

Analyse and explain  
the way a religious  
moral issue has been  
dealt with in a tv s...

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I've chosen to write about an episode of the TV soap Eastenders which was aired on BBC1 on Thursday the 7th of September 2000. The moral issue dealt with is euthanasia. Ethel and Dot have been friends for most of their lives, and are very close.

Ethel is terminally ill and asks Dot to help her die before she becomes unable to help herself. She knows she's going to lose the use of her body and eventually will become completely dependent on other people's care, and wishes to die before that happens. The setting of the scene in which Ethel asks Dot to help her die is key to how Eastenders chose to portray the situation. The scene is set in a small, cramped room with Ethel in a bed. The bed which Ethel is in is quite central in the room, which draws the attention of the viewers to her. Dot is the perfect person for Ethel to ask for help.

She's extremely religious, whereas Ethel is not. By asking Dot for help, the BBC can show the two sides to the dispute over euthanasia and if it is right or not. They can do this because Dot strongly believes that God created life and therefore only he can take it away, but Ethel doesn't believe in God and so says that it is her choice whether she lives or dies. There's a strong contrast of opinions, which represents society's disagreement over whether euthanasia is acceptable or not. Dot tells Ethel " It aint up to you to decide when, or how..

. we don't choose how we come in to this life and we can't choose how we leave." In her opinion, euthanasia is against the will of God. However Ethel who is already in a lot of pain wants to die before she becomes completely incapable of speaking and doing things for herself. Before Dot gives Ethel the

pills, she asks for reassurance that what she is doing is what Ethel really wants because she wants to do the right thing, regardless of her own opinion. People often disagree amongst each other as to whether euthanasia is right or wrong.

Many Christians believe in the sanctity of human life, and that life is holy and sacred. They believe, like Dot that God gives life and only he can take it away. Christians are also not agreed if euthanasia is right or wrong because the Bible doesn't mention euthanasia. Some say that the commandment "do not kill" applies to euthanasia, however others argue that the Bible is dated and doesn't take euthanasia into account. One of the beliefs about God is that he is kind and loving, so he should end suffering, however there are two ways of interpreting this. Some say that they are doing God's will by helping someone end their suffering, whereas others say that only God himself can take life away.

However Christians also believe that God gave them the choice of free will, so it's their choice whether they live or die. Dot believes that by helping Ethel to end her life she is committing murder, and even goes to report herself to the police. Although Dot believed it was best to make Ethel as comfortable as she could before her death, Ethel's view was that she would rather die more quickly. Some Christians, like Dot believe that the purpose of suffering is a test of faith. However others believe in a quality of life, so that a short, happy life is better than a long life filled with pain and suffering.

If a person is unable to live for themselves and are completely dependant on others' help, then there is no quality of life and like Ethel, they believe that

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they should be allowed to end their life before they reach that point.

Although Dot believes that helping Ethel to die is murder, Christians believe in life after death and that death is the end of the beginning and that after death they enter a new stage of existence. By helping Ethel to die, Dot is in fact helping her be reunited with God in paradise a lot more quickly, which is a good thing. However despite this, Dot still feels that helping Ethel to die is wrong. In the end Dot decides that because Ethel is the one suffering, it's her choice and her non-religious views are more important than Dot's own religious views. Although Dot believed she had murdered her friend, she only gave Ethel the pills and the water which is assisted euthanasia.

This is where someone gives a terminally ill person the means to kill themselves, but doesn't actually kill them. Ethel swallowed the pills and the water herself, so Dot did not kill her. Camera shots also help show how the BBC has dealt with the issue of euthanasia. There are a lot of close ups on Dot and Ethel, which help to show how ill and weak Ethel is. Ethel is in her bed and is dressed in her nightwear, which helps to show how ill she is because she is bed bound.

This helps give the viewers a sympathy for her. Throughout the scene, Dot keeps touching Ethel. She often has her face against Ethel, and constantly has her arm around her. She's doing this to comfort Ethel. This is because Ethel is weak and dying, and people in that state often need to be physically comforted, to be held.

The director's use of sound also plays a part in how the BBC deals with the issue of euthanasia. Inside the room the only sound is Dot and Ethel talking.

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However in the background the director uses diegetic sounds such as people talking in the market square and trains passing so show that although Ethel is dying, life goes on. Towards the end, non diegetic music starts very quietly and gradually gets louder and louder until the end where the Eastenders theme tune cuts in. An episode of Eastenders normally ends with an infamous drum sound, however this episode ends with soft music.

The music has been playing quietly, and gets louder as the episode ends. Doing this helps the BBC to show the sensitivity of the subject of euthanasia. In my opinion the director of this episode of Eastenders was successful in dealing with the issue of euthanasia. Both sides of the argument whether it is right or wrong are shown equally, with just a slight bias towards letting Ethel die. However it had to be slightly biased in order to come to a final decision.

There is a lot of disagreement over under which circumstances euthanasia could be classed as acceptable, but the BBC portrayed Ethel as being extremely ill and desperate to die before she becomes totally incapable of looking after herself. I think that it was very effective the way they showed Dot going against her strong beliefs to perform her dying friend's wishes. It also helps to show that euthanasia is not a black and white subject, and that there are many things to take into consideration whilst trying to decide if euthanasia is right or wrong. Aiii) Analyse and explain the way a religious/moral issue has been dealt with in a film The film I have chosen to write about is the Green Mile as the film has a strong religious theme which includes issues such as miracles, visions, faith and prayer. It also poses the moral question 'Is capital punishment right?' The Green Mile is about a

prison guard called Paul Edgecomb who is in charge of prisoners awaiting execution on “ death row”.

One of his prisoners, John Coffey, is described as a walking miracle. He’s eight feet tall and accused of raping and murdering two young girls. He’s also afraid of the dark. At the beginning he says “ I tried to take it back boss but it was too late” to Paul. Although this isn’t very important at the beginning, it explains his innocence as the film progresses. When the new prisoner, “ Wild Bill” is about to enter the prison and Paul is waiting, John starts to talk.

He repeats ‘ careful...careful’ over and over again. He knows that Bill is trouble before he even enters the prison. Then Bill starts attacking the guards.

John had a vision that Bill was bad news and tried to warn Paul, which helps to show his good natured character. John has the ability to sense people, and he knows if people are good or bad in their hearts. One of the miracles in the film is that John Coffey has the unusual ability to heal people. At the beginning of the film you see Paul in a lot of pain, standing in a room. The camera then moves to a shot of the toilet, and nothing entering the toilet.

Later on in the film when Paul’s in bed you see him run out of the house to go to the toilet, and also in a great deal of pain. When he finally passes urine he is crying out in pain before passing out in the garden. After Bill attacked the guards, he is knocked out and thrown in a cell. Paul collapses onto the floor in pain. John calls out to him that he needs to talk to him and that he

needs Paul to come over. When Paul asks what he wants, John replies “ just to help” before grabbing Paul and pulling him towards the bars.

He places his hand on John’s crotch and the camera then moves to a shot of the light bulb in John’s cell glowing very brightly before breaking and Paul falls down onto the floor. When Paul asks what he did, John simply replies “ I helped it... I took it back.” Paul then goes to the toilet where you can see that he is surprised because he is no longer in pain whenever he tries to pass urine.

He’s been healed by John and this is a miracle. Paul’s friend Hal, warden of the prison has a wife who is terminally ill. She has a brain tumour the size of a lemon and can’t possibly survive. However when the guards take John to see her, he heals her. Every time John heals someone he starts coughing and then lots of insects fly out of his mouth. This represents him inhaling the person’s problem, taking it away from them and then releasing it himself so that they are healed.

Another miracle shown is resurrection. Percy is extremely angry, and when Mr Jingles, the mouse runs out into the corridor Percy stamps on him. He’s dead but John then asks to see him. He holds Mr Jingles in his hands and breathes in. Mr Jingles’ tail which is poking through his fingers starts to wiggle and his hands start to glow very brightly. He opens up his hands again, and My Jingles is alive again and runs back to Del.

Like when he healed Paul, John opens up his mouth and lots of insects fly out. When asked what he did, he replies " I helped Del's mouse... I took it back." Another religious theme in the film is faith.

One of the inmates (asks Paul that if he truly repents what he's done then would he go back to a time when he was happiest in his life and live forever, and would that be what heaven was like. Paul reassures him that yes he will go to heaven because by dying his sins are being washed away. He also reassures him that " you'll be fine, you'll do fine." Another theme in this film is the repenting of sins. In one scene when Paul is explaining to Percy the importance of not being aggressive towards the inmates, Paul says that death is the ultimate forgiveness and that in dying they are being forgiven for their crimes and will go to heaven. After the first inmate has been put to death and Percy pokes the body and says " drop us a card from hell" Brutus grabs his arm and pulls him away forcefully and says " he's paid what he's owed, he's square with the house again so keep your goddamn hands off of him.

" This represents the theme of repentance because all his sins have been forgiven and now he is innocent so Percy has no right to disrespect his body. Another idea posed in the film is that John is the Messiah from God. When Paul goes to visit the lawyer who defended John in John's court case, he asks about John's history. However the lawyer tells him that John's nearly impossible to trace, and says that " it's like he fell outta the sky" i. e.

he came from God. This helps reinforce the idea that John is one of God's true miracles. Even Paul recognises John as a miracle from God. John tells

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Paul how he feels everyone's pain, and how "it's like glass in my head, never goes away." The ending reinforces the idea that John was sent from God, because he is put to death like Jesus was for something he didn't do.

Another example of him being sent from God is that he chooses who he wants to help. He could have resurrected Bill, but he didn't. He has the ability to see into people's hearts, and he chooses who deserves to be helped and who doesn't. In doing so, he is playing God. Just before John is to be put to death, Paul asks John if he wants him to set him free.

When asked why, he says "On the day of my judgement when I stand before God, and he asks me why did I kill one of his true miracles, what am I going to say? That it was my job?" John replies "You tell the lord it was a kindness you done. I know you be hurtin', I can feel it but I want it to be over. I'm tired boss." Paul agrees to let him die because in dying, John will be freed of his giant burden and can be reunited with God. B "Television always portrays religious people as out of touch with the modern world.

" Discuss Television in today's modern world has to deal with certain issues. The broadcasters have a responsibility as to how they present religious people. Many different television programmes such as soaps, documentaries and news items all portray religious people, and the way in which they present religious people is vital to the message they are trying to put across. Dealing with religion is a sensitive issue, because although religious people have to be shown, the way in which they are presented can often cause offence. Religious characters are often stereotyped in television programmes.

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There is often a huge gap between the stereotypical image of religious people and modern issues. There are many ways in which they are stereotyped. One of the ways is clothing. In Eastenders, Dot Cotton is an extremely religious character and her choice of clothing is used to reflect her beliefs. She always has a cross around her neck, and always wears non-flattering, dull clothes. She never has her hair done nicely, and uses her clothes and make up to make her look very boring and ordinary.

Another example of stereotypical images broadcasted is Ned Flanders in the fictional cartoon 'The Simpsons'. Ned and the whole Flanders family are shown to be very prim and proper, posh and 'goody goodies' who never do anything wrong. They are also never shown to be doing anything dangerous or anything which could be classed by most people as fun. Also, in any TV programme, a Muslim is identified by wearing a headscarf, regardless of the fact that hundreds of thousands of Muslim women don't wear them. TV also shows black Christians as usually being part of a gospel church.

An episode of Little Britain which is a comedy sketch series shows a black minister who constantly shouts out "Praise the lord!" and "Can I get an amen?" Also, strong accents are often used to identify different religions, despite most people simply having accents from the area they live in. For example in "The Kumars at no. 42" the Kumars all have strong Asian accents, despite them living in Britain and most of them having strong British accents when not on the TV screen. Religious people are often the subject of jokes in television, and are frequently put into programmes simply to be made fun of. They're often shown to be odd, to be different to normal people

in today's modern society and this also keeping them separate from the modern world.

Religious characters are never slightly religious; they're always 100% over the top religious. An example of such a character is Dot Cotton in Eastenders. She quotes passages from the bible in every episode, and almost everything she says has a reference to Jesus, God or the bible. In the Vicar of Dibley, the church council are there simply to laugh at. There is no possible way they are not casted to be funny and made fun of. Owen, one of the members likes to have sex with his farm animals.

There's also Jim, who can't say yes or no properly and Alice who is one of the most idiotic people to walk the planet. Alice Tinker who is the verger in the Vicar of Dibley was created just to be made fun of. No sane person has teletubbies as their bridesmaids, and she is simply included to be the butt of jokes. Alice is often the butt of jokes because she never understands the jokes Geraldine tells her, and is seen as thick. Also, if a religious character does something wrong then their actions are broadcast all over the news channels.

For example a gay vicar in Cambridge who ran off with another man was plastered all over every news channel. However if a non-religious, "ordinary" person was to run off with another man then most people wouldn't really care. Television also shows religious people as either having nothing to do with, or opposing modern issues such as homosexuality, euthanasia, abortions and pre-marital sex. The Pope is never shown doing something good for people, only opposing issues such as homosexuality. If he does

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something such as visit terminally ill children, the news doesn't show it.

However if the Pope is speaking out against civil partnerships or abortions then it's reported on almost every TV news station.

In Eastenders, when Dot is unsure of what to do when her friend Ethel asks her to help her to die, Dot turns to the priest. The priest is shown only having one opinion, and tells Dot that euthanasia is murder and isn't right under any circumstances. In a series called Invasion, when people need safety the priest of a church is shown to only allow Christians into the safety of the church. Also, in an episode of The Simpsons which is mocking Harry Potter, the pupils all get punished for practising witchcraft because it's going against the church. This shows religious people to be out of touch with the modern world because they're not accepting the choice to perform witchcraft.

The timing of the programmes also helps to add to the religious characters being shown as out of touch with the modern world. Religious programmes are never shown at prime times and they are only ever on when the majority of people aren't watching. For example the early hours of the morning when most people are either asleep or too tired to pay attention, or around lunchtime when the majority of people are out at work or school. Religious programmes don't have modern presenters, the presenters tend to be all middle aged and the young audience isn't targeted. Also, whenever religious people are on TV, they tend to only ever be shown in their religious place of worship.

For example in Eastenders the priest is only ever in the church. If there was to be an interview with a Rabbi, it would be conducted either inside or in front of the synagogue, and they would be wearing their Rabbi clothing. They would most certainly not be shown in jeans and trainers outside their local supermarket. They are never shown in places where most 'normal' people go, which helps to set them aside from the public as being religious and therefore being different and separate from the modern world. However although television often portrays religious people as being out of touch with the modern world, this isn't always the case. Not all of the characters are stereotypes.

For example Geraldine Granger in the Vicar of Dibley is unlike most vicars. Firstly, she's a woman. Although more women are becoming vicars, the job still tends to be male dominated. She also likes to get drunk and have pre-marital sex. Dot Cotton is another example of a non-stereotypical Christian. Although she recites passages of the bible, she also gossips, smokes and helped Ethel die which went against her beliefs.

Another example is Father Ted. He's often drunk whilst doing his sermons, and goes against teachings of the church. Some television programmes also sometimes depict religious people in touch with modern issues. In the Vicar of Dibley, Geraldine tries to get Kylie Minogue to sing at the opening of the church fair. Although religious people are often at the centre of jokes, in programmes such as the Vicar of Dibley the audience are laughing with Geraldine, not at her. The character of Geraldine Granger is based on a real London vicar who was a Hell's Angel and wore biker clothes to church.

Religious people such as John Sentamu are never the butt of any jokes, and are taken extremely seriously. John Sentamu is the Archbishop of York and the first person of a racial minority to ever become an Archbishop. Nelson Mandela is another character who is never the centre of any jokes on television. And although the majority of religious programmes are shown in “the graveyard slot,” some of them are shown at viewable times. For example, Songs of Praise is shown at 6pm on a Sunday. Also, in the run up to Christmas, the majority of religious programmes were not shown at 2am, and were in fact often shown just before, during and just after prime times.

In conclusion the television often portrays religious people as being out of touch with the modern world. Often, news programmes show religious figures such as priests doing things which would be acceptable if it was any one else, but not acceptable for religious figures. For example the news doesn't report every single homosexual relationship, but if a priest fell in love with another man then it would be all over the news. Religious people are often the butts of jokes and are also often stereotyped. However in my opinion they are not always portrayed as out of touch with the modern world. Mother Theresa, who helped people who would have otherwise died was extremely religious and definitely not the butt of any jokes.

Also, although the majority of religious programmes are on at unsociable hours, there are some religious programmes like Songs of Praise which are shown during periods when people will be watching TV.