



IAN RICHARDSON IN 'HOUSE OF CARDS' (1990)

The following is abridged from a longer article, 'Funny Peculiar' by Hilary Kingsley, from *Radio Times* 17–23 November 1990.

In *Mother Love* and *A Very Peculiar Practice*, writer Andrew Davies explored the darkly humorous side of life. Now, in *House Of Cards*, he treads a similar path through the minefield of British politics.

Davies has adapted the novel by former Tory public relations man Michael Dobbs about the Machiavellian power struggles in a right-wing government with a slim majority. Dobbs traces several points of view, but the reptilian Frances Urquhart, played by Ian Richardson, appealed to Davies's sardonic sense of humour.

'I was influenced by Laurence Olivier's Richard III – all those wicked beckonings and asides to camera. I expect we'll be accused of left-wing bias again but this isn't about the nitty-gritty of politics. It's about the people in politics. Having just worked on this awful mother in *Mother Love*, it struck me that if you took the issues out of politics, it was all about awful fathers. It's almost like child abuse – these men telling us: "Don't worry, leave it to me, I'm the strong chap." And then they use you, violate you.

Urquhart is so persuasive and charming that you do get this feeling you would like to surrender your autonomy to him.'

Davies enjoys adapting other's works. 'I find plots terribly difficult to think up and I'm so grateful if someone else has already done that. I can then add quite a lot of my own humour and explore my preoccupations.' Happily, he has never been at a loss for either of those since he began writing radio plays, then children's stories, then adapting such solid television successes as *To Serve Them All My Days* and *Diana*, starring Jenny Seagrove and a young Patsy Kensit. And all this while lecturing full-time.

But as his fiftieth birthday approached, four years ago, Cardiff-born Davies decided to give up the 'day job'. There was so much writing to be done – a novel, *Getting Hurt*; a collection of short stories, *Dirty Faxes*; a film script (now dropped); and a children's book, *Poonam's Pets*, written with teacher wife Diana, which is shortlisted for the prestigious Smarties Prize.

At the moment he is in Poland, where native-born Joanna Kanska is acting as interpreter and guide as he fleshes out an idea for a special Polish *Peculiar Practice*, due for the screen late next year. She is delighted to serve. When, after the first *Practice*, no job offers came in, Davies wrote specially for her. For her role he had stipulated top name shoes, designer frocks, the lot. No wonder women like Andrew Davies.

WITH THANKS TO RADIO TIMES



ANDREW DAVIES

Andrew Davies is one of the most critically acclaimed and commercially successful screen writers in the UK today, famous for his adaptations of classical period dramas. Davies was born in Rhiwbina, Cardiff on 20 September 1936. The son of two schoolteachers, Davies himself taught at schools and universities after graduating with a degree in English Literature. He combined his love of literature, teaching and writing until he gave up teaching to pursue his writing career full time in 1987.

In 1990 he won an Emmy award for outstanding writing for BBC drama series *House Of Cards* and in 1994 he adapted George Eliot's *Middlemarch* for the BBC, receiving a BAFTA nomination for Drama Serial and winning the 1994 Writers' Guild of Great Britain award for best dramatised TV serial.

Davies will always be remembered for his adaptation of Jane Austen's *Pride And Prejudice* for the BBC (1995) starring Colin Firth and Jennifer Ehle. The series was a huge success; he was nominated for BAFTA and Emmy awards for the drama and won the 1996 Writers' Guild of Great Britain award for best dramatised TV serial for the second time in three years.

He wrote the screenplay for *The Fortunes And Misfortunes Of Moll Flanders* (1996), adapting Daniel Defoe's risqué novel and in 1998 adapted William Makepeace Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* for the BBC.

Davies adapted Kingsley Amis' novel *Take A Girl Like You* in 2000 for TV and in 2001, showing his diversity, co-wrote the screenplay for film *Bridget Jones's Diary* from the novel by Helen Fielding. He would also co-write the screenplay for the sequel, *Bridget Jones: The Edge Of Reason* (2004).

In 2001 he was part of the BAFTA-winning team for the production of Anthony Trollope's *The Way We Live Now* starring David Suchet, and would write the screenplay for another of Trollope's works for the BBC, *He Knew He Was Right*, in 2004.

Achievements in 2002 included adaptations of Sarah Waters' *Tipping The Velvet*, Boris Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago* and George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda* which starred Hugh Dancy, Romola Garai and Hugh Bonneville.

Davies also wrote the screenplay for the BBC's epic production of Dickens' *Bleak House* (2005). The drama gained Davies a BAFTA nomination for Writer and an Emmy nomination for outstanding writing for a miniseries, movie or a dramatic special. He won the Royal Television Society's award for best writer (drama) and was part of the BAFTA-winning team that scooped the Drama Serial award.

In 2007 he was responsible for bringing *Northanger Abbey*, *Fanny Hill* and *A Room With A View* to the small screen and in 2008 Davies wrote the screenplays for two further BBC period dramas: an adaptation of Jane Austen's *Sense And Sensibility* and Dickens' *Little Dorrit* starring Matthew Macfadyen and Claire Foy, with a brief appearance from Eve Myles.

BBC WALES ARTS

TANYA SEGATCHIAN

Tanya Seghatchian is an award-winning British film producer. She was the first to spot the cinematic potential of the *Harry Potter* books, and developed and produced the first four films in the Potter Franchise for Warner Bros, with David Heyman, JK Rowling, Steve Kloves, Chris Columbus, Alfonso Cuarón and Mike Newell. She won a BAFTA for producing Pawel Pawlikowski's critically acclaimed independent film, *My Summer of Love*.

She was Head of the Development and Film Funds at the UK Film Council and then the British Film Institute, where she built the Film Fund and oversaw the development and/or production investments of British public money in scores of award-winning British companies and films including Jane Campion's *Bright Star*, Tom Hooper's *The King's Speech*, Richard Ayoade's *Submarine*, Andrea Arnold's *Wuthering Heights*, Lynne Ramsay's *We Need To Talk About Kevin*, Phyllida Lloyd's *The Iron Lady*, Steve McQueen's *Shame*, James Watkins' *The Woman In Black*, Ben Wheatley's *Sightseers*, and the upcoming release of Jon Glazer's *Under The Skin*.



MIDDLEMARCH (1994)



BRIDGET JONES'S DIARY (2001)



FILMOGRAPHY: TELEVISION

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|------|---|------|---|------|------------------------------|
| 1967 | <i>The Wednesday Play: Who's Going To Take Me On?</i> | 1992 | <i>Screen One: A Very Polish Practice</i> | 2007 | <i>A Room With A View</i> |
| 1970 | <i>Little Big Time</i> | 1993 | <i>Anna Lee: Headcase</i> | 2008 | <i>Sense And Sensibility</i> |
| 1973 | <i>Full House: Can Anyone Smell Gas??</i> | 1993 | <i>Harnessing Peacocks</i> | 2008 | <i>Little Dorrit</i> |
| 1974 | <i>Bedtime Stories: The Water Maiden</i> | 1993 | <i>The Boot Street Band (Series 1)</i> | 2008 | <i>Affinity</i> |
| 1975 | <i>2nd House: Saul Bellow 2nd House 2nd Round</i> | 1993 | <i>To Play The King</i> | 2009 | <i>Sleep With Me</i> |
| 1975 | <i>Centre Play For Christmas: The Imp Of The Perverse</i> | 1994 | <i>Middlemarch</i> | 2011 | <i>South Riding</i> |
| 1976 | <i>Playhouse: A Martyr To The System</i> | 1994 | <i>Stages: A Few Short Journeys Of The Heart</i> | 2013 | <i>House Of Cards</i> |
| 1976 | <i>A Ghost Story For Christmas: The Signalman</i> | 1994 | <i>The Boot Street Band (Series 2)</i> | 2013 | <i>Quirke</i> |
| 1977 | <i>Eleanor Marx: Tussy</i> | 1995 | <i>Game On (Series 1)</i> | 2013 | <i>Mr Selfridge</i> |
| 1978 | <i>Play Of The Week: Fearless Frank</i> | 1995 | <i>Pride And Prejudice</i> | 2014 | <i>A Poet In New York</i> |
| 1978 | <i>Play Of The Week: Renoir My Father</i> | 1995 | <i>The Final Cut</i> | | |
| 1979 | <i>The Legend Of King Arthur</i> | 1996 | <i>Game On (Series 2)</i> | | |
| 1981 | <i>To Serve Them All My Days</i> | 1996 | <i>Wilderness</i> | | |
| 1981 | <i>Play For Today: Bavarian Night</i> | 1996 | <i>Moll Flanders</i> | | |
| 1981 | <i>Theatre Box: Marmalade Atkins In Space</i> | 1996 | <i>Jane Austen's Emma</i> | | |
| 1983 | <i>Educating Marmalade</i> | 1998 | <i>Getting Hurt</i> | | |
| 1984 | <i>Danger – Marmalade At Work</i> | 1998 | <i>Vanity Fair</i> | | |
| 1984 | <i>Look And Read: Badger Girl</i> | 1998 | <i>A Rather English Marriage</i> | | |
| 1985 | <i>Screen Two: Inappropriate Behaviour</i> | 1999 | <i>Wives And Daughters</i> | | |
| 1985 | <i>Scene: Baby I Love You</i> | 2000 | <i>The Party: Boris Bitty's Brand New Parents</i> | | |
| 1985 | <i>Summer Season: Pythons On A Mountain</i> | 2000 | <i>Take A Girl Like You</i> | | |
| 1986 | <i>Screen Two: Time After Time</i> | 2001 | <i>The Way We Live Now</i> | | |
| 1988 | <i>A Very Peculiar Practice (Series 1)</i> | 2001 | <i>Othello</i> | | |
| 1988 | <i>A Very Peculiar Practice (Series 2)</i> | 2002 | <i>Tipping The Velvet</i> | | |
| 1988 | <i>Screen Two: Lucky Sunil</i> | 2002 | <i>Daniel Deronda</i> | | |
| 1989 | <i>Mother Love</i> | 2002 | <i>Doctor Zhivago</i> | | |
| 1989 | <i>Screen One: Ball-Trap On The Cote Sauvage</i> | 2003 | <i>The Other Boleyn Girl</i> | | |
| 1990 | <i>Alfonso Bonzo</i> | 2003 | <i>Boudica</i> | | |
| 1990 | <i>House Of Cards</i> | 2004 | <i>The Alan Clark Diaries</i> | | |
| 1991 | <i>Screen Two: A Private Life</i> | 2004 | <i>He Knew He Was Right</i> | | |
| 1991 | <i>Screen One: Filipina Dreamgirls</i> | 2005 | <i>Falling</i> | | |
| 1992 | <i>The Old Devils</i> | 2005 | <i>Brief Encounters: Ted</i> | | |
| 1992 | <i>Anglo-Saxons Attitudes</i> | 2005 | <i>Bleak House</i> | | |
| | | 2006 | <i>The Line Of Beauty</i> | | |
| | | 2007 | <i>Northanger Abbey</i> | | |
| | | 2007 | <i>The Diary Of A Nobody</i> | | |
| | | 2007 | <i>Fanny Hill: Memoirs Of A Woman Of Pleasure</i> | | |

FILMOGRAPHY: FILM

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| 1988 | <i>Consuming Passions</i> |
| 1995 | <i>Pride And Prejudice</i> |
| 1995 | <i>Circle Of Friends</i> |
| 1998 | <i>B. Monkey</i> |
| 2001 | <i>Bridget Jones's Diary</i> |
| 2001 | <i>The Tailor Of Panama</i> |
| 2004 | <i>Bridget Jones: The Edge Of Reason</i> |
| 2008 | <i>Brideshead Revisited</i> |
| 2011 | <i>The Three Musketeers</i> |

BAFTA HERITAGE SCREENINGS

BAFTA Heritage Screenings are a series of quarterly film screenings and on-stage interviews which celebrate British film and TV classics and the great film and TV professionals who made them.

