferences as driving a vintage Bentley convertible and fighting with a swordstick, rolled umbrella or any other handy implement, rather than the more obvious weapons.<sup>9</sup>

Some of this was due to old Etonian Patrick Macnee, but equally important was the show's overall vision of 'Avengersland'. In the words of writer and producer Brian Clemens, this was a 'carefully contrived, *dateless* fantasy world depicting a Britain of bowlers and brollies, of charm and muffins for tea, a Britain long since gone – if it ever really existed'.<sup>10</sup> This fantasy world, Clemens notes,

admitted to only one class ... and that was the upper. As a fantasy, we would not show a uniformed policeman or a coloured man. And you would not see anything so common as blood in *The Avengers*. Had we introduced a coloured man or a policeman, we would have had the yardstick of social reality and that would have made the whole thing quite ridiculous. Alongside a bus queue of ordinary men-in-the-street, Steed would have become a caricature.<sup>11</sup>

Though the show has often been praised for refusing stereotypical TV female personas for Cathy Gale and Emma Peel, there were few black or working-class characters. Trinidadian actor Edric Connor played a gang leader in the third series episode 'The Gilded Cage' before Clemens took over as co-producer, but the show as a whole is summed up in the words of Paul Cornell: 'right up to when the series ended, its most prominent black man was Honor'.<sup>12</sup> It is difficult to deny Cornell's point that 'the apartheid of *Avengers* England' could have been avoided by simply casting more black

actors, and the absence of black people limits the conception of Englishness on offer in the show.

The presence onscreen of black actors is a different issue from the presence of working-class characters. However clichéd the character played, a black actor is not simply pretending to be black. But to represent the working class it is not necessary for the actor to belong to that class. For working-class characters, therefore, the alternative to exclusion was not a representation in which authenticity was a necessary component; something that the show's roots in spy and SF TV genres in any case militated against. The low budget required that every person shown was foreground rather than background: as Brian Clemens said, 'If you were in shot, you were in the plot.'<sup>13</sup> This refused the common division of actors into cast and extras, itself a form of exclusive representation. The emptiness of both interior and exterior scenes, the latter often focusing on Steed's classic car outside his London mews flat or on traffic-free roads, signalled a world where there was no such thing as the masses or the crowd. More generally, it emphasised that Avengersland constructed rather than copied its England and Englishness.<sup>14</sup>

These constructions were not produced in isolation. *The Avengers's* version of England and Englishness grew from and responded dynamically to other imaginations of nationality in the 1960s. Some of the most important and internationally popular of these were the James Bond movies. Although *The Avengers* began before the Bond films, many of its features can be productively considered as dialogically related to them. Sometimes the show copied the films, as when Steed's bowler hat became a weapon like Oddjob's in *Goldfinger* (1964). Both Honor Blackman and Diana Rigg were 'Bond girls' (the latter in *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* (1969), along with the 1970s *New Avengers* actress Joanna Lumley). Blackman actually left the show in order to appear in *Goldfinger*. Her defection was jokingly recycled in the fourth series episode 'Too Many Christmas Trees', in which Steed receives a Christmas card from Mrs Gale and wonders aloud, 'What *can* she be doing in Fort Knox?'

Casting aside, the relationship between *The Avengers* and the Bond films can be seen as critical. Bond is self-consciously opposed to the 'gentleman spy' genre in which *The Avengers* was, albeit knowingly, rooted, while *The Avengers* raises an ironic eyebrow at the 'modern' simplicities of the Bond world. Unlike the sexually irresistible Bond, Steed's confident charm most clearly signified his class background rather than his sexual attractiveness. Bond's professionalism and

classlessness indicated a break with the past, and the films' variety of geographical settings implied that he was part of a new, post-Imperial, meritocratic elite with, as Michael Denning suggests, a 'licence to look' at both women and 'peripheral' places.<sup>15</sup> Mrs Peel and Mrs Gale, being anthropologists, both also had a licence to look, in contrast to Steed, whose expertise and horizons were limited by his class positioning. He was far less intellectual or knowledgeable than either of his female colleagues.

Ian Fleming's Bond was eventually revealed not to be English at all (in Fleming's 1964 *You Only Live Twice* he is identified as half-Scot, half-Swiss). Despite this, and spending almost all of his time in other parts of the world, Bond defended a Britain metonymically represented by a completely English establishment. *Avengersland*, on the contrary, was definitely English rather than British – and London/Home Counties English at that. The show was concerned with the rituals, fabric and institutions of this specific world rather than exploring national 'character'. Just as the restricted social milieu of classic interwar English detective fiction allowed the development of its puzzle element, *The Avengers's* social and geographical exclusivity functioned as part of its visual and verbal playfulness, which was inimical to realism. Ironically, this playfulness was more up-to-date, in terms of the emergent 1960s aesthetic, than the Bond films' attempt to update genre conventions by making them acceptably realistic. Indeed, Toby Miller identifies *The Avengers* as an early example of postmodern TV, featuring 'a superfluity of screen palimpsests that are excessive for the needs and capacities of a single story'.<sup>16</sup> The show knowingly recycled pulp and other plots, and often parodied films and TV, as episode titles like 'The Girl from Auntie', 'Mission ... Highly Improbable', and 'The Superlative Seven' indicate. Its High English parody should be understood as both a stylistic and a critical response to Bond's relative straightforwardness, which, if it critiqued anything, was focused on the communist Them.

Bond recognised 'our' diversity only in an Establishment form, in the guise of the Q's eccentricity, which was harnessed to the practical context of producing gadgets and weapons for the forthcoming mission. The madmen, whether scientists or otherwise, were foreign. *The Avengers*, though it began as a conventional enough spy series, by the fourth and fifth series more or less repudiated its own Cold War paranoia (and Bond's more glamorous variant) and began to parody it. It situated the threat to the state in a non-realist context,

produced an agent (Steed) whose unreconstructed aristocracy was itself legible as a species of eccentricity, and set itself within an England infested with eccentrics planning to take something or somebody over. But the difference between Bond and *The Avengers* is most clearly visible in their respective treatments of gender. The issue is nicely focused by the fact that Bond took two of its female leads from the TV series. But Mrs Gale and Mrs Peel are not simply pursued by Steed (if they are pursued at all), but work with (not *for*) him. Neither are agents. Avengersland, unlike Bondworld, has room for male/female friendship. In this light, the international success of *The Avengers* indicates a cheering global receptiveness to contra-Bond material.

But if the most interesting and entertaining elements of the 1960s TV show were produced through parodic interrogation of 1960s TV genres and Bond movies, where does that leave the 1998 remake?

Interestingly, long after Bond began to parody itself, the 1998 film includes several knowing nods to the old adversary. Grace Jones, a Bond villain, sings the closing credits tune in a style reminiscent of Shirley Bassey. The film's plot involves the taking over of the world via control not of oil, space or the Internet, but the weather, though the fourth series of *The Avengers* got there first: the episode 'A Surfeit of H<sub>2</sub>O' features a cloud-seeding villain called 'Sturm'. And, most obviously, the role of the megalomaniac Bond-villain is taken by Sean Connery himself, who revels in his Scottishness (he is dressed in kilt and sporran to deliver his ultimatum to the world, flanked by bagpipers) and boasts a name (Sir August de Winter) to rival the silliest of the Bond-girls'.

But the 1998 *Avengers* is dialogically engaged not only with TV genre conventions and the 1990s version of Bond, but, crucially, with other contemporary representations of English identity. One of the main principles behind the cuts to the preview version seems to have been the removal of the kind of sex and violence that tilted the movie toward the action genre. Bad Emma killing, Sir August slicing up scientists, the cloned Bad Emma being explicitly jealous of Good Emma, and rather a lot of explosions – all these appear in Macpherson's original screenplay. The cuts in turn refocused the film on the heritage of Englishness. Indeed, the 1960s series' playful Englishness is revisited and intensified. The film packs in as many Hollywood signifiers of Englishness as possible – country houses, mazes and gentlemen's clubs; Jags and Minis; red telephone boxes and London buses; croquet and tea; City suits and bowler hats. This

relatively simple use of 'English' signifiers is, however, supplemented by a second layer of mocking or affectionate throwaway references – to Lewis Carroll, Edward Lear, Narnia, the TV dramatisation of *Brideshead Revisited* (1982) and Hammer movies. Beneath the internationally recognised signifiers of Englishness, the England of Swinging London and country houses, there is another layer. Mother (a man, as in the TV series) tells Father (a woman), 'Nothing's impossible, Father. I often think of six impossible things before breakfast' – a quotation from Carroll's *Through The Looking Glass* (1871). Drifting along the Thames in a bubble after vanquishing Sir August, Steed begins a quotation from Edward Lear's 'The Owl and the Pussycat' (1871), which Mrs Peel continues: 'The owl and the pussycat went to sea—' '—In a beautiful pea-green boat'. Before Bad Emma's first assault on Steed, she appears out of a snowstorm like the Queen in C.S. Lewis's *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe* (1950). On the one hand, these references to classic English children's texts are part of the same retro-Englishness as the film's classic cars, stately homes and cod-Victoriana. On the other hand, they acknowledge the centrality of children's fantasy fiction to formative understandings of English national identity. For the many readers of such fiction, their first imagined English communities have fewer humans than non-humans – motoring toads, bears of very little brain, big friendly giants.

This is not to imply that such 'inside' references place Englishness as infantile. Rather, they recognise the diachronic aspects to the imagination of national community, as a process of construction and interpellation beginning in childhood. This understanding of the continuing reproduction of changing senses of Englishness provides an instructive contrast with another, far more popular, film ostensibly engaging with similar territory, *Austin Powers: The Spy Who Shagged Me* (1999). In part it is a Swinging London/James Bond parody which uses some of the same iconic props as *The Avengers*. But here they are just props. No English locations are used. A mock-up of swinging London is constructed from stock footage and picture-postcard images – Union Jacks, red telephone boxes, London buses, zebra crossings, guardsmen in bearskins, policemen. That it is a construction is unpacked at length. The Swinging London street is shown to be a set built in the middle of nowhere. As Powers speeds past a red telephone box in the same (clearly non-English) nowhere, he remarks to his companion, 'You know, what's remarkable is how much England looks in no way like Southern California.' These

'England on the cheap' jokes rapidly wear thin, because such coach-tour icons are primarily signifiers of English difference to the outside world rather than being strongly cathected by locals. This is not to claim that *The Avengers* constructs a 'deep Englishness' in contrast to *Austin Powers's* 'surface Englishness'. Both are concerned with stock English surfaces; the difference is in the variety and ownership of the surfaces on display. The synchronic, snapshot-Englishness in *Austin Powers* is entirely accessible to anybody who has visited London as a conventional tourist; the Englishness of *The Avengers* is constructed for a different audience with a different relationship to English culture.

Taking its cue from the series, *The Avengers* film makes comic use of postmodern techniques. It playfully gestures towards the world outside the film, by casting Ralph Fiennes as a parody of the English gent he so successfully portrays elsewhere, and asking Uma Thurman to test her English accent to destruction with the line 'How now brown cow' (if the film had not been so savagely cut we would also have heard her say the shortest sentence incorporating all the letters of the English alphabet, 'The quick brown fox jumped over the lazy dog'). As in the TV series, there are other kinds of in-joke, referring to both films and the real world. Connery dies as his character does in *Highlander* (1986); Mrs Peel fights a villain swinging from high-tension cables, as in the Bond film *Moonraker* (1979); images and lines are quoted from *Blade Runner* (1982). Teddy bears appear, not, as in *Brideshead Revisited*, trailed behind wistful Oxford undergraduates, but as full-suit disguises for the scientist-conspirators of the Prospero/BROLLY alliance. Visually, the film presents the same mix of country houses and London scenes as the series, with the added twist that many of them are well-known public places rather than anonymous locations in the Home Counties. *The Avengers* was filmed at the Royal Naval College at Greenwich, Windsor Great Park, Syon House, Hatfield House, Blenheim Palace, the Lloyd's building and Stowe School, while other scenes used mock-ups of Trafalgar Square and Big Ben. The makers even used Richard Rogers's own flat for Mrs Peel's home. The use of larger and grander locations intensifies the TV series' characteristic 'emptiness', and emphasises the antirealist aesthetic of the project. It also opposes the film to contemporary appropriations of these locations for the heritage industry, one of the enabling factors for which is costume drama's representations of England and Englishness. Costume drama, in its explanation of how life was lived in these kinds of places, focuses

on domestic interiority rather than their power to awe. *The Avengers*, in putting a mad scientist with a plan for world domination into a stately home, recognises the megalomania behind creating and living in such buildings.

The show's antirealist aesthetic emerges in other details that show its preference for the quoted over the quotidian. People in teddy bear suits populate the Lloyd's building (a nice take on that building's iconic modernity). Sir August's first appearance is preceded by a shot of a room filled with 1500 recently shaken snow shakers. His orchids have giant lenses in front of them through which we see from the orchid's point of view the humans admiring it. Mrs Peel encounters an Escher staircase trying to escape from Sir August's stately home, the aptly named Hallucinogen Hall. These variously impressive or playful settings are juxtaposed with the shabbiness of the Ministry for which Steed works – a range of gloomy underground corridors heated by a wood-burning stove. Mother, the ostensible head of the outfit, is a scruffy chain-smoker covered in dandruff, fag ash and macaroon crumbs. Steed the employee, on the other hand, is dressed by Savile Row. This productive disjunction with Mother is part of the film's modification of Macnee's original Steed, who, though equally stylish, was undeniably from the English aristocracy. Though Fiennes's Steed is rich and patronises gentlemen's outfitters, the film does its best to present his class simply as a source of style. His interests outside the immediate adventure are seemingly limited, like Mrs Peel's, to chess, who, though equally stylish (and, to judge from her apartment, equally rich), is similarly classy without being aristocratic. The poster for the movie, which featured Steed as city gent and Peel in a leather catsuit, carried the slogan 'saving the world in style'.

There are also jokes that are simply jokes. Or rather, the film employs, as the series did, the kind of understated wit organically related to a comic view of English formality (that is, as something other than an indication of a desperately repressed and impoverished inner life). After stumbling into a building inhabited by scientists in large teddy bear suits, Mrs Peel is attacked by her double, Bad Emma, who is also wearing a bear suit. Steed arrives in time to register the two faces side by side, after which Bad Emma escapes and the following exchange occurs:

PEEL: Just in time to save me from myself.

STEED: Are you all right? I thought I was seeing double.

PEEL: That makes two of us.

The 1960s TV series began from many of the same elements as Bond films, but used them to construct an alternative perspective, rooted in a past that Bond repudiated, on national and gender identities and the pleasures of genre. The film continues this strategy. Producer Jerry Weintraub states of the film's 'Avengersland', 'We're in London and it's the sixties, but it's the sixties as though they hadn't gone away, they've just been going on for a very long time'.<sup>17</sup> In other words, 'Avengersland' is an idyllic alternate world in which the England and Englishness of over 30 years' worth of Merchant-Ivory films, Jane Austen adaptations, and TV versions of 'classic' nineteenth- and twentieth-century English novels simply *have never existed*. As with Bond, the 1998 film takes the materials used by other constructions of England and Englishness – race, gender, money, class, style – but constructs them so that, like the Lloyd's building, their constructedness is always visible.

This is not to deny that the film is nostalgic. But its nostalgia is not for the vanished world of its icons of Englishness, but for the TV series on which it is based. Macpherson's script is full of references to old *Avengers* episodes. It quotes, for example, the Peel-Steed fencing duel of the first Mrs Peel episode, 'The Town of No Return'; Steed's helping Mrs Gale with her tight leather boots in 'Death of a Batman'; and the line introducing all the fifth series shows, 'Mrs Peel, we're needed'. Patrick Macnee, the original Steed, even has a walk-on (or rather a shimmer-on) part as an invisible man ('Learnt the trick in camouflage. Till the accident made rather a mess of things'). But the film's pastiche of these and other 'original' elements can be seen as simple homage (or, as many critics claimed, failed homage) only as long as the postmodern nature of the 1960s TV series – and thus the film itself – is forgotten. Remaking was always part of *The Avengers*.

While it is difficult to avoid comparing the film with that of the best of the TV series, it is important to remember that, in terms of presenting England and Englishness, the two have different projects. The Irish poet Patrick Kavanagh developed in the 1940s and 1950s an aesthetic of the parochial, which he contrasted with the 'provincial' which has 'no mind of his own; he does not trust what his eyes see until he has heard what the metropolis – towards which his eyes are turned – has to say on any subject'. Provincialism, as Kavanagh defines it, bedevils many imaginings of Englishness (especially those produced elsewhere), with the United States functioning as the metropolis toward which the provincial

imagination is oriented. Both incarnations of *The Avengers* might be said to be parochial, in Kavanagh's sense of an opposition, rooted in inside knowledge, to the merely provincial.<sup>18</sup> Both resist the American – or American-centred – construction of England and Englishness as provincial with regard to the centrality of the US (though both have their limitations, particularly in their virtually all-white casts). The film is not designed to make instant sense to audiences uninterested in Englishness. Its ironic casting of Englishmen like comedian Eddie Izzard and the legendarily wasted singer Shaun Ryder as non-speaking heavies is just one example of the ways in which the film addresses itself to insiders. But while the TV series dialogically engaged with Bond's particular brand of realist modernity, the 1998 film's most powerful contemporary companions in imagining Englishness are backward-looking, particularly towards the long Imperial century overflowing both sides of the nineteenth. The heritage films are themselves an attempt to look back before the Americanisation of Britain, a project the *Avengers* shares but critiques. The crucial element of this critique is its refusal of realism. It is important to the *Avengers's* kind of parochiality – rooted in a variety of references intentionally incomprehensible in Peoria – that it is both knowing and whimsical about representations of Englishness, including its own. In doing so, it allows the imagination back into the imagined community of England.

Thanks to Jim Riley for discussions about both the film and the series, and for access to his collection of cult TV materials.

## Notes

1. From the *Sunday Times*, *Daily Mail*, and *New York Post* respectively, as quoted in Nick Paton Walsh, 'Putting the kinky boot in', *Guardian*, 21 August 1998.
2. Adam Smith, 'A film you can afford to miss', *Observer*, 16 April 2000.
3. Philip French, 'Film of the Week: *The Avengers*', *Observer*, 16 August 1998.
4. Don Macpherson, *The Avengers: Original Movie Screenplay* (London: Titan Books, 1998), p. ix.
5. Patrick Macnee and Marie Cameron, *Blind in One Ear: The Avengers returns* (San Francisco: Mercury House, 1989), p. 242.

6. One of the film's 'missing scenes' showed Good Emma getting into the exclusive men's club Boodles by using martial arts on the doorman. Macpherson, *The Avengers*, p. 15; <<http://www.sierra-safari.com/avmissing.html>>
7. Toby Miller, *The Avengers* (London: British Film Institute, 1997), p. 42.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 19.
9. Dave Rogers, *The Complete Avengers* (London: Boxtree, 1989), p. 88.
10. Brian Clemens, 'Foreword' to *ibid.*, p. 9.
11. Rogers, *Complete*, p. 90.
12. Paul Cornell, Martin Day and Keith Topping, *The Avengers Dossier: the definitive unauthorised guide* (London: Virgin, 1998), p. 349.
13. Miller, *The Avengers*, p. 12.
14. Both the 1998 film's producer Jerry Weintraub and production designer Stuart Craig saw the emptiness of the TV series as suggesting the paintings of Magritte. See Dave Rogers, *The Avengers: the making of the movie* (London: Titan Books, 1998), pp. 14, 34.
15. Michael Denning, *Cover Stories: narrative and ideology in British spy thrillers* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987), pp. 91–113.
16. Miller, *The Avengers*, p. 119.
17. Rogers, *The Avengers*, p. 14.
18. Antoinette Quinn, *Patrick Kavanagh: born-again Romantic* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1993), p. 199. See also her discussion of Kavanagh's parochialism, pp. 195–254.