

DECODING TELEVISION NEWS

by

JUSTIN WREN LEWIS

Centre for Criminological and Socio-Legal Studies

University of Sheffield

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Justin Wren Lewis

The thesis attempts to develop the field of audience research, by adapting recently developed theoretical approaches to an empirical study of the television audience.

The thesis begins by examining two general theoretical areas that provide a framework for the research - semiology and theories of ideology. The work of Louis Althusser is analysed in a movement towards a semiological theory of ideology.

The thesis then examines work on the media that has developed out of this broad tradition - notably cultural studies, textual analysis, discourse analysis and the semiotics of film and T.V. Detailed attention is paid to the theory of encoding and decoding, and, in particular, the work of David Morley. The objective of this examination is to set up the encoding/decoding model within a semiological framework for use in practical research on the T.V. audience.

The audience research itself is based upon an exhaustive analysis of fifty in-depth interviews with viewers following a screening of a pre-recorded News at Ten. The aim of the research was not to investigate the views of the fifty decoders, but to establish how and why readings of television programmes are constructed - the process of decoding.

The research is presented in three stages. The readings of one item (about British Leyland) are scrutinised in order to establish an appropriate set of variables for understanding the decoding process. These variables are then used to systematically analyse the readings of another single item (about troubles in the West Bank). The points raised during this analysis are then developed in relation to readings of the whole programme.

The research reveals a number of problems in the form and character of television news. The thesis therefore ends with a set of recommendations for overcoming these problems.

INTRODUCTION

Television today represents one of the most important sources of information available to our society. Hours upon hours of words and images flood from the T.V. screen into most peoples homes every day. It has become part of our environment, as varied or repetitive as the jobs we do when we are not watching it. It teaches us, tells us stories, makes us laugh, makes us angry - it guides us into a whole series of different worlds and asks us to position ourselves in relation to them.

There is no shortage of research attempting to understand the nature and significance of this extraordinary cultural phenomenon. In spite of this, television has become powerful and influential far more quickly than our ability to comprehend and analyse that power and influence. Social scientists have, since the popular use of the T.V. set, been preoccupied with particular questions about it, as well as fixed within particular frameworks for answering those questions.

The first identifiable set of questions about television failed to produce any decisive results. These questions came from within a body of research that has become known, for obvious reasons, as the 'effects' approach. This approach attempted to address a fundamental and very general question: what effect does television have on people? The scope for investigation opened up by such a question is clearly enormous, so it was not surprising that researchers limited themselves to specific kinds of 'effect', and used a specific set of investigative tools. The most popular fields of inquiry were the effects of (political) television on political attitudes, and the question of whether violence on the screen precipitated violent behaviour. The failure of most of those studies to unambiguously demonstrate such effects led social scientists to become disenchanted with the questions being asked, and

to search for new questions within new frameworks. Thus began:

"the functional approach to the media, or the 'uses and gratifications' approach. It is the program that asks the question not 'what do the media do to people?' but, 'what do people do with the media'" (Katz, 1959, p2).

This change in direction shifted power away from the television screen towards the viewer, who used television to gratify certain needs.

The 'uses and gratifications' approach was extremely influential, both in Britain and the United States, from the 1950's to the 1970's, yet it was, in many ways, as limited as the methodology it replaced. Above all, it allowed the fundamental question posed by 'effects' research to remain unanswered. The fact that 'effects' studies failed to yield positive results had a lot more to do with the way they were conceived than with television's lack of power and influence. Carl Hovland, writing in the same year that Katz and others were heralding the dawn of the new age of uses and gratifications (as Joseph Klapper wrote four years later in 1963 - "Viva los uses and gratifications studies, and may their tribe increase") pointed out that 'effects' research was frequently not capable of answering the questions it posed, because of the investigative methods used. Reviewing the media research of the period, he demonstrated that the conflicting results they produced could be traced back to the way the research was done. Briefly, those surveys which were able to measure a controlled exposure to media (i.e. before and after exposure) yielded more positive results than those sample surveys that simply attempted to draw correlations between exposure to media and attitude (Hovland, 1959) where 'before and after' controls are difficult or impossible. Typical of the latter was Trenaman and McQuail's work on the 1959 British general election, which concluded that:

"within the frame of reference set up by our experiment, political change was neither related to the degree of exposure nor to any particular programme or argument put forward by the parties" (Blumler and McQuail, 1970, p.457).

Any attempt to relate fairly short periods of media exposure with simple changes in attitude or behaviour is unlikely to be successful, partly because ways of thinking may be influenced in ways that do not easily correspond to, say, particular political orientations, and partly because it will completely neglect the long term influence various media have in shaping our perceptions of the world. As Gillian Dyer points out, when writing about the influence of advertising:

"It is more than likely that an advertisement's effect are diffuse and long term, and there is some evidence that advertising plays a part in defining 'reality' in a general or anthropological sense...For instance, the sex-role stereotyping common to many advertisements - the 'little woman' as household functionary thrilling to her newly polished table or whiter-than-white sheets, or the masterful, adventurous male - act, many social scientists argue, as agents of socialization and lead many people, young and old, to believe in traditional and discriminating sex roles" (Dyer, 1982, pp.77-78).

Similarly, Hartmann and Husband's work on the media and attitudes to various racial groups strongly suggests that, in areas where people do not have experience of those racial groups, the media play a crucial role in gradually building up a collection of images, attitudes and stereotypes about them (Hartmann and Husband, 1973).

Once the complexity of the significance of television in our lives has been acknowledged, a number of problems emerge: most obviously, how do we, within the limitations imposed by the time and resources available to research budgets, set about such research? There is no clear or exhaustive answer to this. It is perhaps not surprising then, that research over the last decade has shifted away from study of the audience towards study of the message itself, from the work of Screen and Screen Education to the Glasgow Media Group.

In many ways, this shift towards the T.V. programme or programmes has been important and useful. Sophisticated forms of analysis from semiotics, cultural studies, textual analysis and ideology theory have

been applied and developed in relation to television, as the most important site of cultural production in Britain today. These developments have significantly increased our understanding of various forms of television and how they work.

We have now, I think, reached a point where textual analysis can go little further. The absence of anything other than a hypothetical T.V. viewer imposes an increasing strain upon the analysis of meaning in the television message. Debates about the production of meaning, whether they revolve around the notion of political/cultural bias or the precise construction of that meaning, are inevitably limited because they require more detailed knowledge of how the T.V. viewer reads and understands what appears on the screen. The discipline of semiology, moreover, has provided a more sophisticated set of tools for undertaking audience research than ever before. This leaves us with a gap in our knowledge, described by John Hartley thus:

"The growing areas of semiotics and communication studies developed largely out of textual analysis of various kinds... and as a result, there is currently a gap in research into social discourses like the news. Most of what happens when the text is 'realised' as a 'live' discourse, when it is read by the consumer is a mystery. As Patrick Moore says about other mysteries of the cosmos, 'we just don't know'" (Hartley, 1982, p.138).

It is this gap that we need to fill if we are to begin to really understand the possible effects of television. It is into this gap that this body of research falls, as an attempt to begin to solve the 'mystery' of 'what happens when the text is ... read by the consumer', to investigate the process of decoding.

Moving into this relatively uncharted area of research presented me with a number of problems. These concern the plurality of the theoretical traditions I am working from: semiology, theories of ideology, cultural studies, discourse and textual analysis. The theoretical diversity and richness of work in this area has meant that the field is, in many ways, already overtheorised. Theories from a variety of origins overlap to

produce a framework cluttered with concepts and terms that may or may not fit neatly together. This leads to research that is as confusing as it is fruitful.

The first three chapters, then, are an attempt to clear a coherent path through these theoretical areas. This necessarily involves going back to the philosophical, theoretical and sociological roots of work that might provide a framework for research into practices of decoding television, before moving forward into work more immediately relevant to that framework.

The two concepts that are central to a study of television are ideology and signifying practice. The concept of ideology has been most rigorously developed in Marxist theory, particularly in the work of Louis Althusser. Althusser attempted to theorise the relation between ideology and society as a whole, as well as analysing how it worked and where it came from. This enables us to conceive of television as an ideological apparatus, which, with other ideological apparatuses (like the school) shapes the way we view the world. The first chapter therefore explores Althusser's work, and offers a critique that attempts to establish the structural and epistemological status of the concept of ideology, via its theoretical geneology.

The second chapter develops this critique, analysing the relation/compatibility of the notions of ideology and signifying practice. It is in this chapter that I attempt to iron out some of the problems with semiotic theory today, and lay down the semiological foundations of the research. This allows me to move into a semiotic analysis of television and its audience (in Chapter Three), based upon a critique of the encoding/decoding model of televisual communication. Chapter Three pays particular attention to the recent work of David Morley, whose work signals the beginning of empirical work on the decoding process.

The fruits of this labour are, I hope, realised in the next five chapters, which present my analysis of the decoding process. This

research is more thoroughly introduced in chapter Four - suffice to say here that it deals with fifty detailed readings of a News at Ten broadcast in 1982. My decision to use the news, rather than, say Coronation Street, was made on the grounds that the news provides one of the most important definitions of the world beyond the T.V. screen in our society. This is not to say that Coronation Street does not also offer such definitions, but that the news is more important to the political education of our people, and, ultimately, more important to the running of British democracy.

I should add, finally, that the value of this research is not so much in providing hard and fast answers to the mysteries of decoding, but in setting up a framework for understanding the decoding process and the effects it might have. The last chapter, looking more closely at the news itself and how - on the basis of the research - it could be improved, is clearly suggestive rather than conclusive.

1 RETHINKING IDEOLOGY

i. The economic mode of production: its conceptual proliferation

Marxism today constitutes a vast theoretical arena: it has become nothing less than a model of the complex but complete 'whole' of society as a social formation. Although this 'whole' was a concept always designated and referred to, Marxism's theoretical beginnings offered a much more specific, much more humble object for analysis. Analysis of a 'designated object' started life as a theory of an economic formation (capitalism), grew to be a theory of economic formations in general (feudalism as a mode of production to capitalism as a mode of production to ...), expanded further towards a theory of economic formations with certain non-economic conditions of existence and effects in the social formation, until finally, albeit after no little toil, it became a theory of society itself. This geneology is not without significance: indeed I shall argue that it is precisely in the conceptual formulations of this geneology that many of Marxism's problems and inconsistencies lie. Further, any theory whose designated object (of analysis) grows via a proliferation of concepts is subject to the pitfalls of rationalist incoherency. I shall briefly trace this development as it exists in the work of Louis Althusser, most particularly as it relates to a theory of ideology and "ideological state apparatuses".

The (capitalist) economic system is conceived as a combination of forces of production and relations of production: the former being the combination of raw materials, means of production, and labour power functioning for the purposes of production, the latter referring to the functions fulfilled by the individuals and groups concerned; specifically their control of/separation from the means of production. Under capitalism, the relations of production are relations of exploitation, those separated from the means of production 'selling' their labour, so that those owning the means may appropriate the surplus value that labour power provides.

I shall go no further than this. The point I want to make is that there is an essential concept here which can be formally defined as "the structure of a production" (Althusser, 1970, p.58) or practice which refers to "any process of transformation of a determinate given raw material into a determinate product, a transformation effected by a determinate human labour, using determinate means (of 'production')". (Althusser, 1969, p.166).

This concept is thus deemed to have a level of generality allowing it to think (and analyse) the history of other economic formations, a generality sanctioning its diachronic development (from one historical period to another). The validity of this development will be questioned by examining its epistemological foundations (to which I shall proceed in Chapter Two), and also by looking at its synchronic development (within an historical period).

First: what are the 'problems' that make this (synchronic) development necessary? There are two:

- a) the involvement in (economic) relations of production of labour/human individuals, whose constitution cannot wholly be explained by the positions allocated them, i.e. men and women are not 'formed' by an economic system; hence there are other agencies which must account for their formation into specific positions;
- b) the economic mode of production names the social formation (e.g. capitalist) ¹ and therefore posits (for itself) a privileged position in relation to other practices within a social formation.

I shall discuss these problems and their implications shortly. What is fundamental to them both is the relation between the economic and the extra-economic within a concept of the social formation. The metonymic (i.e. a part of thing that stands for the whole of a thing) relation of the economic to the 'whole' (the social formation) is a privilege quite simply gained by its status as the (all important) initial object for analysis.

So, if we begin with the economic, we must move to the extra-economic. The status of these two concepts is mirrored in the names given them: infrastructure (base, 'essential' structure) and superstructure ('extra' to the infrastructure). This stage (this 'moving on') is crucial to the development of Marxism as we know it.

Althusser recognised the dangers implicit to the infrastructure/superstructure model, and in order to avoid certain implications, saw the need to go "beyond" it. (Althusser, 1971, p.130). In Language and Materialism, Coward and Ellis refer to these dangers as having direct political significance: in Russia "the revolution in ideology is seen to have taken place more or less as a result of the revolution in production relations"² (Coward and Ellis, 1977, p.70). This, they claim, is "a recipe for disaster, a recipe for the return of the structures that have been overthrown" (Ibid., p.72). Chinese communism, on the other hand, recognises that a revolution in economic practice cannot be sustained unless accompanied by a revolution in ideology, a cultural revolution, whereby the 'levels' of the social formation may correspond (in harmony). For Althusser, and Coward and Ellis after him, the assumption behind the Russian conception grants too much power to the economic; the superstructure being reducible to a form which can be entirely explained in terms of the economic level. This reduction is such that it supposes the reality of the social formation is the economic relations of production, which determines its own political forms and explains ideology as a misrecognition of this reality. Althusser and many others have provided thorough criticisms of this development, and I shall not reiterate them here. Suffice to say that Althusser saw the realm of the extra-economic as more than a simple manifestation of the economic, consisting of forms that are separate from economic practices. (For thorough-going economism, it follows that the first problem sited above - of the need for non-economic agencies to produce labour power appropriate to the economic system - disappears: the agencies providing the human

component of the relations of production are explained as reflections/manifestations of the economic mode of production, fully determined by it.)

The problems for Althusser can be posed thus: how, within a Marxist framework are the forms other than the economic to be conceived? Further, what is the relation between these forms and the "structure of a production" that is economic practice? The conceptual apparatus designed to deal with these problems is ingenious indeed.

The social formation, which is a combination of economic and superstructural practices, cannot be explained in terms of any one practice, these practices being necessarily independent of one another as 'parts' of a 'whole'. It can be explained, argued Althusser, by use of the conceptual determination of the concept 'economic practice', in that it is the structure of this concept that determines the form of its proliferation. Althusser does not step outside a Marxist framework, he sidesteps within it to:

"assert the primacy of practice theoretically by showing that all levels of social existence are the sites of distinct practices ... We think the content of these different practices by thinking their peculiar structure, which in all these cases, is the structure of a production; by thinking what distinguishes between these different structures, i.e. the different natures of the objects to which they apply, of their means of production and of the relations within which they produce." (Althusser, 1970, p.58, my emphasis after "primacy of practice").

So, the social formation is a series of separate, distinct (and distinguishable) structures governed by the concept of the structure, with its three Generalities (raw material, means, product). The form is constant, the terms ("natures of the objects") variable, the concept of social formation complete. As Glucksmann writes: "The concept of production ... regulates the primordial divisions of the Althusserian universe ... Everything is production, and as productions, the productions have the same status ..." (Glucksmann, 1977, pp.282-3).

The relation of these practices, or 'levels' is postulated as a 'relative autonomy', whereby each level is both separate and determining/determined.

The theory then moves to a new plane: its designated object has expanded and must be theorised by:

- a) the development of the object's divisions;
- b) the relation between these divisions.

ii. Conflation of concepts: social formations, relative autonomy

In the problems mentioned earlier allowing for the development of a concept of economic practice to encompass a theory of the whole social formation, two assumptions exist which must be clarified. These are:

- a) that the economic level, while it might not be dominant within a social formation (political practice, for example, is considered to be the dominant mode within the feudal social formation) is where analysis must begin, if only to explain certain relations of production (such as labour power) as effects of other practices. So, other practices are initially conceived as agencies with manifestations that operate within the economic.
- b) that the concept of social formation is equivalent to the concept 'society as a whole', and that an articulation of the determinants and effects of its levels gives us a complete "mechanism producing the 'society effect' ... which is effectively a real existing society" (Althusser, 1970, p.66).

Before treading any further down the Althusserian road, it is worth pointing out that these two assumptions do not lead us in the same direction. We shall see this clearly manifested when Althusser moves onto the terrain of ideology and ideological state apparatuses. For the time being it is sufficient to briefly elaborate upon the two very different objects contained in (a) and (b).

The former refers to an economic mode of production whose relations of production (separation and non-separation from the means of production) are partially manifestations of agencies outside that mode (effects of ideological apparatuses like the school, which trains human subjects to fill certain positions with the capitalist economic formation). Specific

(superstructural) forms therefore provide the conditions of existence of these relations, while these forms are not necessarily reducible to those manifestations, i.e. that is not their only function. In short, while the object designated (the economic mode of production) implies specific superstructural forms, these forms are not equivalent to the nature/function of the superstructure as a whole. An ideological apparatus like television, for example, may theoretically assist the process whereby people are able and willing to take up positions within capitalist relations of production. This will nonetheless be just one of a whole number of its ideological effects. Hindess and Hirst, recognising the necessary limits of this concept designated here, give it the name 'social formation', defining it "as an object of discourse in which the conditions of existence of determinate relations of production are secured" (Hindess and Hirst, 1977, p.26). I shall refer to this concept as social formation I.

The latter, on the other hand (i.e. social formation = society as a whole), refers to a social totality whose forms explain effects on all the levels of that totality, via the conceptual proliferation of a given structure. I shall refer to this concept as social formation II.

To neglect this distinction by a conflation of these two objects of analysis is an unstable foundation upon which to proceed. Nonetheless, if the consequences of this instability are to be fully understood, it must be made clear that this conflation is inextricably linked to the development of a Marxist theory/model of the social formation as social totality. Without it, analysis is restricted to the limits of the Hindess and Hirst model of the social formation, and the ingenious 'hierarchy of levels' development becomes an unnecessary elaboration. The problem Marxism poses - that of the ideological support given to the economic mode of production - is a problem requiring the study of specific ideological forms. If the study of ideology is to move from this specific question to a general theory (of ideology) - a move implied by the conceptual proliferation of the "structure of a

production" from economic to superstructural practices - then the specific ideological forms present in social formation I must be based on a general practice of ideology within social formation II. If this conflation is not made, there is no reason for moving towards a general theory of ideology.

Having erected this important warning sign, I shall proceed to the formulation that a society can be known as a hierarchy of levels.

If we accept the basic concepts contained within this formation; ideology, politics and the economic as the three practices of production (I shall discuss the fourth practice of the Althusserian scheme, theoretical or scientific production later), and, if we reject the economistic position in order that the formulation may develop, an old problem re-emerges. More precisely, the notion of independent levels within a social formation introduces the problem of determinacy, through its construction of the determinant/autonomous continuum. For economism, determinacy is not a problem but a fact. For Althusser, we:

"think the relations establishing and articulating these different practices one with another by thinking their degree of independence and their type of relative autonomy, which are themselves fixed by their type of dependence with respect to the practice which is 'determinant in the last instance': economic practice" (Althusser, 1970, p.58).

This is an extremely complex position. It entails two assertions:

- a) that the three practices are relatively independent of one another, and hence relatively determining;
- b) that despite this, the economic level is always the practice 'determinant in the last instance'.

We have seen a way in which the second assertion leads to the first, in terms of a duplication of a concept (of a structure) made possible by the designation of two different objects (of analysis) as the same object. Having constructed the 'three practices model' of the social formation by these means, the privileged position of the economic is retained. Now, this might seem a perfectly logical

following on, but it is actually no such thing. The fact that the economic mode is philosophically/theoretically privileged, because it provides the structure for understanding other practices, does not mean that mode needs to be sociologically privileged in the power to determine other modes (within social formation II). What Althusser achieved in the construction of the concept of the social formation as three distinct practices was a notion of how society works, within a Marxist framework (i.e. by rigorous use of a concept formulated by Marx), which avoided the reductions necessitated by economism. To then reintroduce what had been avoided into this new conception of the social formation, albeit by pushing it into the background ('in the last instance') is understandable but by no means inevitable. It adds a new dimension to the 'relative autonomy' problematic: relative autonomy not only defines the relations of the practices to one another, it also refers to the quasi-determinacy of the economic.

This can be explained in terms of the Coward and Ellis illustration of the relative autonomy model cited earlier. In their example comparing Chinese and Russian communism, the notion of 'determination of the economic in the last instance' is absent. What they attempt to demonstrate is that the ideological and the economic determine one another, so that certain economic forms necessitate certain ideological forms and vice versa (in fact, their example implies the primacy of the ideological, as I shall explain later). Hence revolution involves all practices in harmony with one another, economic practice is in no way privileged, being as much a function of the ideological as functioning.

To what, then, does the 'last instance' determinacy of the economic refer? Althusser, first of all, diminishes the concept of determinacy by means of a causality/power split, or more specifically by distinguishing between determinacy and dominance. So, while the political may be the dominant practice in a social formation (as in the feudal mode), its

position as the dominant mode is determined by the economic. In this instance, this gives the complex relation: the political is dominant and determining, the ideological is subordinate and determining, the economic is subordinate and doubly determining. If this appears rather difficult to conceive, it is a function of the confluence of two kinds of relative autonomy insofar as:

- a) all levels are relatively determining inasmuch as they are relatively autonomous, while one level will be dominant within a given social formation;
- b) the economic level, having already been defined within the above conception of relative autonomy, is said to determine the relations of dominance of those levels (between them) and hence be 'determinant in the last instance'.

This is, in fact, the most coherent explication of the dual relation autonomy problematic in Althusser, i.e. there are other, less coherent explications which crop up as necessary results of the conflation of the two concepts of social formation. To these I shall shortly proceed. Before doing so, it is important to make two things clear.

Firstly, that there is nothing inherently problematic in the concept of relative autonomy. An industry, for example, may be relatively autonomous if it provides an important market for its own production (e.g. the iron industry in the 19th century), therefore providing (in one sense) some of its own conditions of existence. What is being evaluated is a relation of an object ('the iron industry') to itself and its dependence upon other objects (other markets, labour, coal as a raw material for smelting, capital, etc.).

Secondly, as a tool for analysing/describing the two concepts of social formation defined earlier, the relation 'relative autonomy' has two meanings respective to those two types. In the Hindess and Hirst version, the economic mode of production can be said to be relatively

autonomous in the way I have just described, i.e. the economic level, while constituting many of the forms for the reproduction of its own conditions of existence, does not have complete autonomy because it requires the ideological. In the social formation as a hierarchy of levels, relative autonomy is no longer a specific reference to one realm (the economic), but a general concept referring to all realms; defining all those realms relationships (to each other), each mutually distinct but relatively determined. So, in the first instance, relative autonomy works, quite coherently, in terms of one specific mode (and the relevant agencies outside that mode), in the second it works in terms of a general three-way relationship.

The notion of general three-way relative autonomy is, to say the least, difficult to grasp, with or without the economic mode lurking in the background. The essay Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses is an attempt to elucidate this notion; in the first part of the essay, ideological and political apparatus are examined as determined but distinct ('autonomous') practices, in relation to the economic means of production; in the second half the focus is upon the mechanism involved in the practice of ideology in its own right.

iii. The I.S.A.s and their conditions of existence as concepts

The work done in 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses' (Althusser, 1971) can be seen as a necessary development of the conflation of concepts described earlier. It would be appropriate if we could attribute the concept of the Ideological State Apparatuses (hereafter I.S.A.s) developed in the first half of the essay to the limited conception of social formation I (as an economic mode of production requiring outside agencies to secure it), and the second half of the essay to the conception of ideology as a relatively autonomous level within a social formation II. Such an approach would be, as we shall see, only superficially correct.

The concept of the I.S.A.s is developed, in the first instance, in order to theorise an answer to the questions posed in social formation I, namely: "How is the reproduction of the (diversified) skills of labour power provided for in a capitalist regime? ... the reproduction of the skills of labour power ... is achieved more and more outside production by the capitalist education system, and by other instances in institutions." (Ibid, p.127). Now, what is actually being stated here (and is subsequently articulated) is the problem of social formation I, posed in terms of social formation II. To recapitulate: the relative autonomy of the economic mode of production is 'relative' in the sense that it relies upon outside agencies to secure the labour required to fulfil the positions necessary for the maintenance of the relations of production. These relations take place between the possessors of the means of production and those separated from the possession of those means, not between the "skills of labour power ... achieved ... by the capitalist education system". As Paul Hirst has argued (Hirst, 1979), the divisions created between the skills of labour power; managerial/non-managerial, skilled/unskilled, manual/non-manual, etc., are not equivalent to the divisions between possessor and non-possessor in the capitalist mode of production, indeed, these "divisions of the labour force which are influenced by the education system exist in socialist countries also, for example the U.S.S.R." (Ibid, p.49: Hirst goes on to add that this lack of equivalence does not mean that divisions influenced by the education system are of no consequence to the divisions of the relations of production, but this is a different point). So, what Althusser has done is to equate the specific divisions of social formation I with the more general set of divisions that exist in social formation II.

Consequently, the problem of explaining the reproduction of the relations of production (i.e. one of their conditions of existence) shifts away from the formulation (social formation I) which posed the problem in the first place. What the theory of I.S.A.s explains, or

attempts to explain, is not an economic system with ideological supports but an ideological/political system; the ideology of the ruling class or 'capitalist' ideology, i.e. "it is ultimately the ruling ideology which is realized in the Ideological State Apparatuses". (Althusser, 1971, p.139).

This shift has certain ramifications - it effects, for example, a mutation of the concept 'class'. Althusser clearly recognises the considerable limitations involved in the notion of class as deducible from social formation I. It is obvious that the division between a class enjoying ownership and a class separated from ownership is an insufficient means for conceptualising the more complex divisions; mental/manual, male/female, skilled/unskilled, etc. - divisions reproduced by the I.S.A.s. What is achieved by relating (in this way) very different types of division - relations of supremacy/subordination - via the fusion of social formation I and social formation II, is a Marxist theory of class relations.

The form of this fusion (of the concept; class) - relations of supremacy/subordination in social formation I = all forms of supremacy/subordination - owes its power to the metonymic relationship of (capitalist) economic practice to a social formation containing all practices. In other words, if an economic mode of production is a capitalist mode, then the social formation in which it operates is necessarily a capitalist social formation, giving us, for example, 'capitalist ideology'. Now, if 'capitalist' is to be a concept equivalent in both contexts, the notion of a capitalist ideology (or, for that matter, 'bourgeois ideology') is, at best, extremely limited. Capitalism refers to an economic system involving the appropriation and control of capital by capitalists. It is not a political/ideological system, and although we may be attributing ideological significance to the 'world view' of the capital owning class (literally, capitalist ideology) or to the specific ideologies sustaining capitalist relations of production, this is as limited a procedure (unless

we adopt an exhaustive conspiracy theory) as positioning class divisions within relations of production.

The point is that, in Althusser and many, many other (self-designated) Marxist texts, the term 'capitalist' alters its referent quite radically from social formation I to social formation II. In social formation II, the referent 'expands', like the concept of class, to refer to all forms (within any practice) of the relation hegemony/subordination in a society sustaining a capitalist mode of production (or social formation I).³ The I.S.A.s theory is a way of unifying these various forms, in terms of their function. This function, moreover, is ambiguous: "what unifies their diversity is precisely this functioning, insofar as the ideology by which they function is always in fact unified ... beneath the ideology of the ruling class." (Althusser, 1971, p.139). To retrace our steps: the terms in social formation I, capitalist, the capitalist's view of the world as a function of his/her position as a capitalist - capitalist ideology, are expanded in social formation II so that they become; those exercising hegemony in various forms, their existence as a class ('ruling class'), the ideology (ideological apparatus) sustaining the hegemony (hence 'ruling') of that class.

When Hirst points out that the functionalism of Althusser's I.S.A.s reduces ideology to entirely a function of economic, signified by the insertion of the unifier 'state', since the concept of the I.S.A.s "depends for its role and unity upon the representation of class interests formed at the economic level" (Hirst, 1974, p.70, my emphasis) he is correct in one sense, and incorrect in another. On the one hand the I.S.A.s are "dominated by a single score" (Althusser, 1971, p.146) to orchestrate the production and reproduction of social formation I. On the other, this massive functionalism refers not to social formation I but relations of supremacy/subordination in social formation II. These relations are not necessarily formed at the economic level (male/female, for example), but on the levels of ideology and politics, as well as

having economic manifestations apart from those given in social formation I (mental/manual, etc.), i.e. the state as a symbolic hegemonic structure, having I.S.A.s (ideological practice), R.S.A.s (political practice) and what could be called Economic State Apparatuses (economic practice) working for it, sustained by its hegemonic power.⁴ This ambiguity is implicit in the conflation of social formations I and II. Further, it supports the two types of relative autonomy collapsed together by this conflation. On the one hand, for example, ideological practice operates as a (one of three) relatively autonomous unit, functioning to sustain a unity-ruling class ideology - which in turn overdetermines other practices. On the other, economic practice is privileged because the ultimate function of social formation II is to sustain social formation I.

It is fairly evident, I hope, that this model is inherently incoherent, precisely because of its ambiguous structure (it is ambiguity that gives theoretical work a bad name, supporting only the theory at the sake of its application). The economism that Hirst points to is not the subtly contrived version created by the splitting of the concepts of determinant and dominant. Were this economism abandoned via the removal of social formation I (which amounts to, conceptually, the conditions of existence of the model 'social formation II') leaving the three practices free to produce a multi-levelled hegemony (or, more correctly, hegemonies), not only would the symbolic unity vanish (a unity provided by, though not necessarily referring to, social formation I) but the whole basis of the reason for the existence of such a theoretical model would be thrown into jeopardy. There are fundamental points to be made in connection with this, which I shall go on to discuss.

One more point remains to be made in respect of the model upon which the I.S.A.s theory is traced, concerning the concept of functionalism. Whichever level the functionalism operates upon, i.e. whichever definition of class or hegemonic relation it functions towards, it is impossible to raise the explanation provided beyond the terms of the specific function

(a function is necessarily a specific and not a general concept) designated. Functionalism necessarily reduces⁵ analysis to the level (or in this case, levels) of the thing produced by that functioning. It is therefore a specific theoretical tool that cannot be used towards a generality, like social formation II. Now, this functionalism is a necessary part of the aforementioned conflation, and as I have just suggested, it could be avoided by abandoning the consequences and meanings of social formation I. It could, in other words, be freed of its theoretical history, so that social formation I is just one of the many manifestations of the three practices, none of which are privileged. This is, in effect, what Althusser assumes in the second section of the essay, where he analyses the concept of ideology in general, and how, on an independent level, it operates within a social formation (II). I take it as given that social formation II only works in the form that it does, as I have indicated, because of the original existence of social formation I.

iv. The concept of ideology as practice

I want, very briefly, to examine the status of the concept of ideology in general in Althusser. For the time being, the theory itself (of ideology in general) shall be ignored. The reason for this, if not already apparent, will soon be so. First, a brief resumé of the form of Althusserian structuralism and its aims: the society model is conceived as a series of practices, or productions, allowing society/the history of societies to be thought. This notion (historical materialism), Glucksmann writes: "is not a system of history but the unique system of concepts allowing various histories to be thought ('there is no plurality of historical processes they determine')" (Glucksmann, 1977, p.309). Now, the concept of ideology is privileged to take its place as one of these productions, which means that "ideology is eternal" (Althusser, 1971, p.152) and is thus "omnipresent in its immutable form throughout history (history = the history of social formations containing

social classes)" (Ibid, p.152 - the concept of "social classes" in this statement is problematic, as we have seen).

As a concept then, the position of ideology has already been set out. It remains for Althusser to define what it is and how it works. This is precisely what his work on ideology in general attempts to do. In short: "Ideology is a 'Representation' of individuals to their Real Conditions of Existence" which "Interpellates Individuals as Subjects" (Ibid, pp.152 and 160). Given the concept's geneology, there exists another assertion whose necessary emphasis is notably absent, this being: ideology is a production, and as a production consists of the three generalities essential to production. If this assertion were absent in any form this absence would have significant consequences for the geneology Althusser follows, but this is not my point. What the theory of ideology in general assumes is that ideology is a production, yet since this assumption constitutes (as we shall see) a crucial point of incoherence in the theory, the theory chooses not to emphasise that assumption (and hence highlight the incoherence).

Now, for ideology to operate as a process of production, something/ someone must be produced, and for something/ someone to be produced, a state prior to production must be posited. This state is referred to by Althusser as the condition of the 'concrete individual', whose existence is necessarily prior to interpellation by the Subject to form the concrete subject, as Althusser puts it: "we distinguish for the moment between concrete individuals on the one hand and concrete subjects on the other" (Ibid, p.160). Thus far, no problem, ideology is a production which has the "function ... of 'constituting' concrete individuals as subjects" (Ibid, p.160).

Althusser's first assertion: "Ideology is a 'Representation' of the Imaginary Relationship of Individuals to their Real Conditions of Existence", as the abundance of capital letters indicate, is a far reaching one. It is tantamount to saying, as he proceeds to do, that

"man is an ideological animal by nature" (Ibid, p.160). Paul Hirst discusses the problems this leads to, which can be summarised in the question: if "you and I are always already subjects" (Ibid, p.161), i.e. subjects "by nature", where are we to find the concrete individual, prior to interpellation and therefore to ideology?

This problem does not go unrecognised, indeed an answer to it is attempted, this being that "individuals are always - already subjects" (Ibid, p.164). Now, if this statement seems incompatible with the notion of ideology as a production, which it clearly does, the 'abstracting out' of the process of the concrete individual confirms any doubts we might have. The idea that "individuals are abstract with respect to the subject which they always-already are", if it has any meaning at all (beyond one of convenience) denies the essential concrete individuals existence. What I am concerned with here is that the nature of the concept ideology in general makes it difficult to emphasise the status of the concept as a production, as one of the three practices which together comprise a social formation.

Indeed, we can go further to recognise the incompatibility of the concept of three distinct practices with a theory asserting that "there is no practice except in and by an ideology" (Ibid, p.159). I shall discuss some of the theoretical implications of this statement later. What is of immediate concern is that the whole theory whose development we have been following, seems, once we get down to the specific business of marking out the terrain of a practice in general, to collapse. I have tried to hint the possibility of this by making clear some of the inconsistencies established along the way. If the reasons behind this necessary collapse have not been made clear yet, I shall proceed to an explanation of these reasons and their consequences. The ground must be cleared before commencing a more detailed examination of the concept of ideology.

v. Levels equal in difference

The problem with a Marxist conception of the social formation (II) is so fundamental that it undermines the whole rationalist course that we have been following. While I have tried to demonstrate some of the shortcomings in Althusserian theory (as it leads us to a theory of ideology and the social formation), I have also, I hope, tried to show that these shortcomings are not dismissible as a series of avoidable errors. As I have already stated, the conflation of the concepts social formation I and social formation II is not an unfortunate accident, but a necessary condition of a theory attempting to explain or think social formation II with a theory that can be legitimately designated 'Marxist'.

While we have seen that the conceptual proliferation with which I began is complicated by various forms of economism, this complexity is a result of the assumptions lying behind the motivation for that proliferation: namely the importance of (a concept of) economic practice. Now, while I have traced some of the incoherent positions that the process of 'filling up' the concept of social formation (II) by means of a particular conceptual proliferation creates, the problem goes much deeper. This much, in so many words, I have already said. I refrained from going any further, not merely to be enigmatic, but because to have spelt it out any earlier would have pre-empted the discussion.⁶ Rather, the following argument has been, I hope, implicit in what I have already written.

A theory which relates a concept of a whole to 'subsidiary' concepts forming part of that whole is a delicate structure indeed, particularly if the sum of those subsidiary concepts is to explain the whole of the whole (as in this case, with the 'society effect'). If, in constructing a structure of this type, we begin with a subsidiary concept (economic practice), and not with the 'whole' to which the concept is subsidiary (social formation II), we are embarking on

decidedly shaky ground. The concepts combining to make the whole can only do so coherently if they are mutually exclusive, i.e. if by their specific natures they exclude one another. Each subsidiary concept, to be meaningful, must operate within a realm that is its own, that is separate and distinct from the realms covered by other subsidiary concepts. Each level must also operate in the same way - they must be levels equal in difference. For, crucially, it is only within such a framework that a concept of relative autonomy extending to the relationships of all the parts to each other (as with the three way general relative autonomy model) can be made to work. If these rules, necessary to a structure making certain claims for itself, are disobeyed, the structure runs the risk of collapsing into incoherency.

Before I elaborate these rules, it must be made clear that Althusser is aware of the structure he is trying to articulate. If he were not, his use of the structure of the concept of economic practice, as an essential structure governing the specific terms of autonomy of each practice, would not be necessary. The course of his reasoning is partially dictated by the notion that the three practices must be levels equal in difference. Now, at no point is the concept of economic practice sufficiently interrogated in terms of its suitability to become a level equal in difference, and neither, subsequently, are the concepts of the practices governing the realms of ideology and politics. They are simply (and nothing more than) each, in their own way - not in the same way - seen as important. It is assumed that because economic + extra-economic = social formation II (a statement which actually means nothing beyond the patently obvious, its function being to relate the economic with social formation II) the extra-economic, or everything which is not economic, can be divided into levels which:

- a) are exclusive from the economic;
- b) are exclusive from each other;
- c) are exclusive in the same way from each other (hence, relatively autonomous) i.e. whose structures are identical with that of the economic;

d) together are enough to complete the whole, the social formation. In other words, it is assumed that what is being analysed is not merely economics, ideology and politics, but the whole of society whose every operation is the sum of these three practices.

The whole terrain of the three levels theory is dependent upon a division that is never made: the social formation - a confused concept⁷ - is never defined and divided into distinct parts/levels. Rather we have three separate theories thought to somehow coalesce into a totality. The handing over of banknotes to purchase a commodity is a practice that can be construed 'meaningful' as an economic practice, and as an ideological practice - in some instances even as a political practice, but, just as those levels of explanations cannot exhaustively explain or position that practice, these explanations are seen to overlap as attempts to conceive of a thing. The purchase of a commodity can be evaluated, furthermore, with varying degrees of significance (I am not advocating a form of relativism, as I shall later explain) as a linguistic practice, a semiological practice, a psycho-analytic practice, etc. The appropriation of these different explanations varies according to the object being analysed, not because the object can be 'broken down' into different parts; with qualities essentially allocatable to a number of explanatory forms whose totality is the whole of the thing analysed.

It is important to stress the difference between practices relatively determining/autonomous and practices overlapping one another. For example, ideology in general is said to refer to the relation between human subjects and all practices or objects, whereas the economic refers specifically to certain (economic) practices, and to the objects and subjects that support them - in short, as explanations the two practices are not equal (in difference).

The point I am trying to make here is not so much that Althusser was attempting the impossible - a set of discourses explaining society - but that the formula: social formation II = ideology + economy + politics

in a relation of relative autonomy, is an incoherent attempt to do this, and that this incoherency can be traced through the geneology of concepts with which the theory deals. If we were to attempt to reduce colour to three essential components, we would be misguided to begin with green because of its importance in nature. The theory of the primary colours; red, yellow and blue, works in terms of a whole which is conceived as a circle of colour. If the whole is to be divided, that is where we should begin, to begin with an 'important' part of that whole would be an incoherent way of postulating an essential 'part' of the whole. This is not to diminish the 'importance' or 'significance' of the colour green, but to question the relation of that importance to systematising the world of colour. The colour circle works, not because it 'explains' all forms of colour - both in the sense that it cannot appropriate colour types like gold and silver, nor can it explain the formation of colours in the natural world⁸ - but because its 'whole' can be designated as the sum of three divisions equal in difference. It works as a coherent structure.

This structural deficiency problematises a political statement of the kind cited earlier by Coward and Ellis, whose consequences rely upon a notion of equivalence between the three practices, i.e. that the political, ideological or economic levels either correspond or fail to correspond with one another. In fact, their avoidance of economism amounts to nothing more than a tinkering with the same (incoherent) structure, a mere shifting of terms towards the determinacy of the ideological: economic practice is autonomous inasmuch as a revolution may occur within this practice independently of other practices, while ultimately (in the last instance?) ideological practice will determine the return to a specific (capitalist) mode of production. In this formulation, practices are conceived as supports for one another via their equivalence/non-equivalence. It may be relevant that recent political events in China seem to reflect the failure of the cultural

revolution as a process with economic effects equivalent to a particular mode of production, insofar as China is presently undergoing a shift back towards forms of free enterprise. This is not to say that there are not certain economic practices which may be either jeopardised or sustained by certain ideological practices relating to those economic practices, simply that there are no general corresponding/non-corresponding realms which can be usefully designated economic and ideological.

If all this seems obvious, there is an abundance of work which prefers to neglect this obviousness in favour of a reworking of what amounts to a complex and unstable structure.⁹ This is generally done in good faith to justify - and apply a level of generality to - arguments which are themselves quite coherent and legitimate. David Morley, for example, insists upon (with a few reservations) the Althusserian relative autonomy model, because - as he rightly claims - there is a tendency for ideological manifestations to vary across social (occupational in the Weberian sense) classes as well as within them (Morley, 1980). Human subjects in occupational classes, however, are actually manifestations of ideological processes (the home, the school, etc.) which can be seen to support economic practices (even though those practices refer to divisions of labour within a non-capitalist class¹⁰). The fact that those specific ideological manifestations do or do not produce other forms of ideological unity does not demonstrate a relative autonomy between practices. The problem with the 'relative autonomy' model of the three practices here, as elsewhere, is that it disguises the differences between 'the economic' and 'the ideological' as forms of explanation.

It is in this context that Hindess and Hirst's criticisms of rationalist epistemology can be best understood (Hindess and Hirst, 1977, Chapter One - I shall discuss this in the next section). "Rationalism claims to reproduce the real in the form of an abstraction through the

order of discourse" (Ibid, p.13) giving a 'knowledge effect'. What we have followed is an argument whose course privileges a certain concept, whose development is necessarily abstract, because it is posited prior to an examination of the specific relevance of that concept to that development, i.e. ideology is conceptually positioned because it fits an abstract formula - its actual operation is only examined (and specified) after this abstraction has taken place. Thus, for example, the theory of I.S.A.s is necessarily made unstable by the work (of abstraction) that has preceded it.

The consequence of this argument is this: a theory of ideology or of society (in the sense although not the structure of social formation II) cannot be rigorously assigned 'Marxist', inasmuch as Marxist theory is specific and limited to certain objects of analysis. The search for a general Marxist theory of ideology is, and must always be (since Marx is dead) a fruitless task. Althusser's work on ideology is, in many ways, restricted by his efforts to remain within a Marxist framework. If work in this area is to develop, such worries must be jettisoned. Now, what I am criticising Marxism for is what it tries but is unable to say, nothing more or less than that. This does not mean that a theory of ideology in general cannot be compatible with social formation I or with other coherent Marxist forms of analysis. Yet I maintain that this cannot happen self consciously (conscious of the necessity of this compatibility) - the concept of ideology must be examined on its own terms, i.e. with regard to things ideological.

vi. Television as an ideological apparatus

Before moving on to consider the concept of ideology in more detail, I shall briefly clarify the position I have reached in the context of television and the mass media. I shall restrict myself, at this stage, to two points.

Firstly, the concept of an ideological state apparatus is, as we have seen, problematic because it incorporates a unity - the state - that that apparatus functions towards. Whether or not such a unity can be identified is not my point. The problem I have identified is that the unifier 'the state' is, in Althusser (and others), constructed on a specifically economic level. This enables Althusser to suggest that the I.S.A.s function to produce a specific economic mode of production. The concept of an ideological apparatus or agency that is not defined in terms of a specific function is, however, a very useful one. It is quite possible to assert, for example, as Charles Wright does:

"One also can analyse functions and dysfunctions of mass-communicated news for smaller subgroups within the society. To illustrate, such news activity might prove especially functional for a political elite insofar as the free flow of news provides information which is useful to the maintenance of power by this group" (Wright, 1964, p.103).

The news media, it could be argued, reproduce a version of the world that encourages democratic support for particular political elites (a similar point is made by Hall, Connell and Curti, 1976). Television can therefore be understood as an ideological apparatus with specific political effects.

This does not mean that television cannot be, on one level, understood as a particular economic mode of production, or in terms of multifarious other effects. Television may be understood as an ideological apparatus, but not exhaustively defined as such.

My second point refers to television as the site of the 'relative autonomy' debate. There are those that argue that the ideological or political effects of media institutions are products of their economic structure, ownership and control (cf. Murdock and Golding, 1973). While it is quite valid to explain certain ideological practices in terms of particular economic practices in media institutions, it is not very helpful to understand those forms of causality within the 'relative

autonomy' model. This would be to imply that some of television's ideological effects were determined by economic practices, while others were free of these (economic) determinations, and therefore 'autonomous'. Such a formulation is unnecessary and misleading - it privileges the economic as a determining practice, and even suggests that the process of determination, because it is not explained, is somehow different if it occurs autonomously within ideology.

It is more useful to analyse the mass media in terms of forms of explanation, be they ideological or economic. The Glasgow Media Group, for example, have frequently argued that television's output reflects the "perceptual framework of one group", i.e. a world viewed through the eyes of white middle class males. This argument can be understood on both economic and ideological levels. The world view of white middle class males may be partially determined by their (privileged) economic circumstances - as the Glasgow Media Group point out:

"On average a reporter or producer at the B.B.C. will earn around £15,000, while a producer at an Independent Company will receive upwards of £26,000 per year, plus expenses for hotels and restaurants, etc. Their style of life is quite distinct from many of those on whom they report. When the Warrington by-election of July, 1981, was announced, the joke which went around the B.B.C. was 'how does one eat in that part of the world?'" (Glasgow Media Group, 1982, p.12).

This world view can also be seen as a product of various ideological institutions: the family, the school and the media itself. Both explanations are appropriate to particular objects/subjects under analysis - to say there is a relation of relative autonomy between the two forms of explanation is merely to confuse the issue.

FOOTNOTES:

1. The diachronic development of economic mode of production does not, in fact, necessitate the retention of the power of the economic to name a social formation - the feudal mode gains its name from the political realm of that mode. Nevertheless, the power given the economic mode in the synchronic development of the 'structure of a production' is carried over to other, non capitalist, social formations.
2. It is interesting, I think, in the light of my following argument that "production relations" are assumed to refer to relations within economic practice.
3. The point at which a capitalist mode of production becomes a significant/insignificant section of the economy (in, for example, the continuum of the mixed economy) for it to be given overriding importance in this way - an economy still 'sustains' a capitalist mode of production even if it accounts for 1% of the G.N.P., for example - is problematic. To designate such a point, while necessary for the theory, begs several questions.
4. Hirst's point may refer to Althusser's intention i.e. the author may well have understood his functionalism only in the terms designated by Hirst, but it is important to understand that this functionalism is sustained by its ambiguity.
5. To 'reduce' is no bad thing, as long as it is a self-conscious reduction. For example, Hindess and Hirst's 'reduction' of the conception of social formation to social formation I is operative precisely because of their awareness of its limitation, whereas my later discussions of forms of subject/object structures use a 'reduction' as a criticism, because I am criticising attempts to explain the 'whole' of that relation. Similarly, social formation II is an all-explanatory model.
6. Although I must acknowledge that inasmuch as certain statements referring to a fundamental problem to be explained 'later' have set up enigmas - the following paragraphs represent my attempts to solve those enigmas, to close the narrative.
7. Confused, quite literally; the fusion of two conflicting concepts.
8. Grass is not green because of a mixture of blue and yellow, for example. To 'explain' it as such is meaningless.
9. There is an interesting essentialist tendency in Marxism not unconnected with this: that is, to justify/validate a statement by tracing its origin in Marx.
10. The fact that Morley's 'classes' are not necessarily distinguishable in terms of relations of production undermines the geneology of the Althusserian model he cautiously endorses.

2 THE MEANING OF SIGNIFICATION

i. The concept of Ideology and its relation to epistemology

Much of Althusser's theoretical work is based upon a clearly defined epistemological position, whose results and consequences I have traced. This position is clearly articulated within a notion of 'theoretical practice', or science, and can be seen as an attempt to avoid the reductions necessitated by empiricism and idealism. Empiricism reduces knowledge to experience of the real whereby objects are knowable in their essence, this knowableness being either apprehended or misrecognised by the human subject designated as having "a capacity of experience to function as a means of representation and a faculty of judgement as two essential attributes" (Hindess and Hirst, 1977, p.13), these two essential attributes determining knowledge of the essentially knowable. Truth is inscribed in the real world for all to see. Idealism is another form of essentialism within a subject/object theory of knowledge denying the essence of the real inasmuch as the subject is privileged as the origin of knowledge (constituting objects).

Both empiricism and idealism, then, posit knowledge as a consequence of (and within) the subject/object relation (hence 'subjectivity' and 'objectivity'). Marxism's criticisms of idealism, where men and women are the origin/constitutors of knowledge, are well known. Furthermore, Althusser's epistemology is an attempt to go beyond an empiricist notion of false consciousness: whereby the subject either recognises the object (knowledge) or misrecognises it (ideology/false consciousness), misrecognition being a condition determined by the real's positioning of the subject in an ideological relation (to itself). This attempt is managed by an ingenious means; no less than the relinquishing of the subject/object structure itself, via a withdrawal of the category of the subject from the formula, replaced by a concept of a subjectless scientific problematic. Such a problematic is distinct from an

ideological problematic; the latter is conceived within a closed, ideologically limited, circle, in which both problematic and solution are both already present. Contained as it is implicitly within the (ideological) problematic, the 'answer' fails to extend beyond an ideological existence into the virgin world of knowledge. This epistemology leads to a new determinacy, the determinacy of the scientific problematic.

This gives us a fourth practice, a mode of production whose product is a 'knowledge effect'. I did not discuss this practice earlier since it is not 'part' of the social formation; it "can no more be ranged within the category 'superstructure' than can language itself which ... escapes it" (Althusser, 1970, p.133, the 'neutrality' of language will be discussed later). As Glucksmann writes, the exteriority of this practice is necessary since it is "theoretical production 'through which' the essence of all production is to be read ... The 'society effect' can only be known in the 'knowledge effect' and reciprocally, the 'knowledge effect' can only be known in the knowledge of the 'society effect'" (Glucksmann, 1977, p.289). Paul Henry uses this Althusserian formula in his analysis of discourse, where he argues that scientific concepts are derived from theoretical/scientific production, whereas ideological concepts are "tied to a specific loci in the social structure" (Henry, 1971, pp.93-4). As in Althusser, the category of the subject is absent in the former and present in the latter. So, the history of the concept social formation that I have traced through is thought to lead to knowledge ('knowledge effect') of that social formation ('society effect') precisely because of the rationalist development of the problematic with which I began.

Now, given the incoherence of the 'society effect', there can be no 'knowledge effect'. Subsequently, either Althusser's problematic was ideological rather than scientific (dooming it from the very outset), or, the epistemology allocating knowledge of the essential real to a

determinant set of concepts is itself faulty. In Mode of Production and Social Formation, Hindess and Hirst attempt to expose the latter, in their critique of (rationalist and empiricist) epistemology.

In epistemology (they argue), a relation of knowledge is conceived between (a) a discursive realm, and (b) a realm extra to or designated by discourse (the real). Now, before going any further, it is important to stress that this relation is constituted by the division prior to this relation, this division being the condition of existence of that relation, i.e. there is no 'natural' division between the discursive and the extra-discursive. I shall return to this point in the next chapter, in relation to Morley's work on the T.V. audience. Such a division forms the basis of the Hindess and Hirst critique, but, as we shall see, limits their ability to go beyond it. The immediate point I wish to make about the two designated categories; discourse and the real, is that they do not correspond to relations conceived by semiology - the first term refers not to the signifying practice/realm of signification, but specifically to language (language = words). The relation is thus between the signified and the material realisation of that signified, as Saussure conceived it: a linguistic relation. This is a crucial specification, and I shall return to it.

Hindess and Hirst's critique shows that: just as empiricism sees the latter (the realm extra to discourse) as knowable in the former (the discursive realm), determined by the (language using) subject's capacities of representation and judgement (experience) of the real, Althusser's rationalism depends upon the same conception - that the real, or the realm extra to discourse, takes the existence of objects representable in discourse - privileging instead a determinate set of concepts. Both approaches see the world extra to discourse as realisable in discourse. So, whole empiricism privileges experience/judgement (and its discursive effects) as the means through which the real is appropriated, rationalism privileges the determinate concept. This determinate concept,

in this instance the scientific problematic, is 'given', and the subjects capacity to recognise the scientific (non-ideological) character of the scientific problematic is essential, for "Althusser explicitly rejects the possibility of forms of theoretical discourse in which the scientific or non-scientific character of problematics may be established" (Hindess and Hirst, 1977, p.19).

So, to refute epistemology, they state clearly, "is not to deny forms of existence outside discourse, but it is to deny that existence takes the form of objects representable in discourse" (Ibid, p.21), which means that, just as there is no privileged capacity of experience (as opposed to the non-privileged relation of misrecognition/false consciousness), there "are no privileged 'basic concepts' of Marxism or any other field of discourse ... providing a uniquely privileged access to the real" (Ibid, pp.30-31). In Althusser, the scientific problematic is given, the knowable essence is given, these two givens are equivalent to two essences, the 'knowledge effect' being a function of the relation of these two essences. Knowledge is, then, essential - a consequence of the privileging of essences. In criticising (Althusserian) epistemology, Hindess and Hirst are exposing its essentialism. Alternatives to these epistemological forms will be established later.

This critique of Althusser's epistemological position, is, I think, a useful introduction to his theory of ideology (in general), since, as we shall shortly see, it amounts to a subversion in part, of the conditions of existence of the concept 'ideology'. At the same time, Althusser's theory (again, partially) acknowledges the fundamental propositions of this critique.

I pointed out earlier that (among other things) the all-encompassing nature of ideology, under whose auspices all practices take place, is problematic for the whole conceptual structure of the social formation.

It follows, then, that if "there is no practice except by and in ideology", the concept of theoretical practice is problematised also; for, how can this statement be compatible with a practice producing a knowledge effect? The answer is locatable in the following assertion; "there is no ideology except by the subject and for subjects" (Althusser, 1971, p.159) - in other words, since knowledge is an effect of a practice without a subject it is non-ideological. The incoherency of this position is mind-boggling. If "there is no practice except by and in ideology", and "there is no ideology except by the subject and for subjects", then, necessarily, there is no practice except by the subject and for subjects: hence there is no scientific/theoretical (subjectless) practice. At the same time, it is Althusser's recognition that "there is no ideology except by the subject and for subjects" that necessitates an epistemology which is a non-subjective practice.

There is a way out of this cul de sac; but it lays bare (once again) the concept of scientific/theoretical practice. It is a route that has already been implied, that is, science is not a practice but an essence. Its essential nature enables its abstraction from any formula involving the terms 'practice', subject, and ideology, onto a separate terrain (of knowledge). This 'way out', of course, does not solve the problem, it merely displaces it (by introducing another). The problem is this: Althusser avoids the empiricist position, with its essential knowable reality and essential subject whose consciousness has the capacity to either recognise (knowledge) or misrecognise (false consciousness/ideology) that essence, because he conceives of a subject/object structure that is non-essential, insofar as both terms are constituted by an entity reducible to neither - ideology. Yet despite (in the face of) this, his concept of ideology fails to rigorously deny its empiricist heritage, i.e. it is a term dependent upon an opposition - recognition/misrecognition. In other words, the concept of ideology

formulated by Althusser actually subverts the opposition still retained within it, in this instance non-ideology or science/ideology (the rationalist reformulation of the empiricist recognition/misrecognition).

It is easy to account for this complex contradiction, for, the concept ideology as it exists in Marxism (prior to Althusser) relies upon an oppositional concept as its condition of existence, i.e. misrecognition, science, knowledge, etc. Its development (in this context) is necessarily a function of relation of correspondence/non-correspondence to knowledge of the real. Althusser attempts to go beyond this opposition by repressing it, and asserting instead two different processes, so that we have an imaginary relation, a mechanism which is a reality revealed by the knowledge effect, so that the "reality in question is this mechanism, the reality which is necessarily ignored (méconnue) in the very forms of recognition (ideology = misrecognition/ignorance)" (Ibid, p.170). This quotation is aptly aware - indeed, it admits it - of the reduction the theory seeks to avoid in the (false) reformulation of opposition to mere difference. In other words, Althusser's attempt to displace the opposition recognition/misrecognition by substituting it with two processes different rather than oppositional, fails.

In this sense, Althusser's assertion "there is no practice except by and in ideology" involves a conception of ideology without a notion of misrecognition, while what he is theorising is precisely a notion of misrecognition. Hence, the contradiction. So, Althusser's theory of ideology is both innovative and derivative. It is derivative in its working of a displacement of the essential, from an essential subject (as in empiricism) to an essential scientificity necessarily retaining the notion of the essential, extra discursive, realm of the real. This much I have already stated. Althusser's innovations, however, deserve some examination, leading us - indirectly - towards a theory of materiality and signification.

ii. Representation and Signification

Althusser's innovation is on the other side of this contradiction, the aspects of his theory which do indeed go some way towards collapsing the discourse/real distinction, simultaneously dissolving the correspondence/non-correspondence antithesis. The one necessarily leads to the other, the epistemological knowledge relation in the former being the condition of the latter's existence, i.e. if the discourse/real relation (of knowledge) collapses, there can be no correspondence between the two realms, and subsequently no non-correspondence between them. This is achieved (to quote slightly out of context, as we shall see) in the simple assertion that "an ideology always exists in an apparatus, and its practice or practices. This existence is material" (Ibid, p.156). This 'materiality', he specifies, "does not have the same modality as the material existence of a paving stone or a rifle", although it is "rooted in the last instance in 'physical matter'" (Ibid, p.156). In other words, just as the green colour of grass (for example) has a material existence in that grass, the word 'green' has a material existence as a written or spoken word, in the practices of writing and speech. The materiality of ideology¹, since it poses an equivalence between itself and the 'real'², frustrates any attempt to formulate a relation between the 'real' and its representations, i.e. both the 'real' and its representations are material, and, insofar as they are material, are equivalent - "in the last instance".

It is unfortunate that the point designated by "the last instance" should have such an unstable existence in Althusser's work. There is nothing inherently wrong with "the last instance"; it is a classification which has just as much claim to precision as "the first instance" - if it gains a reputation as a kind of warning signal, whereupon any theory is within immediate danger of self-destructing, it is not the fault of this humble phrase, but fault of its user, i.e. its context.

In Althusser (in the instances cited in this essay), "the last instance" is an ambiguous term, a kind of conjuring trick of the 'now you see it, now you don't' variety: it may refer to the prominent instance (rather than the last of a series of instances), while, at any given moment, it may vanish altogether. If, in the first part of this essay, we saw a tendency towards the former, we now see a shift in the latter direction. This is a necessary consequence of Althusser's use of the notion of representation, a notion implanted to preserve the non-correspondence theory of ideology.

The equivalence of the existence of ideology (in apparatuses, practices) with the 'real', both being material ("in the last instance") mysteriously vanishes into the unseeable distance when the status of "the object which is 'represented' in the imaginary form of ideology" (Ibid, p.153) is properly considered. The notion of representation establishes a distinction between the material real and the material ideological, the one being a representation of the other, i.e. a representation of "the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence" (Ibid, p.153, my emphasis). In other words, ideology has a material existence only insofar as its representations are material.³

Furthermore, this relationship grants a material existence to the represented (the real) independent from the means of representation (ideology). As Paul Hirst has demonstrated, two consequences follow from this; "either, the represented must determine the process of representation ... or it must exist in a form against which its reflections or expressions may be measured as more or less accurate representations of it" (Hirst, 1979, p.69). Two forms of existence are necessarily posited, the real and forms (apparatuses, practices) of misrecognition of the real. Knowledge is only achieved in the apprehension of the represented via an undistorted means of recognition (science/theoretical practice). Once again, we see the recurrent theme

of the essential object (as in a "paving stone or a rifle") characterising the subject/object structure, wherein the "represented (object) exists as the source or measure of its representations" (Ibid, p.69).

To assert an essential objectivity is to deny the constitution of oneself as a subject, a constitution that Althusser's theory of ideology goes some way towards theorising. As Barthes aptly observed, objectivity is nothing more than "an imaginary system like all the rest, an image which serves to name me advantageously, to make myself known, 'misknown', even to myself" (S/Z, p.10). This is the logic of the statement "there is no practice except by and in an ideology". To reiterate, Althusser's failure to coherently theorise his innovations; the collapsing of the discourse/real distinction, and hence the collapsing of the non-correspondence/correspondence relation of the real to its representations (constituted in/by the subject), can be explained by:

- a) the geneology of the concept ideology, and the reformulation of that (unaltered) concept via a science-knowledge/ideology antithesis;
- b) the use of the reductive equation "ideology is a representation ..."

It follows then that, if Althusser's innovations are to be usefully employed in advancing a theory of ideology - rather than dump the whole theory - we must abandon any trace of a correspondence/non-correspondence antithesis, and avoid the reductions implicit within a theory of (ideological) representation. While the first of these tasks amounts to a simple matter of redefining the object of analysis, the second requires an alternative - in short, if we drop the theory of representation, what takes its place? It is at this point that we can begin to utilise the work done by semiology - or more precisely the concept at the foundations of that discipline - to assert that we do not represent or misrepresent 'reality', we signify it.

This is the conclusion of Hirst's rigorous analysis of the theory of ideology, for, "if the represented exists as an effect of a process of signification it has no existence beyond the process which represents it" (Hirst, 1979, p.68). This statement by Hirst is not unambiguous, so I shall clarify my use of it. I most certainly do not mean to abstract the process of signification away from the represented. As I shall proceed to argue, the represented, as a signifier, is a crucial component in the process of signification.

If we equate ideology with signification, it enables us to posit a necessary relation ("there is no practice except by and in an ideology") between subject and object, reducible to neither. Now, it would be extremely careless to assume that a simple exchange of concepts (signification for representation) is the be all and end all of the problems of the theory of ideology! The replacement of one concept with another carried with it certain effects and conditions. It is with these in mind that I make the following assertions.

- a) In order to collapse the discourse/real relation, language must be conceived, inasmuch as it exists in a material form, as an entity necessarily equivalent to all other forms of material existence (not merely "in the last instance").
- b) Following on from this: all forms of existence are conceived within signification. This, as the saying has it, goes without saying, conception being nothing other than the constitution of concepts/signifieds. It is, nonetheless, necessary to make this point absolutely clear - it is a fact repeatedly ignored by attempts to resurrect the language/real distinction.⁴ This point can be clarified in relation to Paul Willemen's statement that:

"there should be a distinction made between 'reality' and 'whatever is perceived as reality by members of a particular cultural group or sub-groups at a given moment in time'. An excavation in the Andes is a reality brought about by a social praxis, the Andes themselves are not. The Andes are a geological fact bearing upon the imprint of geological history, but this history is by no means the 'meaning' of the Andes. They are a non-signifying reality" (Willemen, 1981, p.22).

Clearly Willemen is quite right to say that to designate a signifier as meaningless is not to deny the existence of that signifier (it becomes a "non-signifying reality"). It is, needless to say, impossible for any subject to conceive of a non-signifying reality, since that reality must enter signification to be conceived. A non-signifying reality is therefore a concept that exists outside subject/object relations (or semiological relations).

c) Following on again: the signified exists only within the subject. Signifieds/concepts have no external existence. The subject is therefore constitutive of signification within given systems. This is a complex formulation which I shall examine shortly in some detail.

From this point on I should like to clarify a point made earlier concerning the split discursive/extra-discursive (and the substitutions discourse/real, language/real). Whereas previously the terms were seen as more or less synonymous with the terms language/extra-linguistic, as in the critique of epistemology, they will now need to be reformulated to refer to semiological systems in general, so that discourse/discursive = within systems of signification (and extra-discursive = existence prior to signification⁵).

The use of the linguistic/real division, is a problem that has burdened linguistics and semiology alike. Julia Kristeva, for example, suggests that the stoics were the first semiologists, because they posed "the opposition real/language" and therefore placed "signification in the

necessary relation between the two. The fundamental problem that determines western thinking over the whole of its history, the relation matter/spirit is thus resolved by the establishment of a mediation, the sense hidden in the sign" (Kristeva, 1981, p.24). While Kristeva is quite correct to place the process of signification between matter (the object) and the spirit (the subject), her statement is jeopardised by her assumption that the matter/spirit relation is synonymous with "the opposition real/language". This, in turn, raises the problem of theorising the (linguistic) signified/material referent relation. This relation has been seen as a problem in the light of the epistemological problems it relies upon (that I have discussed), i.e. the irreducibility of this relation to a knowledge relation based upon a notion of representation.

Language is not (directly) a knowledge system - we do not know an object upon naming it. Now, for those who see relativism as a viable philosophical position, whereupon knowledge is an invalid notion in itself, all discourses being equally viable, this problem may be overcome. For my own part, such forms of relativism seem to me to be politically dangerous (apart from anything else), for, if we abandon the concept of knowledge along with its conditions of existence in the truth/falsity relation altogether, we run the risk of sliding into a solipsistic lethargy. Indeed relativistic philosophies are necessarily hypocritical, for they assert, within a discourse, as knowledge the invalidity of the concept of knowledge. If I did not think this work contained components entirely dependent upon a truth/falsity relation, I would abandon it here and now.

At no point have I questioned the truth/falsity relation, in itself, as a concept. I would argue, instead, that truth/knowledge is:

- a) not a necessary relation - many (political, for example) discourses, are ultimately dependent upon discursive forms constituted in terms of other relations (such as relations of value);⁶
- b) to be conceived only as a relation. Adjectival forms of truth are an obvious example of this relation - 'the slow train to Waterloo' is true in relation to the fast (or faster) train(s) to Waterloo;
- c) dependent upon a relation between signifiers, and therefore upon the material existence of those signifiers (all signifiers are material).

The relation (linguistic) signified/material referent thus becomes linguistic signified/object signified (where the linguistic signified refers to an object), and hence relations between signifying systems, rather than within a system. Truth/falsity is then conceived as a specific relation between or within these systems⁷.

Now, it may seem that I have jumped the gun, without pausing to consider the reasons for the existence of the linguistic/extra-linguistic relation. It could be argued, for example, that the nature of language as a form of shorthand, where words are substitutes for things, necessarily sets up such a relationship. Language is, therefore, a linguistic system dependent for its very existence upon the 'material'⁸ referent. I would argue that this conceptual model leads to misunderstandings, as well as being based upon them, for two primary reasons.

Firstly, just as various mathematical systems are reducible only to their written (or spoken) articulations rather than to any ultimate referent beyond the mathematical sign, many words operate more or less exclusively from any relation to an extra-linguistic 'material' referent, e.g. prepositions, conjunctives, metalinguistic statements such as 'I before E except after C', or 'never begin a sentence without using a

capital letter as the first letter of the first word in that sentence'. It is clear that the material referent in such instances is linguistic.

Secondly, I fully acknowledge the absurdity of any denials of the relation between certain linguistic signs and certain non-linguistic signs (indeed I have referred to the existence of this relation), the relation between the word paving stone and the sign paving stone as it exists on the pavement. Equally, in most cases, the non-linguistic sign precedes the existence of the linguistic sign. My point is that, given the existence of these two particular systems of signification, the non-linguistic sign is no more a condition of existence for the linguistic sign than the linguistic sign is a condition of the non-linguistic sign's existence. By this I do not mean that the non-linguistic sign would not exist without being named (just as I do not mean that the linguistic sign is not dependent upon the non-linguistic to maintain its existence, as is exemplified by linguistic signs referring to extinct creatures, or to historical characters)⁹, but that the two signs are interdependent. We do not know objects, we learn to know them within systems of signification. Since an important body of those systems for us, as well constituted social adults, are linguistic, knowledge of those objects as signifiers is therefore dependent, to a very considerable extent, upon the existence of a sign's relation to it within linguistic systems. The paving stone, as a sign existing in terms of the pavement, is a different object (sign) prior to its naming. Once named, it becomes a new thing (sign), absorbing two different systems of signification (linguistic and non-linguistic).

So, while it is possible to make, as Hartley does, "a distinction between signs and the objects/activities/notions they refer to - their referents" (Hartley, 1982, p.34), it is important that we also see the referent as a sign. Although there is an implicit distinction between 'the linguistic' and 'the real' in Hartley's statement, he (partially)

avoids the problems of such a distinction by asserting that "both sign and referent are merely potential when it comes to meaning" (Ibid), i.e. the (linguistic) sign and (non-linguistic) referent are both equivalent - within signification - as signifiers.

As Saussure made clear, while language is perhaps the most important system of signification, it is not the only one: "A science that studies the life of signs within society is conceivable ... I shall call in semiology. Semiology would show what constitutes signs, what laws govern them ... Linguistics is only a part of the general science of semiology; the laws discovered by semiology will be applicable to linguistics, and the latter will circumscribe a well defined area within the mass of anthropological facts" (Saussure, 1974, p.16). This great project implied by Saussure has frequently been misconceived and replaced by the equation; semiology = linguistics dependent upon a set of social (extra-linguistic) set of contexts and determinations. This describes not semiology but discourse theory.¹⁰ As discourse theorist, Paul Henry, argues:

"The study of discursive processes, of discourses functioning in connection with other discourses, implies that we work with a corpus of messages and that we take into account the loci of speakers and addressees" (Henry, 1971, p.84).

Discourse analysis, in other words, looks at language in relation to the position (loci) - real or implied - of the speaker/listener in the material world. A semiological analysis, on the other hand, will not merely analyse a linguistic discourse in context, but a linguistic signifying system whose specific (historical) position (as a signifying system) inter-relates with the signifying systems that operate alongside and across it - the images around the talking head on the television screen, the objects around the television, the signifying system referred to by these spoken/visual discourses, etc.

So, if what we are analysing is the relation between subject and object, we are analysing relations between signifying systems. This

applies just as much to, for example, the relation between a T.V. programme and the viewer, as to that viewer's position in social, economic or linguistic relations. The determinations upon that viewer's reading of the T.V. programme or the world around him/her both occur within relations of signification. What is therefore important is not the 'objective' material circumstances of the viewer in themselves, but his/her perception of them.

This does not mean that all analysis is limited to this semiological framework. We can, of course, analyse the world in terms of relation between objects - be they linguistic or non-linguistic. What is important is that once we begin to analyse the construction of/determinations upon the subject, we must incorporate the subject into the analysis via signifying relations. This means treating linguistic and non-linguistic objects within the same set of relations. I shall develop this point in both this and the following chapter.

What makes language so important is the human subjects reliance upon it for the development of nearly all forms of social relations. Language, I have suggested, is a coded shorthand necessary for sophisticated forms of communication, enabling us to avoid the Swiftian nightmare of communication by things.

In connection with this, I should mention a considerable school of thought that understands the constitution of the subject as a purely linguistic process, language being the stuff thought is made of: namely, Lacanian psycho-analysis. I do not want to offer any kind of critique of this discipline, its ambiguity contains much that is useful - it attempts to theorise the reflexive subject with great ingenuity for example - but makes it difficult to pin down into any kind of coherent form. Suffice to demonstrate, via this instance, the essentialism that accompanies the assertion that "Language re-produces reality. As there is no thought without language, knowledge of the world, of others and of

self is determined by language" (Lemaire, 1977, pp.53-53). This supposes that an infant, as a non-linguistic being (prior to his/her entry into the "symbolic order") has no access to systems of knowledge. This is simply wrong. An infant has the capacity to absorb simple forms of knowledge; it knows, for example, the difference between human beings and static objects, between its mother and other human beings. It does not have to make any kind of utterance to be constituted in the sign system; mother-breast-milk.

Further, it is posited that the infant, since it is removed from the "median" of language, lives in an immediate relation to the world, and it is language which somehow "distances him from his immediately lived truth" (Ibid, p.7).¹¹ This is nothing less than a concept of the essential real, wherein language = misrecognition of that reality - "the Impossible, the Truth, the Real" (Ibid, p.40) - and where - "There is in fact no common measure between what is spoken and what is lived, between the true essence and the manifestation of that essence in spoken discourse. In this discourse he pronounces upon himself, the subject moves progressively away from the truth of his essence" (Ibid, p.7). I shall not reiterate the criticism of the discourse/real relation that is articulated here, suffice to emphasise that, as psycho-analysis demonstrates, a discourse/real relation is necessarily subject to the many versions of a misrecognition theory, be it of language or ideology. It is only through a rigorous and coherent notion of signifying practice that such reductions can possibly be avoided.

Umberto Eco, in his discussion of frames, avoids the linguistic/non-linguistic distinction, so that just as understanding language involves knowledge of the frames it works within, so:

"the supermarket frame would involve virtually the notion of a place where people enter to buy items of different types, pick them up without mediation of any vendor, pay for them all together at a terminal counter, and so on. Probably a good frame of this sort involves also the list of all the commodities one can find in a supermarket (brooms: yes; cars: no)" (Eco, 1979, p.21).

Language must take its place as one amongst many, albeit one very important, semiological system.

iii. The material signifier

How do we conceive of the subject in signifying practice?

This is a problem, given the nature of signification as a process completed by the subject: as John Ellis put it, meaning "occurs only through the function of a subject, not through the fixed position of the sign" (Ellis, 1976 (a), p.212). In short, signification is a process that does not exist without the category of the subject - how could it? Signifieds (concepts) have no existence outside the mind. The reader of these lines will understand their meaning, but they are, in themselves, mere signifiers. Which, in turn, leads to a second question: how is it that within a given community/society, subjects share (unequally) a predominantly uniform set of significations? At this point, a familiar concept threatens to make a triumphant return.

In order to give this concept's re-entry the maximum credibility, let us re-pose these questions in a slightly different way. The practice of signification can be conceived as a practice of closure, whereby the possibilities of the signifier are limited by the fixity of that signification. Given the comparatively unmotivated character of the signifier,¹² we can conceive of the signifier as multi-referential, or plural. Hence, any act of signification will limit the potential plurality of the signifier: the subject is the place of closure. The questions are reformulated thus: how do we conceive of these systems of closure? of the subject as constitutive of that closure?

Coward and Ellis (amongst others) conceive the answers to those questions upon a new terrain, the realm of ideology which "defines the limits for, and works to fix the individual with a certain mental horizon" (Coward and Ellis, 1977, p.74). This seems to clarify the problems posed, as well as offering possibilities for theorising the concept of ideology, which becomes a practice relating to signification,

"a practice to produce a specific articulation, that is, producing certain meanings and necessitating certain subjects as their supports ... a practice of fixing on limiting of the endless productivity of the signifying chain" (Ibid, p.67). The subject is seen at once as a constitutive of signification and constituted by and in ideology. Signification and the subject are therefore both functions of ideology.

Before going any further with this convenient theory, it is pertinent to ask; what precisely constitutes ideology? - or even more pertinently, to what does this concept of ideology refer? On the one hand it seems to refer to the order of the signified; "producing certain meanings and necessitating certain subjects as their supports". In this instance, ideology has no material existence - i.e. the signified has no material existence. Alternatively, it exists materially, within the order of the signifier, granting this level a determinacy. Both these formulations are complex and problematic; but, since we cannot solve the mysteries of signification merely by naming them ('ideology'), whether or not we conceive of the sign in terms of its closure or its production (in terms of the "endless productivity of the signifying chain" or as a production in itself) it is necessary to theorise the theory of signification within that theory. Without doing this, the word ideology remains a purely 'theoretical' term, solving problems within theoretical discourse, but not beyond it, i.e. to the discourse of 'practice' (analysis). So, to return to the questions as first posed: there are three ways of conceptualising an answer to these problems -

- a) in terms of a notion of a naturally constitutive subject, whose nature constitutes a given set of significations;
- b) in terms of a notion of the transcendental signified, i.e. the signified that passes between subjects untainted by the risks of signification;
- c) in terms of a notion of the determinant signifier - determining a specific (set of) signification(s).

The first of these leads unambiguously to a thorough-going idealism. The second bears a more complex relation to idealist thought, and is also incompatible with the position that has been (is being) argued for , for two reasons.

Firstly, the transcendental signified refers only to systems of communication between subjects, most particularly the linguistic system. As I have stressed, systems of signification do not necessarily involve such inter-subjective communication. Secondly, the transcendental signified is necessarily a concept retaining its conceptual status throughout communication. To conceive of such a thing is to deny the nature of the sign as the product of a process of signification, and to return to the process of representation. The process of signification demands that the sign (in inter-subjective communication) is communicated as a signifier. This is necessarily so, once the word has left the mouth of the speaker it has (material) existence only as a signifier, whose meaning (signification) is constituted by/in the receiver. This is not a guaranteed form of communication; the signified - signifier - signified structure does not ensure the equivalence of the two signifieds. As Henry points out, "in order to interpret the messages he receives, the addressee must elaborate representations in connection with those messages. If the addressee is not able to build up such representations, the message is meaningless for him" (Henry, 1971, p.91). Only within a system of representation, where the signifier and signified are bound for all time , could the transcendental signified conceivably operate. Such a system denies the existence of historical change, signifying practice being somehow beyond history. Further, it denies the limited (specific) plurality of the sign, as it occurs and refers within and across discourses.

It is worth pointing out, nonetheless, that Saussure's conception of "langue" - a lexicon fixed within a given community - in some ways

corresponds to a system supportive of a transcendental signified. Moreover, both the notion of a language and a transcendental signified are more than mere aspects of a faulty theory. Returning to the original problem; within a community, the signified is able to pass from one subject to another relatively unscathed. While the signified cannot be, by nature, transcendent, it frequently behaves as if it were. The problem of understanding the subject within signification thus remains.

The determinate signifier, on its own, appears to refer to a rigorous empiricism in which the signifier designates itself. It is a notion that has been appropriated (by Coward and Ellis, following Lacan) in a form "that takes a priori the human semiological system" (Coward and Ellis, 1977, p.96) giving the determinacy of the signifier a new meaning. In other words, the 'determinate signifier' is not a self-contained concept, it derives its determinacy from a system. Exactly how this system operates is a crucial problem. Coward and Ellis conceive this system as the Saussurian system of difference:

"The determinant then is to be understood not by a link between the thing and the sign, but by the relation of signifiers: Saussurian linguistics does not look for identity, but for difference; each element ... different at each new instant of its repetition, and similar or identical only in opposition to other elements in the signifying chain" (Ibid, p.97).

The notion of difference is important; I have already referred - for example - to a conception whereby truth is not absolute but relational. It only exists within the difference of its oppositional term - falsity, untruth. It is not sufficient, however, to assert meaning as a product of difference between signifiers. I shall develop this point by clarifying the notion of difference in terms of its relation to the semiology/linguistics split.

What Coward and Ellis are analysing is a semiological system. The Saussurian notion of difference, on the other hand, refers to, and operates with, a linguistic system. The determinate signifier does not

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function equally within both contexts. The semiological system (incorporating the subject as the constitutive element in that system) posits a relation between signifier and signified that is not necessarily arbitrary, insofar as, for example, the concept of an object like a paving stone is related by sensory data, to the object it refers to. The subject, placed within a linguistic system establishes a relation between signifier and signified (word and concept) that is completely arbitrary. Words are privileged in this respect, more obviously dependent upon a code than any other signifiers. To analyse the linguistic system in the name of the semiological system, is unfortunately, common practice in semiology.¹³

Let us take the linguistic system first. The signifier is seen as determinate, although its relation to the signified is arbitrary. The system wherein the signifier exercises its determinacy is Saussurian in conception - "it is taken for granted that each individual enters into a pre-existent linguistic world" (Ibid, p.47, my emphasis). In other words, the determinate signifier, in linguistics, is dependent upon a notion of the always-already given (or language). They avoid the limitations of this system (I pointed these out in relation to the transcendental signified), of the already given, by introducing (to it) the notion of the constitutive subject, whose reflexivity is constitutive of the system, as well as being constituted by it. This allows the possibility of change occurring in the already given - indeed, it can be conceived as in a state of constant (albeit slow) flux. This position is useful, and, in one form or another necessary, but it still fails to explain the determinacy of the signifier. That is to say, the notion of difference only works on the assumption that words are already constituted - 'given'-as signs. The signifier 'absence' does not operate on terms of its difference to the signifier 'presence', but in terms of its difference to the sign presence. The notion of difference, then, bypasses the moment of signification, the moment of the signs production (as a function of the subject) by assuming a moment/signification

prior to that moment. Analogous to this is the "uses and gratifications" school of audience research, which understands the decoding of television messages in terms of how the viewing subject uses those messages to gratify certain needs. This conception also bypasses the moment at which opinion is formulated, so that the subject functions to reproduce or develop his/her own position in signification. The determinate signifier is contextualised, but not explained. This I shall attempt to do, in relation to signifying systems in general.

The photograph, if we momentarily suspend it from its context, whilst being as multi-referential as the linguistic signifier, does not exist in an arbitrary relation to its signifieds - particularly in terms of its principle realm of signification as an image, whereupon it is appropriated by the sense of sight as a visual object. Its meaning will be (in the first instance) determined by its context, this context resting upon a relation of equivalence. Suppose the photograph is of someone we know. The signifying chain will operate in terms of - among other things - the relation between the signified (how that person looks to me) of the signifier 'that person's appearance', and the signified (how that photograph looks to me) of the signifier 'the photographic image'. Now, our subsequent thoughts/comments - does it look like him/her? ... hasn't he/she changed ... etc., are based upon the assumption that the flat image, as a signifier, is in some way (in this case, by sight) equivalent to or associated with the person 'in the flesh', as a signifier. If we were unable to recognise photographs in this way we would see them completely differently (or more profoundly, we would not 'see' them because we would not have conceived of their existence).

This is, indeed, the experience of educationalists in societies unfamiliar with photographic or film technology. One, following his experience in Africa, described how, "if you get a picture of something that is familiar ... it may not even register as a picture of something ...; this is a flat thing ... not interpretable to the (untrained) eye" (Fosdale and Fosdale, 1966, p.610). An American film maker recorded a

similar experience in Iran (in the 1950's):

"We did a film on nutrition ... In part of the film we had the classroom with the professor up front, with charts, diagrams, pictures of the various vegetables and so forth. It was completely lost on the audience. They didn't understand that this was a carrot ...; that this was a cabbage ...; that this was a potato." (Ibid, p.611).

The ability to say of a picture of a carrot; "this is a carrot", is based on the learnt ability to construct relations between particular photographic images and particular objects.

So, we understand the photograph, in the first instance, not because of its difference (the second instance) to another signifier, but because of its equivalence/association. In this example we might say that one is 'like' (equal to) the other, while not being reducible to the other. As Peirce wrote, meaning "is, in its primary acceptation, the translation of a sign into another system of signs" so that "the meaning of a sign is the sign it has to be translated into" (from Eco, 1979, p.183).

An example of a slightly different kind: we understand, have knowledge of, a kitchen fork, in one instance, because we posit a relation of equivalence/association between the object as a signifier - the fork - and its function as a signifier (the practice of eating off a plate). Thus we can demonstrate or think; a fork is a tool for eating from a plate. This equivalence is unified by the functioning of the object. If we did not understand this function, we would not be able to pose this relation. We may, ultimately, be reduced to an understanding of the fork in terms of the signifieds produced by a sensory explanation of the non-functioning fork - it looks like ... it smells like ... If we confront the signifier (or are confronted by it) that is not 'like' anything, we will not be able to understand it, systematically, until a new system is imposed upon it.

This is what I conceive as the meaning of the functioning of the subject - the subject functions to produce relations of equivalence

between signifiers, which then constitute aspects of a system of difference. Language is perhaps the clearest example of this. We 'learn' a language by being placed in particular positions in relation to words (as signifiers) and the objects (as signifiers) they refer to. From these positions the words and the objects are in some way juxtaposed (as in a child's picture book) so that we can produce/constitute a relation of equivalence between them. It is in this sense that we are both constitutive and constituted. Our tutors (parents, teachers) will place us in these positions in order to encourage us to produce these relations, to constitute a semiological world akin to their own.

The process of 'learning' is therefore a practice that understands us as constitutive subjects, and places us in positions whence we can be expected to produce particular associations. So, while the subject is the constituting site of signification, that constituting is limited by the signifiers available to him/her, and therefore by the positions he/she is placed in.

What this presupposes is our ability to constitute equivalence/connections between signifiers, be it because of a formal/sequential relation (mother, breast, milk), a spatial relation (tea goes in the cup), a visual relation (the colour of grass is like the colour of leaves), an aural relation (Mrs. Thatcher sounds condescending - or 'like a woman who is condescending'), a functional relation (a fork is used for eating) etc., etc. These equivalences/associations can be extremely complex. We may find sunshine makes us feel happy, this association being dependent upon perhaps many signifying systems (linguistic and non-linguistic) in which sunshine and well-being are equivalent/associated.

Needles to say, all these systems are reliant upon sensory perception - how else can we relate to the material? A deaf, dumb, blind, person without his/her senses of touch, taste and smell would not know anything - he/she would have no means of establishing the existence of the material world. A significant demonstration of this concerns the truth/falsity relation. As Hawkes suggests, "the true nature of things may be said to lie not in things themselves, but in the relationships which we construct, and then perceive, between them" (Hawkes, 1977, p.17). Frequently, we can assert falsity because a sign refers

to the material existence of another on a level at which it has none, or, alternatively, we can assert the non existence of something on a level (of signification) at which it has a material existence. Religion can be used to demonstrate this. The notion 'God exists' cannot be true, insofar as it either: poses an equivalence between a material object (i.e. God exists in a material form) and a

(material) linguistic sign ('God'), whereupon it collapses due to the non-existence of the signifier on the non-linguistic level; or, it relies upon a notion of an abstract force, whereupon its existence cannot be posited beyond the mind of the religious subject. God's existence as a visible signification is dependent upon associations formed on a linguistic level. The existence of Jesus will be more problematic in terms of a truth/falsity relation. The furthest we may be able to go in terms of an assertion of this kind is to demonstrate the non-existence of his supernatural practices in terms of a discourse of physical science.¹⁴

Now, as I have suggested, the subject does not do all this constituting by his/ herself. Left to his/her own devices, the human subject would know very little (although this limited knowledge was sufficient to enable men and women to develop collectively into society/societies with extremely sophisticated levels of knowledge - 'society' did not spring up from nowhere), being constituted by signifying systems of a simple, fairly basic, kind, accumulating little more than the knowledge necessary for survival. The subject, in our society, is constituted in already formed systems of signification, his tutors (principle among these, parents and teachers)¹⁵ placing him/her in contrived positions in relation to signifiers, in order to encourage connections/equivalences in the subject's consciousness. The subject thereby learns to equate and differentiate between signifiers, whether as a T.V. programme or a plate of food, his/her memory enabling a vast accumulation of signs. It is in this context that the determinant signifier may be conceived, and it is largely through socially constitutive practices, apparatuses, etc., that the signifier is placed in its specific position for a specific determination.¹⁶ It is through the moments of associative signification that the subject accumulates a memory of already signified signifiers. Henceforth, apart from providing a necessary basis for understanding a truth/falsity relation, the determinate signifier is a

concept only really useful to the moment prior to the construction of a (dynamic) "a priori human semiological system". The establishment of such a system (with its shared systems of signification) clearly transfers determinacy to the signified in conjunction either with other signifieds - or what we might call reflexivity - or between signified and signifier - the already-thought and the to-be-thought. The functioning of the subject will, because of memory (learning) give considerable power to the non-material (signified) to determine the closure of the material (signifier). The term 'open minded' is meaningful in this context, referring to the desire to permit greater determinacy to the level of the signifier, either in determining new meaning (signification) rather than closing signification within an already signified structure, or else in refusing to close signification to a single signified by acknowledging the plurality of the sign within already signified discourses. The 'closed mind' then becomes a pre-condition for the development of myth (see the first definition of ideology below) - a false or non-existent essential correspondence between signifiers - in an instance whereby the subject allows the already-thought to appropriate understanding of a signifier in a way that fails to correspond to the specific materiality of that signifier. The discourse guaranteeing policemen as signifiers of legitimacy makes it difficult to construct an adequate explanation of the death of Blair Peach, for example, without the construction of an alternative set of signifieds, i.e. without thinking an alternative set of signifiers.

iv. Ideology revisited?

In such a formulation, what is the place for a concept of ideology? Language and Materialism conceives ideology as the necessary means of closure in the signifying world. While, as I have stated, this fails to specify the precise existence of ideology beyond a functional entity within a specific linguistic discourse, it is also slightly misleading.

The notion of closure works within a concept of a potentially limitless plurality, i.e. in relation to the non-existent. It is important to stress that the associative and differential forms of signifying practice are productions rather than limitations - 'closure' therefore refers to the production of meaning. To call such productions ideological is a tautology (because in this formula signifying practice = ideology) and therefore superfluous. At this stage it is useful to retrace our steps.

We have seen that in order to avoid the problems of a theory of false consciousness (with its built-in economism) the notion of ideology was set free from the restrictions of a truth/falsity relation cast in an empiricist mould within a subject-object structure. In order to go beyond that structure, Althusser and post-Althusserian ideological theory has designated the subject-object structure as necessarily an ideological relation. In so doing, certain epistemological conceptions relating to that structure are placed in jeopardy - as Hindess and Hirst's work demonstrates. This development has created a notion of ideology reducible to a notion of signification. What semiology has provided is the wherewithal for an epistemological breakthrough, via an understanding of the material signifier, recasting the subject-object structure without succumbing to an essentialism, so that the truth/falsity relation can be understood within what might be called a subject/object-object structure.

Any theory (like Althusser's) which seek to collapse or circumvent the subject/object structure, in an attempt to construct a non-empiricist materialism (my aim also), are patently misguided. To deny the subject/object structure is to deny signification itself.

In some senses, we have come full circle. By abandoning (or trying to) a non-correspondence theory of ideology, the very *raison d'être* of the concept within Marxism has been jettisoned also, arriving at a concept which can no longer usefully be termed ideology. If the term

is not to become altogether unnecessary, thought must move towards a careful redefinition within a semiological context. Two options seem to me to present themselves as viable, both involving a more circumspect and precise articulation than hitherto.

- a) Ideology as a notion of non-correspondence within a subject/object-object structure. This would allow instances to be designated (such as those recently cited in relation to God and Blair Peach) in which the asserted signifier-signified relation fails to correspond; in other words where the signified signifies correspondence with another signifier in an instance where that signifier does not exist or is incoherent. Such a concept of ideology would refer almost exclusively to linguistic discourses.
- b) Ideology is a notion of discursive forms, although requiring a basis within a truth/falsity relation, placed beyond or outside the parameters of such a relation. In this sense aesthetics or morality might be instances of the ideological, referring as they do to systems of value rather than systems of truth. Such a definition (as I have already indicated) would need precise articulation within political discourse, which refer to both systems of value and systems of truth/falsity.

Both definitions have the merit of coherency. Nevertheless, the ground marked out by such definitions would perhaps benefit from an association with signifiers other than ideology! To perpetuate a term, some of whose considerable problematic meanderings I have tried to follow, would seem to be more trouble than it was worth.

FOOTNOTES:

1. I realise that, in this formula, the meaning of the word ideology becomes a problem. I shall discuss this later.
2. The 'real' as a concept has become problematic, hence the inverted commas.
3. This point is made by Stuart Hall (Ideology and Consciousness 3, 'The subject/ideology couplet' p.116); albeit from a different position.
4. Much of this stems from Saussurean linguistics, which pose a relation between the thing and the (linguistic) sign, rather than between two signs. I shall move on to briefly discuss this.
5. This second term is not a particularly useful one. I shall refer to existence prior to signification, quite simply, as a (series of) signifier(s).
6. We may, for example, make a statement reliant upon a relation of truth like: "wealth is distributed unequally amongst our citizens", any subsequent statement concerning political action (to alter or sustain this state of affairs) will be dependent upon a value judgment, such as "we must alter this manifest inequality".
7. This is a point I shall take up again later. I think it is an important and elucidatory one, needless to say. It enables us to draw a straight line through, for example, the complex meanderings of the Chambers/Ellis debate (Working Paper in 'Cultural Studies'; nos. 6 and 9) insofar as it resolves problems on both sides. It enables the reconstitution of Chambers' problems concerning the reality of a kitchen sink, as part of a non-linguistic signifying system, while endorsing the substance of Ellis' arguments on the nature of language with the proviso that we expand (or clarify - after all, his argument relies upon semiological suppositions) his term language to refer to all signifying systems. This is nothing more than a semantic procedure, although I have not chosen to define language in this way in this essay, since it irons out any fabrications that rely upon the specificity of the linguistic system that Ellis may care to develop.
8. I use inverted commas because this use of the word material implies its opposition to the non material linguistic sign. I am therefore quoting from an argument that, as I have now stated, goes against my own.
9. If this were so, the linguistic sign 'Tyrannosaurus Rex' would relate not to a once living animal, but to remnants of fossilised skeletons.
10. As it exists today, discourse theory has not developed beyond a 'superior' linguistics. Because it still privileges the linguistic discourse it is still subject to the pitfalls consequential to the sign/'material' referent distinction.

11. In Language and Materialism the awkwardness of this claim is excused via its status as a "mythical hypothesis" (p.101), mythical because it is hypothesised through language. This is subject to the same form of relativism of the theory it attempts to excuse.
12. This obviously varies, as in the Piercean divisions between iconic and symbolic signifiers. Nevertheless, no sign represents itself.
13. It can, perhaps, be partially explained by the Saussurian influence, and by the tendency of writers like Coward and Ellis, drawing upon Kristeva, Barthes and the Tel Quel group, to concentrate upon literary texts, particularly those of the likes of Mallarmé and Joyce - these exemplifying the plurality of the sign.
14. Science's dependence upon a truth/falsity relation perhaps explains Althusser's privileging of it as a discourse.
15. Or what Althusser called 'I.S.A.s'.
16. As I have already stated, this determinacy is not guaranteed. Freudian psycho-analysis has shown the existence of 'misplaced' association in the neurotic patient.

3 THE ENCODING/DECODING MODEL

CRITICISMS AND REDEVELOPMENTS

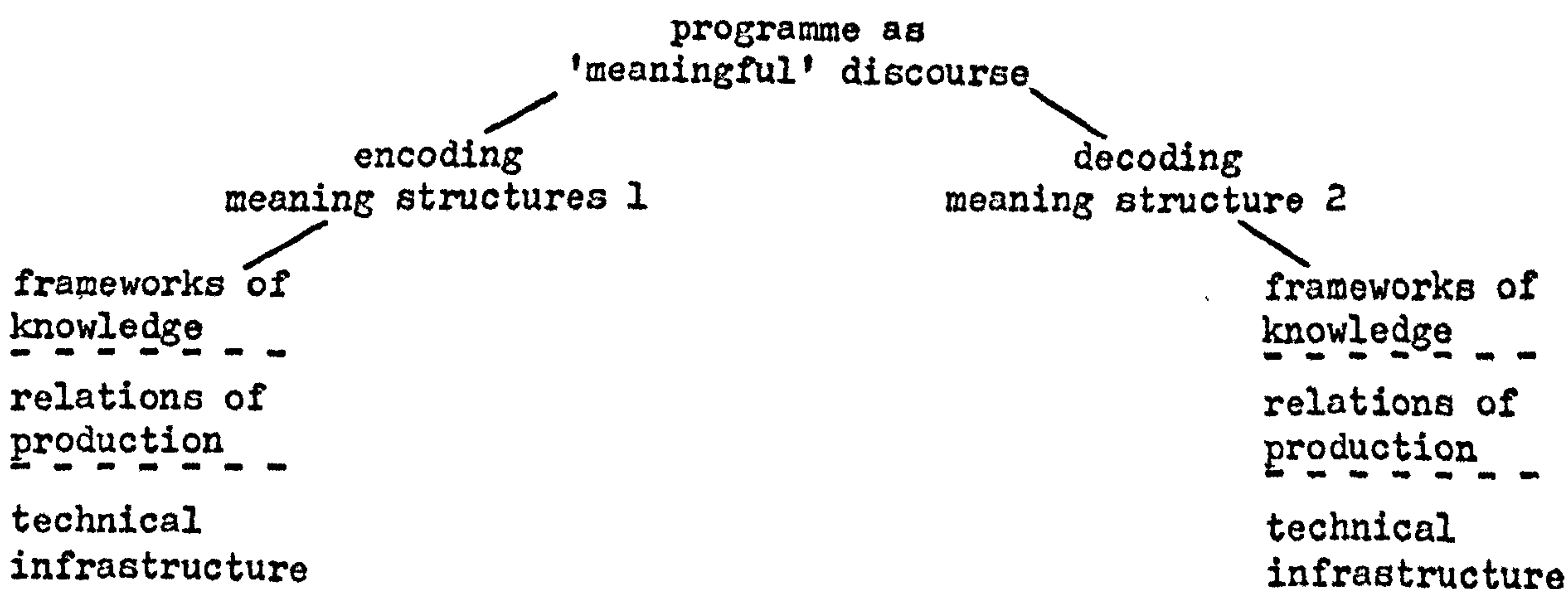
i. Encoding and decoding

The development of the encoding/decoding model represents an important stage in the conceptualisation of televisual communication. It is, above all, a semiological conception. It allows us to conceive of the T.V. programme not so much as a distortion/reproduction of the world, but as a stage in a process - a product of a specific set of signifying practices (encoding) whose meanings are ultimately fixed by a second set of signifying practices (decoding). Thus, in essence, we have:

signifier (event/object) → encoding → signifier (T.V. programme) → decoding

In what follows I shall investigate problems with recent formulations and adaptations of this conception of television, with particular regard to the analysis of decoding practices. David Morley's work as, perhaps, the most serious foray into this field, will come under special scrutiny.¹ If, as Morley writes at the end of The Nationwide Audience, we are to move "onwards, out of the swamp", this work, together with its theoretical forerunners, needs a solid reappraisal.

Before briefly considering the notion of encoding, the relative status of the two practices needs to be clarified. The encoding/decoding model is frequently represented as a thing of symmetry, decoding being seen as the mirror image of encoding. Stuart Hall's articulation of the model posits such an equivalence:



This equivalence is a theoretical/conceptual device, a golden mean against which the lack of fit between encoding and decoding can be measured. Although "'meaning structures 1' and 'meaning structures 2' may not be the same" and the "codes of encoding and decoding may not be perfectly symmetrical", Hall argues that this "depends upon the degrees of identity/non-identity between the codes which perfectly or imperfectly transmit or systematically distort what has been transmitted" (Hall, 1980, p.131). Obviously, there will be a lack of fit, but this is not because of the non-identity of the codes, for this is to deny the materiality of the T.V. programme, and, subsequently, the different conditions fundamental to the two practices' existence. Encoding is a signifying practice selecting and interpreting a whole world of signifiers, while decoding negotiates with an exclusively televisual object. While that televisual object may signify the world prior to encoding, its status (as a signifier) is very different. Encoding produces a signifying entity that cuts across two worlds - as Roger Silverstone puts it:

"These two worlds juxtapose at the screen, both a domestic nodal point and a frame for the display of the limited, vicarious and often crucial experiences that television makes constantly available." (Silverstone, 1981, p.12).

If we are to decode critically, in terms of the gap/contradiction between objects on the screen and objects elsewhere (between, for example, our knowledge of gender positions in Dallas, and our knowledge outside Dallas), we must do so in relation to two distinct signifying systems. Encoding, on the other hand, is always prior to the televisual object.²

The T.V. programme links the two practices. It also marks the point of separation between them.

ii. The encoder and the encoded

Hall, and others following him, conceives encoding as a specific form of cultural production in a world of culturally produced significations.

This identifies two moments of signification:

a) Signification in general. Hall describes this as follows:

"Any society/culture tends, with varying degrees of closure, to impose its classifications of the social and cultural and political world. These constitute a dominant cultural order, though it is neither univocal nor uncontested ... The different areas of social life appear to be mapped out into discursive domains, hierarchically organised into dominant or preferred meanings." (Hall, 1980, p.136).

b) Encoding as a signifying practice, negotiating with the "social and cultural world" to produce the programme as a meaningful discourse. The programme thus becomes a "framework of ... preferred structures of meaning which have been encoded." (Hall, 1976, p.67).

This specifies two levels of "preferred meanings"; a primary level produced by the signifying practices general to the social, cultural, political world; and a secondary level produced by the signifying practices of televisual encoding. This perspective enables Hall to conceive of what he calls the "professional code" of television broadcasters, a code working "to reproduce (via "defining elites") the hegemonic signification of events." (Hall, 1980, p.136). The second level of signifying practice - encoding - is therefore "relatively autonomous", either working "within the 'hegemony' of the dominant code" or outside it.

There is, before going any further, a fundamental problem with this model. How can we represent it semiologically? It is all very well to postulate encoding as a practice operating upon an already constituted system of signs, but what binds these signs together? In other words, if the sign is constituted (i.e. the signifier is thought) prior to encoding, who does this constituting?

The sign has no material existence, since meaning is brought to words or objects, not inscribed within them. Only the signifier - the unit prior to meaning - exists as a material entity, the sign requires

the presence of a (constituting) subject. What a society does is not to present the subject with ready made signs, but to offer a determinate structure of signifiers, a concrete series of associations (the object and the word, the object and the action, etc.) and differences, allowing the subject (as a sign producing agency) to operate within a specific set of limitations. In short, society is structured in a way that encourages certain meanings. The problem with understanding television as a secondary sign producing agency, operating upon the work done by primary agencies, is that it implies the existence of a set of privileged agencies, with privileged access to the signifier, without identifying them. As Morley has pointed out, in relation to the preferred meaning:

"Hegemony has been treated as an abstract concept - referring rather widely to the whole field of cultural processes through which dominant meanings are constructed - without these particular processes being examined in any detail." (Morley, 1981, p.5).

To say that the "professional code" works to reproduce dominant meanings by recruiting a specific set of "primary definers", is to beg a number of questions. Do we define dominant meanings in relation to their authorship (out of the mouths of politicians and judges), and therefore in relation to the economic/social position of the authors? If so, where are these "defining elites" - The Trade Union leader, the politician, the expert - signified as primary definers prior to their selection by television? What is the relation between "dominant meanings" and those who articulate them? How much of the signifying world can be understood within the framework of a hegemonic meaning structure?

The problem here is not merely the abstract character of the "whole field of cultural processes through which dominant meanings are constructed", but the implicit exclusion of televisual encoding from that field of cultural processes. Television is seen as reproducing meanings (or not), rather than producing them. This is to accord television the same status as³ those communication models that see the

T.V. message as a simple representation/misrepresentation of social reality (rather than an agency constructing and negotiating with social reality). While many versions of the encoding/decoding model certainly go beyond such a conception of television as a straightforward mediator, the formulation of two levels of signifying practice remains (the semiological problem aside) confused. Briefly, we need to identify the encoder and encoded.

This problem becomes more distinct when we consider the television fiction. Television fiction represent a suitable meeting point for a number of different forms of analysis: the exploration of specific determinations upon encoding have met up with the generic, narrational and textual approaches developed in relation to the cinema.⁴ This broadening of theoretical horizons results, I would suggest, from a recognition that the T.V. fiction problematises any simple divisions between a world prior to encoding, and the practices and conventions informing encoding. Because there is no real Hilda Ogden, we are unable to reduce analysis to measures of representation/misrepresentation. Hilda Ogden is the locus of a whole range of signifying practices, be they within the school, the family, the film, the novel or the advertisement. Furthermore, Hilda Ogden's relationship to the Coronation Street narrative provides its own specific determinations.

Yet, many of the questions opened up by work on fiction can be addressed equally well to television news/current affairs. Practices of scheduling (based upon what Richard Paterson has called "audience aggregation" and the consequent cultural location of the family audience), linguistic determinations;⁵ narrative determinations,⁶ generic determinations (such as the novel or the newspaper),⁷ cultural stereotyping (as Brunsdon and Morley showed, the whole concept of Nationwide relies upon references to cultural stereo-types), as well as the fluctuating ideologies of news value and professionalism, make the dividing line between signifying practices within, or prior to, encoding

rather difficult to locate. Trevor Pateman's study of the 1974 General Election solved (or avoided) this problem by conceiving of this news event as a "television election" (Pateman, 1974, p.2). Political representations and televisual representations were seen as part of the same signifying practice. Hall, Connell and Curti, on the other hand, do not accept such a conflation, arguing that:

"If we accept that Television plays a mediating role, it follows that elections as political events, remain distinct from their presentation as television events. The two are related ... but they are not immediately interchangeable." (Hall, Connell and Curti, 1976, p.52).

While, as Pateman argues, political events and discourses are frequently formulated as media events, to suit the requirements of a televisual form (and, as such, are incorporated within the encoding process), it is correct to say that those political formulations do have their own conditions of existence. The problem of conceiving televisual signifying practice within/in relation to other forms of signifying practice is important, not merely for the sake of theoretical coherence, but in marking out areas of cultural and political struggle.

iii. Encoding as signifying practice

To recapitulate, there are a number of problems with the model of television as a secondary sign-fixing practice.

- a) A semiological problem of conceiving T.V. as a mediator of pre-constructed meanings. This gives the sign a material existence, and denies the activity of television as a sign producing agency (with access to the level of the signifier). This, in turn, subverts the essential semiological model with which we began. This point will be taken up again in relation to the 'preferred reading' of the T.V. message.
- b) This leads towards reducing television to a medium, either reproducing or not reproducing the dominant political/ideological meaning of the world it represents.

- c) A problem of indentifying the boundaries of encoding practice - what constitutes encoding and the encoded?
- d) A problem of specifying the relationship between encoding and other signifying practices.

The solution to these difficulties is to reassert the status of watching television as a signifying practice, to rescue T.V. viewing from any positions that relegate that practice to a secondary stage in a communication process. Watching television is a signifying practice, distinct from other signifying practices. Decoding television is not to reproduce significations produced within the political/social/cultural world, it is a signifying apparatus inscribed within the political/social/cultural world. Whether that practice reflects or subverts so-called 'preferred' or 'dominant' meanings within a society is not the point; the televisual media are inscribed within the range of signifying practices that produce and reproduce meanings, that structure relations of dominance and hegemony. The world prior to encoding, from this position, is seen as a world of signifiers rather than significations. The task of critics is consequently to locate other discourses, practices and institutions outside encoding practices and therefore to:

- a) appropriate significations referring to signifiers ignored by televisual discourses - the absence of the signifier from encoding practice nullifying the possibility of signification. In short, talk about things T.V. ignores;
- b) appropriate significations absent within media discourses, yet which refer to the same elements on the level of the signifier; in short, employ a process of re-interpretating the information signified on T.V.

Whilst these last points seem pretty obvious, they avoid the mistake of seeing changes in television merely as consequences of changes within "the dominant cultural order", or vice versa. Analysis can then be directed to the whole range of determinations upon television

as a series of signifying practices. We can then analyse how these practices work reflexively with other practices (whether in the family, in Parliament, or in the cinema).

iv. The T.V. text

Much has been written about the thing itself, the message, as a semiological object. The degree of fixity of meaning, or the power of the text to determine its own set of readings, are questions that lie at the very heart of any audience research. Consequently, practitioners of the encoding/decoding model have been aware of the need to avoid "two equally unsatisfactory positions" (Morley, 1981, p.5). They fluctuate between, for example, some of those developed in Screen that theorise "the near total effectivity of the text" (Morley, 1980, p.148), by positing the existence of an inscribed subject position into which the reader is placed to be manipulated (by the text), and those that grant the reader power to determine his/her own reading, a position commonly associated with the 'Uses and Gratifications' school. Decoding, as Morley stresses, must be seen as a product of two determinations, the reader and the text, reducible to neither. The encoding/decoding formulation has attempted to steer a path between these positions in terms of the notion of a "preferred reading". The message is thus:

"a complex sign, in which a preferred reading has been inscribed, but which retains the potential, if decoded in a manner different from the way in which it has been encoded, of communicating a different meaning. The message is thus a structured polysemy ... all meanings do not exist equally in the message; it has been structured in dominance, although its meaning can never be totally fixed or closed." (Ibid, p.10.).

This would appear to be a considerable step forward - a "preferred reading" is inscribed within the message (as "a complex sign"), although the decoder is not obliged to accept it. There are, however, a number of problems that cannot be overcome by merely differentiating between subjects within and outside the text. Clearly, any theoretical position must acknowledge the

activity of the decoding subject in constituting significations; the problem lies in locating the boundaries upon that activity. The Screen position has rightly been attacked for conflating the textual subject and the real subject in history, for conceiving the subject as merely a textual production, and therefore failing to distinguish between:

"'real' readers/authors and inscribed ones, constructed or marked in and by the text. Real readers are subjects of a single text. The two types of subject are not commensurate." (Willeman, 1978, p.48).

Morley uses this distinction in The Nationwide Audience in order to specify the status of the notion of the 'preferred reading'. So, while there exists "an unbridgeable gap between 'real' readers/authors and 'inscribed ones'", the former, being "subjects in history, living on social formations" who "always exceed the subject implied by the text", yet "the social subject is also restricted by the positionality the text offers it" (Morley, 1980, p.159). In other words, there exists an (encoded) inscribed positionality operational within the structured dominance of the preferring reading, which may or may not determine the reading and which may be accepted, negotiated or opposed by the "subject in history".

The textual subject - the subject positioned "in and by the text" - is not a unitary category. It can refer to:

- a) the 'I' of the narrative, the position of the camera (point of view);
- b) the textual strategies which are said to construct (absent) subject positions in relation to a 'preferred' reading.

In endorsing the existence of both these levels of signifying practice, the critics of certain positions adopted in Screen have merely differentiated between the Screen position and the 'preferred reading' by distinguishing between textual subjects and 'real' subjects. To emphasize the existence of the decoding subject is, of course, vital. However, what is also crucial is this; to simply point to a distinction between an inscribed

subject (in relation to a 'preferred' reading) and a real historical subject is not to deny the priori existence of an inscribed positionality, merely to deny its effectivity. This is to posit an essential preferred reading and a range of (dominant, negotiated, oppositional) responses in relation to it. This is to effectively reproduce the Screen position and, by implication, the functioning of the subject in constituting signification is denied.

Here we see the problem with the notion of the 'preferred reading', incorporated into the encoding/decoding model as part of the structure of the message prior to the act of reading. Morley, in his postscript to his work on the Nationwide audience, acknowledges this difficulty:

"Is the preferred reading a property of the text per se? Or is it something that can be generated from the text (by a 'skilled' reading) via certain specifiable procedures? Or is the preferred reading that reading which the analyst is predicting that most members of the audience will produce from the text? In short, is the preferred reading a property of the text, the analyst or the audience?" (Morley, 1981, p.6).

The answer must inevitably be: the audience. Any determinacy granted the text must acknowledge its status, before decoding, as a structure of signifiers, constituted as signs by decoding (as a signifying practice). The text is only "a complex sign" once it has been read. Morley's first option does not exist, since a readerless text has no meaning at all, while the task of the analyst can only be, as Barthes puts it:

"not to reduce the Text to a signified, whatever it may be ... but to hold its significance fully open."
(Barthes, 1977, p.141).

The fact that many decoders will come up with the same reading does not make that meaning an essential part of the text. The power of the text's signifiers to determine a specific set of readings will be constituted by historical subjects, whose place in society/history will enable them to form the same associations and differences, the same signifying patterns. We must therefore replace the 'preferred reading' model:

Constant

text/preferred meaning/inscribed subject
with a semiological model of decoding practice:

Variable

subject in history

Variable

text + subject in history

Variable

preferred readings/subject positions

Morley does, in fact, try to go beyond the 'preferred meaning' model in his postscript to the Nationwide study, in a number of ways. While these attempts strain the 'preferred reading' model to its limits, they do not, I would suggest, actually make the necessary fundamental shift towards a semiological model.

Firstly, he identifies a problem with the Nationwide studies in conceptualising the 'preferred reading' on a "higher level of textual organisations" than the syntagmatic relations between monemes, referring exclusively to notions such as 'framing'. The syntagmatic and paradigmatic choices that arrange specific signifiers in a specific way are, as Morley points out, crucial in the organisation of meaning.⁸ While this is a move away from conceiving the text as fixed blocks of meaning it still retains a Saussurean conception of langue, a natural language whose essential units are fixed, a world of denotative meanings where the sign is no longer negotiable. This problem is anticipated in Hall's seminal encoding/decoding essay, where the notion of denotation is retained for analytical use only, so that the distinction between a culture's "deep semantic codes" (denotation) and its "more active ideological dimensions" (connotation) can be drawn (Hall, 1980, pp.132-134).⁹ The danger of this analytical distinction is that, since it is made by the analyst (and not by the decoder) it might prove pre-emptive, although audience research cannot hope to avoid assuming a certain level of direct correspondence between the significations constituted by the analyst and by the decoder. A 'denotative' meaning of a word can never represent the totality of the thing it refers to, merely to particular

aspects of it. Since no object has any essentially definitive aspects, the cluster of aspects that are captured in the denotative meaning can never be fixed or permanent. The word can never be more than a symbol, and, as Peirce wrote:

"every symbol is a living thing ... The body of the symbol changes slowly, but its meaning inevitably grows, incorporates new elements and throws out old ones." (Eco, 1981, p.186).

Secondly, Morley attempts to go beyond the textual subject/historical subject division by adding a third term - "the addressee: the author's conception of whom s/he is addressing/will be read by". While this is a vital consideration in analysing encoding, as explored by Richard Paterson in "Planning the Family: The Art of the Television Schedule" (Screen, 1980, no.35), it does not refer to practices of decoding.

Thirdly, Morley redefines the notion of "the reader inscribed within the text ... in relation to different genres of texts, rather than in relation to individual texts" (Morley, 1981, p.12), in an "attempt to establish discursive connections which can account for the purchase of particular textual forms on particular categories of readers, under determinate socio-historical conditions" (Ibid, p.11). This is a sophisticated approach, yet it (once again) presupposes the research necessary to establish generic unities between texts, particular categories of readers and the relationship between them. Such an approach would limit the scope of a decoding study by predefining both genre and audience without providing the empirical evidence necessary to validate statements about the relationship between them.¹⁰

The limitations imposed upon analysis of data by the "preferred reading" concept become clearer in practice. It is therefore to Morley's analysis of The Nationwide Audience material that I now turn.

v. Preferring responses

To separate the text from the reader (by substituting the decoder with the researcher's decoding) is to run the risk of predefining the range

of responses in the style of the 'effects' school of audience research. Now, while Morley rejects the 'effects' approach for its failure to explore "the level at which decoding operates" (Morley, 1980, p.30), there are points at which his own theoretical tools force him back into a sophisticated version of the 'effects' position. Just as 'effects' research inscribes the text with a meaning in order to categorise responses to that meaning, so the 'preferred reading' ignores "the level at which decoding operates" in order to measure a response to the 'preferred' meaning (I use the term 'meaning' rather than 'reading', because meaning is inscribed before the act of reading).

It is symptomatic of this approach that it involves a theoretical exclusion of a specific "socio-historical" determination upon the practice of decoding; what Paul Henry calls the "discursive effect" (Henry, 1971, pp.91-95). This, briefly, identifies the difference in the conditions of the decoding context precipitated by each successive stage of the utterance/message. Henry argues that the difference between the generator of the message (Δ) and the representation of the message (R) is internally analysed (by the decoder) to produce a change in the (decoder's) conditions of production ($|\neg'$) of meaning. This gives us:

The utterance received: Δ l R l \leftarrow $|\neg'$ l (conditions of production)

\downarrow

$|\neg'$ l + l (new conditions of production)

In other words, with each act of signification (Δ R) the conditions of message reception change. Edward Branigan makes a similar point in relation to what he calls "levels of narration" in the visual narrative. He demonstrates, in relation to shifting points of view in the succession of camera shots structuring the narrative, how "each successive level of narration implicates a new subject". He argues that reading is not so much a movement towards a final signified, but a constant process of reinterpretation, or (borrowing from Roland Barthes): "reading is a process of l name, l unname, l rename" (Branigan, 1981, p.58). Although these movements would be extremely difficult to locate in the difficult

practice of audience research, the development of meaning that takes place during interviews with decoders involve more obvious manifestations of the "discursive effect" (I shall take up this point again later, in relation to the social groupings of interviewees).

Although Morley moves beyond the model of responses used in The Nationwide Audience (in the Critical Postscript) I shall briefly detail the problems with that model. Having constructed a 'preferred reading' of the Nationwide text, Morley used a model developed from Parkin to identify three categories of response:

- a) "where the audience interprets the message in terms of the same code employed by the transmitter, e.g. where both inhabit the dominant ideology", i.e. where the 'preferred' reading is accepted;
- b) "where the audience employs a negotiated version of the code employed by the transmitter", i.e. where the 'preferred' reading is partially accepted;
- c) "where the audience employs an oppositional code to interpret the message and therefore interprets its meaning through a different code from that employed by the transmitter", i.e. where the 'preferred' meaning is rejected (Morley, 1980, p.23).

In other words, there is only one 'preferred' reading, and three categories of response depending upon the decoder's willingness to inhabit that reading, rather than three 'preferred' readings. When, for example, Ralph Nader was given a devil's advocate interview on Nationwide, Morley felt the 'preferred reading' of Nader to be a negative one. In other words, in the discursive struggle between the interviewer (on behalf of Nationwide) and Mr. Nader, Morley reads the encounter as a 'win' for Nationwide. Consequently, when a group of trainee telephone engineers endorse Ralph Nader's position, Morley asserts that they "reject the preferred, negative reading of Nader" (Ibid, p.48). Surely, what the trainee telephone engineers reveal is that Morley's reading amounted to

a premature closure of the text. Quite simply, they prefer a different meaning to Morley's.

By privileging what he sees as the substantive ideological propositions framing the text, the 'oppositional' category unifies a range of responses that might otherwise bear witness to the text's multireferentiality. The group of European management trainees who saw Nationwide as "very pro-Labour", and situated themselves in opposition to this reading of Nationwide, (Ibid, p.123) constructed a 'preferred' reading of Nationwide very much opposed to Morley's preferred reading (the fact that "the substance of their arguments pulls in precisely the same direction as ... Nationwide" (Ibid, p.126), does not make their decoding of the programme any less oppositional), while the group of shop stewards actually confirm the 'preferred' reading constructed by Morley (they 'see through' the programme in much the same way) only to reject "the political line that runs under the whole thing" (Ibid, p.116) - in much the same way that Morley would. Both groups construct "oppositional" readings in entirely different ways, i.e. both rejected what they perceived as the text's preferred readings.

Morley's analysis of these two readings disguises the problems created by the privileging of substantive ideological propositions he sees Nationwide preferring. While the shop stewards are seen as rejecting the Nationwide discourse from an oppositional ideological position, the trainee managers are labelled as "subjects out of position", "only in a formal sense" (Ibid, p.126). This statement is based on Morley's ability to locate his preferred reading of Nationwide and the discourses of the trainee managers within a unified "dominant ideology". The problem is that this is done not by analysing their decoding practices, but outside those practices, in terms of "the substance of their arguments". The subsequent distinctions made between the "formal" and "ideological" levels (I shall consider the use of these kinds of concepts shortly) rely upon the preconstructed "preferred reading", and tells us very little

about the actual relationship between the textual signifiers and the pattern of significations brought to bear upon them. At worst, this position amounts to a double-sided use of the "intentional fallacy".¹¹ "The code employed by the transmitter" is extrapolated from the text (as an "ideological proposition") and is matched up to the codes employed by the receiver; extrapolated from their discourse, in order to measure the ideological harmony/disharmony behind both articulations. While this exercise is perfectly valid for the study of determinations upon the process of encoding, it is inappropriate as a means of investigating the construction of meaning (decoding).

Morley acknowledges this problem (of intentionality) in the Critical Postscript, as well as the accepting the limitations imposed by three hypothetical "overtly political" decoding positions. In doing so he attempts to move towards a more flexible, more widely applicable decoding model than the approach developed from Parkin. The Parkin model is replaced by the notion of "genre" or:

"Sets of rules for the production of meaning - rules governing the combinations of signs into specific patterns which regulate the production of texts by authors and the reading of texts by audiences." (Morley, 1981, p.10).

This is clarified in relation to notions of "cultural competences", "reading publics" and "the organisation of diversity". As such, it represents a considerable advance towards a semiological model, capable of explaining how and why specific meanings are constituted in specific socio-historical contexts. Needless to say, a great deal of work needs to be done to establish the analytical tools necessary for such a project. Moreover, before this stage is reached, two fundamental points need clarification: how do we conceive of the determinate structure of the text, and how do we conceptualise an audience before decoding comes into play? I shall develop these points in relation to perhaps the two most substantial problems revealed in Morley's work: the use of the form/content division undercut by a restricted use of the

concept of signification; and the categorising of social groups based upon certain theoretical assumptions.

vi. Signification: form and content

Most models of textual analysis tend to conceive two levels of textual organisation, using different (but not necessarily interchangeable) terms: syntagm/paradigm; the totality/the exterior; narrative closure/polysemy. Despite the fact that these divisions are frequently appropriate analytical tools, I shall argue that the extension of these divisions to the broad generalities of form and content can lead to misleading conceptions of how signification actually works.

In The Nationwide Audience Morley conceives the T.V. message as a discourse constructed along two planes: "the level of the ideological" is the level of a subject's socio-cultural viewpoint," at which particular problematics are reproduced and accepted or rejected", whereas "the level of signification" is mechanistic and structural, determining the subject's position "in the signifying chain" (Morley, 1980, p.140). He explains this distinction in relation to Heath and Strirrow's piece on World in Action, which (he argues, quoting Alan O'Shea), in its exclusive concentration on the "form of signification" leaves "no place for the other 'circuit', the viewer as bearer of a complex of interpellations, many of which are not constructed by the T.V. text". Thus when the "authors argue that Dudley Fiske - the 'expert' called in to sum up the problem of truancy - has the power that he does within the discourse by virtue of his formal position within the structure of the text and narrative" they are ignoring the "what" of ideology, i.e. who he is - "his social position" - and "what he says". He consequently argues that we must "pose the ideological field as the space within which signification operates", since "signification always occurs in ideology" (Ibid, pp.153-155).

Morley, referring to Paul Hirst's work on Althusser's theory of ideology, criticises that work for "reducing ideology to signification" (Ibid, p.151). This criticism reveals a common tendency to reduce the field identifiable as signification. The problem with Hirst's rearticulation of ideological relations as signifying relations is that it carries the Althusserian break with an orthodox Marxist theory of ideology to its logical conclusion, so that ideology defines all relations between subject and object, between signifier and signified. This is hardly a reduction! Indeed, Hirst could be criticised here for giving the concept of ideology a massive level of generality.

What Morley does, effectively, is to reduce the concept of signification to specify a formal category. This, ironically enough, is to misrepresent a concept identifying the relation between the signifier and the signified. So, for example, the "formal position" of Dudley Fiske within the World in Action narrative is certainly a function of signifying practice, but so is who he is and what he says. A system of signs does not position the subject in relation to the "what" of ideology, it is the "what" of ideology. The sign is a unit of meaning, not an empty vessel. To conceive an ideological problematic as "constructed in its specific form through the process of signification" (Ibid, p.156) is precisely to conceive of such an empty vessel 'filled' with ideology (content), while to pose "the ideological field as the space within which signification operates" is a tautology - what this statement says is that we must understand the process of meaning (signification) within meaning systems.

To misconceive signification in this way is a considerable limitation for a decoding study to bear. What I propose to look at in more detail is the form/content model implicated by a division between what Morley usually refers to as "mode of address" and "ideological problematic". A similar distinction is made by Brundson and Morley in their Nationwide study, where they distinguish between "the axis of difference (different

items, different topics, different participants ...)" and "the axis of continuity and combination - which binds, links and frames these differences into a continuous connected, flowing 'unity'" (Brundson and Morley, 1978, p.61). Perhaps one of the clearest specifications of this kind of division is Barthes' formulation in S/Z. Consequently, if I move towards a Barthesian redefinition of Morley's position, it is in order to clarify and develop it (at the risk of misrepresenting Morley).

Just as, for Morley, the T.V. programme is a "meaningful sign vehicle" operating on two levels, so for Barthes signification (or "connotation") is determined:

"by two spaces: a sequential space, a series of orders, a space subject to the successivity of sentences ... and an agglomerative space, certain areas of the text correlating other meanings outside the material text and, with them, forming 'nebulae' of signifieds" (Barthes, 1974, p.8).

Barthes sees "each connotation as the starting point of a code" (Ibid, p.9), of which there are five types: "only three establish permutable, reversible connections, outside the constraint of time (the semic, cultural and symbolic codes); the other two compose their terms according to an irreversible order (the hermeneutic and proa iretic codes)" (Ibid, p.30). What Morley calls the "structural polysemy" of the text works in terms of two such spaces, the structure restricting its potential plurality. As he writes in the Critical Postscript: "polysemy is already structured and limited by the syntagmatic relations established between the separate signs as they are organised in the text" (Morley, 1981, p.6).

The difference between these two types of connotation can be reformulated thus:

- a) sets of significations which refer within the totality of the text's parameters to construct a chronological narrative;
- b) sets of significations which refer to significations formed outside the text.

In short, as Barthes puts it: "the text must simultaneously be distinguished from its exterior and from its totality" (Barthes, 1974, p.6). If we look at two units of meaning in the Nationwide text, it becomes apparent that this distinction is more difficult to conceive than it appears. The two examples I have chosen are from the Nationwide coverage of the Budget. The first unit of meaning is spoken by Frank Bough at the beginning of the programme:

"And at 6.20, what this 'some now, some later' Budget will mean to you.";

(I shall concentrate upon the part of the sentence signifying 'what will this Budget mean to you?'). The second unit is spoken by Mrs. Tufnell, wife of personnel manager John Tufnell, during a three-part feature looking at how the budget affects a "cross section" of families. Mrs. Tufnell complains:

"we can't have avocados any more."

At first glance the first sentence signifies within the text's totality, establishing an enigma which the following programme attempts to solve (working in terms of the hermeneutic code, the code of enigma). It is part of the text's order, fixed within its chronology, part of its structure. The second statement, on the other hand, seems to revolve around a signifier - the avocado pear - whose connotations are located in signifying chains outside the Nationwide narrative, not dependent on that narrative to establish a reversible set of meanings. Its polysemy, so it follows, is subsequently restricted by its narrative context. The superficiality of such a first glance conceals three glaring problems.

Firstly, while these two statements work in terms of different codes, both refer, in the first instance, to significations constructed outside the text. It is only in the second instance that the sign may be specified/alterd to establish a new layer of meaning. This may be stating the obvious, but it needs stating. The former, for example, refers to significations, formed prior to the moment of reading, producing a "nebulae of signifieds" around the signifier 'Budget'. Similarly, the

second example also refers to the already signified ('avocadoes').

Meaning can only be established in the text:

- a) if the subject is unable to constitute some of its elements as meaningful, and s/he is therefore required to locate the meaning of those elements by establishing relations of association or difference within the text (a dictionary works in this way, as does any developmental narrative);
- b) in terms of certain linguistic categories - notably those designated by Benveniste as "shifters", linguistic elements such as personal pronouns (I, you, us) and exophoric pronouns (here, now, then) dependent upon the context in which they are uttered/received for their meaning.

Furthermore, if "form" has a pure sense prior to the comprehension of a text's elements, it is merely as what Umberto Eco calls (Eco, 1981, p.15) a "linear text manifestation", the most basic linear chronology fixed in space and time. As Eco demonstrates with a quotation from a pre-Dadaist experimental poem by Christian Margenstern, such a set of meaningless words, if one ignores the "phonic connotations as well as the halo of 'literariness'" surrounding the poem, exist purely as "a linear manifestation (expression) to which no content can be ordered". The problem is, of course, that one cannot ignore the "phonic connotations" or the "halo of literariness", since it is precisely these things that constitute the meaning or significance of the poem, that gives a sense to the structuring of meaningless words into a poetic form. Once the one dimensionality - A, B, C, D ... - of a text's linear manifestation is given meanings, it begins to form patterns. No signification can impose a form upon the text if it has not been established (by the reader) as meaningful.

Secondly, those elements (like 'avocadoes') working in terms of what Barthes refers to as the symbolic code, form part of and work within a narrative structure. The signifier 'avocado pear' is a component in

the 'three families' narrative: the three layered social structure with which we are presented is more than a simply defined series of incomes and occupations, it is a collection of symbols and images - of which the avocado pear is one. The symbolic structure will operate as a necessary structuration (limitation) closing the discourse within certain parameters. In the same way as the enigma 'what will this budget mean to you?' refers the decoder to the following narrative, Mrs. Tufnall's remark about avocados works with other symbols (e.g. the company car) to signify a certain economic and cultural position - "the assumption that people over a certain level ... in a certain job have a right to eat avocado pears and everybody else hasn't" (the group of trade union activists studying part-time in Labour Studies), "middle class shoppers out buying their avocado pears" (the group of trade union officials on a TUC training course). These significations are engendered by the text, not independently of it. Indeed, one could go further to emphasise the greater dependence of the second unit of meaning upon its narrational context (its position in the discourse). While the first functions (has its meaning) more or less as a self-contained unit, not substantially altered by the sequence it refers to, the second signifies contextually, whether as a symbol of a luxurious lifestyle ("a certain level") or the "middle class" in general.

Thirdly, if a distinction is made between codes working within or outside its narrative, it is incorrect to necessarily understand significations referring within the narrative as 'fixers', 'limits' to the text's polysemy, although most work using the notion of a 'preferred reading' invariably does make this assumption. The generalities 'polysemy'/'narrative context' impose a false set of divisions that, although sometimes useful, distort the actuality of signifying practice. As Barthes himself writes in "The Death of the Author":

"a text's unity is not in its origin but in its destination ..."
(Barthes, 1977, p.148).

It is the reader, rather than the internal system of the text, that ultimately restricts its plurality. It is the combination of text and reader that is the eventual finite point of closure. The structure of signifiers, however, does not necessarily reduce the text's elements to a set of meanings. By a complex interplay of significations, the text produces meaning in the reader, or, to use an appropriate metaphor, each new text, each addition to the reader's consciousness, is reproductive, offering new traces of meaning with each association, each set of differences.

I emphasise these problems because the distinction between significations working within or outside the text is a very important one. As I attempt to demonstrate in my own audience study, this distinction is the first step towards the analysis of narrative. This is a complex area for a study of decoding to move into, and it therefore is necessary to clear the theoretical ground before doing so. This is not achieved in Morley's work, which, as I have suggested, attempts to solve problems in the model of responses derived from Parkin by conceiving of two planes of textual organisation which fail to correspond to such a distinction.

The "mode of address"/"ideological problematic" split is used to interpret two fairly 'oppositional' sets of responses; one from a group of bank managers, and one from a group of shop stewards. While the "managers comment hardly at all on the substance of the ideological problematic embedded in the programme. Their attention focuses almost exclusively on the programmes mode of address"; the shop stewards "can accept the programmes mode of address to some extent ... what they reject is Nationwide's ideological formulation of the 'issues'" (Morley, 1980, p.145). This is certainly an interesting observation - but it would be misleading to place these decodings into two distinct categories. The difference between the shop stewards and the bank managers are the discourse available to them with which to criticise the Nationwide discourse. The bank

managers are able to do so in terms of the "Daily Telegraph, Panorama and the Money Programme" discourses, while the shop stewards "watch as a group of people very committed to a certain thing", i.e. with constant access to the political discourses of trade union activity. So, when both groups refer to absences in the text - "it wasn't sufficient, to be quite frank", "he only shows what he wants to show" - they are referring to discourses other than Nationwide. The fact that one criticism is overtly political and the other not (while on one level quite significant) is not a function of the "mode of address"/"ideological problematic" (form/content) split. It could equally well be argued - to use Morley's terms - that the bank managers' criticisms are not formal but ideological. They are rejecting a representation of themselves (the 'you'/'we' of Nationwide's discourse), and the personalisation of discourses that they are, as bank managers, all involved in. As Morley says, "it is ideas, not people, which are important to them." (Ibid, p.105).

The significations constructed by Morley's audiences can be differentiated in terms of the access and decoders have to discourses/ other significations. What is crucial is that the complexity of this interplay is understood. While the text should not be forced into simple categories, neither should the audience. It is, therefore, to the problems involved in categorising groups of decoders that I now turn.

vii. Decoding classes

In the Critical Postscript, Morley attempts to rethink the nature and importance of 'class' as a variable with which to explain differential decodings. He suggests three revisions.

- a) That the importance of variables - like class - "cannot be resolved purely on theoretical grounds, but also has to take into account empirical evidence". In other words (and this is the implication) there should be no a priori categorising involved in decoding research, these categories should be established by the research.

- b) That the labels used to specify 'class' slide between Marxist and Weberian definitions.
- c) That the class-based variable used to divide the groups into groups gives those groups "a representative status - they are taken to stand for segments of society".

Now, the problem here is not that these revisions are wrong (they're not), but that they represent more than mere revisions. The Nationwide study is firmly cast within a (broadly Althusserian) epistemological/theoretical mould, giving rise to a privileging of the concept of class via a complex set of confluences. The revisions suggested in the Postscript, I shall argue, undermine a great deal of the theoretical work done in The Nationwide Audience.

Morley's epistemology is based upon a division between the real and the discursive. He quotes Neale's statement that, "Having recognised the determining power of the real, the real is only and always grasped as reality ... through discourse" (Ibid, p.19). In other words, the discursive determines/allows our perception of the real, but the real determines our access/relation to the discursive. As I have argued, this distinction may seem commonsensical - or even a necessary basis for any epistemological position,¹² but like many commonsensical notions it rests upon uninterrogated assumptions. Morley fails to define either the real or the discursive, or, crucially, what distinguishes one from the other. Rather, he assumes an equivalence between the discourse/real relations and other relations - juxtaposed with the above quotation, for example, is the 'equivalent' statement that "audiences are determined economically, politically and ideologically". Since Morley also fails (along with a host of others) to specify this tripartite distinction, the conflation of the two statements veils any meaning it might have in a thick fog of ambiguity. In the comparative specificity of the Nationwide study, we can begin to identify what is actually meant by the category of 'the real' and the category of 'the discursive', and how these terms

combine with the terms of the base/superstructure model of a social formation.

A large part of Morley's work attempts to understand decoding in terms of the relation between what he calls on the one hand; "social position" (p.48), "social structure" (p.158), "socio-economic structure" (p.14), "basic socio-demographic factors" (p.26) and "class structure" (p.15), and what he calls ideology, discourse or "involvement in various forms of cultural frameworks and identifications" (p.26) on the other. The realm of the real corresponds with a notion of socio-economic or class position, while the realm of the discursive exists in the apparently less concrete realms of ideology and signification. Any thorough examination of these terms as they occur in Morley's text would be theoretically fruitless, as they are used indiscriminately within different contexts.¹³

If the discourse/real relationship is composed of two mutually exclusive entities determining one another, it is consistent that the equivalent terms; ideology/social or class position, should also have this type of relationship - and so they do. Morley defines it in relation to the Althusserian notion of "relative autonomy" (a vaguely defined relationship between two vaguely defined categories!) via a rejection of what he sees as the Paul Hirst position. Unfortunately, Morley (along with many others) misinterprets Hirst's critique of Althusser as the construction of a Hobson's choice - the "absurd" polarisation of "either total determination or total autonomy" (Morley, 1980, p.17). As I have already suggested, Hirst's critique demonstrates that the notions of "Ideological State Apparatuses" and of "Ideology as a Representation ..." are both incoherent expositions of a "relative autonomy". The consequences of Hirst's position is not necessarily to deny the existence of "correlations and patterns" between "class position" and "ideological positions", but to reject the Althusserian formulation as a way of understanding those correlations and patterns. They must be

explained in a different way (I shall return to this point). As I have argued, this notion of 'relative autonomy' encompasses so many relations between so many things that it has very little purchase as a form of explanation.

It is not surprising, therefore, that it is difficult to grasp how this relative autonomy operates. It allows him to say:

- a) "the structure of access to different discourses is determined by social position" (p.134), or "the real determines to a large extent the encounter of/with discourses" (p.19); and
- b) "social position in no way directly correlates with decodings" (p.137).

If these two statements are not to contradict one another, the first becomes meaningless. In short, if there is no [?] correlations, then the determined "structure of access to discourses" has no effectivity. Yet, since Morley repeatedly states the effective determination of "involvement in various forms of cultural frameworks and indentifications" by "basic socio-demographic factors", the source of this incoherency must be examined.

I have already examined the problems with the discourse/real distinction. Moreover, if we split existence into categories there is no reason why they should causally relate. Furthermore, we should be aware of the criteria used to calculate such a split. The problem with 'class' as a socio-economic category is that it necessarily refers (in Morley's and in most other sociological investigations) to occupation/economic unities, while decoding refers to "the range of discourses at the disposal of the audience" (Ibid, p.55). In this sense, Morley has only thought the autonomy side of the relative autonomy problematic - the specific nature of differential decoding along class lines need not be explained, yet when he discovers differential decodings from groups with "a common class position ... their decodings are inflected in different directions by the influence of the discourses in which they are situated" (Ibid, p.56). If this is so, I would suggest, it therefore follows that to function as

an explanation of forms of decoding, class must be understood as a (limited) set of discursive unities.

A subject's class position does not determine her/his access to discourses, it is itself a set of (largely non-linguistic) discourses. If this statement sounds contradictory, it is because of the way in which 'discourse' has been defined, in opposition to categories like 'the real', the object, the non-linguistic.

To conflate the socio-economic with the real as Morley (following a well trodden path) does, implies that the discursive/ideological is somehow 'less real' - an epistemological absurdity that, as I have demonstrated, Althusser attempted to theorise out of Marxist theory. Doubtless this is not his intention, but since the privileging of the socio-economic (class) is, as I argued in Chapter Two, a function of an epistemology based upon this conflation, one cannot be rejected without the other. To redefine the discursive/ideological as real representations, with the same status as economic/social representations, is to go back to square one, to invalidate the whole theoretical field privileging the concept of class.

Since Morley is not prepared to do this, the epistemological problems remain, however silently. For example, he quite correctly points out the need to investigate "the extent to which ... individual readings are patterned into cultural structures and clusters" while (silently) assuming that this implies "an approach which links differential interpretations back to the socio-economic structure of society" (Ibid, p.15). Furthermore, we can theorise socio-economic determinations as much as we like, but in audience research the category of the subject must be understood within a specific set of signifying relations. To theorise a subject positioned within a set of social/historical/gender/class relations is, in the analysis of decoding practices, to grasp the wrong end of the problem. Unless these relations have conscious or unconscious determinations in constituting the subject in signification, they are not

immediately relevant. As I have pointed out, the subject must be conceived within a set of subject/object relations - i.e. signifier/signified relations - be it in relation to the T.V. set, objects in the living room, her/his take home pay. To step outside these relations to theorise the relations between objects (signifiers) is to theorise something other than the practice of decoding.

This notion is necessarily semiological - it understands the signifier as more than a linguistic/imagistic category. The discourse/real distinction is not applicable in semiology, which does not privilege the non-linguistic signifier (e.g. the word's non-linguistic referent) over the word and the image. To wear the blinkers of this division is to see the T.V. programme as a set of signifiers and the objects surrounding the T.V. screen as not, to see the political discourse as signifying and the practices of bank managership as not.

Apart from the problems Morley's approach creates in analysing the data, the data itself is weighted by the organisation of groups in terms of socio-economic variables. Morley acknowledges these problems in the Postscript (see above). There is, however, a related difficulty that emanates from his decision to work with groups (of decoders) rather than individuals. This choice, he writes:

"was made on the grounds that much individually based interview research is flawed by a focus on individuals as social atoms divorced from their social context " (Ibid, p.33).

This may well be true, but it is no reason for interviewing the decoders in groups. Morley is quite right to suggest that an individual's meaning-systems develop through a whole series of social interactions (if that is what is being suggested). He is, however, quite wrong to imply that an "individually placed interview" necessitates the exclusion of "social context" while a group based interview does not. This implication assumes (again) a conflation between "the conditions in which actual opinions are formed, held and modified" (Ibid, p.34), and the socio-economic unities defining each group.

This does not mean that Lazarsfeld et al (1944) are incorrect to understand decoding in terms of a "two-step flow", whereby media messages are not seen as "finished" once they have been decoded by the individual audience member, but are again mediated through the viewer's social network - where they will fall under the influence of 'opinion leaders', who will have the capacity to redefine media messages for his/her peers. As Chaney points out and Morley implies:

"In order to grasp the potential implications of mass communications for social relationships, it is necessary to discover how the performances of mass communications are mediated in the social groups that constitute an individual's meaningful environment" (Chaney, 1972, p.18).

As Straw recognises, this is a shift in "emphasis from the points encountered by the message along its transmission path to the networks of communication within and from which people arrive at the decisions required in daily life" (Straw, 1983, p.4). It is a shift that cannot be made by interviewing people in occupational or socio-economic groups, which are by no means equivalent to these "networks of communication".

Since the first stage of decoding television usually takes place on an individual basis or familial basis,¹⁴ it is appropriate to interview audiences on that basis. While it would be even more revealing to trace the decoding subject's path through "the conditions in which actual opinions are formed, held and modified" this is - apart from being incredibly difficult - emphatically not what Morley does. If the members of a decoding group move towards a unifiable position, it is difficult to gauge how much this is an effect of group dynamics. Do, for example, certain dominant members of the group structure the readings of the group as a whole? The individually based interview circumvents this problem.

Moreover, there is no reason why individually based interviews should be psychologistic enterprises. Indeed, it is only by interviewing each subject (as a product of a whole range of societal variables) individually that analysis can establish societal variables influencing decoding

practice. Such research would be able to examine, as Roger Silverstone puts it; "the question of whether the structures really exist, or whether they are only the products of the analyst's imagination". (Silverstone, 1981, p.106).

viii. "Out of the swamp"

Given the wealth of material using semiological tools for the analysis of film and television, it is remarkable that so little work has been done on the practice of decoding. Obviously, empirical work on audiences is difficult to organise, but this is no excuse for failing even to consider how such a project should be approached. Morley's work is inevitably confusing, moving as it does from an over-theorised area (encoding/textual analysis) to an under-theorised one (decoding), a confusion acknowledged at the end of The Nationwide Audience. We are left thinking, like an audience at the end of King Lear; what does it all mean? Where do we go from here? We can do no worse than restate some of the questions that decoding research may provide answers to: what are the dominant variables determining readings of television?; to what extent are these variables inscribed within the T.V. text?; how much scope do the variety of forms of television allow for differential decodings, and what limits these differences? Can we identify determinant moments in the T.V. text? If we are to answer these questions, the following points should be observed.¹⁵

- a) The analysts task is to construct a series of 'preferred readings' from the material gathered after interviewing has taken place. This will enable her/him to gauge the scope of possible readings the text allows (scope limited only by the range of decoders), and to identify the points at which the text allows/limits plurality. At this point, textual analysis will be necessary in the quest to identify the textual aspects/forms that determine certain meanings at certain points.

b) Textual analysis, by itself, can only reveal the narrative forms/ devices that engender particular kinds of purchase within the decoder's cultural parameters. The decoding subjects should, as far as possible, be understood as products of specific socially determined biographies, so that we might be able to construct a list of determinant discursive variables that explain differences/similarities in the range of readings. This will best be achieved by interviewing each decoder individually.

c) Obviously, no research project will be able to avoid obscuring these points by unconsciously ignoring or privileging certain variables before, during or after interviews. One problem, for example, will be the decoder's awareness of her/his involvement in a research project. This will inevitably lead, as the 'Uses and Gratifications' theorists could tell us, to the tendency for decoders to construct a more critical reading than they might do otherwise. Most of Morley's decoding groups try and present a critical face towards Nationwide, even if this only involves them stating a preference for the programme on the other channel. This problem will be almost impossible to circumvent. Other problems, however, are less likely to crop up if the interview revolves around the decoder reconstruction of the T.V. programme, i.e. the first question should be; what happened?

d) As Morley, following Richard Dyer, suggests in the Critical Postscript, attention should be placed upon the concept of pleasure. Which bits did the decoders find memorable or interesting? Why? How did this affect their readings?

Such research would not only answer questions. It would offer considerable political ammunition to critics of various forms of television output. I shall now move on to consider the more specific practicalities of such a venture.

FOOTNOTES:

1. Principally, the two Nationwide studies and the Critical Postscript.
2. Although, of course, encoding will be based upon previous televisual messages as part of the signifying world, but this is a different point.
3. The same structural rather than epistemological status.
4. See, for example, BFI monograph number 13 on Coronation Street, containing a series of essays spanning these approaches.
5. See, for example, Tony Trew's work on the linguistic basis of the development of a news story in The Sun and The Morning Star.
6. See, for example, Wren-Lewis on the narrative determinations upon the T.V. coverage of the 1981 riots.
7. As indicated by Heath and Skirrow, 1977.
8. Morley also sees syntagmatic relations precipitating textual closure, a point I shall take up later.
9. This refers to the debate existing within the space between Mythologies and S/Z.
10. The problem of categorising audiences is discussed below.
11. There is nothing inherently problematic about the investigation of intention - applied to encoding, for example, it is a valid area of consideration.
12. Hindess and Hirst (1977), as I have pointed out, more or less define - and subsequently reject - epistemology in terms of this relation.
13. For example, towards the end of the study, Morley attempts to re-establish the importance of class in decoding. He thereby refers to "ideological class relations" in which "every discursive process is inscribed" (p.157), having previously distinguished between ideology and class (as relatively autonomous). To subsequently lump them both together in relation to "every discursive process" is, to say the least, a little difficult to decode.
14. If a family watch T.V. together, each producing their own meanings in comparative silence, they are, in effect, watching as individuals.
15. These points are based upon lessons learned during my own pilot study, as well as upon what has already been said.

4 PRELIMINARY NOTES ON DECODING RESEARCH

The task I have set myself - to analyse decoding as a set of signifying practices with specific determinants, and therefore to suggest how T.V. news does or does not communicate - is a daunting one. As I have already suggested, it involves following previously uncharted methodological paths. While Morley's work lays out possible ways into such a project, it stops well short of offering the precise methodological tools necessary for the specificities of a detailed semiological analysis of decoding. While my own theoretical work has led me towards certain points of approach, it is by no means exhaustive, particularly in relation to the actualities of coding the decodings. I shall therefore briefly indicate some of the problems I inevitably encountered during the research, and the reasons for making certain choices in relation to those problems.

i. The decoders

My main problem was in selecting the number and character of the decoders. The first decision was fairly easily made within the limitations of the resources available to the research. I also wanted to limit the number of interviews for analysis to a level small enough for an in-depth analysis on an interview by interview basis to cope with, while having enough material to investigate general or possible patterns of decoding. I therefore decided to do fifty four full length formal interview/viewing sessions, using the first four to develop specific lines of questioning, and the other fifty as the basis of the research. The selection of the kinds of decoders was obviously more problematic, especially since I have already argued against the problems of using variables for selecting respondents that have implications for classifying the variable determining the practice of decoding (e.g. 'class'). I nevertheless felt it was important to use decoders spanning a variety of educational and occupational backgrounds, from a broad range of age groups, with men and women more or less equally represented. This was done in order to increase the likelihood

of obtaining a broad range of responses, rather than to enable me to make (anything other than obvious, easily identifiable) generalisations relating these variables to particular decodings. The size of my sample, moreover, prohibits any such generalisations from being anything more than suggestive.

Two groups of people were, however, deliberately chosen for their access to particular knowledge: broadcasters and political activists (6 of each). The knowledge available to these groups, I hypothesised, would help maximise the range of significations that the news programme might offer.

The full list of decoders is set out below. I have included in this list various basic variables gathered from a preliminary questionnaire. As I have indicated, the significance of these variables in determining response is difficult to gauge with a sample of this size. Nevertheless, the importance (or otherwise) of such variables cannot be completely ignored. I shall therefore, briefly consider them (in relation to the decoding framework established in Chapters Five to Seven) in the final chapter.

For the time being, these variables provide a basic biography that the reader can refer to when individual decoders are specified. As a group of fifty people, their status is not so much 'representative' of society in general, but as a group who are likely to have access to a diverse range of discourses that can be used to decode a news programme. The range within variables (of age, occupations, etc.) reflects this diversity. The variables cover age, sex, political position, occupation, which newspapers they read and their general opinion (before the viewing/interview session) of T.V. news. Other information gathered from the questionnaires is summarised below.

<u>Number</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Sex</u>	<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Politics</u>	<u>Newspaper</u>	<u>Opinion of T.V. News</u>
2A	40	M	Clerk in Steel Works	Labour	Local Paper Daily Star	Very good.
2B	35	M	Work Study Officer	Labour	Local Paper	London biased.
3A	29	F	Library Assistant	Don't know	Daily Mail	Well presented, but too much 'bad' news.
3B	24	F	Library Assistant	Don't know	Daily Express	Good.
4A	28	M	Teacher	Labour	The Guardian	Lack of analysis. Often biased.
4B	33	M	Unemployed	Labour	None	Biassed - part of the system of control.
5A	21	F	Library Assistant	SDP/ Labour	The Guardian	Reasonable - prefers current affairs.
5B	59	M	Porter	Conser- vative	Local Paper Daily Express	Likes the B.B.C., not so keen on I.T.N.
6A	28	M	Workshop Foreman	Cynical	Local Paper	Informative but petty.
6B	20	F	Clerical Assistant	Moving left	Daily Mirror	Likes the visual aspect of T.V. news.
7A	35	F	Library Assistant	Labour	The Guardian	Biassed in favour of 'the system'.
7B	18	F	Library Assistant	Don't know/SDP	Local Paper	A bit boring.
8A	40	F	Purchase + Supply Administrator	Humanist	The Guardian	Too much comment, not enough facts.
8B	29	M	Unemployed	Labour	None	Superficial and biased.
9A	19	F	Secretary	Don't know	Sunday People	A bit morbid.
9B	59	M	Porter	Labour	None	None in particular.
10A	46	F	Secretary	Conserva- tive/SDP	Local Paper	Good but depressing.
10B	50	F	Secretary	Cynical	Daily Mail	Not very enthusiastic.
11A	30	F	Youth worker	Angry/ confused	None in particular	Biassed and super- ficial.
11B	60	F	Housewife	Conser- vative	Local Paper	None in particular.
12A	26	F	Assistant Producer (<u>Newsnight</u>)	Labour	The Guardian	Prefers current affairs.

<u>Number</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Sex</u>	<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Politics</u>	<u>Newspaper</u>	<u>Opinion of T.V. News</u>
12B	26	M	T.V. Researcher (Weekend World)	Labour	Numerous	Shallow, narrow outlook.
13A	25	M	T.V. Journalist (B.B.C. news)	Confused	Numerous	Finds it difficult to offer one.
13B	26	F	Solicitor	Conser- vative	The Times Daily Mail	Generally good, but dislikes <u>News at Ten's</u> tabloid style.
14A	68	M	Retired steelworker	Liberal	Daily Mirror Daily Mail	Well presented but sensationalised.
14B	34	M	Lecturer in Biology	Labour	The Guardian	A bit biased - prefers the B.B.C.
15A	36	F	Housewife/ Mother	SDP/ Labour	The Guardian	Well presented, but biased at times.
15B	40	M	Lecturer in Oriental Studies	SDP/ Labour	Numerous	Good but constrained by need for pictures.
16A	40	F	Community Worker	SDP/ Labour	Numerous	Moving towards a magazine style.
16B	34	F	Mother	Labour	The Guardian	Prefers B.B.C.
17A	62	F	Retired Caterer	Conser- vative	Local Paper	Reasonably good.
17B	50	F	Radio Journalist	Left Wing Christian	The Guardian	Finds it difficult to offer one.
18A	40	M	Police Constable	Conserva- tive	Daily Express	Good, but sometimes misleading.
18B	33	F	Teacher	Conser- vative	Daily Express	Good - usually unbiased.
19A	55	M	Cashier in steel works	Conser- vative	The Sun	Fairly free of bias. Brief but informative.
19B	35	M	T.V. Producer (Calendar)	Cynical	The Times Local Paper	Concise, balanced and over-criticised.
20A	62	F	Housewife	SDP	Local Paper	Sometimes too sensational.
20B	57	F	Housewife/Part- time deliverer	SDP/ Liberal	The Times Local Paper	Likes the visual aspect.
21A	64	F	Housewife	Varied	Local Paper	Good.
21B	35	M	Librarian	Liberal	The Guardian	None in particular.
22A	32	F	Librarian	Liberal	None in particular	None in particular.

<u>Number</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Sex</u>	<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Politics</u>	<u>Newspaper</u>	<u>Opinion of T.V. News</u>
22B	58	M	Unemployed T.V. engineer	SDP/ Liberal	Local Paper	Good.
23A	37	F	Housewife	Conser- vative	Local Paper	Acceptable.
23B	30	M	Town Planner	Cynical	The Guardian	Too tabloid in style.
24A	50	M	Teacher	Labour/ SDP	Local Paper	Quite good. Too much comment, too little fact.
24B	44	F	Housewife	Labour/ SDP	Local Paper	Variable - not always objective.
25A	32	F	Teacher	Labour/ SDP	The Guardian	Generally superficial.
25B	26	F	Computer Analyst	SDP/ Liberal	None in particular	Well presented - prefers B.B.C.
26A	26	F	T.V. Journalist (<u>Nationwide</u>)	Labour	Numerous	Difficult to summarise.
26B	26	F	T.V. Researcher (<u>Newsnight</u>)	SDP	Numerous	Repetative and cliché ridden.

Most of the decoders were fairly regular viewers of television news programmes, and most were fairly regular T.V. viewers in general (although there was a wide range of preferred programmes). The decoder's 'opinion of T.V. news' listed in the table is based upon their own written or spoken comments. The comment that many decoders neglected to mention was that while they felt T.V. news was well presented, many found it, on the whole, difficult to absorb and frequently dull. This view was only revealed during the interview/viewing sessions.

ii. The interviews

The interviews themselves had to be approached with extreme delicacy. I wanted the decoder to do his/her work with as little intervention/guidance from me as possible, without him/her losing track of the object of analysis (the items on the programme) or confidence in myself as questioner. These problems were anticipated by Trenaman, who

acknowledged the power of interview questions to set the agenda for the shape of the responses, and that the "apparent objectivity of such questions is no more than an appearance, subjective judgements enter into the framing of questions" (Trenaman, 1967, p.24). Accordingly, questions should be used to simulate "a normal conversation" in order "to elicit those elements of comprehended material which the respondent would be inclined to make use of in real life" (Ibid, p.26).

Questioning on each item therefore began with a fairly open question, such as 'what did you think that was about?', 'what did you make of that?', 'what impression did you get of what was going on?', or simply 'what happened?'. A number of the decoders found this rather vague approach initially difficult to cope with, since they were not sure what was required of them. 11A was particularly bold in voicing this insecurity. Our interview began thus:

JWL: The Hillhead item, what did you make of that?

11A: Is that it? Is that the only question I get? It's a bit loose isn't it?

Other interviewees simply asked for a more specific question: "in what respect?" (10B); "in what way?" (13B), etc. After this initial hesitancy, however, all the decoders quickly 'learnt' what was initially required of them, i.e. to describe the items as they saw it. Subsequent questioning involved prompting the decoders to develop or clarify points (I felt were) worth developing or clarifying. Decoders were also frequently asked to recall those images/moments during an item that they found memorable/significant. This provided a means of re-orientating decoders who tended to stray too far from the item under discussion, or encouraging less confident interviewees (who were occasionally shy of discussing an item in general, and preferred to develop points from specific instances in the broadcast). Also, as Trenaman suggests:

"there is some likelihood that in free recall whole sections of a programme may fail to be reproduced only because the informant has temporarily overlooked them. Part of the function of questions might, therefore, be to remind the informant of principle areas of a programme without giving too much information away" (Ibid, p.25).

This frequently amounted to encouraging the decoder to develop themes in relation to the programme.

There were, however, moments when I departed from this method to ask fairly specific questions. This occurred in relation to specific moments during certain items which I felt, on the basis of the preliminary interviews, seemed important. The responses to these questions will be treated as such in the analysis of the material.

iii. Decoding the decodings

Having done the interviews, another extremely daunting set of problems emerged. These were, firstly, how to practice detailed textual analysis upon such a huge body of material, and secondly, how to restrict the analysis so that it might be organised in a presentable form.

The first problem is both analytical and structural: how best to condense two hundred thousand words (from the fifty transcribed interviews) into coherent sets of variables so that we might begin to interpret what and how meaning is constructed? This problem could only begin to be resolved very gradually during the analysis, developing the modifying criteria until they evolved into a satisfactory form. This involved collecting and coding the data to produce a large pile of statistical and analytical data, then experimenting with that data to find out which aspects were significant, and how best to understand that significance. Material needed to be worked and reworked.

The second problem - of presentation - was more difficult than I had anticipated. Clearly, it was necessary to select the more interesting and illuminating material. At the same time, the aims and objectives of the research carried a number of requirements, these being:

- a) to indicate not only which variables (and relations between variables) were significant, but which were not;
- b) to suggest how methodological decisions about the development of variables had evolved;

- c) to provide models for practical decoding research to work with, rather than arrived at comprehensive conclusions about the activity of the audience.

I have decided, therefore, to present the analysis of the decoding work in three stages. The first introduces the main variables used to deconstruct the data, as well as showing how these variables provide a way into the material. As the material is broken down certain questions are raised, which, when followed through, demonstrate how certain methods of inquiry can be used to try and answer these questions. At the end of this chapter (Chapter Five), a loose framework for decoding analysis will have been laid out. I hope, also, that some assertions will have been made (assertions obviously limited by the scope of the data).

The second stage will use this framework to explore readings of a particular section of the news item in greater detail. The decoding of a news item will be broken down into various component parts, and the relations between those parts will be systematically and comprehensively analysed. Significant points will be highlighted during this analysis, so that they may be drawn out and examined in greater depth. By the end of this chapter (Chapter Six), the key areas for investigation will have become apparent.

These key areas will be dealt with in Chapter Seven. The two preceding chapters will have dealt with just two items from a half hour news programme. How the rest of the programme was decoded will therefore be presented very selectively, in order to clarify suggestions or assertions that the previous chapters will have raised. I shall also cover points brought out during my work on the whole programme, that were outside the scope of the material covered by Chapters Five and Six.

iv. The programme

The programme that all this work is based upon is a News at Ten broadcast on Friday, 26th March, 1982. The programme was chosen from a number recorded on the Thursday and Friday.

This two-day period was chosen some time in advance, as the interview/viewing sessions had to be organised to immediately follow the broadcasting of the programme, in order to achieve as short a time span as possible between the viewing sessions and the actual transmission of the programme. This meant that the news stories on the chosen news programme would be watched on roughly the same context as they might have been when transmitted. Many of the decoders, indeed, felt the news programme was still 'newsy' enough to be worth watching in its own right.

The main problem I foresaw was that certain news stories would develop significantly during the interview/viewing period (about three weeks), altering the basis upon which the story would be understood. This would mean that a new variable - watching the news as history - would come into play (worse still, it would mean that those interviewed during one week would be watching the programme in a different narrative context from those interviewed during the next week).

Clearly, this problem could not be entirely overcome by conducting the interview/viewing sessions as close to the actual transmission time as possible. Such problems did not, in the event, ever arise. A few days into the interview/viewing sessions, a week after the programme had been broadcast, the Falklands crisis hit the headlines. Because of the massive significance attributed to the dispute (to later become a war) by the media, all other news stories were virtually obliterated from our screens. Journalists in El Salvador were quickly despatched down to Buenos Aires. This meant that, whatever might have been happening in the outside world, the news stories on News at Ten on 26th March were held in a curious suspension, apparently fixed at the same point in history for several weeks.

The programme itself was, as I have stated, chosen from a small selection recorded during a two day period. It was, therefore, effectively chosen at random. My reasons for choosing it from the small selection

recorded were based on its typicality and the selection of news stories it dealt with. The running order included a long and a short British political news story, two major items of foreign news, an industrial relations story, a human interest story, and a variety of shorter items spanning a number of 'newsy' topics. Perhaps the only unusual aspect of this particular News at Ten was the large amount of time devoted to the lead story (about a third of the whole programme) - Roy Jenkins' victory at the Hillhead Byelection. This was clearly, as some of the broadcasters interviewed and the programme's editor told me, seen by T.V. news to be a significant moment in British political history (although, as many decoders pointed out, the actual substance of the story was repetitive and uninformative, a plethora of reaction and comment, containing very little useful or significant information).

The length of time devoted during the interviews to each item was roughly in proportion to the time allotted it by the programme. The two items singled out for detailed attention in the next two chapters were chosen after the interviews had been completed (these being the British Leyland story and the West Bank story, the second and fifth items on the programme). A transcript of the whole programme is printed below, followed by a brief outline of its immediate television history.

ITN News at Ten : Friday, 26th March, 1982

Burnet:	'Gong' Is he now the alternative Prime Minister?	Film: Jenkins holding microphone surrounded by supporters.
	'Gong' BL is catching up with the other robots.	Film: Robots spot welding.
	'Gong' There's more fighting on West Bank.	Film: Smoke bombs thrown in front of oil drum barricade.
	'Gong' And Mr. Whitelaw wins a Tory ovation.	Film: Whitelaw waving to applause after making speech.

Good evening. The social democrats have been talking today of Mr. Roy Jenkins as the next Prime Minister, after his win at the Hillhead by-election. The Liberal leader Mr. David Steel has not disagreed, but he has been more guarded about who should lead the Alliance. The other parties in the byelection have been licking their wounds, Burnet in studio. No logo.

and playing down their defeat. Mr. Jenkins arrives at Westminster on Tuesday. His friends expect him to become Mrs. Thatcher's chief opponent - they say, the alternative Prime Minister. He repeated today what he said of the SDP/Liberal Alliance on ITV last night: if people want me to lead it, I will lead it.

Mrs. Shirley Williams said: 'There is no one in the SDP who would not agree to Roy Jenkins being put forward as leader of the Alliance and future Prime Minister'. Dr. David Owen, another SDP founder, had already said: 'He is certainly going to be the leader of the Alliance in Parliament and our Prime Ministerial candidate'.

The Liberal leader Mr. Steel said he too looked forward to an Alliance government: 'I will work with whichever leader they choose' he said.

Mr. Jenkins' triumph at Hillhead came at 12.30 this morning - half an hour into the SDP's first birthday. His majority over the Tories; 2 thousand and 38. Mr. Jenkins, the Social Democrat, got 33%; the Conservatives 27; Labour 26; the Scottish Nationalist 11, and he lost his deposit.

The SDP well up on the Liberal vote at the General Election, Conservative and Labour both well down.

In fact the SDP up 18.9%; the Conservative down 14.4, Labour down 8½, the Scottish Nationalists marginally up - 1.2%.

Today Mr. Jenkins has been with his Alliance partner, Mr. Steel, talking about the future at St. Andrews.

From there, our political correspondent, David Walter.

Walter: ... to make his first speech as a Glasgow M.P.

Scottish Liberals haven't had so much to cheer about for years (sound of applause).

full screen picture (hereafter fsp) of Jenkins above caption: 'If people want me to lead it - I will lead it.'

fsp of Williams above caption: (see other column).

fsp of Steel above caption: (see other column). All captions faded in.

Burnet in studio. No logo.

Graphic 1
'Glasgow Hillhead Share of the vote'
Coloured columns indicating SDP 33%
Con 27% Lab 26% SNP 11%
Oth 3%

Grey columns marked '79' appear next to coloured columns.

Graphic 2. 'Glasgow Hillhead Change since 79'. Columns rising or falling below baseline - indicating: SDP +18.9%; Con -14.4%; Lab -8.5%; SNP +1.2%; Oth +2.8%.

Steel and Jenkins entering hall between rows of applauding people.

Burnet in studio. No logo.

Steel and Jenkins ascending towards platform surrounded by people.

Audience seated and clapping. 'David Walter' captioned.

Jenkins	We have a unique opportunity, such has not occurred, for at least 60 years past. I believe we are well on the road to seizing it! But if we let it slip now, we would not forgive ourselves, and the British public would not forgive us either. Applause (continues during Walter's voiceover).	Jenkins at Platform, captioned.
		Jenkins sits down.
Walter:	The Liberals also heard from David Steel, who's widely believed to be willing to serve under Mr. Jenkins as leader of the Alliance.	Scottish Libs applauding.
Steel:	We have all agreed that it would be wrong for our two parties to go into the next election, leaving the identity of the Alliance Prime Minister in doubt, or open to the vagueries of our Alliance electoral arrangements. We cannot however take that decision, until the leader of the SDP has been elected. I repeat that I will work with whichever leader they choose, but I hope that they may decide to resolve that matter sooner rather than later (voice faded right down).	Steel at platform, captioned.
Walter:	Mr. Steel ended by recalling his childhood visits to Mr. Jenkins new city of Glasgow.	Shot of audience. Close up of Steel.
Steel:	... And it was drummed into me at an early age, that the motto of this huge and lively industrial city, was 'let Glasgow flourish, by the preaching of the word'. Today I say to this conference, let Britain flourish - by following the decisions of the people of Glasgow. Applause.	Steel sits down.
Walter:	Today Mr. Jenkins could have been facing the political wilderness - instead he's being talked of as a future Prime Minister. Peter Sissons asked him if that was how he felt.	Camera pans round to applauding audience.

- Jenkins: I feel like a man who's fought a very hard and occasionally fluctuating election campaign, um, and has won it. And, um, I believe that is important in more than a purely personal sense, because I've been trying hard for the past, um, year in a purely formal sense, a year or so beyond that since I gave a lecture which, um, started some ideas on this front moving. I've been trying very hard to change the shape of British politics because I think they need changing in the interests of the country, and, um, I think we've made remarkable progress in this direction, I think the country now has a real third choice, apart from the two, rather tired, failed old parties, and, um, all my efforts are devoted to advancing this cause which I believe to be extremely important for the nation.
- Film of Jenkins interviewed.
Close up.
- Sissons: But are you now going for power, are you going for number 10?
- Jenkins: Well, what is certainly the case is that the Alliance is going for power, the Alliance, which is going hard to win the next general election.
- Sissons: And do you want to lead it, into the next general election?
- Jenkins: Erm, if people want me to lead it, then I'm willing to lead it.
- Sissons: How are you going to convince the people of Hillhead that you haven't used them - simply to get back to power?
- Sissons close up.
Jenkins close up.
- Jenkins: I think that, um, er, that, er, that view, which again people tried to use was rejected by the people of Hillhead yesterday. I shall take this constituency very seriously, I have told them I shall take it seriously, but I have never concealed from them that I intend to try to play a major national political role as well, and in my view, which I think they have accepted, um, to have a figure who's trying to do that as a member of Parliament for a constituency, enhances, rather than diminishes, its influence.
- Sissons: Mr. Jenkins, thank you very much (faded out).

Walter: It's been a heady 24 hours for Mr. Jenkins.

Returning Officer: Jenkins, the right honorable Roy Harris, Social Democrat Liberal Alliance candidate 10,106.

Walter: The moment the SDP had been waiting for - Roy Jenkins was home, home by a bigger margin than most of them had expected.

As he left the count, there was relief as well as exhilaration on Mr. Jenkins' face. It had been touch and go.

And so, onto the SDP party - Brussels had never been like this! In Warrington he just failed, but this one, in the end, they said was 'easy'.

Jenkins: Well, we did do it, after all. Applause and cheers. And we did it by more than any of us believed we were going to do it by even till the last 24 hours (applause and cheers).

Cliff Richard : 'Congratulations and felicitations etc.'

Walter: But half a mile away Labour were serenading the victor, Mr. Jenkins, as a nowhere man.

'Red Review' : have no point of view, knows not where he's going to, he's a member of the SDP.

Walter: (over singing) For a brief period earlier this week the Wiseman camp thought they had it in the bag. Coming third was a big disappointment.

And for the Conservatives it was bitter blow to lose their last stronghold in Glasgow, a seat they'd held since 1918. Their man Gerry Malone couldn't bring himself to take his seat at today's press conference.

There's no doubt it's been Roy Jenkins day today. The question remains how far this was his personal triumph, and how far lesser known Alliance candidates in the forthcoming by elections and council elections, can keep the momentum going. David Walter, News at Ten, Glasgow.

Film of SDP supporters watch the result on T.V. Pan from T.V. to supporters, who jump around slightly hysterically when Jenkins' vote is announced.

Film of Jenkins leaving count, wading through press men.

Fans applaud. Jenkins arrival. He wades through the crowd.

Jenkins holding mike.

Jenkins in crowd at party.

Film of young lads with guitars, singing and wearing 'Red Review' 82 tee-shirts.

Film: Camera pans from Malone poster on wall, to tea men seated at a table, to the empty chair next to them.

Film of Jenkins and crew in SDP landrover, Jenkins thanking Hillhea over mike. (Actuality sound).

- Gall:** Both the main parties were quick to deny they'd been badly hurt by Mr. Jenkins' win. The Tory Chairman, Mr. Cecil Parkinson claimed the result proved voters were coming back to the Conservatives. Mr. Tony Benn said; Labour would still win the next general election. At the Conservative council meeting in Harrogate, the Leader of the Commons, Mr. Francis Pym, gave his reaction. **Gall in studio. No logo.**
- Pym:** Well, we had a majority of two thousand at the last general election, and now we've lost it by a majority of two thousand, and that really, in the middle of a parliament, after all that's happened and all the problems we're facing, I think it's really not a bad result. But of course, I've always thought the Alliance was important, and, of course, we've always taken it very seriously in the Party, and we will, and we'll get organised for the next election, which is wide open and we're determined to win it. **Pym interviewed outside building. Captioned.**
- David Rose:** What does the Conservative vote at Hillhead say about the public's perception of the government's economic policies? **Rose's head and shoulders.**
- Pym:** Naturally they're worried - obviously they're worried, about unemployment and the problems we're going through (in this world recession, affecting all industrialised countries), of course they're worried about it. And I think if you bear that in mind, it's really remarkable how well our vote did hold up. **Pym again.**
- Foot:** We are going to unite - determined to win the next election, and that's what I've said to the others and I say to you now ... **Film of Foot interviewed out of car door. Interviewer just in picture.**
- Inter-viewer:** Yes, yes!
- Foot:** ... I'm sure that'll be the mood up and down the country. We've had set backs in the Labour Party before, we overcame them, and we'll prepare for victory at the next general election. So, best of luck. **Foot closes car door.**

Burnet: In industry: BL management and unions have been holding talks, (that they hope to settle next Wednesday) to get a new deal in industrial relations. The deal has had strong union backing - it would mean better bonuses for productivity, and new procedures for settling strikes. BL's workers - with the help of robots - have hit new productivity records in BL's biggest plant at Longbridge. Our industrial editor, Giles Smith, has been there.

Burnet in studio. BL logo.

Smith: Today's deal will, in the view of both sides, be the icing on the cake in a remarkable productivity improvements, that have transformed BL's biggest plant, from one of the least productive in Europe, to one of the most. In 1980, each Longbridge worker was producing just 7 cars a year. Last year that rose to 16, and so far this year each man has been turning out Metros a minute at a rate of 22 cars a year - an increase of over 200%.

Film of assembly lines.

Workers working on cars.

Brian Fox: The rest of our competitors aren't going to stand back and watch us, it's not just about us. They don't want us to be first in the world, so we've got to continue to do the things that they do and try and beat them.

Interviewing on shop floor. Captioned as 'Operators Director, BL'

During the last 12 months its no secret that over 2000 people have left Longbridge. We've still got improvement plans, and we're still getting better, so we're continuing to run a voluntary redundancy scheme. I think an important point is; no one has had to leave here, all of its been achieved by voluntary means.

Smith: Behind the improvement is the wide-scale use of robots. On this automated body framing line, each one gets through 256 spot welds in about as many seconds. Just 34 men work on the line, which would need nearly 150 if the welds were done in the traditional manner. And a Metro body shell comes off the line once every 48 seconds.

Film of robots spot welding.

BL worker 1: We have seen our bonus payments coming through, and er, hopefully we hope to see it continue.

Interview on shop floor with two (uncaptioned) BL workers.

Smith: But you have seen an awful lot of jobs go in the process. Colleagues of yours have had to leave.

BL
worker 1: That is correct and, er, this is a great tragedy, but, um, I think under the circumstances, for us to be competitive with our competitors, we've just got to have this sort of equipment in which invariably jobs have got to go.

Smith: How do you feel about the people who've had to go?

BL
worker 2: Yeah, well, the same actually. Its, its progress. Um, its better probably to save a few jobs than have no jobs at all.

Smith: Longbridge is now producing 98% of its target - an unprecedented rate for the motor industry. But robots don't go on strike - men can. Only a major industrial disruption would seem able to blow BL off course from its aim of breaking even next year and making a profit in '84.

This is Coften Park, scene in the past of the mass meetings, that led to the big strikes in the '70s. It's empty now, and Sir Michael Edwards, and whoever is to succeed him later this year, will hope it stays that way, as a result of the procedures already agreed in Longbridge, and today's new industrial relations deal. Giles Smith, News at Ten, Longbridge.

Film of spot welding robots again.

Man driving car off shop floor. Drives slowly past camera.

Smith standing on hill with buildings in background.

Zoom in to Smith.

Burnet: Up to $\frac{3}{4}$ million people with company cars, were told by the Chancellor Sir Geoffrey Howe today, that the tax they pay will go up again next year for the 3rd year running - its going up by 20%, and if they get free petrol they'll pay even more.

Burnet in studio. No logo.

fsp of a Ford Granada with 'Tax on company cars Up 20%' caption.

The pound fell against the dollar today, closing at 1 dollar 78.70 cents, that's one and a half cents down.

American interest rates are still rising, and a lot of people in the Chicago money market apparently sold sterling when it fell below one dollar eighty cents yesterday.

fsp of green pound notes with £ = \$ 1.7870

1.3 caption
Burnet in studio. No logo.

Gall: Israeli's shot and wounded a Palestinian on the troubled West Bank today. Israeli troops have clamped a tight grip on the area after several days of rioting, in which at least 5 Palestinians have been killed. In today's incident at Halhul, Israelis in a civilian jeep fired warning shots, according to an army spokesman, to disperse a stones throwing crowd. The West Bank has been tense since the Israelis sacked 3 Palestinian mayors. Derek Taylor is there.

Derek Taylor: If there's going to be trouble, Friday midday is usually the time as the Mosques empty in the West Bank and crowds gather. That's what happened in Ramula, and a score of Israeli paratroopers sped forward and fired into the air (actuality sound of shot).

The streets cleared within seconds, and the paras scoured the town to make sure that it stayed that way.

In Nablus, the other of the two West Bank towns where the Israeli's turned the Palestinian Mayors out of office yesterday, there was desultory sparring (actuality sound).

As the military clampdown continued, the Head of the Israeli administration in the occupied territories was justifying to foreign journalists, the dismissal of the mayors, who, he said, are agents of the PLO, the Palestine Liberation Organisation.

Milson: Israel is engaged now, in a very serious struggle, against the PLO, er, I consider it to be a very crucial struggle for the chances of peace in the Middle East. It is very clear to all of us that PLO is committed to the tactics and politics of undermining the, er, framework for peace in the Middle East, established at Camp David.

Taylor: Israel's action though, has brought criticism from the other peace partners, Egypt and America.

fsp map of middle east. Egypt and Israel marked, with Halhul and West Bank shown in Israel.

Film of army landrover in street. Cut to crowd outside large building. Zoom in to crowd leaving building. Cut to soldiers running along street. Cut to close up of soldiers - actuality sbund of shot's fired.

Cut to soldiers milling about streets.

Cut to men setting up oil drum barricade across street. Zoom out to reveal soldiers approaching in foreground. Cut to smoke bomb being thrown at building next to barricade.

Soldiers walking along an empty street.

Inside press conference.

Close up of "Mr. Menachem Milson, West Bank Administrator" (captioned).

Soldiers on street corner.

Civilians walking past.

But at the moment the Israeli's have got a lever against both of them; that's the fear that an open rift between the peace partners might be enough to lead the Israeli government to delay the hand over of the Sinei to Egypt due next month. Derek Taylor, News at Ten, on the West Bank.

Taylor, in front of building, to camera.

Burnet: The people of El Salvador are about to vote - despite all the bullets - a specialreport next.

Plus, Mr. Whitelaw finds the Party faithful, faithful.

And on and on, up and up Everest. That's in a couple of minutes.

MUSIC

Burnet in studio. No logo. Clip of banner waving Salvadorans.

Clip of Whitelaw acknowledging standing ovation.

Clip of Everest - long shot.

Shot shrinks to mid screen

Caption: 'News at Ten

End of Part One', appears below it.

ADVERTISEMENTS

Gall: MUSIC
The Americans seem to be on extreme right wing victory in Sunday's elections in El Salvador, and they appear to have changed their minds about Major Roberto D'Aubuisson, the leader of the Nationalist Republican Alliance, who's been linked with the right wing death squads.

A former American ambassador to El Salvador, is reported to have called D'Aubuisson a pathological killer. American observers of the election have just arrived there. Jon Snow reports.

Clip of Salvadoran banner wavers. Gall in studio. No logo.

fsp of D'Aubuisson.

Gall in studio. No logo.

Snow: (captioned) With a day to go to the election the American senator and congressmen observing it arrived in a bullet-proof convoy two hours ago. The British delegation, already here for 5 days, has not disguised its resentment that the Americans have joined them so late.

The ballot papers being unloaded at polling stations offer the people a choice of centre, right and extreme right wing candidates. Each has held rallies, whilst the Social Democrats, Socialists and Communists have not - all their candidates are either dead or in exile. The left argues that the death squads would continue to hit them if they returned.

Film of cars driving over hill towards camera. Black limousine drives past camera with 'El Salvador this afternoon' caption. Shot pans round to cars driving away from camera.

Men lifting boxes from a table.

Banner waving crowd (in street). Camera cuts to various shots of sections of the crowd.

Though there are half a dozen parties of the right, the battle is really between two men. President Duarte in the centre for the Christian Democrats, is Washington's candidate, but both he, and the U.S. Embassy here think he has a good chance of losing.

His opponent, Major Bob D'Aubuisson on the extreme right now has, in the opinion of the Embassy and many others, a fair chance of winning. Vast amounts of money sent in from the exiled oligarchy in Miami, have given him a lavish campaign. He promises to restore much of their land to them, and to defeat the guerillas with Nepal and gas within 3 months.

Six miles outside San Salvador this morning, in the notorious lava pits, lay the bodies of a man, a woman and a child. This is the spot where the death squads daily dump their victims.

The Senior American officials have been convinced of D'Aubuisson's connections with the death squads for a long time. The documentation associating him with the killing of Archbishop Romero has been destroyed - but it was seen before that by the previous American ambassador here, Robert White.

Until a few weeks ago, the Embassy made it plain that D'Aubuisson was not a man with whom they could co-operate. But last night, in an about turn, the U.S. Ambassador revealed to selected journalists that a new view prevailed.

Filmed at an Aide meeting this morning he said "we know D'Aubuisson's reputation, he denies the rough stuff, he should be judged on his future actions, and not on his past performance". Leaving he told us, America would try to co-operate with D'Aubuisson, if he won the election.

Amid the furore stirred up by this new policy, guns blazed away in the district around the electoral commission headquarters. It lasted 24 hours, and there was never any sign of the guerrillas, but they have been active elsewhere today; their radio has warned of considerably more action here tomorrow.

Jon Snow, News at Ten, San Salvador.

Duarte addressing large rally (camera behind Duarte).
Close-up of Duarte speaking.

D'Aubuisson waving amidst crowd.
Zoom in to D'Aubuisson.

Camera looks down on large rally in mini football stadium setting.
Crowd with banners (in street).

Shot of road through wasteland.
Zoom in to dead bodies.

Close up of pair of boots. Zoom out from vulture on rock to reveal dead bodies. Snow, at lava pits, to camera.

Shot of building with U.S. flag in foreground.

Close up of roof.
Zoom out to reveal building.

Close up of man with glasses.

Shot of him leaving press conference.

Soldiers (two) firing guns into trees aimlessly.

Burnet: China gave a cool reception today to President Breznev's offer to patch up the 20 year quarrel between Moscow and Peking. A spokesman said China attached importance to the actual deeds of the Soviet Union. Western diplomats said this almost certainly meant: a withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afganistan and a big reduction in Soviet influence in Vietnam and the rest of Indo-China, and this was unlikely.

Burnet in studio. No logo.

Gall: A 25 year old research student who manufactured a powerful illegal drug in a university laboratory, has been jailed for 4 years. The man described as his marketing manager got 3 years.

Gall in studio. No logo.

Paul Barker told the judge he knew more than his professor. The judge said he was arrogant and bogus.

fsp of Paul Barker. Zoom in to head and shoulders.

In a laboratory at Sussex University he made a drug called BromoSTP. He made thousands of tablets by dipping blotting paper in the drug. He was finally arrested with some of the drugs at a pop festival.

fsp of chemical laboratory.

fsp of sheet of tablets.

Burnet: The Home Secretary Mr. William Whitelaw got a standing ovation today after a speech to Conservative Party activists at Harrogate. He spoke in a debate on law and order at an Annual Conference of the Party's central council, and to judge from his reception, he has emerged triumphant again, after a week fending off his critics. From Harrogate, our political correspondent, David Rose.

Burnet in studio. No logo.

Rose: Mr. Whitelaw must have been worried about what sort of reception he'd get today. There had been rumblings from the Party's grass roots, and he'd been given a rough time by the party conference on this issue last year. But in the event, every speaker except one supported him. Mr. Whitelaw defended his record, and contrasted it with his predecessors and opponents.

Film of Whitelaw walking onto platform. Rose captioned. Shot of audience applauding.

Whitelaw sitting with colleagues on platform.

Speaker below platform.

Whitelaw listening, smiling. Audience listening.

Whitelaw: It was Labour Home Secretaries like Roy Jenkins, who failed to provide the prison places, for whose shortage they now criticise us. I am tired of those, whether Liberal, Labour or SDP, who far from supporting the police, and encouraging the public to help, concentrate on criticism and complaint. Whitelaw speaking (captioned).

Rose: He was clearly delighted by the way the debate had gone. Zoom out, no sound.

Whitelaw: And may I once again thank you deeply for the support and help which you have given to me at a very difficult time. Applause. Sound up again.

Rose: And they rose to him. Afterwards Mr. Whitelaw told me that he had been hurt by previous criticism, from within his own party. Many of these representatives from the Tory grass roots are worried by the crime figures - but today, few held the Home Secretary personally responsible. Whitelaw sits down.

There's no doubt that Mr. Whitelaw has received almost total support from the Conservative Party workers here at Harrogate. Zoom out to reveal audience who slowly rise.

This time last week he feared what looked like a tough week of criticism: from first on Monday, Tory MPs, when in the House of Commons yesterday; then here from Party workers in Harrogate. Zoom in to Whitelaw acknowledging applause.

But tonight his position looks very much stronger. David Rose, Audience clapping.

News at Ten, Harrogate. Rose, to camera.

Gall: More than 900 jobs have been saved at the Lucas Battery Plant in Birmingham. Lucas beat off competition from Chloride to provide BL with half a million batteries a year. But as this weeks ITN jobs survey shows, not everyone has been as lucky. Gall in studio. Lucas logo.

British Aerospace are cutting 12 hundred jobs at centres on North Humberstone, Braisbridge Heath in Lincolnshire, and Bidwell in Leicestershire. Gall in studio. News at Ten jobs survey logo.

The same number are going with the closure of Metal Box plants in Monmouth, Leicester and Wigan. Gall in studio. fsp map of G.B. titled 'Jobs Lost': "British Aerospace 1,200" flashes up with dots on appropriate places on map.

Repeat with 'Metal Box 1,200'.

In Birmingham, Hardy Spicer Transmission components are getting rid of 300, the same number go at Stone Platt Industries in Macclesfield.

In West Wales 200 jobs are going with the Delinair car heater company, in North London 190 have gone at the ABC Pie factory, and a 100 at Haskins Shutters in Basingstoke.

On the brighter side, Sperrings newsmarkets will provide 600 new jobs around Southampton, as with Panel Plus Furniture Company in Peterborough.

In Scotland there are 200 new jobs at Greggs Bakery in Rother Glen. Conoco in Aberdeen will take on the same number, and there'll be another 100 at the Glen Roths Entertainment Complex.

In the North West, there'll be 130 new jobs at Dainichi-Sykes Robotics in Preston, and 120 at a Co-op store in Chester.

New orders this week: Foster Wheeler of Reading have won a 60 million pound engineering contract in Sweden: £15 million of it will come to Britain, while Leyland buses in Lancashire, and Volvo trucks in Oban in Falkirk have both secured orders worth £10 million each.

The Royal Navy is closing its Hovercraft trials unit on the Solent in Hampshire, as part of the defence cuts. 3 Hovercrafts are being sold off, and about 100 service men and women are being transferred to other jobs. One Hovercraft will remain, the only one still operating in any of the 3 services.

Burnet:

Tonights soccer: in the fourth divisions; Colchester 2, Hull 0; Stockport 1, Darlington 0; and York and Scunthorpe fighting to avoid the embarrassment of re-election - York 3 Scunthorpe 1.

In Durban, South Africa made 181 for 9 declared in the first innings of their last match against an England eleven. The England rebels were 14 without loss.

Repeat with 'Hardy Spicer 300'.

Repeat with 'Stone Platt Industries 300'.

Repeat with 'Delinair 200'.

Repeat with 'ABC Pie Factory 190'.

Repeat with 'Haskins Shutter Company 100'.

Replace 'Jobs Lost' with 'New Jobs' and repeat with 'Sperrings Newsmarkets 600'. Repeat with 'Panel Plus Furniture Co. 600'.

Repeat with 'Greggs Bakery 200'.

Repeat with 'Conoco 200'.

Repeat with 'Entertainment Complex 100'.

Repeat with 'Dainichi-Sykes Robotics 130'.

Repeat with 'Co-op 120'.

Replace 'New jobs' with 'New Orders'. Repeat with 'Foster Wheeler £15 million'.

Repeat with 'Leyland Buses £10 million'.

Repeat with 'Volvo Trucks £10 million'.

Gall in studio. No logo.

Burnet in studio. No logo. fsp of football scene with scores in white on top.

fsp of cricket scene with scores on top.

- Gall:** The main points of the news again. The Social Democrats have been talking today of Mr. Roy Jenkins as the next Prime Minister after victory at Hillhead.
BL's productivity is going up - thanks to its robots.
The Israeli's shot and injured another Palestinian Arab on the West Bank today ... we've just heard the problems on the space shuttle, the problems with the radio system have got worse and mission control may have to bring the spacecraft back to earth earlier than Monday.
- Burnet:** Finally, the British expedition which is trying to climb Everest by a totally new route, is now establishing a base camp 16,000 feet up the mountain. ITN has just received the first film of their arrival in Tibet, shot by one of the climbers, Joe Tasker. Sam Hall's been admiring it.
- Hall:** The British team, 4 climbers, an expedition doctor and a base camp manager, is one of the smallest expeditions ever mounted on the world's highest peak. And the route they've chosen for their assault, is the East North East ridge. Its never been climbed before, nor even attempted - and they hope to do it without oxygen.
Looking pensive, Charles Clark, the expedition doctor.
First off the plane in Lasa, the Tibetan capital, was Adrian Gordon, who'll be organising the base camp - and behind him, Chris Bonnington, who led the successful British Everest expedition in 1975. Sight-seeing in Lasa was just the first stage of a long process of acclimatisation. This is the Potala Palace, former winter fortress of the Dalai Lamas, 1200 feet up.
Peter Bordman, who climbed Everest in 1975, like Dick Renshaw, will need 6 weeks or more to get used to the altitude. The expedition has provided a unique opportunity for the team to see a city still visited only rarely.
Many of these pilgrims walked 100 miles or more, to visit the holy palace.
- Gall in studio. No logo.
- Burnet in studio. Map of Tibet and Nepal logo.
- Film of clouds. Sam Hall captioned.
Various shots (from plane) looking down on snowy mountains.
- Clark with binoculars looking out of plane window.
People getting off plane. Camera follows Gordon and Bonnington.
- 3 shots of magnificent fortress.
- Boardman with rucksack taking photo (of palace?).
Renshaw with camera.
People climbing up palace steps.
Zoom out to crowd in courtyard.
- Pilgrims lying face down on mats to kiss the ground.

Dr. Clark, who will also study what a lack of oxygen does to the eyes at high altitude, was surrounded by Tibetans who'd never seen a westerner before. And that's Dick Renshaw, who climbed on the British K2 expedition 2 years ago.

It's a 200 mile drive from Lasa to the base camp at 16,000 feet - too easy really, because most expeditions trek to base camp, and acclimatise on the way. So, the British team are shopping for a couple of days, every time they gain 1000 feet in height.

This was their first view of the mountain, which has only once been climbed by a small team, and never by a small team on a new route, without oxygen.

Burnet: And that's the news from high and low tonight. Good night.

MUSIC

Clark surrounded by jolly-looking Tibetans with green caps.

Renshaw, also surrounded, at a market stall.

Landrover towards camera.

Moving camera shot along road looking down on precipice. Variety of shots.

Lang shot of Everest. Zoom in.

Gall and Burnet both in picture, captioned.
Picture of Houses of Parliament with:
Programme Director:
Diana Edwards-Jones.
Programme Editor: Sue Tinson.

v. The programme context

The perceived context of these news items will be discussed in detail during the analysis. For the time being, it is worth briefly mentioning the immediate history of these news items, as T.V. news stories.

The Hillhead piece was obviously the culmination of a story, beginning with the selection of Jenkins for the seat. Reports from then on focussed on opinion polls, which suggested that the by-election would be a close run three horse race. In the longer term, the Hillhead by-election was part of a succession of by-elections during 1981 and 1982 which featured SDP/Liberal Alliance candidates doing unexpectedly well. The news media took a great deal of interest in these by-elections, focussing upon the SDP as the 'mould breakers' of British politics, featuring the 'Gang of Four' (Owen, Williams, Rogers and Jenkins).

These by-elections saw Jenkins fail (with an unexpectedly high share of the vote) in Warrington, Bill Pitt win at Croydon, and Shirley Williams win at Crosby. Following these successes, the news media attached great significance to Jenkins' performance in Hillhead.

The significance of the story was increased by the possibility that the SDP/Liberal Alliance bandwagon might be grinding to a halt. In the face of an extremely unpopular Conservative government and a divided Labour opposition, the Alliance had risen to extra ordinary heights in the opinion polls. During their most successful period (around the Crosby by-election, when Williams won a hitherto safe Tory seat) the Alliance were represented in the polls as the most popular political party in Britain, sometimes recording over 50% of people's preferences (which, if translated into a general election vote, would have given them a massive majority in the House of Commons). By March, 1982, however, the Alliance's 'honeymoon' period appeared to be ending. The Conservative Party in particular, after a period when the massive rise in unemployment had made people begin to write them off as serious candidates for the next general election, had begun to pick up slightly.

This led to speculation - fuelled by the opinion polls - that Jenkins might not win Hillhead. In the light of the Alliance's spectacular successes at Croydon and Crosby, such a failure would have been interpreted as a major blow for the Alliance and the end of Mr. Jenkins as a political heavyweight. A success, on the other hand, kept the bandwagon rolling, as well as returning the Alliance's most experienced politician to Parliament.

News at Ten's billing of the victorious Jenkins as the 'alternative' Prime Minister was obviously a 'newsy' hook to hang (what was felt to be) a major political news story on. It was, nevertheless, an extremely ambiguous idea, begging the question: alternative to whom? There was no evidence, at the time, that the Alliance was hitting the Labour vote

any harder than the Conservative's (as was subsequently the case in the 1983 general election). The suggestion that Jenkins would become "Mrs. Thatcher's chief opponent" was therefore based upon the Conservative's position as the party of government, rather than the unpopularity of the Labour Party. The notion of an 'alternative' was therefore more likely to be understood in relation to both major parties.

The British Leyland story, on the other hand, appeared fairly suddenly in the news. The processes and discussions the item refers to were not widely reported. The piece is therefore partially retrospective (i.e. it brings us up to date).

The Company Car item, similarly, has no immediate history as a news story. The Pound/Dollar item, on the other hand, forms part of the tapestry of television news. It's regular presence on the news, nevertheless, usually occurs without signalling any narrative development - the pound goes up a bit, down a bit, up a bit, etc., etc. - rather like the weather forecast.

The West Bank story had a number of different reported histories, although none of them were particularly immediate. The most recent news stories from the area concerned speculation about the success or failure of the Israeli withdrawal from the Sinai, and the sacking of the Palestinian mayors in the West Bank. The former received more attention than the latter.

The El Salvador piece was, on the other hand, part of a recently developing news story. American interest in El Salvador following Ronald Reagan's election had given this unfortunate country a recent promotion to the news media's map of the world. The authorities attempts to hold an election in the face of powerful opposition from the guerilla forces (who controlled large sections of the countryside), coupled with the American's attempts to prop up the existing regime, gave the story a great deal of news value. Jon Snow (and his opposite number from the B.B.C.) had issued reports from El Salvador throughout the previous week, monitoring the build up to the election.

The news of possibilities of reconciliation between China and the Soviet Union had received almost no previous news coverage, a situation reflected in the brevity of the attention given it on this edition of News at Ten. The only 'topical' aspect of the item was a brief reference to the Soviet occupation of Afganistan. The Drugs item that followed had no television or news history at all. Paul ¹ Barker's first and (probably) last appearance on television was on this edition of News at Ten (the Nine O'Clock News on B.B.C. 1, after some discussion, decided not to include the item ²). This story, perhaps more than any other of the others, was therefore fairly self-contained.

The Whitelaw item had a very specific (television news) history - a history that began when the erstwhile Home Secretary received an extremely hostile reception at the previous Tory Party conference in 1981 ³. Since then, Whitelaw's liberal position (within a party dominated by a cabinet whose ranks were becoming increasingly hardline/ right wing) had become increasingly precarious, following his 'failure' to introduce repressive methods of punishment and policing. Criticism of Whitelaw had been building up (again) during February and March, and both the B.B.C. and I.T.N. sent camera crews down to Harrogate in the hope of witnessing a showdown. The actual event, in news value terms, was something of an anticlimax. Both channels, nevertheless, had spent considerable time and money in covering the story, and clearly felt bound to include it - albeit lower down the running order than if a confrontation had occurred.

The Jobs piece was a regular Friday evening feature on News at Ten. The Friday 'Jobs Watch' was introduced in response to the dramatic rise in unemployment beginning in 1980. Rises in unemployment had been, in one form or another, a fairly ubiquitous news story since that time. By March, 1982, although unemployment had not lost its importance as a political issue, it had lost some of its news value. Some of those working within television news and current affairs were beginning to suggest that the 'Jobs Watch' was no longer newsworthy

enough to deserve an automatic place on News at Ten, while the increasing success of the Conservatives in the opinion polls suggested that familiarity with unemployment (as a news story, if nothing else) had anaesthetised public sensitivity to the issue.⁴

The final item (apart from the sports news) was within the tradition of 'light' items at the end of the news. Like most stories within this tradition, the Everest item made its first major news appearance on this edition of News at Ten (although it was to reappear again in rather more tragic circumstances).

FOOTNOTES:

1. The man's name was, in fact, Peter Barker.
2. The item they chose instead was a story of a young man who had died after a 'head banging' session.
3. Following the riots in the spring and summer of that year, when the right and left were offering very different solutions to the problem of civil unrest (see Wren-Lewis, 1981/2).
4. There is, perhaps, a contradictory set of processes at work here. The constant presence of unemployment as a problem on the news may, on the one hand, anaesthetise the viewer to the realities of the problem or incline him/her to accept its inevitability, and, on the other, instill into him/her the prominence of unemployment as a problem facing Britain. This could explain why the Conservative Party were able to increase support while the electorate continued to prioritise the issue of unemployment.

5 DECODING BRITISH LEYLAND

i. Opening British Leyland

In many ways, the British Leyland item is a good example of a news discourse at its most open. The item does not refer to a sequence of news stories recently preceding it, like, for example, the El Salvador or West Bank items (only 11 decoders were able to place the item in a specific narrative context). Indeed, some of the decoders (6), particularly the broadcasters, questioned the actual news value of the story, and consequently the editorial decision to place it second in the running order. This questioning amounts, more or less, to the absence of any identifiable news narrative contextualising the story - the British Leyland item fails to justify its sudden 'appearance' on News at Ten for precisely this reason.

The narrative structure of the item itself is both loose and confused. 4 of the decoders were able to locate this confusion with remarkable accuracy (for a decoder to deconstruct an item critically, rather than give an impressionistic account of it, after having watched a half hour news programme once, is a considerable achievement - one that occurred only rarely throughout the research). 3 of the 4 were able to demonstrate the lack of fit between the item's introduction and the rest of the piece:

"I wondered if I'd missed something actually, because they said BL had some new productivity deals but they didn't actually tell you what they were. Unless I missed it", 24B;

"I wasn't actually sure what it was on about actually. I wasn't sure whether they were talking about the productivity deal or some sort of industrial relations deal, because I wasn't concentrating when they introduced it. Um, then of course the main bulk of the item was about productivity at the Longbridge plant", 25A.

One was also able to identify the reporter's attempt to relocate the item's introductory theme (the "new deal") at the end of the item:

"Rather odd, I thought it started off with the announcement of a new deal, some new deal, that didn't seem to be brought out on the story, not until the end when the guy stood in the field and substantiated it by saying there is a new deal being signed, the rest seemed to be basically on their production figures, on productivity figures, and workers' reaction to working with new equipment", 19B.¹

The reason for the confusion is fairly straightforward. The piece begins with the news of "Today's deal" between "BL management and unions" because, in terms of day to day news coverage, this is the newsworthy element of the piece. The rest of the report deals almost exclusively with the final part of Burnet's introduction:

"BL's workers - with the help of robots - have hit new productivity records"

without elaborating on the details of the new deal. While this film report is 'newsy' enough not to be out of place on News at Ten, it needs something to locate it in the world of that days news, to justify its position on News at Ten. The news about the "new deal" provides this justification. The confusion arises because the piece fails to successfully link the two. The one merely provides "the icing on the cake" for the other.

For the vast majority of the audience, who were unable to critically deconstruct the item in this way, this confusion produces a wide range of different themes in the decodings. This thematic diversity is extended by the treatment of the notion of 'productivity'. Interspersed with news of the "remarkable productivity improvement", the notion of unemployment is introduced. This occurs quite suddenly in the narrative, in the second half of the statement by Brian Fox (operation manager), and is developed during the interview with the two BL workers. ("But you have seen a lot of jobs go in the process. Colleagues of yours have had to leave"). The relation between new technology, a rise in productivity and unemployment is left fairly unclear. Crucially the difference between production and productivity is left unexplained. Just as 4 of the decoders were able to demonstrate the confused nature of the item, only 4 of the decoders were able to problematise the item by articulating

this difference, and only 3 of them were able to do so clearly. Of those 3, 8A's most dominant response to the item was that:

"It left me asking a question, 98% productivity ... we didn't actually hear whether they were producing more cars ..."

In other words, since productivity is calculated on the basis of cars per man, an increase in productivity doesn't mean an increase in actual production (i.e. output), indeed, since the two indices are not directly related, it could coincide with a fall in production. As 8A correctly pointed out, all the comparative figures quoted on the item relate to the ratio of cars produced per man. So while the replacement of men with robots may not necessarily lower costs or increase output, it inevitably improves productivity. This realisation left 18B in a state of some confusion:

"Well, when they were talking at the beginning, they were saying, look haven't we improved our standards, and look, people are making, men are making more cars per year ... and then they were talking about robots; well presumably the robots are helping the men to make the cars anyway, so it was slightly sort of distorted I thought. ... They are getting rid of men, men are making more cars, but they were introducing robots, they were dispensing with men ... the impression that came over to me was, well what's the point?"

The 'good news' tone of the report therefore relies on the viewer either equating productivity with production, or else assuming that the robots (in terms of cost) are more efficient than men, and that this increase in efficiency is worth the subsequent sacrifice in jobs (both responses are discussed below). In terms of how the item signifies, the ambiguity of the concept of a 'productivity increase' allows a number of possible responses. An increase in productivity could be understood to signify unemployment, an increase in efficiency or an increase in output.

The final sequence of the item provides a further point of ambiguity, by reintroducing the theme of industrial relations to the story. In some ways, as 19B suggested, this could be seen as providing the story with a kind of closure. It could also, nevertheless, be seen as redefining the theme of industrial relations as represented in the beginning of the

story. It also sets up a powerful enigma, one which the item leaves unresolved ('will strikes disrupt these improvements in productivity?'). This final cautionary note is in direct contrast with the secure celebratory tone of the rest of the item, making it more difficult for the item to generate a particular response. The viewer may choose to emphasise other aspects in his or her decoding, or attempt a reading that successfully absorbs both moods. As I shall proceed to discuss, the story's ending also locates BL in the context of more familiar associations - inefficiency, strikes and trade union militancy - associations that the bulk of the story works directly against.

So, although the BL item in some ways appears to be a simple success story,² we can identify a wide range of possible significations. What the research attempts to investigate is how and why those possible significations were or were not taken up.

ii Preferred readings

Much of the semiological work on film and T.V. has emphasised the importance of those elements in the discourse that precipitate or encourage its closure. In their analysis of the Nationwide discourse Brunsdon and Morley locate these elements on an "axis of continuity and combination - which binds, links and frames these differences into a continuous, connected, flowing, 'unity'" (Brunsdon and Morley, 1978, p. 61). The two crucial elements operating on this axis (to make the programme a "structure in dominance") are the discourses of linking and framing. While Nationwide and News at Ten are not identical discourses, the concept of framing ("establishing the topic and its relevance to the concerns of the audience", p.58) is appropriate to both (linking refers merely to links between items - 'now, over to ...' - a device rarely used in news programmes). Just as it is the Nationwide presenters duty to frame items in his/her introduction, so it is with News at Ten. The practice of framing occurs most conspicuously on the main news reports, in this instance the Hillhead, British Leyland, West Bank,

El Salvador and Whitelaw items. In the Hillhead item (because of its length) this process is more complex, but the other four items follow the same pattern: an introductory frame by Burnet or Gall in the studio followed by a film report on location. Given the ambiguous, rather loose structure of the British Leyland item, how successful is Burnet's frame in closing the narrative, or in preferring certain meanings over others?

In order to investigate the notion of the 'preferred reading', the material was coded first of all on the level of themes. This is a general category referring to the item as a whole, apparently irreducible to any specific signification (although it is, of course, constituted by and constitutive of those significations). The thematic structure of a reading is not equivalent to a 'preferred reading' in the sense in which it is often used. A decoder may indicate the presence of a theme while simultaneously rejecting the importance of that theme - 8A, for example, thought the item was about a rise in productivity, while questioning the significance of this (in relation to an absent theme, i.e. output). Similarly, 9 of the decoders read the item as 'a good news story' (with an appropriate thematic structure) while actually suggesting it was, in fact, not good news at all.³ These readings will be examined further in relation to critical discourses.

It is obviously difficult to mark out the boundaries of a theme. The point when the interpretation of part of the text can be classified as a theme, rather than an interpretation specific to certain signifiers, is difficult to define. The theme, as opposed to the signifying unit, or lexia (described below), appears to refer to the text as a whole (even if it is actually based on one signifier), and is therefore endowed with a certain overall significance by the decoders. We can also identify different thematic levels. There may, for example, be three distinguishable themes clustered around a more general category - like, for example, the

general category of 'industrial relations'. On the first thematic level, one decoder may identify the theme 'a new harmony in industrial relations', while another may decide the item was suggesting that BL would do well in the future, provided there are no strikes. While these themes may, in many ways, be very different, both decoders are agreed that the item is, in some sense, 'about' industrial relations. I shall, where appropriate, refer to both thematic levels, although the term 'theme' by itself, will refer to the first, more specific definition.

Most of the decoders identified⁴ 2 - 4 themes in their reading of the item, the exceptions being 11A, 17A (who located as many as 5 themes) and 6A, who located only one. The themes, like all the categories, were identified by going through the decodings and applying them to the programme (rather than vice versa, as is perhaps more usual). They were as follows:

- A BL is more competitive
- B A reduction in overmanning at BL
- C New technology as a source of unemployment
- D An increase in output at BL
- E BL is now doing well
- F Jobs have been lost at BL (without specifying the link in (3))
- G Productivity has improved at BL
- H BL will do well in the future, provided there are no strikes
- J The acceptance by the workforce of new technology
- K A new harmony in industrial relations
- L Robots as efficient workers
- M The issue of 'voluntary redundancy'
- N The need and inevitability of new technology in industry

Of these, four emerged with significantly more frequency than the others: theme C, identified by 28 decoders; theme E, identified by 19 decoders; theme K, identified by 20 decoders and theme G, identified by 18 decoders (the next most frequently identified themes were A and J, identified by 8 decoders)⁵. In the case of theme G, it was often impossible to positively identify whether decoders had misread productivity as meaning output (as in theme D). Thus G should not, therefore, be taken as representing an understanding of the logic behind the concept of productivity, although only 8 unambiguously misread productivity as output (it could be argued that this was, nonetheless,

still a high figure). Similarly theme C should not necessarily be seen as a manifestation of this logic, as it is quite possible to link new technology with unemployment and conflate production with output⁶ (for full details of the frequency of themes, see the Appendix).

These themes can be grouped (more or less) into five more general categories, in order to provide a rough overview of what the item was seen to be about. These general categories can be listed as follows, in order of frequency (the figure in brackets is derived by simply adding the number of appearances of each theme together, as opposed to the other figure, which represents the number of people who identified at least one of the themes within the more general category):

Technology (C, J, L, N)	39 (50)
Unemployment (B, C, F, M)	33 (41)
BL now more successful (A, E, H)	29 (30)
Improvement in output/productivity (D, G)	26 (26)
Industrial Relations (H, J, K)	26 (32)

What emerges fairly clearly is that the introductory frame by Burnet fails to produce a correspondingly dominant reading by the decoders. The thrust of Burnet's introduction concerns the talks between management and unions and the consequent "new deal in industrial relations", yet only half of the decoders were able to locate a theme relating in any way to industrial relations. This is perhaps not surprising, as I have already indicated that the "new deal" is not investigated in the film report that follows. It is, nevertheless, possible to 'read' the report in terms of Burnet's contextualising frame (together with his final aside referring to the "new productivity records"). The statements by the Operations Manager and the BL workers in particular could be read as demonstrating the logic behind the "new deal". This, as I shall proceed to explain, didn't happen.

Crucially, more people identified the presence of a theme entirely absent from either Burnet's introduction or Giles Smith 'closing' statements

in Cofton Park - unemployment. What this thematic overview also confirms is the degree to which the BL item is polysemic. The percentage of decoders constructing a theme within one of the 5 sets of general categories (listed above), ranges from 50% - 70% (of the 50 decoders, for example, 26 - 52% - constructed a theme within the general category of industrial relations), with a high proportion able to identify themes from within conflicting or separate categories. For example, if those themes appearing in 2 general categories are fixed within one⁷ (so that themes H and J are fixed within the Industrial Relations category, and theme C fixed within the Unemployment category), over half the decoders (26) were able to identify themes across 3 or more categories, and only 3 restricted their reading within one category.

In order to understand what these themes mean and how they are constructed, the item was broken down into a number of more specific signifying units. Each decoding was then analysed in terms of if and how each signifying unit was read.

iii Signifying in practice

How can we speak of a signifying unit? How substantial is the unit, and how are its parameters identifiable? We could simply divide the T.V. text into hundreds (or with some items, thousands) of monemes (a unit/element of language which cannot be divided by meaning). Work done by discourse analysts, however, has evidenced a high level of re-encoding before the recall of utterances takes place. Experiments set up by Rommetveit et al. found that subjects were more likely to recall statements (or meaningful equivalences of those statements) when prompted by 'meaningful' content clues (outside the statement) than when prompted by words actually 'quoted' from the statement. They also found that subjects used a higher level of synonyms (rather than verbatim recall) when recalling statements with pictorial contexts, which, they argue, demonstrates that visual contexts induce a higher level of re-encoding than statements without visual contexts (Rommetveit et al., 1971). The

television discourse, then, is unlikely to be precisely relocated around specific monemes, since the practice of signification is:

- (a) affected by the visual/verbal context within which that signifier signified;
- (b) based upon the practice of re-encoding - in other words the site of the signifying practice of recall shifts from the signifiers on the T.V. screen to the subjects reconstruction of those significations in his/her head. That construction will be reconstructed during the recall of an item.

This is not to suggest that we cannot locate a signifying practice between textual signifier and the decoder's discourse, merely that it is by no means a straightforward procedure. Since we cannot be present inside the decoder's mind while decoding takes place, we have to attempt a reconstruction of that decoding activity in discussion with the decoder. Moreover, that discussion will be based upon an agenda formulated by the decoder, which may not involve specific textual references.

Suppose, for example, decoders feel that the British Leyland item is about, among other things, the need to use new technology (as 7 of the decoders indicated) in industries like BL. This reading may be based upon significations located in statements by Brian Fox, by the two workers, or by linking a whole series of significations (like, for example, the positive connotations linked to the productivity increases with positive connotations around robots technology). The decoder will clearly be unable to reconstruct the precise significations that led him/her to that impression, and may even fail to locate a whole group of signifiers that influenced/constituted that impression (he/she, for example, may reiterate Fox's discourse without being able to identify Fox as the origin of that discourse, a decoding that will be discussed in more detail below). We need, nevertheless, to split the text up into signifying units in order to understand how it works.

In S/Z, Barthes divides his text into "a series of brief, contiguous fragments, which we shall call lexias, since they are units of reading". This, Barthes admits,

"will be arbitrary in the extreme; it will imply no methodological responsibility ... The lexia will include sometimes a few words, sometimes several sentences: it will be a matter of convenience: it will suffice that the lexia be the possible space in which we can observe meanings, its dimension, empirically determined, estimated, will depend on the density of connotations, variable according to the moments of the text: all we require is that each lexia should have at most three or four meanings enumerated" (Barthes, 1974, pp.13-14).

This allows Barthes to privilege some monemes/groups of monemes over others in terms of the "density of connotations" he identifies. This task is fairly straightforward in S/Z, since Barthes the author/researcher and Barthes the decoder are the same (i.e. his research is his decoding). Furthermore, the "step by step" method of analysis used in S/Z appears to eliminate Barthes the re-encoder from the scene - the appearance of each lexia and its decoding take place, in the text of S/Z, simultaneously. The fact that, for example, Barthes' reading in S/Z of Sarrasine is based upon re-encoding previous decodings of Sarrasine, is an absence in the S/Z text. This absence (of Barthes the re-encoder) is not crucial, because Barthes is not attempting a recreation of his own first reading - he seeks merely to indicate how a text may be read, not how it is read: his concern is the text rather than his own decoding of it.

For audience research, the task of dividing the text into signifying units or lexias is more difficult. The researcher must take into account:

- (a) the distinction between signifiers in the decoders discourse and signifiers in the T.V. text;
- (b) more than one reading - in this case fifty - as the basis for identifying signifying units;
- (c) the fact that, in order to locate dominant readings (rather than ask the decoder to radically reconstruct his/her reading by going through

the text step by step - what he/she forgets or ignores is as significant as what he/she doesn't), the researcher must make as few references to specific textual signifiers as possible. Matching up the T.V. text with the transcribed reading of it will therefore be a more complex procedure. Furthermore, a system must be able to incorporate every textual lexia identified by the decoders.

Thus, while I shall clarify the notion of a signifying unit with Barthes' concept of the lexia, it is obviously not possible to appropriate the terms of his definition verbatim - in audience research, the separation of a text into lexias is, as I have stated, extremely complex. The audience researcher has to accurately represent a large number of decodings (rather than one decoding) in terms of one structure. This structure (a text divided up into specific lexias) must be capable of absorbing a multiplicity of interpretations.

The fundamental problem in mapping out a textual framework, which distinguishes decoding analysis from a Barthesian critical reading, is that the text itself is not, ultimately, the basis of that framework. This means :

- (a) some signifiers will be entirely absent from the decodings, despite being potentially meaningful;
- (b) we cannot state that "each lexia should have at most three or four meanings enumerated", since we are not in control of those meanings. To exclude lexias simply because they don't generate a sufficient level of polysemy would be to exclude decoding from our framework. Similarly, we cannot merely 'expand' lexias (as Barthes does) until they include enough signifiers to generate a "density of connotations", since this will not record the specific relations between signifiers and signs constructed by the decoders;
- (c) when we appear to have different interpretations of a signifying unit, we have to be sure that the same sets of signifiers are being

interpreted, and that we are not imposing textual unities upon the decodings. When, for example, decoders refer to the interview with the BL workers, is this equivalent to the textual entity marked out in words and pictures?

To this end, the BL item was divided into 10 general signifying units, or lexias, (some of which were subdivided where necessary) corresponding to those elements located by the decoders as signifying unities (monemic not in an actual sense, but nevertheless 'unities' as far as most of the decodings were concerned). These unities were then classified, where necessary, in terms of how they were decoded, or which signifiers were emphasised during the decoding. If the result appears at time to be a little methodologically imprecise, in the sense that some signifying units are classified in terms of a range of significations while others are simply classified as present or absent in the decoding, this imprecision is not ad hoc but calculated in terms of what is appropriate to the decoding material itself.

The 10 lexias, with subdivisions and types of reading, were as follows (numbers in brackets indicating the number of decoders who identified these signifying units in the way indicated).

(1) The new deal. This incorporates Burnet's introduction and Smith's brief references at the beginning and end of the piece. This was decoded thus:

- (a) Referenced: not problematised or seen as working. (5)
- (b) Referenced, problematised either because the item failed to specify its nature or because of its failure to represent the workforce's dissatisfaction with it. (3)
- (c) Not referenced. (42)

(2) Productivity improvements. This incorporates the figures given to signify the productivity increase. More general references to productivity based upon those figures and/or Burnet and Smith's general statements are covered in themes D and G.

- (a) Correct recall of figures. (10)
- (b) Partial recall of figures. (4)

(c) Correct recall of figures misinterpreted. (2)⁸

(d) No recall of figures. (34)

(3) Brian Fox, Operations Manager. Although Fox's statement is classed as a signifying unit, it was necessary to subdivide what he said into small but separable signifying units in their own right. This was briefly because some of Fox's remarks were referenced in isolation from Fox as author (i.e. their authorship was forgotten) rather than as part of 'Fox as signifier'. Because of the preliminary interviews preceding the sample of fifty, I decided to encourage discussion of the interview sections of the item. Those who made no reference to either interview were therefore prompted ("do you remember anyone being interviewed?"). If they failed to or only vaguely remembered Fox, and nothing of what he said, they were therefore categorised under "poor recall".

(a) Clear recall of Fox. (18)

(b) Poor or no recall of Fox. (32)

(c) Fox's management position correctly identified. (5)

(d) Fox's management position vaguely identified. (16)

Fox's statements (as separable signifying units)

(e) "Redundancies voluntary" with Fox identified as author. (6)

(f) Redundancies voluntary recalled without authorship. (4)

(g) Redundancies voluntary not recalled. (40)

(h) "More redundancies needed" with Fox identified as author. (2)

(i) More redundancies needed recalled without authorship. (2)

(j) More redundancies needed not recalled. (46)

(k) "2000 jobs lost" with Fox identified as author. (1)

(l) 2000 jobs lost recalled without authorship. (4)

(m) 2000 jobs lost not recalled. (45)⁹

(4) The robots. This incorporates the references to robots punctuating the item, as well as the shots of robots in action. Because of the distinct awareness by the decoders of the visual presence of the

robots, this awareness has been specified separately in this category.

(a) Reference to visual shots of robots. (11)

(b) Awareness of robots/automation as a significant presence. (32)

(c) No reference to robots/automation. (7)

(5) British Leyland workers. Because this lexia attracted so much attention ¹⁰ it has been split into two: namely the workers themselves; and their statements. The 'BL workers as signifiers' were more enigmatic than Fox, since they were not identified (by captions) and it was not necessarily clear who they were speaking for. The decoders were therefore all asked whether they felt the two interviewees to be typical or representative of the BL workforce as a whole (this was the only point, during the discussion of this item, where the decoders were asked to accept or reject a specific interpretation of a lexia), although many made such a judgement without prompting.

(a) Clear recall of BL workers. (49)

(b) Poor recall of BL workers. (1)

(c) Seen as representing foreman or shop floor management. (4)

(d) Seen as representative of BL workforce. (12)

(e) Seen as not representative of BL workforce. (15)

(f) Seen as part of a public relations exercise on behalf of BL or BL management. (13)

(6) British Leyland worker's statements. All those who remembered the BL workers clearly were able, through their statements, to define their position in some way or other. Their statements were also seen as separable lexias, 33 of the 50 specifically referring to at least one of these statements. Where a high number of decoders were able to quote a statement more or less word for word, the initial V (for verbatim) will be given against the appropriate number.

(a) The need to compete. (4)

(b) Move towards robotics necessary for progress. (12, 7V)

(c) Sorrow for the loss of jobs. (10)

(d) Better to lose a few jobs than have no jobs at all. (15, 8V)

(e) Bonusses coming through. (7)

(7) Unemployment figures. Although these figures are, on one reading, measurements of productivity ("Just 34 men work on the line, which would need nearly 150 if the welds were done in the traditional manner"), they were usually decoded as signifying unemployment.¹¹

Although only a small number of decoders referred to these figures, they are distinguishable as a lexia in their own right, being the only set of figures present in the commentary unambiguously indicating the level of unemployment brought about by automation (the only other unemployment statistics given are voiced by Brian Fox - 2000 "voluntary" redundancies).

(a) Correct recall. (4)

(b) Near or substitute recall. (2)

(c) No reference to figures. (44)

(8) "Robots don't go on strike, men can". Although this statement begins the final speculative sequence on industrial disruption in the future (providing a rather tenuous link between the productivity story and the industrial relations story), the logic behind it stands out on its own.

(a) Clear, almost verbatim recall of statement. (7)

(b) Robots seen as reducing effectivity of strike action. (1)

(c) Good recent strike record attributed to robots. (1)

(d) No reference to the logic behind the statement. (41)

(9) Future strikes at B.L.? This signifying unit incorporates the final few sentences setting up the enigma - will strikes blow BL off course from their new found successes? The visual image of the empty Cofton Park proved to be a fairly memorable component of this sequence, and references to it are recorded within this signifying unit. Its meaning, however, was not unambiguous.

- (a) The empty Cofton Park as a visual signifier. (12)
- (b) Strikes can stop BL's progress. (5)
- (c) The residual strike problem not necessarily solved. (3)
- (d) Cofton Park as an example of the new harmony in industrial relations. (3)

(10) Michael Edwardes. The reference to Edwardes' forthcoming retirement is perhaps the most superfluous piece of information given during this item (superfluous in that it doesn't fit easily into any of the dominant themes or narratives). Included in this signifying unit, purely for coding purposes, are other signifiers referred to by the decoders but not so far incorporated in the 10 lexias detailed here.¹² There was, in fact, only one of these - 13B made a reference to the shot of a newly made car being driven out of the warehouse (this shot provides the backdrop to Smith's reintroduction of the industrial relations theme, before the cut to Cofton Park). Two of the decoders merely reiterated the information that Edwardes was shortly to be replaced, while another contextualised this information, as Smith attempts to do, within the industrial relations narrative.

- (a) Edwardes shortly to be replaced. (2)
- (b) Edwardes hopes there'll be no more strikes. (1)
- (c) Car being driven out of warehouse. (1)

Before looking at the information gathered so far in detail, it should be stressed that this is not the only way of constructing a textual framework within the terms set out during the first part of this section. The advantage of this method of coding the decodings, is that it locates the lexia firmly within the sequence of the text. This means that the presence of the textual signifiers in the decodings are made to appear more concrete than they necessarily are.

In the analysis of the West Bank item that follows, every textual reference shall be classified as a different lexia, which will, if appropriate, subsequently be seen to correspond to certain parts of the text. This places the emphasis on the construction of the text (by the

decoders) rather than the text itself. The disadvantage of this method is that some lexias will be more difficult to tie down to specific textual signifiers than others.

The choice of the first method for the British Leyland item is not particularly significant. What the two methods enable us to say or not to say is, in practice, not very different. Suffice to say that the decodings of the British Leyland item actually corresponded fairly neatly with identifiable sections of the text, whereas this correspondence was not always so obvious in the case of the West Bank item.

iv Brian Fox - the vanishing author

One of the most interesting points of comparison is the difference between readings of the Fox interview and the interview with the BL workers. The most obvious disparity occurs between their presence in the readings. All but one decoder - 8A - clearly recalled the interview with the two workers, while only a third (18) clearly recalled the interview with Fox. Similarly, only 8 decoders referred to Fox's statements in relation to Fox the signifying unit, compared with 33 who recalled the gist of statements by the two workers. Moreover, 8 decoders recalled facts clearly derived from Fox's words without referencing Fox as author. Fox the author it appeared, was inclined to merge into the background in a way in which the BL workers did not. In terms of a straightforward content analysis, there is no apparent reason for these quite marked differences: the interviews are of approximately equal length, both are interviewed standing in front of the assembly lines, both are positioned at roughly the same angle and distance from the camera. Their positions in the news item are also remarkably similar. Neither is implicitly or explicitly introduced, both appear after film of men or robots working on the assembly lines, accompanied by a voiceover giving productivity figures. The Operations Manager, furthermore, is more obviously identified as "an author" by having his name and title revealed (in a caption), whereas the workers remain nameless and unidentified.

How then, can the differences in the decoding of the two interviews be explained? What distinguishes the two as signifying units?

The two interviews do, in fact, signify very differently - crucially the interviewees are constituted as very different kinds of subjects, quite apart (though in other ways linked) from the differences in status between manager and worker. The role of Giles Smith, the interviewer, is important here. In the first interview (with Fox) his questions are edited out of the item, so that Fox's discourse appears as a set of statements rather than a set of responses. There is nothing for him (apparently) to respond to. His appearance affords a brief break in the flow of film from the assembly lines (accompanied by productivity figures), almost as if he represents another form of communicating information. This is the kind of access normally attributed to the category of 'expert'.

At the other end of the access continuum is the 'vox pop', and the interview with the BL workers falls more or less squarely into this category. 'Vox pops' are usually untitled, nameless beings chosen at random to 'respond' to an issue or set of circumstances, and this is precisely how the BL workers are accessed. Smith is seen questioning both workers to gauge their reaction to the substantial job losses experienced by the BL workforce (as members of that workforce) - "How do you feel about ..." (my emphasis). The first speaker begins by making a statement very much in tune with the 'good news' about productivity ("Where we have seen our bonus payments coming through, and er, hopefully we hope to see it continue"), but is interrupted by the interviewer to react to the first explicit reference to job losses in the item.

The second interview, therefore, signifies in terms of what Barthes calls the hermeneutic code (Barthes, 1974): the enigma 'how do the workers feel about job losses at their plant?' and its resolution (their 'response'). The power of the enigma to 'hook' the viewer, and the constitution of the workers as 'responding subjects' (rather than,

like Fox, Smith or Burnet, subjects merely communicating information) obviously goes some way towards explaining the relative impact of the two interviews, and the extent to which the two sets of discourses are identified as authored. Rather than assert rather general rules of signifying practice, however, we need to understand how these semiological differences are played out in their discursive contexts.

v Protexual contexts

It is at this point that we need to introduce another decoding category: the protexual discourse. Nowell-Smith, writing in Screen, borrows a term from film semiotics to refer to protelevisual events (from the term 'profilmic') i.e. events that exist prior to the televisual discourse that refers to them (Nowell-Smith, 1978-1979). The protexual discourse is more specific - like the Metzian distinction between cinema (in general) and film (in particular) - referring to a particular televisual discourse. For decoding research, protexual discourses are constructed outside/prior to the signifying range of the T.V. programme in question, and are used by the decoder to inform his/her reading.

Now, it is clear that, signification being the complex process that it is, protexual discourses inform and codify the decoding of a T.V. news item on every one of a multitude of levels. Our comprehension of a specific close up shot, for example, is based on a whole number of protexual discourses. My own use of the term is therefore highly selective. It will be used to designate: those discourses enabling the decoder to place the text (or parts of the text) within a longer narrative (narrative contexts); those discourses enabling the decoder to adopt a critical perspective towards the text (critical discourses); those (dominant) discourses that enable the decoder to relocate or clarify signifying units (extra-textual contexts).¹³

vi In and out of the narrative context

Clearly, these three categories are not, and cannot be, mutually exclusive. Both narrative contexts and critical discourses are extra-textual

contexts, albeit of a particular kind. It is, indeed, their particularity that defines them. The narrative context, for example, will frequently be provided by previous news broadcasts, whereas a critical discourse will nearly always be learnt from sources outside news programmes. The extra-textual context, on the other hand, is a convenient residual category, a label for a collection of knowledges, attitudes or feelings that are outside a longer running narrative (of which the news item is an episode) and uncritical.

I have already indicated the difficulty the decoders had in locating the BL story within a specific narrative context (like, for example, the history of BL under Michael Edwardes). British Leyland is, nevertheless, a signifier loaded with connotations, occupying a particular place within popular mythology - the epitome of an inefficient strike bound company plagued by a belligerent workforce - (cf. Glasgow Media Group, 1980). The mythology provided many of the decoders with an historical perspective, a general narrative context giving the item a specific set of meanings.

"I think people haven't got a very good impression of British Leyland actually, after all the strikes, its a bit of a you know, ... letting you know they are doing well again and things are alright ..." 10B;

"the rate of cars that is coming out now is, by far; its a lot higher, but there again its people isn't it? Not as many strikes (laughs)." 10A;

"Interesting that they are actually doing something successful for a change and not having a strike, usually when BL is on its because they want to have a strike ..." 23A.

This narrative context can be divided into three related strands: a history of BL as uncompetitive/inefficient; a history of a strikebound workforce at BL; the myth of a strikebound workforce at BL. The last of these obviously locates the BL item within a rather different narrative, its focal point is not BL itself, but the coverage given to BL. It nevertheless allows the decoder to construct similar relations between this particular item and its history: 4B's decoding, for example, is, in this sense, a variation of those quoted above:

"British Leyland has been the, sort of, whipping boy of the press and it was always bad coverage it seemed, British Leyland strikes ... the last 10 years its always been that. And yet here was a good story."

In other words, this item is identified as in some way denying its narrative context. The most commonly identified narrative context concerned BL's strike record (identified by 16 decoders), followed by the perception of BL as uncompetitive/inefficient (identified by 12 decoders). Those two protextual discourses are clearly related, the latter being understood as, or at least in part, a result of the former by 8 out of the 12 decoders. Not surprisingly, the identification of BL within a mythical history occurred less frequently (6 times, and of these 6, 2 implied that they felt this mythical history was in many ways equivalent to the real history of BL¹⁴). In total, half the decoders (25) read the BL item in terms of these narrative contexts. Moreover, less than half the remainder were able to locate the item within any other narrative.

It is against the backdrop of these narrative contexts that the decoding of the interview with the BL workers can be more clearly understood. The BL workers begin the interview as pre-constructed subjects. The pre-construction is based upon previous significations of BL workers, the space they are expected to occupy. This is solidified by the fact that this space is traditionally occupied by shop stewards or trade union representatives, i.e. those members of the workforce chosen to speak for their colleagues. The editor of the programme, indeed, felt that the decision not to use trade union representatives made a welcome change from the more usual format.¹⁵

The interviewer himself (Giles Smith) gives the workers an appropriate cue by moving them onto the terrain of job losses, and therefore into a position where they might be expected to react against the changes at Longbridge. During the course of the interview, the workers deny these expectations, and force the decoder to reconstruct them as quite different subjects. This discrepancy led many of the

decoders to conclude that the two interviewees did not reflect the views of the workforce in general, while less than a quarter (12) felt that they probably were representative. This suspicion spanned quite different political perspectives:

"I don't think the British Leyland workforce are really like that, I think they are a little bit more aggressive and a little more militant than they were, from what I know of the past attitudes of BL workers." 10B;

"They certainly didn't seem typical in the face of the usual shop steward attitude at all, I didn't think, but they seemed sensible." 18A;

"I think basically ... I think them two men were plants, by the owners, definitely, they were a bit too good." 6B;

"Well, it seemed like a PR job to me, with the two workers, seemed sort of, well they were two people with the same opinions, they seemed to be a bit sort of stooge-like ..." 16B.

13 of the decoders agreed with 16B's reading, that the whole interview with the workers was a "put up job" or a "PR stunt" by British Leyland and/or the government and/or the media, whether to conceal genuine resistance on the part of the workforce, or to cover up the real nature of the belligerent workforce.

Those decoders who were less suspicious of this new character - the workers taking an apparently management line - were often simply surprised.

"I was rather surprised that they were pro-automation, and accepted the fact ... I would have thought that they would have sided with the unions and put up a fight against the automation. I was surprised that one of them, especially the second one, said it's better to lose a few jobs than there be no jobs at all." 11B;

"I was amazed at the two guys, er, you know, 'a few jobs are better than no jobs' ... you generally think of your average factory worker as being more or less against too much automation and that kind of thing, and they seemed to be welcoming it wholeheartedly. I found that a little bit surprising." 5A.

10A even suggested "that they were foremen or management" because of "their attitude" (3 other decoders also explained "their attitude" by promoting them above most of their fellow workers). Others were able to provide a rationale for the apparent change in attitude, as 17A put it:

"the union men, they said that there again, better to have less jobs than no jobs at all and he thought it was inevitable, and I agree with them, it is a pity that jobs have to go, but there has been so much strike trouble hasn't there? And I think it's coming home to them that these measures have to be introduced, both for the economy and to safeguard from strikes.";

or 8B, from another perspective:

"They seemed very, um, you know, subdued, and willing to say that things were now wonderful. Lacking any, kind of, aggressiveness that the media also associates with union officials ... partly because they probably have beaten them down at BL."

The BL workers, having already been established by the text as 'responding subjects', create an impact by responding in a way that subverts the expectations of a protextual narrative context. The decoder is shocked into providing an explanation for this disturbance, either by redefining the narrative context (see 17A and 8B above, for example), or by redefining the BL workers (in the sense of reallocating the space they would normally occupy) as unrepresentative, part of a PR stunt, or as foremen or shop floor managers. Even if the decoder is only able to express surprise, this work of redefinition still takes place, albeit unsuccessfully. This decoding work, it would appear, forces the signifying unit in question to register on the decoding.

Fox's discourse, on the other hand, is in perfect harmony with his managerial position. This, combined with the role he plays on informing the item (as a mere 'information giver'), allows him to disappear into the text.

This decoding of the BL workers also reveals the dominance of the protextual context over the discourses present in the item itself. (Another set of protextual discourses highlighting both the interviews concerns the issue of unemployment. This will be discussed separately below.) The item begins with statements by both Burnet and Smith emphasising the workforce's support for recent developments at BL, symbolised by the "new deal" which "has had strong union backing" and which "will, in the view of both sides, be the icing on the cake in a remarkable productivity improvement". We have already been told of the attitude of the workforce

towards the "remarkable productivity improvement" before the BL workers appear. In this context, their statements are thoroughly predictable, in harmony with the immediate textual context. This leads us on to consider why the work of redefinition occurs during the interview with the workers and not during the signifying unit opening the item.

vii The silent frame

The failure of the item's introduction to provide a framework within which decoding takes place has already been mentioned. Only 8 decoders referred in any way to the "new deal" that provides the *raison d'être* for the item's presence on News at Ten - an extraordinarily low figure given this lexia's importance to the item as a whole and its position in the text (as an introductory frame). As many decoders recalled verbatim one of the BL workers' statements that "its better ... to save a few jobs than have no jobs at all", and more were able to accurately quote from the list of productivity figures given during the item. The fact that half the decoders located a theme connected with industrial relations might seem to suggest this lexia has a more implicit, less overt signifying power - it may have influenced the decoder's readings without actually registering itself on the decodings. The presence of themes around the concept of 'industrial relations' might imply that this signifying unit had been subject to a substantial amount of re-encoding (i.e. it emerges from the decoder in a very different form from the lexia on News at Ten).

A more detailed examination of the decodings does not seem to bear this out. Most of the decoders locating on industrial relations theme did so with specific references to other lexias. The most dominant industrial relations theme K - a new harmony in industrial relations - was identified by 20 decoders. Only 6 of them referred to the opening lexia. 8 referred to lexia (9), 4 to (8) and 2 to (6)¹⁶ (with only 4 of the decoders identifying the theme without referring to any identifiable lexia).

In total, the three industrial relations themes (H, J and K) were located within the lexias as follows:

Lexia (9)	:	number of decoders	:	13
" (1)	:	"	:	8
" (8)	:	"	:	6
" (6)	:	"	:	4
Not locatable	:	"	:	5

A more important signifying unit constructing industrial relations themes, therefore, is the sequence in Cofton Park (lexia (9)). Apart from 19B (quoted earlier), none of the decoders made any connection between this sequence and the "new deal" (only one other decoder, 25A, actually referred to both).

How can the failure of the "new deal" sequence to influence the decodings (in general) be explained?

There are a number of plausible explanations. There is a certain amount of evidence from the decoding of the other items to suggest that the introductory linking/framing pieces that are preceded by other major news stories tend to be semiologically disadvantaged. The decoder, having been drawn into the preceding narrative finds it difficult to immediately adjust to a completely new story. The introductory pieces might, therefore, work simply as refocussing devices - in this instance, the decoder is still recovering from the lengthy Hillhead byelection story that precedes it, and therefore Burnet's introduction simply communicates the arrival of a new story about British Leyland.

Another interesting and perhaps more obvious explanation concerns the lack of appropriate visual signifiers in this signifying unit. Burnet's studio introduction, apart from the BL logo, is the only sequence in the item that contains a verbal discourse unaccompanied by appropriate visual signifiers (Fox's interview on the other hand, apart from the visual backdrop of assembly lines, contains the visual signifier of Fox himself). Rommetveit et al (1971, p.43) found pictures to be an extremely powerful

addition to a signifying unit. Statements with pictorial contexts, they discovered, facilitated recall of those statements to a significantly greater extent than verbal contexts. It seems extremely likely that the presence of an appropriate visual signifier to suggest the "new deal" would have greatly increased the signifying power of this lexia. The relation between visual and verbal forms of signification is clearly an important field for a decoding study to break into. Before moving on to this difficult subject, it is worth concluding that, on the evidence of the BL items, the power of an opening introductory sequence to frame the decoding of an item is extremely limited. What is certain is that a linking/framing sequence should not be endowed with a signifying power simply because of its position in and relation to the rest of the story.

viii Verbals and visuals

There is an immediate problem with assessing the relation between verbal and visual signifiers in a decoding study, since the decoding itself is an entirely verbal exercise. It is obviously impossible for a decoder to recall verbatim a visual signifier - references to visual signifiers require the very deliberate transformation of pictures to words. The re-encoding of verbal signifiers into other verbal signifiers takes place far less obtrusively.

The role played by visual signifiers on news programmes tends to be illustrative, pictures provide an appropriate backdrop for the verbal communication of meaning. In this sense, Brunsdon and Morley are right to assert that "the verbal discourse is positively privileged over the visual" (Brunsdon and Morley, 1978, p.62). The verbal discourse is also concentrated into blocks of meaning far more easily than the visual: six of the signifying units used to decode the BL item are heavily or completely dependent upon the verbal discourse for their signifying unity, whereas only two ((4) and (7)) work substantially on a visual level. Similarly, because the "argument" or narrative of a news item is constructed primarily

on a verbal level, it is far easier for a decoder (who is also constructing his/her decoding on that level during the interview) to absorb the 'logic' of the verbal discourses - the visual discourse is merely arranged to suit those logics. The pictures of the robots at Longbridge spotwelding are used or 'arranged' in this instance to signify a rise in productivity, efficiency and new technology. Less than six months later, on September 7th 1982, News at Ten used exactly the same film to illustrate an item about the problems facing the British car industry. The same pictures are used to illustrate two stories whose meanings would appear to be almost in direct conflict (how these visuals actually signify is discussed below).

This does not amount to merely asserting the greater ambiguity of visual signifiers. I am simply suggesting that the two levels tend to be constructed in certain (different) ways, and that these differences will have likely effects in the construction of meanings. What makes investigation of the relation between visual and verbal signifying systems (on the news) so difficult is that it cannot be summed up within a single definition. Brunsdon and Morley attempt to do this by understanding the verbal discourse as a way of "fixing" meanings on the visual level - the ambiguity of the visual signifier is closed off by the verbal commentary (Brunsdon and Morley, 1978, pp 62-63). In many ways, this does seem to be precisely what is happening, when, for example, we relate film of a man holding a microphone standing in the middle of an empty park to a verbal discourse defining the significance of both the park and its emptiness. What however, is the relation between the visual signifier 'man holding a microphone' and that man's discourse? The one does not, in any simple sense, fix the meaning of the other. Our first task then, is to explore the complexity of forms of visual and verbal signification.

John Hartley (Hartley, 1982) attempts a simple but comprehensive breakdown of the visual and verbal forms of signification on T.V. news. He identifies four visual "modes of representation":

1. The 'talking head' - a newsreader or correspondent delivering a piece to camera.
2. Graphics - this category including full frame still photographs, computer displays, etc., either filling the screen or placed to one side of the talking head.
3. Nomination - a term borrowed from Brunson and Morley to indicate the designation of a man/woman's title or status. In the visual sense, this is achieved by captions.
4. Actuality - the film report. Hartley splits this into three sub-categories: film with voiceover (where the reporter is unseen); the reporter addressing the camera; the interview (pp. 108-109).

All these visual elements are present in the BL item: it is introduced by a talking head in front of a graphic (or logo) signifying BL; during the actuality film report we have film with voiceover, a reporter's piece to camera and two interviews; both the reporter and one of the interviewers are nominated by caption.

Hartley's verbal categories are based upon modes of authorship (who speaks, how they are allowed to speak), many of which are also present in the BL item. What is immediately clear about this method of breaking down the visual/verbal structures of news discourse, is that distinctions are based on formal criteria. How important are these formal distinctions in the construction of meaning?

I would suggest that the first step that must be taken to investigate this is to establish the relation/autonomy between these verbal and visual "modes of representation". Useful distinctions might also be made between encoded and decoded meanings, particularly in relation to authorship, in instances where intended meanings conflict or fail to correspond with decoded meanings.

We can identify the following set of relations:

- (1) Visual or verbal autonomy: where a signifier on one level is not associated with any signifier present on the other.

- (2) Link by authorship: where the author of a statement (or statements) is visually present, either in the form of a still frame photograph or actuality film. This applies to talking heads, reporters on camera (usually as interviewers) or to camera, interviewees and recreated links between a quoted or tape recorded statement and an image of its author.
- (3) Visually defined verbals: where exophoric or demonstrative pronouns are given their meaning by a visual context. In these instances, the verbal discourse refers explicitly to the visual. The only example of such a link in the BL item is Smith's statement "This is Cofton Park", which relies upon a visual referent (the park) for its meanings. Most exophoric or demonstrative pronouns are defined less directly. When Brian Fox says "no one has had to leave here", the exophoric pronoun "here" is given its meaning by the knowledge that the author is speaking about Longbridge, a knowledge constructed on both verbal and visual levels throughout the item.
- (4) Links of equivalence: where juxtaposed visual and verbal signifiers are taken to be equivalent, e.g. the verbal and visual signifiers of Cofton Park. ¹⁷
- (5) Metonymic links: where a signifier on one level is associated with part of the signifier on the other. In the BL item, the association between visuals of the robots spotwelding and the figures on the robots productivity can be seen as metonymically linked, the robots actions being equivalent to part of the actions signified by the productivity figures. The line between links of metonymy and links of equivalence can easily become blurred on T.V. news. The visual signifiers of a riot obviously bears a metonymic relation to verbal signifiers referring to the riot as a whole - the most newsworthy bits of film are edited together in a sporadic montage of violent scenes. The actual footage of a riot may, nevertheless, be decoded as equivalent to verbal references to the event as a whole. The Cofton Park sequence on the other hand, could be understood as shifting from one of equivalence - Cofton Park empty - to one of metonymy -

Cofton Park verbally "full" but still visually empty.

(6) Contextual links: where the relation between the visual and verbal signifiers is established by a unifying context. In the BL item this would appear to be the dominant link between the two levels, both unified by the context 'things that happen at BL'.

(7) Metaphoric links: where a signifier on one level is seen to be a metaphor for a signifier on the other. This kind of link is not normally associated with T.V. news, since a metaphor is, by definition, neither 'like' nor normally associated with the thing metaphorically signified. It is perhaps most useful, in the context of T.V. news, to conceive of a continuum between the metaphoric link and the links of equivalence or metonymy. Footage of police holding riot shields aloft accompanied by verbal accounts of police being attacked could be said to lie somewhere along this continuum.

ix Authorship and alienation

In terms of Hartley's formal categories, the talking head can either be seen as constructing an autonomous verbal discourse, or as linked by authorship. The decoder, obviously, is not intended to construct the latter, but is nevertheless in a position to do so. 16B, for example, felt that Alistair Burnet bore an authored relation to his discourse:

"I prefer the old fashioned news bulletins where they are just deadpan and we were given the news ... I dislike Alistair Burnet, I dislike the programme since he appeared. He seems to have a great range of expressions sort of expressing his like or dislike." 18

Many of the decoders, in a more general sense, felt that the media spoke from a position somewhere in the establishment. This was felt by decoders from a whole range of political (or apolitical) backgrounds, and implied a certain alienation from the news discourse - the world of 'them' rather than 'us' or 'our' world. This feeling was articulated fairly clearly during the BL item, by those who felt it to be a 'put up job' or 'an advertisement' for British Leyland. Behind this accusation was an assumption broadly linking television with the government and the world of

management, the world of 'them'. What was perhaps most interesting about this assumption was its vague, rather indefinite quality. When questioned as to exactly why ITN should want to broadcast propaganda on behalf of British Leyland, most of the decoders could not, or felt no need to, pinpoint any specific set of relations between the two. Rather, both were seen as connected to 'the establishment'. In the following exchanges, for example, the establishment is symbolised by "government" (6B has just suggested the two BL workers were "plants").

JWL : "Who do you think planted them? The management?"

6B : "Probably, the management. I mean, they may have thought it (automation) was a very good thing."

JWL : "Why do you think television co-operated with that?"

6B : "They're basically dominated by the government, what's on television anyway, everything, er, they have a say in what goes on."

JWL : "Do you mean a specific part of government, or the institution of government?"

6B : "The institution of government, 'cause I mean, you can't blame any party, the Conservative or the Labour - it's the government in general."

JWL : "So that's why they would go along with management?"

6B : "Yeah."

11A, on the other hand, linked various institutions, including, albeit implicitly, the media, as facets of "the system". Having suggested that the whole item was a "big con", I asked her who she felt was doing the conning:

"The whole way it was reported, that you know, Britain has got to get its industry up ... it's just making people think that the best way things will get better, is just keep really working hard for the system, which I don't really agree with."

11A's assumption that television is part of "the system" is so deep-rooted that it remains unspoken. Despite my question, she feels no need to point out the link between British Leyland, television and the system. She therefore answers the question by reasserting her original point.

So while some of the decoders (particularly those active on the political left) criticised the news in terms of an overt political bias,

there was a more widespread feeling that the news was inscribed within an establishment world, a world specifically distanced from the decoder's own experience. This feeling (that the news was an authored discourse) did not necessarily imply a critical reading of the news - many of the decoders who articulated this feeling also read the news as if it presented a 'neutral' picture of the world. The distance between the T.V. news world and the decoder's own experience is clearly extremely important. It should, at the very least, cause broadcasters to reconsider the codes of access, news value, etc., codes that effectively work to alienate the viewer - even if the viewer accepts this alienated position as natural or inevitable. I shall return to this point in Chapter Eight.

x Other visual/verbal links

Graphics usually bear a fairly precise relation to accompanying verbals. Part or full still frame photographs of spokespersons will often be accompanied by quoted verbals establishing link by authorship. Computer graphics will usually be defined by links of equivalence or of metonymy, although the presence of linguistic signifiers will often allow graphics to be self-explanatory. Since graphics are used to provide fairly specific information, they will not usually be merely contextually linked.

The contextual link, on the other hand, will commonly form the basis of visual/verbal relationships during actuality film reports. As I have already stated, these film reports are usually substantially conceived in terms of linguistic blocks of meaning, making it difficult to provide a visual accompaniment that maintains a relation of metonymy or equivalence. The encoders will, nevertheless, see the contextual link as the minimum requirement for verbal/visual relations during actuality film. Because of the constant presence of visuals, the verbal discourse should never drift into autonomy, although during particularly dramatic or significant shots, the voiceover may be withdrawn (even then, it is

invariably replaced by fading in actuality sound).

The nominating caption, as with all words signified on a visual level, will tend to bear relations of equivalence to the verbals (merely emphasising or reiterating something already said), or else contribute towards the autonomy of the visual level by substituting the spoken with the written.

The most powerful signifying units might be expected to involve more direct visual/verbal links than those making less impact on the decoding. The most direct relations are those of equivalence, metonymy, authorship, and visually defined verbals. These relations are not, I should emphasise, inscribed within the text. The comparative weakness of Brian Fox as a signifier could be attributed to the fact that, for many of the decoders, there was no link by authorship between the visual and verbal levels.

I have already suggested that the lack of visual accompaniment¹⁹ to "the new deal" lexia weakened its signifying power (Burnet's statements, for most decoders, was not specifically seen as authored). Conversely, the BL workers' discourse relation to their visual presence increases their signifying power. Simply on the basis of the BL item, it would be difficult to go any further than this to even partially explain the absence/presence of other signifiers in the decodings. While the recognition of visual/verbal relationships is both useful and necessary in order to explain the construction of meanings, these relationships are (in decoding practice) based upon all the signifying practices used in decoding. As I have suggested, neither Fox nor the BL workers bear any natural relation to their utterances, those relations are constructed (and made meaningful) in specific signifying practices. Furthermore, even if verbals and visuals are directly linked by the decoder, they may have less influence in the decoding than signs constructed purely on one level. It is with this in mind that I return to the more general frameworks of meaning constructed by the decoders.

xi The unemployment problem

Having used the decoding material to deconstruct the BL item into signifying units, and to contextualise it within certain protextual discourses (in this instance, certain narrative contexts), I should now be in a position to attempt to explain the absence/presence of some of the more general themes constructed by the decoders. I shall concentrate upon the significant presence of themes involving the issue of unemployment, since, as I have already suggested, the items treatment of this subject does not appear to be anything other than incidental. The other general thematic categories (productivity, industrial relations, new technology and BL as a success story), on the other hand, seem to be an important part of the item's structure. 13B actually located the theme of unemployment caused by new technology (theme C) outside the text (this response was therefore categorised not as a theme but as an extra-textual discourse). The "fact that jobs were lost" as she put it, was "never actually stated, but I think it was obvious because of the other point they were making".

Obviously, those decoders who identified themes around the issue of unemployment did not attach the same significance to them. One of the most common readings involved a balancing act between the bad news - unemployment - and the good news - increases in productivity; as 9A put it:

"Well, it was good news about them making more cars, but bad about the unemployment. If they had more people working it'd help the country."

This 'balancing act' allowed decoders to play down one theme in favour of the other:

"I think it was good news generally for most people. The only thing that concerns me slightly is the loss of jobs." 25B;

"the improvement in productivity has been gained at the cost of a lot of people losing their jobs, and what good is an improvement in productivity ... when they can't sell the cars they're making anyway?" 16A.

The only section of the item to deal with the issue of unemployment was the interview with the BL workers, where the first interviewee confirmed

Giles Smith's comment that "you have seen an awful lot of jobs go in the process" and suggested this was "a great tragedy, but ...", while the second (also in response to Smith) felt that "it's probably better to save a few jobs than have no jobs at all". There were also brief references to unemployment made by Brian Fox ("it's no secret that over 2000 people have left Longbridge ... no one has had to leave here, all of its been achieved by voluntary means") and Giles Smith ("Just 34 men work on the line, which would need nearly 150 if the welds were done in the traditional manner").

Not all the decoders read these signifiers in terms of an unemployment theme, although all of them, in some form or another, made reference to unemployment or redundancy when explicating these textual moments.

Also present in the decodings were a number of protextual discourses. These were: a discourse criticising the 'good news' tone of the item because of the unemployment issues (Critical Discourse A (CD A), the most commonly cited critical discourse); extra-textual contexts referring to the existence of the British unemployment problem in general (E-T C), and to the nature of the concept of "voluntary redundancy" in particular (E-T B), these two being the most commonly cited extra-textual contexts; the articulation of a narrative context sketching out the bleak future employment prospects at BL or in industry generally, following widescale automation (NC J, the third most cited narrative context. The presence of these protextual discourses and the reference to certain signifying units is summarised in the Appendix).

Although there are a fairly high number of protextual discourses demonstrating knowledge of issues on or around the problem of unemployment, not all those decoders constructing an unemployment theme referred to an appropriate protextual discourse - only 18 out of 33 decoders, in fact, did so. Why was this? The answer is, of course, fairly simple, the decoder will frequently not bother to articulate a protextual discourse informing

aspects of his/her reading. With unemployment at around 3 million (at the time of interviewing), most decoders were obviously aware of the problem of redundancies in this context. Indeed, on this News at Ten, on what had become a regular Friday night news slot, news of that week's job losses and (inevitably smaller) job gains was given, a symbol of the issue's topicality. As the decodings of the Jobs item demonstrates (see Chapter Seven), most of the decoders were very much aware of this topicality, and would therefore have been able to assume the problem of unemployment as given. In this instance, it was not necessary for decoders to articulate protextual discourses referring to unemployment. This cannot be said for most of the other protextual discourses listed: the failure of the item to deal with the problem of markets (CD B), or the nature of the process of voluntary redundancy (E-T B), for example, refer to comparatively specific knowledges, areas outside the text that the decoder will feel obliged to mention, before allowing them to inform his or her reading. In terms of the world of T.V. news at that time, the unemployment problem was manifestly exoteric.

Thus it was that 15 of the decoders referred to the unemployment problem implicitly through their decoding of textual signifiers, without articulating the existence of that problem outside the text. 7B, for example, began her reading by referring to two of the textual signifiers in terms of the problem of unemployment, without ever making explicit references to the unemployment problem.

JWL : "Right, the next item was the BL item, do you remember what happened on that?"

7B : "Told you about their increase in productivity, and the voluntary redundancies, and there were two men who thought it was better to keep a few jobs rather than lose a lot ..."

7B's synopsis of the item was consequently a balancing act between these two dominant themes:

"It's good news that productivity is up, but it's not good that so many have been made redundant."

The reciprocal relationship between themes and signifying units can be seen in action here, the theme (of unemployment) highlighting certain signifying units in the decoding, which in turn construct the theme. The dominance of the unemployment theme and the signifying units decoded in terms of that theme must therefore be read in conjunction with one another.

The frequency with which decoders, like 7B, linked the themes of unemployment and productivity is also significant. As 2B stated, the two issues are directly linked:

"more redundancies ... automatically increases productivity. The more you can put on the dole the more productivity's bound to rise, particularly where robots are turning cars out."

As I have already pointed out, however, 2B was one of only three decoders who were able to demonstrate sufficient familiarity with the concept of productivity to make this link (the others being 8A and 26A). His last statement ("particularly where robots are turning cars out") nonetheless captures the logic that informed many of the decodings: robots are producing cars more quickly/efficiently than men, and men are being laid off as a result, or as 7B put it - "robots were being used to build cars and producing them quicker". It is a logic that is inscribed within the item itself ("but you have seen an awful lot of jobs go in the process"), as well as being a fairly familiar problem for most citizens in the industrial world.

This forces us to reconsider the robots as signifiers. As a signifying unit, their presence in the decodings is significant. Apart from the BL workers (whose presence in the decodings was sometimes partially prompted), this lexia was referred to (substantially) more than any other, by 43 of the 50, 11 of whom actually referred to the visual presence of the robots. The discourse linking new technology with redundancy allows the robots to signify 'unemployment'. As 6B put it: "I think it's amazing technology, but I think it's a shame that people have to lose jobs because of it". 28 out of the 33 decoders who constructed a theme revolving

around the unemployment issue directly made this link (as specified in theme C). Furthermore, only 2 of the 33 made no direct reference to the robots, while of the 17 who didn't construct an unemployment theme, 5 made no reference to the robots. The fact that the robots are able to simultaneously signify increasing productivity and unemployment, given the significance of their presence, provides the key to what was clearly a dominant framework for decoding the item.

xii The story so far

I have, at this stage, only analysed certain sections of the data (provided in the appendix). Much remains unexplained. What I have attempted to do is to provide techniques for breaking down and analysing the practice of decoding, so that the work of explanation (at this level of analysis) might take place.

In relation to the BL item, some of the results of the analyses are fairly surprising. The introductory frame had far less impact than might have been expected, and the interview with the BL workers far more. My own initial impression, as well as some of the decoders and many who have been shown the programme since the research, was that the issue of unemployment was "played down", and would therefore not be constructed as a theme by many of the decoders. The decodings show quite the reverse. More decoders, on the basis of the textual signifiers, were able to locate and identify the theme of unemployment than any other, apart from themes involving the introduction of new technology, which, as I have tried to demonstrate, is itself bound up with the issue of unemployment (through specific protextual discourses).

I have argued that the existence of certain protextual discourses had an important effect in the construction of the textual itself. At the same time, I have emphasised the complexity of the reciprocal relationship between the protextual and the text's own signifying units in constructing meaning. The relation between visuals and verbals remains,

at the moment, less clear. Because of the precise semiological contexts in which words and images appear, I have tried to be fairly cautious about assessing the signifying power of particular relations between visuals and verbals.

While I hope my analysis of the decoding of BL has provided no shortage of explanations for particular readings, these explanations are necessarily limited to a specific text. I shall therefore move on to consider the rest of the programme, beginning with the West Bank item. On the basis of the framework I have now identified, I shall offer a fairly exhaustive analysis of the West Bank story, concentrating not only on the comparative presence of variables, but also on relations between them.

FOOTNOTES:

1. The other one of the four expressed confusion at the way the piece dealt with both "robotics" and "management issues", "and then they sort of worked the two together. I thought it wasn't too well done, a bit, erm, neither one thing nor the other." 19A
2. This was my own first impression of the item, an impression confirmed by colleagues with whom I discussed the programme before the decoding research began.
3. In a slightly different example, 13B specifically identified 'the inevitability of unemployment with new technology' as a discourse located outside the text, although this discourse was more usually identified as a theme present within it (Theme C).
4. This identification occurred implicitly - I didn't explicitly ask them to identify themes. Themes emerged during the development of the decoder's reading.
5. For a full breakdown of all the categories, see the Appendix.
6. Although interestingly, a slightly higher number than one would expect (11) identified both themes in their decoding (one would have expected, purely on the basis of the laws of probability, about 8 to have done so). This is discussed in relation to the unemployment issue.
7. This was done on the basis of the dominant emphasis used by decoders. When, for example, decoders referred to the acceptance by the workforce of new technology, it was usually within the context of industrial relations.
8. There were, in all, 8 figures given to signify the productivity increase. One of these, however, was decoded as signifying not improvements in productivity, but unemployment (although they amount, in this instance, to the same thing), and was therefore classified as a separate signifying unit (number (7)). The frequency with which the other 7 figures were recalled were as follows:

(a)	In 1980 each Longbridge worker produced 7 cars per year	-	8
(b)	In 1981 " " " " 16 " " "	-	6
(c)	In 1982 " " will produce 22 " " "	-	6
(d)	The Longbridge plant produces a Metro a minute	-	0
(e)	This is a productivity increase of over 200%	-	3
(f)	A Metro body shell comes off the line every 48 seconds	-	2
(g)	Longbridge has reached 98% of its target	-	3
9. The other signifiers present in Fox's statement were either not referenced or too vague to be locatable in Fox's statement (like, for example, the need to compete).
10. As I have indicated, where decoders failed to make reference to either interviewers, they were gently prompted. It should be added, nevertheless, that most decoders remembered the BL workers either without any prompting or without any difficulty.

11. The item itself shows a certain amount of awareness of this significance, as these figures are immediately followed by the interview with the BL workers, who are asked about job losses.
12. This obviously disrupts the 'unity' of the signifying unit, and was done merely for convenience, since the figures involved in this lexia are so small.
13. Obviously, all three are 'extra-textual'. A full list of those discourses coming under this category in relation to this item are given in the Appendix.
14. This rather curious reading was constructed by both 13B and 18B. 18B, for example, on the BL workers interviewed, commented thus:

"he just seemed rather placid, and the image I've got of BL is that 'we are going to stick up for our rights and get what we want etc., etc.', and 'we are going to strike', which is probably another image projected by the media, which might not be the right image, I don't know, er ... but all the mythology I've absorbed about BL is not reflected by that chap ... No, I don't think he was representative at all."

18B's awareness of the relation between BL and the media is not supported by any discourses that might enable her to construct an alternative reading. So, while she is sceptical about the only (mythical) history she has learnt, she is unable to substitute it with anything else. She therefore feels obliged to construct the BL worker in terms of his lack of fit with this narrative context.
15. This expectation is also confirmed by the nature of the interview. Unlike many 'vox pops', where people are 'caught' in the act of doing something else (walking down the street, working on an assembly line), the interview is fairly well set up, and both interviewer and interviewees behave as if speaking on behalf of the workers. Many of the decoders, even after the interview, felt that they were in fact trade union/shop floor representatives.
16. These figures obviously come to more than 20. This is because some of the decoders located the theme in reference to more than one signifying unit.
17. There is no necessary equivalence between the two in decoding. The decoder may not associate "Cofton Park" with the image on the screen, although the equivalence is obviously strengthened by the reporter's use of the demonstrative pronoun.
18. 16B was not the only decoder to read Alistair Burnet in this way. What is interesting about her criticism is that it is not informed by a political criticism. (Burnet was thought by some of the more politically informed decoders on the left and some broadcasters to be right wing, in a way in which other newscasters, such as Sandy Gall, are not). One of her examples of Burnet "commenting" on a news story actually involved a comment she agreed with.
19. Apart from the presence of the BL logo behind Burnet, obviously establishing a fairly feeble contextual link.

6 DECODING THE WEST BANK

The decodings were, first of all, broken down into the five categories used to analyse the British Leyland item, these being: lexias, themes, extra-textual contexts, narrative contexts and critical discourses. The number of decoders identifying particular lexias, themes, etc., are listed. These variables will then be briefly discussed in terms of their relations with each other, in order to draw out the significant sets of relations. The presence/absence of these variables, and the significant relations between them will be examined in more detail after the whole framework of decodings has been laid out.

i. Lexias or signifying units

As I pointed out in the previous chapter, there are two clear methods of dividing the decodings of the text up into signifying units. In this chapter, I shall use the method focussing upon the decodings of the text rather than the text itself. Some of the lexias listed will therefore be fairly vague, notably (1), (13), (14) and (15). Because these four lexias don't obviously refer to any particular textual signifiers, they have the appearance of themes. What distinguishes them as lexias or signifying units is that they were referred to as specific parts of the text, rather than as themes running through it.

	<u>Lexia</u>	<u>Number of decoders identifying lexia</u>
(1)	Pictures of riots, scenes of violence, or, as 22B put it "war pictures".	44
(2)	The sacking of the mayors.	18
(3)	The Israeli's responsibility for the sackings.	15
(4)	The sackings sparking off violence/tension.	12
(5)	People coming out of the mosques.	1
(6)	Trouble following people leaving the mosques.	9
(7)	Trouble occurring on Friday lunchtimes.	5
(8)	Pictures of the oil drum barricades.	3
(9)	Smoke bomb(s) being thrown in riot scene.	12

	<u>Lexia</u>	<u>Number of decoders identifying lexia</u>
(10)	Gunfire from the Israeli soldiers.	3
(11)	Israeli soldiers "shooting in the air".	2
(12)	Israeli troops running around/keeping law and order.	21
(13)	Images of violent Palestinians (incorporating a sceptical attitude towards this image).	7 (4 sceptical)
(14)	Images of defenseless Palestinians.	1
(15)	Images of the Israelis as a heavy occupying force.	10
(16)	The number of people killed during the disturbances.	2
(17)	The problem of the forthcoming Israeli withdrawal from the Sinai.	4
(18)	General problems for future relations with the U.S.A. and Egypt.	3
(19)	The U.S.A. and Egypt not intervening.	1
(20)	Israel using the forthcoming Sinai withdrawal to paralyse the U.S.A. and Egypt.	1
(21)	Pressure from the U.S.A. and Egypt to end the war.	2
(22)	Reference to Milson as the Israeli spokesman ('V' signifying the correct identification of Milson, by name or biography).	21 (5 V)
(23)	Milson's condemnation of the P.L.O.	8
(24)	Milson's assertion that the P.L.O. are breaking the Camp David agreement.	1
(25)	Street scenes (e.g. man wearing hat, woman wearing veils).	5
(26)	The map shown of the trouble spots.	1
(27)	Reference to Nablus.	1
(28)	Reference to the reporter on location.	4

It should be noted that some of these lexias bare only a vague resemblance to the text itself. Numbers (19) and (21), for example, are rather loose interpretations of Derek Taylor's remarks. This is not simply a function of the different method of dividing the readings up - decoders in general tended to be more confused in their recall of this item than the British Leyland item.

Despite this, it is possible to divide the lexias up into larger blocks of meaning, roughly corresponding to sections of the text. These textual blocks can be identified as follows:

- | | | |
|----|---|---|
| A. | Lexias referring to specific aspects of the riot/violence sequence, <u>excluding</u> the general reference (lexia (1)). This incorporates lexias (4) and (6) to (12). | At least one identified by 35 decoders. |
| B. | Lexias referring to the whole sacked mayors <u>narrative</u> , i.e. lexias (2) + (3) + (4). | All three identified by 10 decoders. |
| C. | Lexias referring to positive/negative images of Israelis or Palestinians. This incorporates lexias (13) to (15). | At least one identified by 17 decoders. |
| D. | Lexias referring to the consequences for Israel and international relations. This incorporates lexias (17) to (21). | At least one identified by 11 decoders. |
| E. | Lexias referring to the sequence with Milson. This incorporates lexias (22) to (24). | At least one identified by 22 decoders. |

These textual blocks will be used extensively during the analysis of the relationship between lexias and other variables.

ii. Themes

	<u>Theme</u>	<u>Number of decoders identifying theme</u>
A.	Story as one episode in an endless saga.	15
B.	Story about images of violence.	16
C.	Story about the breakdown of a society.	2
D.	The Palestinians as the cause of the troubles.	1
E.	As D, but critical of this perceived reading.	5
F.	Israeli intransigence and the repression of the Palestinians.	10
G.	Story about the sacked mayors causing tension and rioting.	2
H.	Future problems with the Israeli withdrawal from the Sinai.	1
J.	Story about the views of Menachem Milson.	1
K.	The inability of the U.S.A. and Egypt to intervene.	1
L.	Difficulty in identifying any themes at all.	6

iii. Extra-textual contexts

	<u>Extra-textual context (E-T)</u>	<u>Number of decoders identifying E-T</u>
A.	Comparison made with a news story from Northern Ireland.	21
B.	Comparison made with the Brixton/Toxteth riots.	4
C.	General expression of confusion.	14
D.	A feeling of distance from the events described by the news story.	7
E.	A sympathy with the Palestinians.	4
F.	A feeling that the Israelis are intransigent.	4
G.	Points out, uncritically, that there is no P.L.O. representative on the news item.	2
H.	A knowledge/experience of the Israeli people.	2
J.	A sympathy with Israel.	1
K.	Mentions large sections of the text <u>as if</u> they were extra-textual.	1

iv. Narrative contexts

	<u>Narrative context (NC)</u>	<u>Number of decoders identifying NC</u>
A.	Vague knowledge of the history of events in the West Bank.	14
B.	Vague knowledge of the history of the Arab/Israeli conflict.	13
C.	Detailed knowledge of the history of the events in the conflict.	5
D.	Knowledge of the history of the western view of the conflict.	1
E.	Speculation about the future of the Sinai withdrawal.	6
F.	Recall of other recent news stories from the West Bank.	2

v. Critical Discourses

	<u>Critical Discourse (CD)</u>	<u>Number of decoders identifying CD</u>
A.	No explanation given for the sacking of the mayors.	3
B.	The Palestinian case not represented.	8

	<u>Critical Discourse (CD)</u>	<u>Number of decoders identifying CD</u>
C.	Details of oppression of Palestinians left out.	3
D.	More background information needed.	12
E.	Bias shown towards the Israeli establishment, as opposed to P.L.O. 'terrorists'.	2

vi. Frequency and relations between variables

The significant variables, and the significant relations between variables, will be briefly discussed here. All frequencies and every set of relations will be listed. There will be additional sets of relations included where appropriate (e.g. relations within the lexia category).

(a) Frequency of lexias

The riot sequence is the section of the item most commonly referred to. 44 decoders referred to the riot/violence scenes in general, and 35 in particular. Within the riot sequence, the Israeli troops running around/keeping law and order (lexia (12)), was by far the most frequently recalled (by 21 decoders) followed by the picture of the smoke bomb being thrown (lexia (9)), recalled by 12 decoders.

Of the other single lexia, references to Menachem Milson the West Bank Administrator (lexia (21)) were most frequent, recalled by 21 decoders, although less than half of these remembered anything Milson actually said. Perhaps surprisingly, a fairly large number - 18 - also referred to the sacking of the mayors. Of these, 10 were able to construct the following narrative: the sacking of the Palestinian mayors by the Israelis led to the violence/tension the item describes. It seems probable that more than 10 of the 18 constructed this narrative, although they failed to clearly articulate it during the interview.

All these frequently recalled lexias (in the form they were referred to) are not particularly dependent upon protextual discourses to be understood. The group of lexias making least impact on the decodings on the other hand, were fairly incomprehensible without fairly detailed knowledge of the story's context. These were the 5 lexias referring to

the consequences of the incidents described in the story for Israel and international relations (lexias (17)-(21)), identified in total by only 11 decoders. This point will be developed in relation to the protextual discourses.

(b) Frequency of themes

In general, the number of themes identified by the decoders was significantly fewer than those identified during the British Leyland item. Most decoders identified between two and four themes running through the British Leyland story, whereas most decoders (forty out of fifty) only located one present in the West Bank item. This confirms the polysemic nature of the British Leyland item, and implies that the West Bank item had a smaller range of meanings on offer. This point will be explored later.

The two most dominant themes were A, the story defined merely as one episode in an endless saga, and B, the story as being 'about' newsworthy images of violence, identified by 15 and 16 decoders respectively. The only two other themes of any significance are connected, these being E - that the item is about the Palestinian's as the cause of the troubles, and that this is not (as far as these decoders were concerned) a fair representation of their case; and F - the item demonstrates the intransigence of the Israelis and their repression of the Palestinians. These themes are related in that they both imply sympathy with the Palestinian rather than with the Israeli cause. They also indicate, however, two directly opposing readings of the item. These two readings will become clearer as the rest of the framework unfolds.

No other theme, apart from the 'non-theme' (L), was identified by more than 2 decoders.

(c) Relations between themes and frequency of lexias

There was a significant relationship between the number of lexias recalled by a decoder, and the themes they constructed. The following table shows that those decoders constructing themes A and B were less

likely to recall substantial parts of the item during their interpretation of it than those constructing other themes, while those constructing theme F were more likely to do so.

<u>Theme</u>	<u>Number of lexias recalled</u>		
	<u>0 - 2</u>	<u>3 - 5</u>	<u>6 or more</u>
A	8	4	3
B	6	9	1
All other themes: C to L	1	10	9
F	1	3	6

This implies that themes A (story as one episode in an endless saga) and B (story about images of violence) tend to be the result of a fairly cursory reading of the text. Theme F, on the other hand (Israeli intransigence and the repression of the Palestinians), is based upon a more thorough reading of the text.

This discrepancy is significant for understanding the practice of decoding T.V. news. It demonstrates that the level of involvement the viewer has with the text will partly determine his/her reading of it. Those involved in the production of T.V. news inevitably assume a high level of involvement with the text, while most would admit that in general, news is not watched that attentively. As the decodings of the West Bank show, the consequences of a cursory reading of the text are quite specific, although these consequences are never considered during news production. The failure of T.V. news producers to anticipate/consider these consequences means that, like Frankenstein, they don't really understand the creature they are unleashing on the world.

(d) Frequency of extra-textual contexts

Almost half the decoders compared the West Bank story to a news item from Northern Ireland (21 out of 50). This comparison brought together a number of perceived similarities: both are part of long-running narratives revolving around an apparently irreconcilable conflict, both involve images of soldiers on patrol in towns and cities together with

images of civilian unrest. The nature of this comparison will be clarified when extra-textual contexts are related to themes (see (j)) and to narrative contexts (see (n)). Even at this stage, however, the presence of this extra-textual context indicates how firmly certain news items are situated within a particular genre.

The only other single extra-textual context of significance was a feeling of straight forward confusion (E-T C), expressed by 14 decoders. This indicates that many decoders simply did not possess the knowledge the item assumes, and therefore found it difficult to assess the story's significance. This, again, will be clarified as the framework unfolds.

Of the other extra-textual contexts, E-T E and E-T F (a sympathy with the Palestinians and a feeling that the Israelis are intransigent) - identified by 4 decoders each - are clearly related. We would expect both these to be instrumental in constructing theme F (Israeli intransigence and the repression of Palestinians - see (j)).

(e) Frequency of narrative contexts

The narrative contexts can be split into three categories. Four of the six - NC C to NC F indicate a fairly well developed narrative context. The decoders who were able to situate the stories in those contexts were obviously in a better position to tease out meanings than those who weren't. Of the two most significant narrative contexts, NC A (a vague knowledge of the history of the West Bank, identified by 14 decoders) indicates, on the whole, a more coherent, detailed background to the West Bank story than NC B (a vague knowledge of the history of the Arab/Israeli conflict, identified by 13 decoders).

A fourth category can be added to signify a still less informed narrative context than NC B - those decoders unable to situate the item in any narrative context. A significant number of decoders - 15 - fall within this category, indicating the esoteric nature of the story.¹

(f) Frequency of critical discourses

The most dominant criticism clearly relates to this point - 12 decoders stating that the item needed to provide more background information in order to make the story more accessible.

The only other significant critical discourse was that the Palestinian case was not represented (CD C, identified by 8 decoders). This usually referred to the presence of Manachem Milson, who was able to speak for the Israelis, but who was not balanced by a Palestinian speaker. Related to this criticism was CD B, articulated by decoders who felt that details of the Israeli's record of oppression against the Palestinians should have been given. Since only 3 decoders voiced this criticism, it will be coupled with CD C during the analysis that follows.

(g) Inter-lexia relations

The relations between lexias or sets of lexias are the stuff of narrative. If decoders who recalled lexia X also tended to recall lexia Y (rather than, say, lexia Z), then the two may form part of a narrative structure.

To this end, the relations between the five categories of lexias grouped in blocks of meaning (A to E) were all calculated. Suffice to say that these calculations did not identify any significantly high or low relations between these blocks of meaning.²

This implies that, in terms of the five textual blocks of meaning identified above, there is no identifiable narrative structure. The presence of Menachem Milson in the decoding, for example, will not imply or lead to the presence of any other part of the text.

In terms of the way the text is actually constructed, this is not particularly surprising. Like the British Leyland item, the narrative structure of the West Bank item is fairly loose, as well as being confused by the editing together of two separate incidents in different West Bank towns. This is not so much because of what the item communicates as the way it communicates it. The item actually consists of a three stage sequential narrative:

- (a) the sacking of the mayors which leads to tension among the Palestinians, as well as symbolising a new hard line approach by the Israelis;
- (b) this leads to the violent clashes between the two sides, with the Israelis coming down hard on the Palestinians;
- (c) which worries the United States and Egypt, who think the Israelis are stepping out of line, but who, because of the forthcoming Israeli withdrawal from Sinai, are unable to do anything about it. The incident therefore has international ramifications.

Yet, only 4 out of the 50 decoders identified all three stages in their reading of the item. The reason for the item's failure to communicate this narrative will be explored later. Suffice to say, at this stage, that there is no generally perceived narrative pattern registered in the decodings.

There are, obviously, a few single lexias which do have significant relationships to one another. The most obvious of these relations exists between lexia (15) (the image of the Israelis as a heavy occupying force) and lexia (12) (the troops keeping law and order on the streets). 9 out of the 10 decoders who identified lexia (15) also identified lexia (12).

(h) Relations between lexias and themes

Perhaps surprisingly, when the different themes are related to identification of the groups of lexia, we find no correspondences or non-correspondences of any great significance. The themes are spread fairly evenly across the five different textual blocks, as the following table demonstrates. The total numbers of themes and lexia (in the textual blocks) are given in brackets.³

Themes x lexias (textual blocks)

Theme	Textual blocks				
	A (10)	B (35)	C (17)	D (11)	E (22)
A (15)	2	8	2	3	5
B (16)	2	10	4	2	5
E (5)	-	3	3	1	3
F (10)	3	10	8	3	6
L (6)	1	5	2	1	5
Others (8)	2	5	1	2	4

Clearly there are some figures worthy of comment. A greater proportion of those constructing theme F (Israeli intransigence and their oppression of the Palestinians), for example, identified a lexia in textual block C (lexias referring to positive/negative images of Palestinians/Israelis) than lexias in other textual blocks.⁴ Given the direct relationship between lexia and theme, this is to be expected. Proportionately less decoders, on the other hand, who constructed theme A identified a lexia in textual block C than the other textual blocks.⁵ This implies that the theme 'one episode in an endless saga' is sustained by the decoder failing to construct a positive/negative image of one of the protagonists. This theme is therefore, perhaps, based upon the notion that 'both sides are as bad as each other'.

Neither of these figures, however, stands out particularly. What is more interesting is how evenly the themes are distributed along the textual blocks. This table therefore supplements (c) - themes to frequency of lexia - and indicates different levels of narrative at work. At one level, corresponding to themes A or B, the blocks of lexias are more likely to be understood in isolation, at another, corresponding with theme F, large parts of the text can be incorporated into one interpretation. Consequently, although less decoders constructed theme F than theme A or theme B, those constructing theme F incorporated more lexias from every textual block between them than those constructing

theme A (between them) or theme B (between them). This phenomenon shall be explored later.

(j) Relations between lexias and extra-textual contexts

Those using E-T A (comparison with Northern Ireland) tended to refer to textual block C (images of Palestinians /Israelis), implying that the comparison to Northern Ireland relates to the adversarial nature of the conflict.⁶ Those using E-T C (general expression of confusion), on the other hand, tended to refer to blocks A and E (the sacked mayors narrative and Milson),⁷ while only one of them referred to block D (consequences for international relations). This demonstrates that confusion arises when the consequences of the narrative (contained in block D) are not part of the reading, whereas the mayors narrative (block B) and the Milson sequence (block E) do not necessarily clarify the decoder's understanding of the item.

The levels of significance involved here are however, as low as those between themes and lexias.

(k) Relations between lexias and narrative contexts

The relations between these two categories are a little more revealing. The first interesting comparison that emerges involves the differences between NC A (a vague knowledge of the history of the West Bank) and NC B (a vague knowledge of the history of the Arab/Israeli conflict). None of the decoders using NC B identified the sacked mayors narrative (textual block B) or the consequences for international relations (textual block D), whereas a comparatively high number using NC A identified lexias in both these textual blocks.⁸ Since these two textual blocks involve the beginning and the end of the item's narrative, this difference is crucial, demonstrating that NC A is more likely to equip the decoders with a framework for decoding the three narrative stages of the item than NC B, which fails dismally on this score.

As I shall shortly demonstrate, those decoders using NC B tended to recall less lexia generally than those using NC A, the only exception

being lexia related to Milson (textual block E). A significantly high proportion of those using NC B referred to Milson⁹, a correlation that will become more meaningful as the analysis develops.

The second interesting relations are those between NC's C to F (which can all be characterised as symptomatic of a fairly elaborate narrative context) and the textual blocks. While none of the decoders using NC B made reference to the mayors narrative (block B) or the international consequences (block D), those using NC's C to F referred to these lexias with disproportionate frequency. This was particularly noteworthy in the case of textual block D: although only 13 of the 50 decoders used NC's C to F, 8 of them identified lexia in this block, whereas only 3 of the remaining 38 did so. Similarly, while those using NC B tended to refer to Milson, those using NC's C to F did not¹⁰. This emphasises the separation between textual blocks B and D, and textual block E in the readings, implying that Milson does not easily fit into a reading of the item incorporating more than one of the three narrative stages.

This implication, however, applies more to the consequences for international relations (textual block D) than the mayors narrative (textual block B). As the relations between lexias and extra-textual contexts revealed, those who were confused by the item (E-T C) tended to refer to the mayors narrative and Milson. What this indicates is that the mayors narrative fits into two distinct readings: one which fits the mayors narrative into a general coherent narrative context and one which is unable to do so. We would, furthermore, expect those referring to the mayors narrative who were confused (E-T C), not to use a detailed narrative context (NC's C to F), and those referring to the mayors narrative who were not confused to use a detailed narrative context. This is indeed the case: of the 4 confused decoders locating the mayors narrative, none referred to NC's C to F, while 3 referred to no narrative context at all, while of the 6 other decoders who did locate the mayors

narrative, 4 referred to NC's C to F (the other 2 referring to NC A, in some ways the most coherent narrative context outside NC's C to F, as has already been suggested¹¹). Narrative context seems, therefore, to be an important determinant in locating not only which lexia are incorporated into a reading, but how those lexia are incorporated.

(1) Relations between narrative contexts and frequency of lexias

It seems worthwhile considering the relation between narrative contexts and the number of lexias recalled by decoders. The result of this comparison are as follows:

<u>Narrative Context(s)</u>	<u>Number of lexia recalled</u>		
	<u>0 - 2</u>	<u>3 - 5</u>	<u>6 or more</u>
A	1	7	6
B	5	4	4
C - F	1	5	7
None	6	9	0

Just as there were quite significant differences between the number of lexias recalled in relation to themes constructed (see (c) above), so the narrative context used produces considerable differences in the number of lexias a decoder incorporated into his/her reading. Perhaps not surprisingly, particularly in relation to the points made in (k) above, the more detailed or elaborate the narrative context, the greater the number of lexias used by the decoder in his/her reading. The differences between NC A and NC B are further emphasised here, those using NC A incorporating, on the whole, far more lexias in their decodings than those using NC B. At the 'low' end of recall, none of the 15 decoders unable to situate the item within any narrative context identified more than 5 lexias.

If these figures are compared with those in (c) above, a number of theme/narrative context relations might be anticipated, most obviously (at this stage) a relation between those decoders constructing theme F with those using NC's C-F, since both tended to incorporate a high number of lexias into their readings, and those constructing themes A and B with

those using NC B or no narrative context at all, since both tended to refer to only a small number of lexia. These relations will, of course, be clarified below.

(m) Relations between lexias and critical discourses

Like the relations in (h) and (j) above, those decoders constructing criticisms of the item did not, in any significant way, locate or fail to locate any particular group of lexias. Both main critical discourses - criticising the absence of the Palestinian view (CD's B and C) and stressing the need for more background information (CD D) - were tied to a very similar spread of textual blocks.¹²

Both revealed a slight tendency to refer to Milson and to ignore the lexia concerned with consequences for international relations. The relation of CD's B and C to an awareness of Milson is fairly straightforward, since the presence of Milson signified the absence of the Palestinian view. Similarly, the presence of Milson signifies the absence of information located in CD D.

The failure of those constructing CD's B and C and CD D to identify the consequences for international relations is an interesting phenomenon. It implies that the decoders satisfaction with the news item depends partly on his/her ability to read it as a coherent narrative. Those decoders who were unable to incorporate the crucial third stage of the narrative - the consequences of the story - into their reading were therefore more likely to be critical.

(n) Relations between themes and extra-textual contexts

There are a number of interesting relations here, all of which help us to understand the nature of the important themes, and the reasons why those themes are constructed.

The comparison with Northern Ireland (E-T A) was frequently made by decoders who constructed theme A - (one episode in an endless saga) - almost half of the 21 decoders making this comparison constructed this theme. This implies that the Northern Ireland comparison was based upon both stories

similarity as news (i.e. as particular long-running narratives based upon urban conflict) rather than simply the conflict/violence itself (as in theme B¹³).

The Northern Ireland comparison was on the other hand, only made by 2 (out of 10) decoders constructing theme F - Israeli intransigence and their repression of Palestinians. This suggests that a formal identification between two news stories is less likely if the decoder is able to establish a specific position in relation to the two protagonists. The formal comparison implied by E-T A is therefore based on the viewer's lack of (committed) involvement with the news item. This is similar to the point made in (h) above, about the failure of those constructing theme A to locate lexias with positive/negative images of the two protagonists. Theme A (one episode in an endless saga) and E-T A are connected not only by their emphasis on the formal characteristics of the news story, but because the decoders identifying them tend not to become involved in the rights and wrongs of the conflict itself - it is just 'one episode in an endless saga', 'just like Northern Ireland'.

Only one decoder constructing theme A, however, expressed a sense of confusion (E-T C), whereas almost half of those constructing theme B (images of violence) did so (7 out of 16). This suggests that, despite the fact that the interpretation 'story = one episode in an endless saga' is not based on a sympathetic (or unsympathetic) involvement with the story, the decoders constructing this theme did not feel confused (even if, ultimately, they were) by it. The theme, 'images of violence', on the other hand, is fairly likely to be grounded in (self confessed) confusion - the images of violence becoming a more prominent part of a confused reading of the story than a coherent reading of it.

Other (less significant) themes associated with a feeling of confusion were theme L (the inability to identify a theme) and theme G (the story is about the mayors narrative). The inability to locate a theme and a feeling of confusion are fairly obviously related. Only 2 decoders

constructed theme G, but the fact that both of them expressed confusion relates to the point revealed in (k). The amplification of the mayors narrative to the status of a theme (i.e. the story is about the mayors narrative) only occurs when the decoder is grasping in confusion for the item's meaning (neither of these 2 decoders, as (k) above suggests, were able to refer to a narrative context).

The only other significantly high relation occurred between theme F (Israeli intransigence and the repression of the Palestinians) and E-Ts E and F (a pre-given sympathy with the Palestinian cause/ antipathy to Israeli intransigence). This is perhaps not surprising, although the fact that 7 of the 8 decoders bringing this extra-textual context to bear on the item constructed this theme shows how important particular protextual discourses are in determining decodings. The extent to which this is an example of the 'uses and gratifications' model in operation will be discussed below. It is important to stress, however, that a simple exposition of 'uses and gratifications' theory may explain the above relation, but does not explain why none of the 5 decoders constructing theme E (a critical view that the item apportioned blame to the Palestinians) referred to E-T E and F.

(o) Relations between narrative contexts and themes

At this point in the analysis, it is possible to discover particular variables linked together in identifiable chains. As I have just indicated, we have a specific set of relations between themes and extra-textual contexts, such that:

- (1) theme A (one episode in an endless saga) is linked to E-T A (comparison with Northern Ireland);
- (2) theme B (images of violence) is linked to E-T C (confusion);
- (3) theme F (Israeli intransigence and the repression of Palestinians) is linked to E-T's E and F (sympathy with Palestinians and/or antipathy to the Israelis).

What now emerges is that these three themes are also linked to particular narrative contexts, so that:

- (1) theme A is linked to NC B (vague knowledge of the Arab/Israeli conflict, generally the least informed narrative context) ¹⁴;
- (2) theme B is linked to no narrative context being stated ¹⁵;
- (3) theme F is linked to the more elaborate narrative contexts (NC's C to F) ¹⁶.

This allows us to develop our understanding of the dominant themes. As stated above, those constructing theme A (one episode in an endless saga) did not feel confused by the item, although they did not tend to become involved in it or display any comprehensive interest in it. It is appropriate then that this theme should be linked to a narrative context (NC B), but a narrative context that is a vaguely understood and vaguely articulated history of the conflict between the Arabs and Israelis. To understand the item as 'one episode in an endless saga' necessitates knowledge of some form of narrative context ('the endless saga'), but indicates an inability to distinguish one 'episode' in the conflict from another. This level of understanding is sufficient to locate the item within a particular genre ('just like Northern Ireland') but insufficient to give it a separable identity as a news story.

Theme B - images of violence - has already been related to a feeling of confusion. It isn't surprising then, that this theme is linked to an inability to locate the item within a narrative context. This suggests that narrative context is a crucial variable, since it provides the basis for particular readings. This will, of course, be explored later.

Similarly, the tendency of those constructing theme F to give more elaborate and detailed readings of the item (see (c) above) is, it appears, based upon a knowledge of a more detailed narrative context. The split between themes E and F is further emphasised here. Of the 5 decoders who constructed theme E (a critical view that the item apportioned blame to the Palestinians), 2 of them were unable to locate it within any narrative context, and 2 of them were only able to refer to a vague knowledge of the conflict (NC B). This implies that theme E and theme F are based upon quite different levels of narrative context.

(p) Relations between narrative contexts and extra-textual contexts

Given the links stated above (see (n) and (o)), we might expect E-T A (reference to Northern Ireland) and NC B (vague knowledge of the conflict), which were both linked to theme A, to also be linked to each other. This is indeed the case¹⁷.

Similarly, E-T C (expression of confusion) is linked to no narrative context¹⁸, and E-T's E and F (sympathy with the Palestinians or antipathy towards the Israelis) to NC's C to F (elaborate or detailed narrative contexts)¹⁹. This confirms the set of relations established in (o) above, giving us three clusters of variables:

- (a) theme A, E-T A and NC B;
- (b) theme B, E-T C and no narrative context;
- (c) theme F, E-T's E and F and NC's C to F.

(q) Relations between critical discourses and themes

The relations between these two variables do not produce any particularly strong or weak links. There is, not surprisingly, a link between CD D (more background information needed) and theme L (the inability to identify a theme)²⁰. Theme A, on the other hand (one episode in an endless saga), tends not to be linked with any of the critical discourses. This confirms the suggestion that, despite its limitations, those constructing theme A are fairly satisfied with this reading²¹.

(r) Relations between critical discourses and extra-textual contexts

One fairly strong link stands out between these sets of variables: half of those decoders who expressed confusion (E-T C) - 7 out of 14 - felt that more background information was needed (CD D). The reasons for this link are self-evident.

(s) Relations between critical discourses and narrative contexts

Given the cluster of variables linking E-T C (confusion) and no narrative context, it is not surprising that half of those not referring to a narrative context did refer to a critical discourse. This, again, is the only significant link between these sets of variables.

vii. The thematic range

One of the most obvious differences between the readings of the West Bank item and the British Leyland item, revealed at the beginning of this analysis (see (b) above), is the number of themes the decoders were able to construct on the basis of the two items. Why was it that the decoders were able to identify so many more themes in relation to the British Leyland story than the West Bank piece? There is, of course, a fairly straightforward answer to this - the West Bank story, in common with most foreign news stories, was seen to be more 'distant' and of less immediate concern to the viewer than a story about our very own British Leyland. The problem with such an explanation is that it doesn't take account of those decoders who were able to explicate large sections of the item, but who still tended to limit their readings to one, or sometimes two, themes.

A better explanation is to understand the readings in terms of (what I shall call) channels of access to the news story. Most of the decoders who were able to discuss the British Leyland story at length, and who felt fairly confident about their ability to decode the item, did not actually know a great deal about the relevant events at Longbridge or at BL as a whole. Only 4 of them, for example, referred to the recent history of BL under Michael Edwardes. As the analysis demonstrated, the narrative contexts surrounding the BL story tended to be vague and unspecific. Nevertheless, most of the decoders had at their disposal a number of protextual discourses or channels of access to the British Leyland story: the various popular mythologies about British Leyland, familiarity with industrial relations/trade union issues in Britain, the problem of rising unemployment, the move towards an industrial society based on technological labour rather than human labour and a range of economic/political discourses concerning the need to improve productivity in British Industry. I call this diverse range of knowledges channels of access because they all provide a context for understanding the news item,

or parts of the news item. The term 'channel of access' is not simply synonymous with the term 'protextual discourse', but a way of understanding how protextual discourses work.

This meant that, not only were large sections of the text intelligible and accessible to the decoders, but also particular signifiers could be made intelligible in terms of a variety of different discourses. The brief statements by the Longbridge workers, for example, could be and were interpreted in terms of most of the contexts listed above.

Yet this was not the case with the news from the West Bank. Here, the range of protextual contexts used to interpret the item were much more limited - even if the actual knowledge of those contexts was rather vague. As 15A remarked:

"It's all very involved. So many different people ... it's very difficult to work out exactly what's happening unless you keep a very close eye on proceedings."

In short, the channels of access to the story were limited to knowledge of very particular protextual discourses - notably narrative contexts. Either you understood the story in terms of previous instalments from the West Bank and/or the Middle East, or you didn't understand it at all. Consequently, the discourses making the story intelligible were fairly specific, encompassing a restricted range of views (e.g. pro-Arab, anti-P.L.O., etc.), and therefore producing a specific and restricted number of readings. In this context, thematic diversity is not possible. The British Leyland item, on the other hand, can be about unemployment and industrial relations and new technology and productivity and BL in particular. The West Bank piece can only be about the background to or consequences of the incidents described within a context of the Palestinian/Israeli conflict and the history of the West Bank in international relations.

This difference, of course, is located in the decoders as well as the items themselves. The West Bank item could have raised a whole number of questions about general issues like urban conflict, the politics of occupation, terrorism, religious/racial differences, etc. It did not for two reasons.

(a) These discourses were simply not available to the decoders, whereas the discourses appropriate to the British Leyland piece are articulated regularly through the mass media. Furthermore, the latter are generally articulated as being of more importance and relevance to us, the British public. This means that when we do receive information about the Arabs/Israeli conflict, we do not feel it is really our concern.

(b) The structure of the British Leyland story encouraged a range of possible interpretations, because, as I have demonstrated, it could not easily be fitted together as a coherent narrative. The West Bank story, on the other hand, had a more identifiable if not a tight narrative structure. This narrative structure did not, in its entirety, determine many of the readings. No more, as has already been stated, than 4 people were able to identify both the causes and the consequences of the disturbances. Nevertheless, a larger number were able to locate aspects of this narrative, (albeit, as we shall see, on different levels), while nearly all the decoders were able to identify a common focal point to the story - the disturbances. This was not possible with the British Leyland item, a fact inevitably creating the circumstances for thematic diversity.

viii. Using channels of access

This leads us onto one of the more fundamental points to be raised by the analysis of the West Bank item. The channels of access available to a decoder will often produce a specific set of readings. This is to suggest a more complex and less easily predictable process of interpretation than that suggested by the 'uses and gratifications' model of decoding. The decodings of the West Bank item show that, whatever the information needs of the decoder might be, he/she is forced to use the channels of access available to him/her to understand and interpret the item. This, in turn, leads to differences in levels of involvement with the text. The text is only able to determine how the decoder reads it in relation to these differences. In other words, the T.V. text can be seen to determine a different set of readings depending upon the decoding context.

Where decoders were only able to demonstrate a low level of involvement with the West Bank item, for example, they were more likely to understand the item as 'one episode in an endless saga' or, more particularly, as about 'images of violence'.

I shall develop this by referring briefly to the concerns of 'uses and gratifications' research. This approach places its emphasis on the activity of the decoder, insofar as, according to Elihu Katz:

"The uses approach assumes that people's values, their interests, their associations, their social roles, are pre-potent and that people selectively 'fashion' what they see and hear to those interests" (Katz, 1959, p.3).

This process of selection is based upon certain needs, and the desire to gratify those needs, as McQuail, Blumler and Brown put it:

"Our model of this process is that if an open system in which social experience gives rise to certain needs, some of which are directed to the mass media of communication for satisfaction" (McQuail, Blumler and Brown, 1972, p.144).

Now, there are clearly a number of difficulties with this approach, difficulties which have been pointed out by a number of researchers. On the one hand it grants the individual complete power to select "what he (sic) likes and avoid what he dislikes" (Chaney, 1972, pp.33-34), and on the other it ignores the determinacy of the text as signifier (Morley, 1980). The notion of channels of access takes both these criticisms a stage further.

The work on the West Bank story revealed that there were clusters of variables, relating specific narrative and extra-textual contexts to particular themes. This suggests that, regardless of choice or need, the protextual discourses - or channels of access - available to the decoder are instrumental in determining what he/she feels the news is about. This is not merely to say that those who have only a few appropriate channels of access to the item will not understand it, but that they will understand it differently, the T.V. text will take on particular meanings.

Accordingly, those who were able to place the item within a fairly elaborate narrative context were more likely to see that item as about the intransigence of the Israelis and their repression of the Palestinians.

The construction of this theme will have been based upon a comparatively high level of involvement with the text (i.e. they will have referred to a number of the text's signifying units). Those who, on the other hand, were unable to place the item within any narrative context, tended to see the item purely as an expression of 'images of violence', a perception based upon a fairly low level of involvement with the text (i.e. they will have only referred to a few of the text's lexias). Those who situated the item within a rather vague narrative history of the Palestinian/Israeli conflict were likely to interpret the item as one episode in an endless saga, a reading also based on a low level of involvement with the text.

This relationship (between narrative contexts and themes) was statistically the most dramatic thrown up by the analysis - all the more so because it revealed sets of relations that could not have been easily predicted. Taken with the different levels of textual involvement (number of lexias referred to) shown in each case, it gives us an insight into the practice of decoding. This practice can be understood in three stages:

(a) the narrative context or other protextual discourses used by the decoder opens up particular channels of access to the text;

(b) certain parts (or all) of the text become(s) meaningful, as these channels of access allow particular significations to come into play;

(c) these significations can then be drawn together to produce particular meanings (or themes) for the text as a whole (i.e. the text is about ..., or the text =)

This practice, then, is not about choice or selection, it is about the necessary processes the decoder goes through to construct meaning. Those who were unable to construct a narrative context are, in most cases, also unable to construct certain meanings (only one out of 15 was able to construct theme F, for example). Similarly, those who use a more elaborate narrative context are forced to deal with the set of textual meanings that

narrative context brings into play, and are therefore also unable or unlikely to construct certain themes.

A good example of this process occurred during the British Leyland story. Because many of the decoders necessarily placed the item within the context of rising unemployment, the (mostly visual) signifier 'new technology' was allowed to work within this context to signify metonymically (new technology replaces human labour which creates unemployment) 'unemployment'. This signification is not a matter of choice or selection for the decoders, it is simply a consequence of certain protextual discourses.

In their study of the audience for election television, Blumler and McQuail found that certain groups of voters responded differently to Party Political Broadcasts. Since they were working within the 'uses and gratifications' perspective, this led them to conclude that:

"the strongly motivated voters had responded in one direction and the less keen in another ... whereas opinions of the strongly motivated voters were influenced by major party propaganda, the politically less keen electors responded favourably to the presentation of the Liberal case" (Blumler and McQuail, 1970, p.473).

Put in this way, the differences between the readings and responses of the "less keen" and "strongly" motivated voter are extremely difficult to explain. The problem here is the notion of motivation. Blumler and McQuail use the concept because it fits the 'uses and gratifications' model, but what does it actually mean? In their formulation, the concept of motivation is quite separate from the political discourses contained within it. In other words, they are suggesting that the reason why some decoders attach positive connotations to the Liberal Party Political Broadcasts and why some attach positive connotations to the Conservative or Labour Broadcasts is because some are weakly motivated and some strongly motivated. This, in fact, does not explain anything. In this form the concept of motivation as a determinant within signifying practice is meaningless.

The differences between the groups' readings in the Blumler and McQuail study can only be properly understood in terms of protextual discourses.

The strongly motivated group are defined as such because they were able to reveal knowledge of certain political discourses. These discourses clearly become appropriate contexts for interpreting certain parties' propaganda in a positive way, enabling the decoders to construct particular meanings/connotations. These political discourses however, were either inappropriate to the Liberal messages, or worked to create negative connotations for the decoder. The 'weakly motivated' voters, on the other hand, clearly did not have the political discourses (at their disposal) necessary to respond positively to the Conservative or Labour Broadcasts, yet, even without them, they were able to construct positive meanings during the Liberal Broadcasts. In short, the Liberal Broadcasts did not require knowledge of particular political discourses to produce a favourable impression. Further, knowledge of such discourses created meanings leading to a less favourable impression. The opposite case applies to the Labour and Conservative Broadcasts.

Before moving on to consider how the text signifies (differently) in terms of the discourses used to contextualise and interpret it, I shall briefly further consider the 'uses and gratifications' approach in terms of the West Bank decodings.

Of the themes applied to the West Bank story, two are in direct conflict to one another. Those decoders constructing themes D and E felt that the item demonstrated that, as 11A put it "the P.L.O. are the baddies", most of them (those constructing theme E, i.e. 5/6) feeling that this was a distortion of the facts. Those constructing theme F, on the other hand, felt that the item demonstrated the Palestinians as victims and the Israelis as the aggressors/oppressors. For these decoders, the item was, as 11B put it, "against the Israelis". Given they were all watching the same programme, how was this possible?

A traditional uses and gratifications explanation would begin by considering the predilections of the decoders prior to the decodings. This would also, from my own perspective, seem the best place to start.

We might expect those decoders sympathetic to the Palestinians to see the item as, to some extent, pro-Palestinian, and vice versa. The problem with the above readings is that they both appear to originate from a position sympathetic to the Palestinian cause (apart from the decoder constructing theme D).

If we look at the protextual discourses used by these decoders, however, some marked differences emerge. 7/8 of those decoders who expressed sympathy for the Palestinians, or a feeling that the Israelis were intransigent outside the item (i.e. as an extra-textual discourse) constructed theme F, whereas none of them constructed theme E. Similarly, half of the decoders who referred to an elaborate narrative context (6/12) constructed theme F, while only one of them constructed themes D or E. Out of context, the first of these comparisons appears slightly unbelievable - it would be extremely enigmatic if a group were able to construct a critical reading of the text (critical of the portrayal of the P.L.O. as "the baddies") without reference to any appropriate protextual discourses. This, of course, did not happen: all of the decoders who constructed this theme (theme E), referred to various critical discourses. 2 made specific claims that the item was biased in favour of the Israelis and 'the establishment' as opposed to the P.L.O. 'terrorists' (CD E), 2 pointed out that the Palestinian view was not represented and 2 simply felt more background information was necessary to understand events.²² These critical discourses are, in many ways, equivalent to the extra-textual contexts (E-T's E and F) sympathising with the Palestinians or criticising the Israelis - what distinguishes them is that they are voiced in opposition to the perceived position taken by the broadcast.

The ultimate position taken by two groups - in favour of the Palestinians "against the Israelis" is therefore based upon certain protextual discourses. What still separates them (apart from the opposite nature of their decodings) is the narrative context they refer their readings to. As I have pointed out, those who constructed theme F, tended

to refer to an elaborate narrative context, whereas most of those who constructed themes D or E did so on the basis of no narrative context at all, or a vague knowledge of the history of the conflict (NC B, the least informed narrative context). This suggests that narrative context is the crucial variable here. The channels of access that knowledge of an elaborate narrative context provide clearly allows the decoder to read the item as sympathetic to the Palestinians. Where the decoder can refer only to a vague narrative context or even none at all, such a reading becomes difficult or impossible - moreover, significations come into play which encourage an opposite reading (and, further, a critical reading).

The reason for these opposing readings is, then, based upon one group's lack of familiarity with the story's narrative context, and one group's comparative familiarity with it. Those who are familiar with the story are aware that, as 16A put it:

"whereas 10 or 5 years ago sympathy for Israel was virtually automatic, the P.L.O. has over the last 10 years or so managed to establish in Europe and the United States ... the idea that it's got a legitimate claim to territory ... occupied by the Israelis. That it's not simply a terrorist organisation, it has genuine political aspirations, and what 10 years ago would have been reported in pro-Israeli terms is not now reported as pro-Israeli".

This awareness may not be as well defined as 16B's, but what is important is that they do not begin their reading of the item with the assumption that the P.L.O. are supposed to be "the baddies". Those who constructed theme E, on the other hand, not having access to this narrative context, automatically surround the P.L.O. with certain connotations, like "baddies" (11A) or "terrorists" (17B), people who are "as bad as the Argentinians!" (23B) which they have accumulated - albeit critically - from a less detailed knowledge of the narrative context outlined by 16A.

The next step, then, is to look in more detail at the relation between narrative context (and protextual discourses in general) and the specific signifying practices that produce these (and other readings).

ix. The process of decoding (part one)

One of the more surprising results of the analysis of the West Bank decodings was the absence of any apparent relationships between the lexias referred to and themes constructed. This would imply that the text's dominant meanings were not dependant upon any particular parts of the text. While this implication is, in part, unavoidable, closer examination reveals that the relation between themes and lexias is by no means completely arbitrary.

The analysis threw up two important pieces of information:

(a) certain groups of lexias were generally dominant throughout the decodings: most particularly those referring to the disturbances in general (44 out of 50 decoders) or specific aspects of those disturbances (35 out of 50 decoders). References to Milson, the West Bank professor (21 out of 50 decoders) were also (perhaps surprisingly) common, unlike references to the consequences for international relations (11 out of 50 decoders);

(b) significant sets of relations existed between themes and the number of lexias referred to by decoders. Themes A and B, in particular, tended to be constructed by decoders referring to only a few lexias.

What these two sets of information tend to conceal is the relation between readings based upon particular isolated lexias or textual blocks and certain themes.

Accordingly, I looked at those decodings that referred only to lexias within the dominant textual blocks. What I found was that of the 24 decoders (nearly half of the whole sample) who referred only to lexias related to the disturbances themselves (11 decoders), or to only these lexias plus the mayors narrative (4 decoders), or to only these lexias plus references to Milson (9 decoders), 21 of those 24 constructed either themes A (one episode in an endless saga) or B (images of violence). Of the 3 that didn't, 2 were unable to construct a theme at all, while the other felt the item was simply about the mayors narrative. In other words

for those who were only able to incorporate these lexias into any memorable signifying practice, only certain meanings were possible. Moreover, decoders whose readings were restricted thus were actually very likely to construct one of two meanings.

It's fairly easy to see how these relationships come about. These lexias, particularly the images of soldiers/rioting and the (Israeli) spokesman denouncing the other side, frequently provide the substance of news stories from this part of the world. They are identifiable because they are familiar, as 5B put it:

"Well I think personally, the Israelis and the Arabs and so forth, all that fracas ... its gone off for thousands of years, it'll carry on."

Restricted to these aspects, the story does become just one episode in an endless saga. This reading therefore depends upon particular lexia being isolated from any specific context. 10B articulated this reading in more detail:

"It has been going on a long time. Probably when it first started it took more of an interest - now it's just a thing that's carrying on and carrying on, and a lot of things that you see like that, that you see often, you tend to think: 'Oh, it's still there, and not an awful lot's coming out of it really'. I think you sort of look at it and it doesn't mean an awful lot any more."

The other, more confused reading (theme B) of the item as about images of violence, clearly also relates to these lexias in isolation. This is, of course, most obviously the case with those decoders who only referred to aspects of the disturbances (of the 11 who restricted their readings in this way, 7 constructed theme B). Of the decoders articulating this theme, some, like 7B, expressed their confusion in terms of their inability to contextualise these images:

"The violence ... I don't, I didn't understand anything about why the army are killing".

Others, like 9A, in an attempt to understand "the violence", attempt to contextualise it by guesswork!

"I don't know, there's just fighting out there, and they're trying to stop it."

Who "they" are, and how they are trying to "stop it" is not clear. 9B arrives at this reading by speculating that if there is "fighting", someone must be "trying to stop it". 8A, on the other hand, suspecting that there might have been more to the item than "just fighting", exaggerates the scale/significance of the violence:

"I'm appalled by the fact that all we see is fighting. May be they are giving more information, but coupled with these horrific pictures, I think perhaps I'm not hearing it."

If we then relate these readings back to narrative context, the whole process of decoding becomes apparent. As I have already revealed, themes A and B related to particular narrative contexts. If we take only those decoders who constructed themes A or B on the basis of lexias relating directly to the disturbances or to Milson (i.e. those whose restricted reading forced them to construct A or B), these relations become even more pronounced. Of the 9 decoders constructing theme A on this basis, 7 did so in terms of a vague knowledge of the Arab/Israeli conflict (NC B), while of the 10 decoders constructing theme B on this basis, 7 did so without being able to refer to any narrative context. This strongly suggests that the narrative context (or lack of one) available to the decoder determines access to (specific parts of) the text, which in turn determines what the text means. In other words, the process of decoding described earlier in relation to 'uses and gratifications' research provides a way of understanding the decoding of the West Bank item.

All that now needs explaining is why the decoders using those narrative contexts (or lack of them) referred predominantly to these parts of the text? There are, I would suggest, two possible answers. The first is in relation to the verbal/visual relations discussed in the previous chapter. There are two significant points at which the verbal and visual levels of the text are closely linked during the story. The first, fairly obviously, occurs during the sequences with troops and rioters on the street. Here the two levels are linked by equivalence or linked metonymically. The second occurs during the interview with Menachem

Milson, where the two levels (as with the BL workers interview) are linked by authorship. The fact that these lexias made most impact upon the decodings in general provides further evidence that greater signifying power is achieved by closely linking the two levels. It also makes these signifying units more accessible for decoders deprived of detailed channels of access to the item as a whole. If the decoder is only able to retain key elements of the text on the basis of their verbal/visual structure, the communication of meaning is not only weakened, but these elements are given power to generate specific meanings (like themes A or B).

The second reason relates to the narrative structure of the story. The narrative as a whole is clearly not self-contained. Neither the causes nor the consequences of the disturbances can be fully understood without reference to a narrative context outside the text. The decoder who has no access to this narrative context will therefore only be able to 'make sense' of signifiers as they relate to other signifiers within the text's narrative. This means that only certain parts of the text will appear comprehensible. The main parts of the West Bank story that work within a narrative specific to that story are:

- (a) on one level, the sacking of the mayors, i.e. the cause of the disturbances;
- (b) the people leaving the mosque on Friday lunchtimes, as a prequel to the disturbances;
- (c) the disturbances themselves, and the reaction of the Israeli troops;
- (d) on one level, Milson as a spokesman for the Israelis, justifying the reaction of the troops.

The most conspicuous of these is, of course, the third (conspicuous because of its length, its visual/verbal presence, and because it is the focal point of the story). This means that decoders using either a vague or no narrative context were able to refer to the disturbances within the context

of the item itself. They were also able to refer to the other three groups of lexias, which they did, although rather unequally. This explains why Milson and the disturbances were located more easily by these decoders, but not why the other two lexias were not. For example, of those constructing a vague narrative context (NC B) or none at all: only 3 referred to the mayors narrative (out of 10 from the whole sample); and only 5 to the people leaving the mosque (out of 9 from the whole sample); whereas 15 referred to Milson (out of 22 from the whole sample). The decoders clearly found Milson an easier part of the text to identify than the others.

There are of course reasons for this outlined above (i.e. in terms of his power to signify verbally and visually) as well as the fact he occupies the screen for a greater length of time. There are, I would suggest, two others, both relating to Milson's position in the narrative. The first echoes the point made in the previous chapter: the fact that the information about the mayors and the mosque occur fairly early on in the story (the first is stated during Sandy Gall's introduction, although Derek Taylor does make a passing reference to it, the second at the very beginning of Taylor's report) means that viewers are still recovering from the previous item, and are still in the process of refocussing their attention to the West Bank when this information is transmitted. The Milson statement, on the other hand, occurs immediately after the 'meat' of the story about the disturbances. The second reason is that the Milson statement apparently occupies a position in the text directly linking him to the disturbances, i.e. he is there to react to the disturbances and justify the clampdown by the Israeli troops. This was how, for example, 14B read it:

"the Israeli spokesman at the end ... justifying that he'd sent his commandoes in to shoot the place up, and scare the locals, and hope that this would cow them into submission."

Milson is therefore - so it appears - given the privilege of explaining/ giving meaning to the focal point of the story.

In this sense, Milson fits easily into a reading based on the narrative of the item itself. The mayors narrative and the mosque incident are less easy to locate because they precede the focal point of the story and consequently do not appear to relate to it so directly. This is, it should be pointed out, a misreading of the Milson statement. Milson is actually introduced to justify the sacking of the Palestinian mayors - his comments are not intended to refer to the disturbances at all. This makes his position in the narrative both curious and misleading - only (some of) those referring to a detailed narrative context were able to avoid this misreading.

The final part of the text - the consequences for international relations - is almost incomprehensible within the confines of the story itself. It clearly relates to a narrative context outside the text. All of the decoders who referred to this textual block referred to one of the more detailed narrative contexts - (none of them referred to NC B or no narrative at all). Without the appropriate channels of access, this part of the narrative cannot become incorporated into the reading of the item. It becomes, for certain decoders, meaningless, signifying nothing.

Once this aspect becomes meaningful, the decoder has moved onto a different level of narrative based upon different channels of access. This, in turn, allows other meanings to come into play.

x. The story so far

It is worthwhile summarising the variety of points made so far.

(1) We can identify a process of decoding in which the protextual discourses (most particularly the narrative contexts pertaining to the story) available to the decoder determine access to the signifying units comprising that story. The significations that come into play subsequently determine the meaning derived from the story.

(2) The narrative structure of the story, insofar as channels of access allow it to, will be instrumental in the creation of meaning, in a number of ways:

(a) in terms of the simple order in which things are said, i.e. the process of refocussing that seems to occur during the beginning of the item;

(b) in terms of the relation between signifying units - the position of Milson in the West Bank story, for example, creates a specific relationship between him and the focal point of the story;

(c) the hermeneutic code, which (as we saw with the interview with the BL workers) can generate interest;

(d) the effect that shifting the decoders signification of a given signifier can have (e.g. again, as we saw during the interview with the BL workers) on the decoder.

(3) The importance of visual/verbal relations, and the possibility that specific kinds of relations and links create more impact than others. These links are, again, dependent upon the decoders ability to make them (e.g. the link by authorship is made with the BL workers and Milson, but often missed with Brian Fox and the newsreaders/reporters).

(4) The creation of meaning in terms of themes can be linked closely to extra-textual contexts clarifying those themes (like, for example, the comparison with Northern Ireland in the West Bank item).

It now remains to clarify these points, or take up points so far ignored, in relation to the rest of News at Ten. I shall do this in three stages, beginning with the process of decoding, moving onto the workings of narrative, and ending with a clarification of the relationship between the verbal and visual levels of that narrative.

FOOTNOTES:

1. This item, perhaps more than any other, divided the decoders into two groups: those who found the item significant/meaningful; and those who found it incomprehensible. To the second group, the item is esoteric, even though - as many acknowledged - the information necessary to place the item within a narrative context is frequently provided by T.V. news. The problem is that at no point during this episodic narrative are viewers encouraged to engage with that narrative. The story therefore remains inaccessible.
2. References to Milson¹ - E - and references to images of the two sides - C - were slightly more likely to occur in the same decoding than with other textual blocks, as were references to the sacked mayors narrative - B - with references to consequences for international relations - D. Although there are ways of explaining these correlations, they are not significant enough to justify those explanations.
3. These figures are not, of course, equivalent to totals derived from adding up figures in each column, for two reasons.
 - (a) Within a decoding, a theme can obviously relate to more (or less) than one textual block - 20A, for example, constructed theme F, and referred to lexias in all five textual blocks. The total number of textual blocks referred to in relation to themes is therefore likely to exceed the total number of themes themselves. The 10 decoders constructing theme F, for example, referred to 30 textual blocks between them.
 - (b) Although most decoders only located one theme, the fact that some constructed two means that the totals in the vertical columns may be higher than the total number of lexias (in the textual blocks). Where one decoder identified two themes, the textual blocks he/she referred will appear twice in the table.
4. Obviously, this fraction (8/10) is compared not only to figures on the vertical axis (i.e. 2/15, 4/16, 3/5, 2/5 and 1/8), as all of the fractions within row F tend to be higher than those within the other rows. The more significant comparison is with other fractions along row F (i.e. 3/10, 10/35, 8/17, 3/11, 6/22). The high figure is therefore 8/17, nearly $\frac{1}{2}$ whereas all the other figures are less than $\frac{1}{3}$.
5. The significant figures here, therefore, are 2/10, 8/35, 2/17, 3/11, 5/22, where all these fractions are 1/5 or greater, apart from 2/17, which is less than 1/8.
6. The proportion of those who referred to textual block C as well as E-T A was 9/17. The proportions of other textual blocks to E-T A were 3/10, 11/35, 4/11 and 9/22.
7. The ratios here were 4/10 (E-T C to textual block B) and 7/22 (E-T C to textual block E), as opposed to 7/35, 3/17 and 1/11.
8. 4 in the first case, 6 in the second, making ratios of 4/10 and 6/11, compared with the other ratios of 9/35, 3/17 and 6/22.
9. 8 out of the 13 using NC B mentioned Milson in their reading, making a ratio of 8/22. This compares with ratios of 0/10, 7/35, 3/7 and 0/11 for the other textual blocks.

10. The proportions for the relations between NC's C to F and the textual blocks were 11/35 for block A, 5/10 for block B, 8/17 for block C, 7/11 for block D and 5/22 for block E.
11. Those using NC A, as I have pointed out, were quite likely to refer to both the mayors narrative and the international consequences, whereas those using NC B were not.
12. These were as follows:

<u>Critical Discourses</u>	<u>Textual blocks</u>				
	A	B	C	D	E
CD B and C	2	7	5	1	8
CD D	3	5	4	1	7
13. A reasonable, though smaller, proportion of decoders did, nevertheless, construct theme B. The ratios of E-T A to the 3 most dominant themes were: theme A 10/15; theme B 6/16; theme F 2/10.
14. 8/15 of those constructing theme A referred to NC B, compared with 3/16 constructing theme B and 2/10 constructing theme F.
15. 8/16 of those constructing theme B referred to no narrative context, compared to 2/15 constructing theme A and 1/10 constructing theme F.
16. 6/10 of those constructing theme F referred to a more elaborate narrative context (N.C's C to F), compared with 3/15 constructing theme A and 2/16 constructing theme B.
17. 9/13 decoders referring to NC B also referred to E-T A, compared with 4/14 referring to NC A, 4/13 referring to NC's C to F and 6/15 referring to no narrative context.
18. 8/15 decoders referring to no narrative context referred to E-T A, compared with 3/14 referring to NC A, 3/13 referring to NC B and 0/13 referring to NC's C to F.
19. 5/13 referring to NC's C to F referred to E-T's E and F, compared with 3/14 referring to NC A, 1/13 referring to NC B and 1/15 referring to no narrative contexts.
20. 4/6 of the decoders constructing theme L referred to CD D, a significantly higher proportion than with any of the other themes.
21. Only 2/15 decoders who constructed theme A referred to a critical discourse, compared to, for example, 6/16 of those constructing theme B.
22. This, of course, makes a total of 6. This is because one decoder referred to both CD B and CD D.

7 DECODING NEWS AT TEN

i. The process of decoding (part two)

Analysis of the way in which the other items on News at Ten were decoded confirms the existence of a process of decoding: the narrative context (or other protextual discourse) used by the decoder to understand/interpret the item significantly determines access to the lexias, which in turn, determine the meaning(s) of that item. On a fairly simple level, the Jobs item provides a neat demonstration of this process. Those whose reading of the item was restricted to a mathematical calculation comparing the number of "jobs lost" to "new jobs", tended to situate the item within a fairly simple narrative context - the item became a signpost in a more general story about economic recovery or decline. Accordingly, the item was seen to indicate that:

- (i) unemployment continues to rise (articulated by 15 decoders);
- (ii) unemployment continues to rise, but jobs are beginning to return (articulated by 9 decoders);
- (iii) jobs are returning (articulated by 4 decoders);

depending on how the ratio of jobs lost/new jobs was understood (there were, in fact, about twice as many jobs lost as jobs gained, although this was by no means obvious from the quick fire presentation).¹ Seen within this context, the only relevant part of the item is the jobs lost/new jobs ratio, allowing decoders (like 18A) to construct narratives such as "the figures certainly seem better than they were some months ago". When decoders have access to a more complex narrative, on the other hand, other parts of the Jobs item became relevant, and enable other meanings to be constructed. Of the 8 decoders who referred to regional differences in job losses/gains, all of them were able to refer to the places shown on the item. So, when situated within a context of regional unemployment, the geographical references in the item ("In West Wales 200 jobs are going with the Delinair heater company ...") become relevant. Some decoders - 5 - were able to refer to a narrative context specifying the

decline of jobs in the manufacturing industry (as opposed, say, to service industries). In these cases, the type of jobs lost or gained become significant, and the item's meaning was to reinforce the narrative context, i.e. the item demonstrated the decline in British manufacturing industry.

What is interesting about the Jobs item is that it demonstrates, more obviously than the West Bank piece, the specific relation between the narrative context used and lexias recalled. In the case of the West Bank decodings, for example, some decoders were unable to refer to any narrative context, and therefore had few channels of access to the item signifiers. Which signifiers were then converted into meaningful lexias therefore depended more upon factors such as their position in the narrative or visual/verbal relations, rather than specific narrative contexts. In the case of the Jobs item, the narrative context very clearly determines which parts of the text become meaningful. So, while protextual discourses determine the decoder's channels of access to both news items, the Jobs item allows us to isolate the relation between narrative context and the signifiers incorporated into a reading. The West Bank item complicates the process by introducing textual determinations into the process.

This fairly specific relation is also revealed in the Whitelaw item. The Whitelaw piece appeared to depend fairly heavily on knowledge of a particular narrative context for the encoded meaning to be fully decoded. Indeed, the story itself was something of an anticlimax with little obvious news value, a story that only appeared on News at Ten because of its narrative context. Whitelaw had (as the story mentions) been suffering from a great deal of criticism from hardliners within his own party, who objected to his 'soft' approach to the problem of law and order. These criticisms had been particularly vociferous during the debate at the previous Conservative Party Conference, when grass roots Tories, in an uncharacteristic display of rebellion and disloyalty, had

given Whitelaw a rough ride. This kind of conflict/dissent makes a 'good' news story, which is one of the reasons why T.V. cameras were present at the conference in Harrogate. Had Whitelaw faced more dissent at Harrogate, the story would almost certainly have been placed higher in the programme's running order. As it was, I.T.N. found themselves with too much film footage to waste, so even though a newsworthy story had failed to materialise, they felt compelled to use it. The 'news' about Whitelaw also appeared on B.B.C's Nine O'Clock News for the same reason. As one of the B.B.C. news broadcasters put it: "We were there to see Willie Whitelaw get mauled and he didn't. We'd expended all that effort and so had they (I.T.N.), so we still had to produce something out of it".

The main encoded theme of the story, then, was the contrast between the support he had received at Harrogate, and the criticism he had previously received from Tory hardliners. For decoders to construct this meaning, they needed to listen carefully to David Rose's commentary (which referred to the story's narrative context), or else be aware of the context Rose refers to. What the decodings demonstrate, in fact, is that the awareness of the former is fairly dependent upon the latter.

If we divide the item up into three basic textual blocks - the narrative context as set up by David Rose, Whitelaw's speech, and the support given to Whitelaw before and following the speech - some interesting points emerge. The least important of these textual blocks, in terms of the encoded narrative, is Whitelaw's speech. What Whitelaw actually said was of no real significance to the story - the footage of Whitelaw speaking was intended to signify nothing more than 'here is Whitelaw speaking in Harrogate'. What was important was his reception. The encoded narrative would have been coherent without film of his speech. Despite this, the footage of Whitelaw speaking was seen by most of the decoders as the focal point of the story. 41 of the 50 decoders referred to the speech, 31 of whom referred to (at least) one of the two points made

by Whitelaw (he begins by criticising former Home Secretaries for not building enough prisons, and then refers to the need to support the police, and the opposition parties failure to heed this). Moreover, although this film of the speech was very brief, it had more impact upon the decodings than the other two textual blocks. The narrative context (set up by David Rose) of the story, i.e. the reason why the support for Whitelaw was of significance, was only referred to by 12 decoders. The fact that Whitelaw received support - a fact signified throughout the item verbally by Alistair Burnet, David Rose and Willie Whitelaw, and visually by shots of his audience applauding or giving him a standing ovation - was referred to by 38 decoders. These references (unlike those to Whitelaw's speech) were occasionally vague and inspecific, in the sense that they sometimes failed to identify the origin of the support, or its significance (8 of the 38, for example, did not specify that the "support" originated from the Conservative Party, but from people in general).

This suggests that the encoded narrative was not, on the whole, reproduced in the decodings (the reasons for this will be discussed in more detail in relation to narrative). What is particularly conspicuous is the decoders failure to refer to the beginning of this narrative, where David Rose sets up the story. The decodings, in fact, reveal that comprehension of this encoded narrative is largely dependent upon knowledge of the narrative context David Rose refers to. Only 15 decoders possessed such a knowledge (before they watched the programme), and of those 9 (out of a total of 12) referred to the presentation of the narrative context within the item. In other words, decoding of the internal narrative context depended largely upon knowledge of the appropriate external narrative context (the 3 decoders who referred to the former without access to the latter were able to refer to a similar narrative context).

Of the group of 10 decoders who, on the other hand, referred neither to the context of Whitelaw's speech nor to the support given him, none were able to locate the story within the relevant narrative context. Most

of this group placed the item within the context of law and order in general, or else did not refer to any narrative context.

So, the disparity of narrative contexts used by the decoders led to the comprehension of different narratives. Briefly, these narratives moved between versions of the encoded narrative, which was about Whitelaw's relation to the Conservative Party, to narratives taking his actual speech as the focal point, and placing it within the context of debates about law and order.

These narratives, in turn, determined their own specific themes/ meanings. Of the 12 decoders identifying the first textual block (David Rose setting up the story), 10 of them constructed themes that characterised Whitelaw as overcoming problems with his party, and winning their support. 9 other decoders were able to refer vaguely to Rose's narrative context, and of these 5 were able to construct such a theme. Of the remaining 31, only 4 others were able to do so - these 4 being part of the small group (of 5) who situated the story within the appropriate narrative context (appropriate in terms of the encoded narrative), but ignored (with the majority) the references within the item to this context. Similarly, none of the 10 decoders who referred neither to the context of Whitelaw's speech nor the support given him, constructed such a theme.

The large group that made no reference to the narrative context set up by the text (31 decoders) constructed themes revolving around Whitelaw's speech (the only exceptions being, again, the 4 decoders who located the external but not the internal narrative context). This limited the possibilities to themes such as: 'Whitelaw supported by Tories for his handling of law and order' (constructed by 3 decoders); 'Whitelaw talking about law and order' (constructed by 8 decoders); 'Whitelaw gaining general support for his measures' (constructed by 4 decoders) and so on. Which theme the decoders identified depended upon the narrative context they placed the story in. Those who constructed the theme 'Whitelaw

talking about law and order', for example, placed the item within the narrative context 'law and order in general' (6 out of the 8) or 'the Tories and law and order' (2 out of the 8).

The decodings of the Whitelaw piece broadens our knowledge of the process of decoding. Not only can narrative context determine which lexias are incorporated into a decoding or how those lexias are incorporated, it helps determine whether those lexias can be arranged into a particular narrative. So, when a news item is arranged in terms of a particular narrative structure, access to that narrative depends upon the decoder's access to certain protextual discourses. The channels of access available to a decoder will make certain lexias comprehensible to him/her. What the Whitelaw item demonstrates is that these channels of access will also allow the decoder to understand the relations between lexias.

The Whitelaw item is interesting in this respect, since it is the only (lengthy) piece on this News at Ten that can be fitted more or less completely into a particular narrative. The power of this narrative to determine response, however, clearly depends upon the narrative contexts available to the decoder.

A more complex example of this particular process occurred during the decoding of the El Salvador item. The El Salvador piece contained a great deal of information, both verbal and visual, about the forthcoming election, the main candidates standing and those unable to stand (and the political complexion of both), the background of Major Bob D'Aubuisson and his intentions towards the guerillas, the death squads, the attempt by the guerillas to sabotage the elections and the armed forces response, the involvement of the Americans, the attitude of their former ambassador and the pragmatic rejection of that attitude and the presence of the British as observers. Clearly, it was going to be difficult for many decoders to make sense of this item, and so it proved. Some decoders were decidedly confused: a couple identified the extremely right-wing D'Aubuisson as a leftwinger, others confused D'Aubuisson with Duarte, some

failed to detect any evidence (from the item) of American involvement - one actually criticising the item on these grounds, and so on. Despite this, general levels of recall were fairly high (particularly when compared to the other overseas news story from the West Bank), while a substantial number were able to organise the story into a specific narrative structure.

This narrative was as follows:

- (a) Major Bob D'Aubuisson is a candidate in the El Salvador elections.
- (b) He is seen as having a dubious reputation, because he is an extreme rightwinger and/or responsible for killing Archbishop Romero and/or connected to the death squads, who are responsible for the dead bodies found dumped by the roadside (the last of these obviously involves connecting two lexias).
- (c) The American's support this man.
- (d) This support is based upon a shift in the American's position.

The El Salvador item is clearly not reducible to this narrative, although this narrative does incorporate substantial parts of the text into it. It was, moreover, constructed by 19 of the 50 decoders. When compared to the meagre 4 decoders who constructed a three stage narrative from the West Bank story - the disturbances, their causes and their consequences - this figure can be seen to be relatively high. If point (d) - the change in attitude by the U.S. - is excluded, the number increases to 25 out of 50, exactly half the sample.

The reasons for this comparatively high number shall be explored later, in relation to narrative and visual/verbal relations. In the meantime, it is worthwhile considering this narrative in terms of the process of decoding.

Like the West Bank item, the decoders access to appropriate narrative contexts was more limited than with home news items - 18 out of 50 referred to no narrative context at all (compared to 15 out of 50 in relation to the West Bank story), while only 10 were able to refer to a narrative context of any detail (compared to 13 in relation to the West Bank). Narrative

context, therefore, is not responsible for the difference in signifying power between the two items. There is, nevertheless, a relation between narrative context and the decoding of the above narrative. This relation can, furthermore, only be fully understood in terms of the whole process of decoding.

The 25 who constructed the first three parts of the above narrative tended to do so on the basis of more elaborate narrative contexts than those who didn't. Of the 10 decoders locating the item within a fairly detailed context (of the recent history of El Salvador), 9 of them constructed the above narrative, whereas only 8 of the 29 who situated the item within an extremely vague narrative context (or no context at all) did so. The 11 decoders who had recourse to a fairly vague but appropriate knowledge of U.S. involvement in El Salvador were divided amongst both groups.

The 25 who constructed this narrative also tended to construct one of two (related) themes. 11 of them saw the item as about the cynical and/or right-wing foreign policy recently adopted by the United States, and 13 of them understood the item in terms of American attitudes (or shifts in attitude) towards the main candidates in the El Salvador election (one decoder constructed both themes, so 23 of this group of 25 constructed one of these two themes). These themes were not, on the whole, constructed by the other half of the decoders (i.e. those who did not read off the narrative described above). Only 4 of them constructed the latter meaning (U.S. attitudes towards the candidates) and none of them constructed the former (the cynical/right-wing policy of the U.S. in El Salvador).

If we look at the group of 11 who constructed the first theme (the cynical/right-wing policy of the U.S. in El Salvador) and the 17 who constructed the second theme (American attitudes towards the candidates), and relate them back to lexias and narrative contexts, some differences emerge:

(a) 9 of the 11 constructing the first theme also constructed the fourth part of the narrative - the American's about turn - compared to 8 of the 17 who constructed the second;

(b) 10 of the 11 constructing the first did so on the basis of a detailed narrative context (7 of the 11) or the most appropriate vague narrative context (see above, 3 of the 11). Only 5 of the 17 constructing the second, however, did so on the basis of a detailed narrative context (3 of the 17) or the most appropriate vague narrative context (2 of the 17).

What these differences indicate is that there are two levels of access to the narrative linking D'Aubuisson to various dubious activities, and the Americans to D'Aubuisson. Those with access to elaborate narrative contexts are more likely to include the American's volte face in this narrative, and to understand the American's support for D'Aubuisson as either cynical or right-wing. Those without access to an elaborate narrative context, on the other hand, will be marginally less likely to incorporate the American's about turn into the narrative, and will not necessarily attach negative or right-wing connotations to the American involvement. This suggests that access to this narrative is related to but not dependent upon access to a particular narrative context, while interpretation of that narrative will be significantly affected by the narrative context in which it is placed. In other words, access to the signifier and its specific signification will be substantially determined by narrative context, as the decodings of the West Bank item suggested. What the El Salvador item confirms is that this is not only the case with lexias or groups of lexias, but with lexias organised into a narrative structure.

The power of narrative context to influence not only which parts of the text are used to construct readings, but how they will be made meaningful, is incorporated into the meaning of the term lexia. As a signifying unit, the lexia is a meaning or set of meanings attached to a signifier or group of signifiers. The whole process of decoding is, however,

based on the potential plurality of the signifier. This means that, before they can determine how the viewer will decode the text, the text's signifiers must become fixed into fragments or blocks of meaning - or lexias. Ultimately, then, the lexias making up the narrative linking the American's to D'Aubuisson and D'Aubuisson to various dubious activities, are not equivalent across different narrative contexts and different themes. If the narratives are generally interpreted in two different ways, based on a different set of (narrative) contextual determinations, then although the signifiers referred to are the same, the lexias organised into a narrative are different. The third lexia, for example, identifying U.S. support for D'Aubuisson, is not one lexia but two. The first may understand this support as demonstrative or symptomatic of America's right-wing leanings or failure to support human rights. The second may see it as a necessary diplomatic shift that does not carry with it any overt connotations about the politics of American foreign policy. The first, then, involves a conflation between D'Aubuisson's reputation or interests and America's, which the second avoids. This is the nature of the specific signifying practice that will determine the construction of different meanings to the whole item.

Throughout the analysis of the decodings, as I have already suggested, similar lexias have been lumped together as if they were identical. If this were not done, the number of lexias to be dealt with would be enormous and the analysis difficult and confusing. By relating lexias to themes, we are actually clarifying the ambiguities contained within the lexia. In the case of the El Salvador item, we are able to see that what appears to be one narrative is in fact two. The subtle differences between them are disguised by their both being based upon the same textual signifiers.

Essentially, the identification of the 'process of decoding' has confirmed the semiological decoding framework mapped out before the analysis, and specified its character. Before the analysis, the process of decoding had been understood in terms of two sets of variables. The

first was the programme itself plus the decoder as a subject in history, the second was the product of the first - the programmes meaning(s) and the decoder's relation to it (them). It is now possible to be much more specific. The first set of variables become the text (as a structured set of signifiers) plus the decoder as bearer of a set of protextual discourses, the most important being those that provide a narrative context in which the textual signifiers can operate. This then produces a text made up of signifying units (lexias) which may or may not be arranged into a certain narrative. The result of this productive work is a set of themes/readings and a decoder set in a specific relation to those readings.

It is in this context that any study of narrative structure (and the determinacy of those structures) must take place. As the Whitelaw and the El Salvador items demonstrate, a narrative structure must be constructed by the decoder before it can determine his/her reading.

ii. Narrative

(a) Focal Points

It is useful, when discussing narrative, to work with the notion of focal points. On a news item, a focal point will be a lexia or group of lexias that the text directs the decoder towards, and which the decoder then sees as a key point in the narrative, a point that the decoding of the story revolves around. During the analysis of British Leyland, it was discovered that there were no real focal points for the decoder to home in on. The part of the item that had most impact upon the decodings - the interview with the BL workers - was not identified as a focal point in the story. It stood out because of its dramatic relation to a particular narrative context, and because of its visual/verbal structure - not because of its perceived relation to the rest of the story, or its position in that story.

The West Bank item, on the other hand, was seen to revolve around a particular part of the story - the scenes of the disturbances. These

scenes were, for most decoders, the events to which their attention was being directed. If any narrative was to be constructed, it was arranged around this focal point, i.e. the causes and consequences of the disturbances. The impact of Menachem Milson upon the decodings, I suggested, was partly due to his position in relation to this focal point.

The concept of a focal point is, unfortunately, more complicated than it first appears. When discussing the Whitelaw item, I stated that a large proportion of the decoders saw his actual speech as the focal point of the story, despite the fact that, in terms of the encoded narrative, it was fairly incidental. What happened, nevertheless, was that many of the decoders perceived the item as if it was arranged around the content of the speech. Because it was seen to be the focal point of the news item, it became the focal point of the decoding. Furthermore, the identification of the speech as the focal point was partly due to the way in which the narrative was structured.

The crucial point of divergence - between a narrative with the speech as its focal point and the encoded narrative - as I have already suggested, are the introductions by Alistair Burnet and David Rose. Both Burnet and Rose attempt to guide the viewer towards Whitelaw's reception (as a focal point) rather than the speech itself. Burnet begins with the most 'newsworthy' element of the story:

"The Home Secretary, Mr. William Whitelaw, got a standing ovation today, after a speech to Conservative Party activists at Harrogate."

He then refers briefly to the speech - without mentioning its content (other than that it formed part of a debate on law and order), before returning to the main point again:

"to judge from his reception, he has emerged triumphant again, after a week fending off his critics."

David Rose then proceeds to fill out the context in more detail, and in so doing, strengthen the emphasis on Whitelaw's reception rather than the speech:

"Mr. Whitelaw must have been worried about what sort of reception he'd get today. There had been rumblings from the Party's grass roots, and he'd been given a rough time by the party conference on this issue last year. But, in the event ..."

Had Alistair Burnet not already let the cat out of the bag, Rose's introduction would have worked as a classic example of Barthes' hermeneutic code. His introduction sets up the enigma: will Whitelaw be given another "rough time" following "rumblings from the Party's grass roots"? The enigma directs the viewer to the point of its resolution - Whitelaw's reception ("But, in the event ..."). I shall return to the use made by News at Ten of the hermeneutic code later. Suffice to say that, in this instance, Rose's enigma is completely subverted by Burnet's introduction, which has resolved the question before it has even been asked.

Nevertheless, it is clear enough that Burnet and Rose have already directed the viewer past the short clip of his speech towards the standing ovation. However, as I have already pointed out, only 12 of the 50 decoders were able to refer specifically to this introduction and 9 vaguely to it. Those that did invariably tended to reproduce a version of the encoded narrative. Those that didn't (apart from the 5 who referred to the narrative context, but not the item's articulation of it), without exception, didn't. For this second group (of 24 decoders), the focal point of the narrative shifts back to the speech - why?

The encoded narrative, in many ways, ignores the traditions of news presentation. Where the news story contains a fairly brief sequence of actuality film, preceded by a news reader and/or a reporter's introduction and followed by a reporter's piece to camera, the viewer can expect that sequence to signify the focal point of the story. This is the case with the West Bank item and the Whitelaw item. Of the other three main news items on this News at Ten, the Hillhead item, because of its length, repeats this format a number of times, the El Salvador piece contains too great a variety of images to be reduced to an easily identifiable focal point (as I shall shortly discuss) while the decodings of the British Leyland item suggest a tendency to look for a focal point during the film report, even though no such focal point existed.

Given this format, the Whitelaw item contains two possible focal points: the Whitelaw speech or the reception bestowed upon it (these being the only two 'events' communicated during the film). Since the second is merely a reaction to the first, the most significant event would appear to be the speech itself. For the decoders not paying full attention to the introductions or ignorant of the narrative context those introductions referred to (largely the same thing, as I have suggested), this is precisely what happened. This did not mean they necessarily ignored the other possible focal point - the reaction to the speech was powerfully signified whichever narrative is constructed - but they were certainly more likely to do so. Only 2 of the 26 decoders who either knew the narrative context already (15 decoders), or referred to it directly (12 decoders) or vaguely (9 decoders) failed to refer to Whitelaw's reception, whereas 10 of the 24 who didn't failed to do so. Similarly, only 2 of the latter group failed to refer to the speech (these 2 paid little attention to the item generally) compared to 7 of those who knew the narrative context.

It is indicative of the power of the traditional narrative form, in fact, that so many of those who were able to reproduce versions of the encoded narrative still referred to Whitelaw's speech, often quite specifically - 14 of them quoted (at least) one of the speeches substantive points² - even though, for most of them, this was not the focal point of their constructed reading. The impact of the speech is also due, I would suggest, to its visual/verbal structure - as I shall discuss later.

The power of a narrative to guide the viewer towards specific parts of the text - and therefore pinpoint a focal point (or focal points) as the basis of the decoder's reading, is clearly evident in the Whitelaw item. The problem, in terms of the encoded narrative, is that there are two, rather different narratives at work at the same time. One of these is accessible to anyone at all familiar with T.V. news, while the other is fairly dependent upon knowledge of a specific (or related) narrative context.

A more obvious example of expectations imposing a focal point upon a decoding occurred during the news about the level of the pound against the dollar. Nearly all the decoders were aware that this fairly brief piece of news cropped up regularly on news programmes. The common feature of this regular slot is the level of the pound, i.e. whether it rose or fell. This information, rather than information about American interest rates or Chicago money markets, was therefore the focal point of most decodings - even though many failed to recall whether the pound had actually gone up or down.

The effect of this expectation, in this instance, is rather unfortunate. Most of the decoders felt the figures were significant (although not necessarily for 'ordinary people') - as 4A said: "one assumes that if its presented on the news that it's a fairly important point, a fairly important economic indicator". Very few of them, however, had any specific idea what the significance of such figures were. There was no relation between the ability to refer to details about the pound's value against the dollar, and the ability to assess its significance. Many of the decoders, for example, relied on fairly simple but misleading interpretations of the significance of this information - assuming, for example, that a high pound was necessarily a 'good' thing while a low pound was generally 'bad'. Indeed, of those who were able to recall that the pound had closed at 1.78 dollars and/or that this was a fall of 1.3 cents, half interpreted such news according to the formula: high pound = good, low pound = bad (without specifying exactly who this was good or bad for, apart from entities like "the economy" or "the country"), whereas less than one fifth of those who were not able to recall these figures used this interpretation.³ To use the equation high = good; low = bad, indeed, is a logical extension of the ability to locate this common focal point - once isolated, the figures (like unemployment figures) must indicate something - even though this equation is, in many circumstances, incorrect.

It is significant that T.V. news items tend to direct the viewer towards focal points on the basis of convention (and therefore expectation) rather than by producing them within the narrative of the item itself. As I have already suggested, the Whitelaw piece was one of the few items that attempted to guide the decoder towards a focal point, an attempt that only partially succeeded because it conflicted with the viewers expectations of formal convention.⁴

The only other lengthy item to attempt to guide the viewer along the path of narrative was, as I have suggested, the El Salvador item. The task of narrative construction was, in some ways, easier for Jon Snow (and the editors of this item) than during the Whitelaw piece. Snow gave a fairly lengthy film report with enough space to construct focal points (rather than have them thrust upon him). Before analysing this (and other narratives decoded on News at Ten), I shall try to be more specific about how narrative works. I shall concentrate on two key aspects of narrative: enigma and resolution and development.

(b) Enigma and Resolution

I have already referred to Barthes' hermeneutic code - the code of enigma. It seems appropriate, at this point, to give his definition.

"Let us designate as hermeneutic code all the units whose function it is to articulate in various ways a question, its response, and the variety of chance events that can either formulate the question or delay its answer; or even constitute an enigma and lead to its solution " (Barthes, 1974, p.17).

The hermeneutic code, then, is a way of linking signifying units within a narrative. It is, moreover, perhaps the most powerful link in televisual communication. The hermeneutic code, more than any other, draws the viewer into the narrative: once the viewer has become interested in the question, the enigma, he or she has become 'hooked'.

The code of enigma works on a number of levels. It can refer to the straightforward posing of a question, such as the one that opens the News at Ten (seen by the decoders). After the first chime of Big Ben, we are asked of Roy Jenkins:

"Is he now the alternative Prime Minister?"

It can also refer to implicit suggestions about the future of the narrative, the kind of enigma/resolution structure that characterises most T.V. or cinematic fiction, but which is embodied most obviously in the continuous serial - like Coronation Street. As Christine Geraghty writes:

"The apparent multifariousness of the plots, their inextricability from each other, the everyday quality of narrative time and events, all encourage us to believe that this is a narrative whose future is not yet written. Even events which would offer a suitable ending in other narrative forms are never a final ending in the continuous serial: a wedding is not a happy ending but opens up the possibility of stories about married life and divorce ..." (Dyer et al, 1981, p.11).

The qualities that Geraghty attributes to narratives like Coronation Street are, in a number of ways, appropriate to T.V. news. Each of the main items on News at Ten are episodes of stories of which the viewer will, if he or she wants, hear more. The Hillhead item, in resolving one narrative (the Hillhead byelection) opens up others - the future of Roy Jenkins, the leadership of the S.D.P. and the Alliance and, ultimately, the whole future of parliamentary politics. The British Leyland item very obviously finishes with an enigma - will strikes disrupt the progress now being made at Longbridge? The viewer is therefore referred to the future of BL, both in terms of productivity and industrial relations. The West Bank story refers specifically to the future of the Sinai withdrawal, and more generally to future Arab/Israel relations and international relations, the Whitelaw piece, in signifying harmony, suggests the possibility of disruptions in the future, and so on. We are witnessing the plot of history. Despite this, the continuous serial is one of the most compelling forms of television, while, for most people, T.V. news is the least. As Patterson writes, the audience of T.V. news programmes is often "an inadvertent one - which in large proportion, does not come purposefully to television for news, but arrives almost accidentally, watching the news because it is 'on', or because it leads into or out of something else ..." (Patterson, 1980, p.57). Why is this?

There are, I would suggest, two clear reasons. The first concerns the way T.V. news focusses a story on or around events, and the role of

such focussing in subverting narrative development - a subject I shall proceed to shortly. The second concerns the use made by television news of the hermeneutic code within the news programmes/items themselves.

If a programme maker was asked to produce a narrative form that, by subverting or ignoring the hermeneutic code, failed to capture and sustain the viewers' interest, he or she might have come up with a T.V. news programme. Apart from occasional instances during opening headlines (like the question about the alternative Prime Minister), T.V. news pre-empts the development and resolution of enigma. It does this in two ways.

(a) By orientating the news item around a focal point or series of focal points. These focal points - be they disturbances on the West Bank, or reactions of senior politicians to the Hillhead byelection - are almost never presented as resolutions or developments of enigmas/questions. When the history of an event is referred to, the enigmatic quality of that history - what would be the reaction of the Palestinians to the sacking of their mayors? what were the circumstances of Jenkins' win at Hillhead, and what are the consequences? - is absorbed into the event/focal point itself. During the film report from the West Bank, reference is made to the mayors after the disturbances have (on the film) begun, while the Hillhead byelection itself is covered after reactions to it have been given (the circumstances of Jenkins' victory are not mentioned at all).

(b) On the rare occasions when the history of an event is presented as an enigmatic prequel to the focal point of the story, as David Rose's report about Whitelaw in Harrogate demonstrated, any enigmatic quality it may have is subverted by the newsreader's introduction to the story. The role of the introduction is not to set up or contextualise (within a narrative) the subsequent report, but to summarise it. The 'main points' of the story are given before the story is properly told. If the 'main points' of Coronation Street or the F.A. Cup Final were given before they were screened, only the keenest viewers would be inclined to continue watching.

T.V. news is not, of course, alone in suppressing the hermeneutic code. Print journalism operates in much the same way, although there is a suggestion that the tabloid newspapers are beginning to move towards a more narrational style of reporting. What makes the denial of enigma on T.V. news so significant is that it is virtually the only form of television to subvert this narrative structure. Even a programme like Top of the Pops attempts to introduce the hermeneutic code into its narrative, via the chart run down (who will be where in the charts this week?) and the presenter's reluctance to introduce the acts other than immediately before they appear (who else will be on this week's show?)⁵

Examples of the hermeneutic code on News at Ten are, therefore, relatively few and far between. It is important, nevertheless, to understand where and how the code operates in relation to decoding narrative.

The El Salvador item, as I have pointed out, was one of the few items to build up a narrative within its own parameters, and attempt to lead the viewer along the stages of that narrative. This attempt was, inevitably, slightly pre-empted by Sandy Gall's introduction which transmitted a synopsis of that narrative. The narrative structure of Snow's report, nevertheless, seemed to have a distinct effect on the decodings. The proportion of those - exactly half - reproducing a basic version of this narrative in their readings (as I have indicated) was comparatively high. The proportion of this group who were able to refer to the whole narrative (i.e. including the fact that not only did the Americans now express their willingness to support D'Aubuisson, but that this support was a swift about turn) - 19 of the 25 - was also unusually high. It compares with 10 decoders who were able to reproduce a version of the more general, two stage Whitelaw narrative (context of Whitelaw's speech + reaction to it), and the 4 decoders reproducing a version of the three stage West Bank narrative.

The decoder's ability to reproduce this narrative was, of course, partly dependent upon knowledge of an appropriate narrative context. What was also crucial, I would suggest, was the space Snow was allowed to develop this narrative, and the techniques he used to do so. The hermeneutic code can be seen to operate throughout this development. Snow begins his report by setting the scene of the election - the arrival of the observers, the distribution of the ballot boxes, the political complexion of the candidates on offer (and the enforced absence of the left). He then so reports that:

"Though there are half a dozen parties of the right, the battle is really between two men: President Duarte in the centre for the Christian Democrats, is Washington's candidate, but both he, and the U.S. Embassy here think he has a good chance of losing."

Having introduced the loser, the enigma 'who, then, is the likely winner?' is established. D'Aubuisson is then presented in these terms, and his 'right-wingness' is stated both explicitly and implicitly (in relation to his policies). The film then moves to a shot of Snow standing by 3 dead bodies. Snow briefly describes the scene, setting up the enigma - 'why are there dead bodies here, and what has this to do with the election?' This enigma is developed in Snow's next sentence, which answers the first question by referring to the death squads, but leaves the second open. The enigmatic power of the scene is intensified by two more descriptive shots of the same scene (what Christian Metz would call a 'descriptive syntagm') revealing close ups of a vulture and an empty pair of boots.

The camera then focusses on Jon Snow, who resolves the enigma by referring to the evidence linking D'Aubuisson to the death squads, and to the killing of Archbishop Romero. This narrative ends with the American's 'new view' of D'Aubuisson, information which is, again, presented without disrupting the narrative flow - Snow tells us first that:

"Until a few weeks ago, the Embassy made it plain that D'Aubuisson was not a man with whom they could co-operate. But, last night ..."

before detailing the nature of the new view.

There is fairly clear evidence that this narrative was fairly successful in capturing and sustaining the decoders attention. Of the 22

decoders, for example, who made the link between the death squads and the dead bodies, over two thirds (15) went on to link D'Aubuisson to the death squads. This comprises nearly all of those (18 decoders) who made the second link. The two lexias are therefore connected in the decodings: those linking the dead bodies to the death squads are fairly likely to make the subsequent link with D'Aubuisson, while those who made this second link were very likely to have made the first.

Similarly, the 15 decoders making both links were also likely to refer to the final stage in the narrative - the American about turn towards D'Aubuisson. 11 of the 15 went on to do this while, interestingly, the 4 that didn't either referred to Sandy Gall's introductory reference to D'Aubuisson as a "pathological killer", or else had got confused at an earlier stage by muddling up D'Aubuisson and Duarte. Both would have a subversive effect on the narrative - the first because it pre-empts the enigma about D'Aubuisson, the second because it would confuse the last part of the narrative.

Of the 23 decoders who did refer to the American volte face, a very high proportion - 19 - constructed the three substantive parts of the narrative (D'Aubuisson as an election candidate, his dubious history and the fact he was currently approved of by the U.S.) leading up to it.

These levels of inter-lexia relations do not occur during most of the decodings of the rest of the programme. The level of inter-lexia relations decoded during the West Bank and British Leyland items, for example, were extremely low.

On the evidence of these decodings, then, the power of a narrative - held together by the hermeneutic code - to reproduce versions of itself in the decodings, would appear to explain a great deal.

The effect of the question about Roy Jenkins opening News at Ten:

"Is he now the alternative Prime Minister?"

is less easy to gauge. Certainly, a large number of the decoders - 33 out of 50 - constructed the 'Roy Jenkins as a possible alternative Prime

Minister' idea as one of the item's themes, while 13 of them felt that this was the theme (this figure is, in fact, quite high - the length of the item allowed the decoders to construct a considerable variety of themes, based upon the substantial range of narrative contexts available to the decoders on this subject⁶). The "alternative Prime Minister" idea is, however, repeated seven times during the programme, so it is not entirely surprising that it should have made a significant impact, even allowing for the unusual length of the item. It seems likely, nonetheless, that the enigmatic nature of the idea - signifying, as it does, the political future of Britain - can only have added to its signifying power.

Another story to use the hermeneutic code was the Jobs item. The repetitive presentation used on this section of News at Ten ("x number of jobs lost here, x number of jobs lost here ...") could have been extremely tedious. Despite this, the decoders did, on the whole, express interest in this item, an interest sustained by the enigma/resolution structure incorporated into the item. The item begins by setting up the enigma - will more jobs be lost than gained? The rest of the item then proceeds, stage by stage, to resolve this question - a resolution that most decoders (34 of the 50) were able to identify, i.e. there were more jobs lost than gained.

Obviously the power of this enigma (as with all enigmas) depends on the decoder's ability to construct it, i.e. they have to be interested in the question to follow its development. Those decoders who were not (for a number of reasons) not only found the item tedious, but were less able to make an assessment of the number of jobs lost to jobs gained.

The only other items seen to make any use of the hermeneutic code were the items about the Everest climb and the drugs manufacturer - both of which generated fairly high levels of interest amongst the decoders. Both items also demonstrate the other key element of narrative - development - and it is on this context that I shall look at the second important tool of narrative.

(c) Narrative Development

In S/Z, Barthes referred to two codes structuring narrative and restricting a text's plurality: the hermeneutic code and the proairetic code (the code of sequential action). The problem with this notion of narrative, I have argued, is that it splits signification into two levels which, by their very nature, are either part of the structure of narrative or external to it. This means that there will be certain kinds of signification - like Barthes' symbolic, semantic and cultural codes - which are free of narrative, and others that create narrative structure. I have attempted to demonstrate that this division neglected the actualities of decoding, since both types of signification could work within or outside a narrative structure.

There are, nevertheless, two fields of reference: signification that operates in relation to significations around it (within a text) or signification that does not. Both fields are, of course, dependent upon the decoder's ability to construct, or fail to construct, textual or extra-textual associations and connections. The ability of a decoder to refer to connections between signifiers within a text is the ability to construct narrative. Narrative is, therefore, about relations and links between signifiers within a given space. This is more than saying that connections that can be made between signifiers create a narrative structure, narrative structure requires that the signifiers are understood in terms of those connections, that signifiers are perceived as referring to each other. The decodings of the British Leyland item, for example, indicate its lack of narrative structure - although most of the items signifiers could be and usually were connected by the general sign 'British Leyland', these signifiers were not, on the whole, either seen as referring to each other or understood in the context of other textual signifiers. Similarly, although sections of the West Bank item could be seen as referring to other sections, plus therefore comprehensible in terms of those relations, the decoders often simply did not make those connections. They did not, in other words, construct a narrative.

It is these relational/referential aspects of narrative that Metz identifies in his analysis of cinematic narrative - the "grande syntagmatique". Here the emphasis is upon the syntagm and the sequence - in other words, the codes of narrative are ways of linking signifiers and understanding them in relation to those links (as implied by the syntagm and the sequence⁷). Those that argue that narrative simply consists of connections between signifiers, rather than the ability to decode those signifiers in terms of those links, are giving narrative a massive level of generality. Hartley, for example, argues that although:

"it may seem odd to suggest that the news and television fiction are structured in the same way ... clearly the different (news) stories often do cohere into a pattern - they break with their individual boundaries and collectively signify particular themes, issues and meanings in the world. We select clues from different stories to construct a 'photofit' picture of our culture, of its state of play " (Hartley, 1982, p.118).

The problem with this is that the argument that "news and television fiction are structured in the same way" is based upon a very general definition of that structure.

To suggest significations from news stories "cohere into a pattern" to collectively "signify particular themes, issues and meanings in the world" is, in fact, to describe the process of signification in general. Given such a definition, it is not difficult to fit television news and television fiction into the same "structure". This ignores the crucial difference between them - the latter tends to signify in terms of relations between signifiers, while the former, as I have tried to demonstrate, does not.

The hermeneutic code is distinguishable because it works in terms of these relations. The other more general code important in the decoding of T.V. narrative I shall call the code of narrative development. This refers simply to the development of associations between significations within a text - all of Barthes five codes can, in fact, operate in this way.

Before considering a particularly powerful form of narrative development in Western culture - the signification of personality - I shall

briefly analyse the process in general, in relation to the Drugs item.

The Drugs item, I have already indicated, made considerable impact upon the decodings, although it was only 29 seconds long. In terms of length, it compares with brief items like the China/Russia piece (14 seconds), the Company Car news (13 seconds) and the Pound/Dollar piece (14 seconds). In terms of the number of lexias constructed by decoders, however, it compares with the more substantial items - most of which were between 4 and 6 times as long (the British Leyland, West Bank, El Salvador, Whitelaw and Everest items were all 2 - 3 minutes in length) apart from the Hillhead item (over 9 minutes long). A total of 9 specific lexias were constructed by at least one fifth of the decoders during the Drugs item, compared with 3 lexias, 2 lexias and one lexia during the China/Russia⁸, Company Car⁹ and Pound/Dollar¹⁰ items respectively. This was also more than during the West Bank item, where only 5 specific lexia were recalled by more than 10 decoders¹¹, and about the same as the British Leyland item (10 lexias).

The reason for this high level of recall, I would suggest, lies in the decoder's ability to follow the item's narrative development. The fact that the El Salvador item contained considerably more lexias decoded (by more than one fifth of the decoders) than any other item (other than the Hillhead story) - 20 lexias - would seem to support this.

Unlike many of the other items, the Drugs story establishes a series of significations that develop, as the story progresses, around a central signification - Paul Barker¹², the illegal drugs manufacturer. We are introduced to him via his occupation. We are then told of his significant action (in terms of the story) and the consequences of that action. Following a reference to his marketing manager, we are given an account of remarks passed between himself and the judge convicting him, with an accompanying picture of the guilty man. This sequence operates as a form of character development, where a series of descriptions are attached to the main character in juxtaposition with a visual description

(his photograph). We are then taken apparently - to the scene of the crime, to focus on what he was arrested for producing (both visually and verbally), and are then told where he was arrested.

This narrative, although deprived of any obvious enigma/resolution by the introduction, nevertheless tells a story whose component parts are dependent upon one another for their signifying power. This, of course, does not give it a narrative structure - only the decoder can give it that. Why, then, was the decoder encouraged so to do?

There are two related reasons. The first takes us back to the process of decoding. The Drugs story, unlike nearly all the other items (the other obvious exception being the Everest item), makes no reference to external narrative contexts. The story begins and ends within the 29 seconds allocated to it. Moreover, in terms of protextual discourses in general, the item was comparatively exoteric. Despite the fact that the kind of drug Barker manufactures is unspecified by the item (only one decoder actually knew what "Bromo STP" was), most of the decoders (44 out of 50) were able to roughly identify it as an LSD-type hallucinogenic drug - an identification signified by signifiers like "student", "Sussex University", "pop festival", and the assumption that "illegal drug" automatically refers to this kind of drug.¹³

The second is partly a consequence of the first, partly a product of the item's structure. Almost every lexia in the item refers both to lexias preceding it and following it. Accordingly, each new lexia adds another stage to the story being unfolded, i.e. narrative development takes place.

The decoder will therefore be able to read the item in the knowledge that he/she will be able to follow the whole narrative until the story is complete. At the same time, each new lexia offers the decoder another step towards that completion.

It is the opportunity to take part in narrative development that affords the decoder satisfaction and pleasure. The news frequently denies

the decoder this opportunity by suppressing the hermeneutic code (and therefore the enigmas encouraging the viewer's participation), subverting the developmental nature of the narrative (by directing the viewer to certain focal points and moving the viewer around those focal points rather than forward) or restricting access to those with knowledge of appropriate narrative contexts. It is a denial of pleasure that few other television programmes would risk.

A good example of narrative development in action occurs during the second sequence of the item. While watching a still frame picture of Barker, we hear that:

"Paul Barker told the judge he knew more than his professor.
The judge said he was arrogant and bogus."

The first statement - "Paul Barker told the judge" follows directly on from previous lexias giving the length of his sentence. Notice also the use of the active form (Paul Barker told the judge) rather than the passive (The judge was told by Paul Barker). The active form signifies the development of sequential actions whereas the passive signifies the already developed (I shall develop this point in relation to visuals and verbals). The second part of the sentence, similarly, develops the references in the first part of the story - the fact he was a "research student" working in a "university laboratory" (of the 10 decoders who referred to Barker as a research student, 7 went on to refer to his claim to know more than his professor).

The next sentence - attaching the descriptions "arrogant and bogus" to Barker, reveal how important the developmental aspect of the narrative is to decoding. The first description, "arrogant", relates directly to the previous lexia - it could be seen, indeed, as describing or responding to that lexia, i.e. the statement that "he knew more than his professor" was "arrogant" or provoked accusations of arrogance. The second description, "bogus", on the other hand, bears no obvious relation to the previous lexia. Accordingly, nearly half of the decoders referred to the description "arrogant" in relation to Barker (21 out of 50 decoders) while only two made any

reference to the idea that he was "bogus". Of these two, one (11A) actually referred to the incompatibility of the two descriptions:

"What did they say he was - arrogant and bogus? I'm not sure how they get those to fit together."

Although the developmental relation between these lexias will not necessarily mean the decoder will, unprompted, refer to both, a high proportion did. Of the 19 decoders referring to Barker's claim that he "knew more than his professor" more than two thirds (13) referred to the idea that he was arrogant.

This conveniently brings us on to one of the most common and successful forms of developmental narrative - the development of 'personality'. Throughout the Drugs item, the significations operate in relation to the development of a central signifier - the man who committed the crime. Each new lexia binds itself to this central signifier - we hear of his crime, his punishment, his occupation, his marketing manager, what he thought of himself, what the judge thought of him, how he committed the crime and where he got caught. The development of the narrative is the story of a man, a 29 second slice of an individual's life. This not only provides the story with 'human interest', it helps hold the story together, giving the viewer a reference point throughout the narrative.

The success of the human interest story in generating and sustaining interest is well known. 'Human interest' is meat and drink to a journalist on a popular newspaper or magazine, or to a producer of television fiction. What I want to emphasise here, however, is that 'human interest' does not generate or sustain interest automatically. The human interest story is successful in our culture for many reasons - it allows the viewer/reader to identify, relate to or visualise ideas and emotions, for example. But it also works because it creates an easily identifiable reference point for the construction and development of a narrative.

We have already seen, for example, how Jon Snow used Major Roberto D'Aubuisson as a reference point in a narrative about American foreign

policy and the politics of El Salvador. D'Aubuisson provided a way of linking a series of ideas to a (unifying) signifier, whose development allowed the story to develop.

The use of an individual or character as a reference point for narrative development, is, in fact, surprisingly rare. This is not to say that news, along with other cultural forms, does not focus on individuals - it does. News, as this News at Ten demonstrates, continually uses individuals from within the establishment to construct its agendas and define the meaning of items upon it - an approach encapsulated in the well known theory of primary definers (Hall et al, 1978, pp.57-60). Similarly, institutions and their effects are frequently reduced to the (prominent) individuals within them - the coverage of politics, for example, is frequently reduced to the comings and goings of politicians like Roy Jenkins or Willie Whitelaw. The way in which these personalities and individuals are used within T.V. news, however, far from being reference points for narrative development, actually obstructs such development. Their statements or actions, as in the Hillhead item, are either constructed as events or focal points or else are used to revolve around such events, explaining or interpreting them. Apart from a brief summary of the result and the reaction from the Tory, Labour and SDP camps to Jenkins' win, the lengthy Hillhead story is a long list of quotations from Roy Jenkins, David Steel, Shirley Williams, David Owen, Cecil Parkinson, Tony Benn, Francis Pym and Michael Foot, all revolving around an interpretation of a single event.

The failure of T.V. news to use narrative (or enable its audience to use narrative) to communicate information clearly has an adverse effect upon its signifying power, in terms of the gap between the encoded and decoded messages. News, I have demonstrated, uses structures that either subvert or discourage development - analysis of the decodings have emphasised this time and time again. I have also suggested that these structures create their own expectations - expectations which (as the

Whitelaw item demonstrated) create their own effects. I shall now move on to consider these expectations and their effect on decoding in relation to the News at Ten narrative more generally: how the items work in relation to each other, the flow of signification and disruptions of that flow.

(d) Flow, refocussing and the disruptive signification

Raymond Williams has described how the experience of watching television can no longer be understood as the perception of a discrete set of programmes:

"most of us say, in describing the experience, that we have been 'watching television', rather than that we have watched 'the news' or 'a play' or 'the football' 'on television'. Certainly we say both, but the fact that we say the former at all is already significant" (Williams, 1974, p.94).

Audience viewing figures confirm that the T.V. channel successfully capturing an audience early in the evening, will usually succeed in keeping that audience. The fact that more people watch the Nine O'Clock News in a particular evening that News at Ten would seem to depend almost entirely on the popularity of the programmes before hand and afterwards. The news enters into a general flow of transmitted messages.

This concept of flow can also be used to describe the more specific experience of watching T.V. news. The content of a news programme is potentially extremely diverse, yet we (as Williams does) will invariably lump that content into one amorphous mass know as 'the news'. The 'flow' of T.V. news is actively encouraged by programme editors - items that are in some way connected are usually juxtaposed in the running order: the British Leyland and Company Car items; the three foreign news items (broken up by the advertisements); the two 'law and order' items.

One of the possible consequences of the news items flowing into one another has already been identified. The power of the introduction to 'frame' an item is diminished, I have suggested, by the decoder's need to refocus his/her attention from the item preceding it.

The significance of the refocussing effect is not always easy to

detect, since, as I have pointed out, the introduction to an item is frequently no more than a synopsis of the ensuing report. This means that it may be impossible to distinguish between significations constructed (by the decoder) during the introduction or during the report. Where such distinctions can be made, the evidence certainly indicates the weakness of the introductory sequence. Both the British Leyland and Whitelaw items contain introductions that, to some extent, set up or contextualise the following report. In both cases, these introductions make surprisingly little impact upon the decodings. One of the decoders (19B) actually acknowledges the refocussing effect as a problem when trying to recall the introduction to the British Leyland story:

"Rather odd. I thought it started off with some announcement of a new deal, some new deal ... I was still in the shock of having watched the Hillhead story and still wanting to take that in. We certainly moved on extremely fast from Hillhead to the Leyland story, and maybe I missed something that's obvious."

The statement that we "moved on extremely fast from Hillhead to the Leyland story" is particularly interesting (the more so because it comes from the producer of a news and current affairs programme). News programmes invariably "move on extremely fast" from one item to another - no sooner has one story ended another begins. It is because 19B found himself thinking, while watching the British Leyland story, that the introduction might not have been as he'd remembered it, that he is made aware of this fact. He is suddenly conscious of the problem of refocussing.

The Whitelaw item's introduction also failed to frame the majority of the decodings. In this instance, as I have demonstrated, the success of the introduction(s) was dependent upon the decoder's awareness of an appropriate narrative context.

Another item with a distinguishable introduction was the brief news about company car tax going up. The item told us that:

"Up to three quarters of a million people with company cars were told by the Chancellor, Sir Geoffrey Howe, today that the tax they pay will go up again next year, for the third year running - it's going up by 20%, and if they get free petrol they'll pay even more."

Although this item lasted less than a quarter of a minute, the focal point of it was absorbed by most of the decoders - 37 of the 50 recalled the fact that company car tax was going up, while 14 remembered the exact percentage of the increase. Some of them indeed, felt the item was of considerable significance to the car industry, and should have been covered in more detail. Nevertheless, of the six lexias presented by the item: three quarters of a million people own company cars; Sir Geoffrey Howe's announcement; company car tax will go up; for the third year running; by 20%; or more if they have free petrol, the only two with no presence at all in the decodings were the first two. The first lexia's absence was, in some ways, the more significant. Several decoders, when discussing the item, suggested that it would have been useful to know how many people were affected by the increase, precisely the information given in the opening lexia. Although the decoder's failure to recall the first two lexias is not simply a result of refocussing (as I shall explain later), it seems highly probable that the opening lexia would have been more powerful if it had been presented at a later stage. ¹⁴

In order for a news programme to generate the flow effect, it needs to adopt a certain style. This style will be a certain set of verbal and visual codes that the viewer associates with particular types of discourse. The drama-documentary can be seen as confusing, for example, because it is a fictional form that combines the styles of documentary and drama, so that the viewer's expectations are upset. The components of style - camera angles and shots, narrative structure, linguistic codes, etc. - are too numerous and multifarious to specify. What I want to briefly demonstrate here is the way in which the style of news presentation instils various expectations and assumptions into the viewer's patterns of decoding.

One of the most regularly used terms in debates about news and current affairs broadcasting is 'balance'. Both B.B.C. and I.T.N. have a commitment to the concept of balance in political broadcasting, a commitment

they are frequently attacked for ignoring (c. f. Glasgow Media Group). One of the reasons for these debates is that 'balanced broadcasting' is a, on the whole, purely formal practice working within strict limitations (as argued by Clarke et al, 1982). In practice, 'balance' means giving equal access to politicians of opposing sides in Parliament to speak on 'political'¹⁵ issues. This is its most prominent and most widely accepted meaning.

Within these limitations, the use of balance on news and current affairs television is an easily recognisable code. It is a code that, on the evidence of the decodings, creates expectations that shape the viewer's reading of 'political' news items.

The most conspicuous use of balance (seen by the decoders) occurred during the Hillhead item, when representatives from the Conservative and Labour parties were balanced against each other to give their views of Jenkins' victory at Hillhead (the notion of balance is rather curious here, as both parties were likely to offer similar views of the SDP). This occurred three times: the Red Review singers (for Labour) against the absent Gerry Malone (for the Conservatives); Tony Benn against Cecil Parkinson and Francis Pym against Michael Foot. The most significant of these balancing acts, in terms of the decodings, was the last.

The level of recall of Pym and Foot was comparatively high: 29 decoders referred to the Pym interview, 30 to the Michael Foot interview. What is perhaps more significant is that the presence of one in a reading invariably meant the presence of the other. Of the 29 decoders who referred to the Pym interview, 24 of them (out of 30) also referred to the Foot interview. Moreover, of the 5 decoders who only referred to the Pym interview, 4 just referred to Pym's statements (therefore ignoring their origin and making it unnecessary to balance them), while the other one 'balanced' it by referring to the Red Review. Similarly, of the 6 decoders who only referred to Michael Foot, 4 'balanced' this with a reference to Gerry Malone.

Furthermore, decoders frequently referred to Pym and Foot in the same way. For example, of the 7 decoders who referred to Francis Pym by name, but without mentioning what he said, 6 referred to Michael Foot in exactly the same terms. Similarly, 3 of the 4 decoders referring to Pym not by name, but as a representative of the Conservative Party, referred to Foot simply as a representative of the Labour Party.

The decoders, then, not only used the code of balance to link two particular lexias, but incorporated this link into their reading of the item. The practice of balance works into the style of 'the news', so that the decoder is able to anticipate a particular construction and read it off.

It is, as I have pointed out, familiarity with this style¹⁶ that generates the flow of the news. It is a familiarity that also breeds contempt. The Pound/Dollar item, for example, was seen by many decoders as signifying no more than 'this is the news', absorbed (like the News at Ten's opening shots of the Houses of Parliament) into the flow of the news to render its specificity meaningless. Nearly half (22 of the 50) the decoders, when prompted, remembered nothing other than that it was 'on', as usual. The Everest item, on the other hand, despite its serious and newsworthy content, was seen by half the decoders as the "light thing at the end", as 14B put it ("you know, Mrs. Smith's poodle that got lost, ate 4 lbs. of sausages in the supermarket and then was sick"), because of its position at the end of News at Ten.

The use of style to create the flow of T.V. news, perhaps rather ironically, gives a potential power to those significations that are stylistically at odds with those around it, and that therefore do not fit into the general flow. During my pilot study of the News at Ten audience, decoders watched a studio interview with Michael Heseltine, during the aftermath of the 1981 riots. The decoders found the interview neither relevant nor revealing, and therefore instantly forgettable. The only lexia that stood out in their memory was Heseltine's brief reference to the Prime

Minister as "Margaret". This use of the informal language of first names - particularly when referring to the Prime Minister - stood out because it was entirely at odds with the dry ministerial language Heseltine chose to use throughout the interview. The decoding of the interview was therefore disrupted by a single signification.

A similar instance occurred during the decoding of the Drugs item. The reference to the man who sold the drugs as a "marketing manager" was felt, by many decoders, to be at odds with the language normally used within the drugs subculture (terms like "dealer" were thought to be more appropriate). As 15A put it:

"it did strike me as an odd sort of term to use for that kind of person - in many ways he's almost an accomplice or something"

17B even put quotation marks round the phrase:

"we were treated to a very brief mention of his marketing manager, who came over in inverted commas by some device or other (I don't know whether it was verbally expressed or whether we were told his 'so-called marketing manager'), but certainly the impression of inverted commas came across."

In other words, it was as if the phrase had been quoted from another discourse.

The "device" she refers to was no more than her ability to locate a potentially disruptive signification.

The "marketing manager" is, in fact, fairly incidental to the narrative in which he appears. His presence in the decodings - 15 decoders referred to him - was almost entirely due to the way he was described. Almost all of the 15 decoders who referred to him did so like 15A and 17B. Significantly, none of the 6 decoders who misunderstood the nature of the drug mentioned the "marketing manager" or, when prompted, saw anything strange about the phrase.

The power of the disruptive signification to draw attention to itself is, perhaps not surprisingly, neglected by television news. The flow effect is a product of the suppression of disruption. When disruption occurs, it is often the product of the decoders reference to specific protextual contexts, i.e. discourses outside the news programme. The

impact made by the British Leyland workers' pro-management statements, for example, was created because, in the context of the mythology surrounding British Leyland's workforce, such a signification appeared disruptive. In the context of the news item itself, as I pointed out, their statements not only fitted into the flow of the story, they were entirely predictable.

There are, nevertheless, instances where disruption can be part of the flow of the news, encoded into its structure and expected by the decoder. The presence of the statements by Michael Foot and Francis Pym (in the Hillhead item) in the decodings for example, was significantly high. Michael Foot's statements were briefer and of less significance than David Steel's, yet they were recalled by approximately the same number of people (9 and 10 decoders respectively). Nearly twice as many decoders, moreover, remembered Pym's statements (18 decoders). Part of the explanation for the comparatively high presence of Foot and Pym's statements lies in their resistance to the dominant flow of an item, dominated by pro-SDP speakers.

Other explanations, involving visual/verbal relations, shall be explored in the section that follows.

iii. Verbals and Visuals

(a) Direct links

I have suggested that points where decoders were able to construct direct links between the verbal and visual levels of an item would necessarily have a greater signifying power. The evidence of the decodings over the whole programme would seem to support this.

The construction of visual/verbal links can be related to the identification of focal points. The viewer will, in many cases, associate the appearance of a visual signifier of a thing or event simultaneously described or heard with the focal point of the story. The most obvious examples of this are the Company Car and Pound/Dollar items. In both cases,

the lexias making most impact upon the decodings were those accompanied by visual significations of those lexias. These lexias were, in turn, seen as the focal points of those items.

In the case of the Company Car item, the two most prominent lexias (in the decodings) were both signified visually by accompanying graphics, i.e.

Tax on company cars
Up 20%

against a background picture of a Ford Granada. These lexias were considered by most decoders to be the focal point of the story.

The three most prominent lexias during the decodings of the Pound/Dollar item were also signified visually by accompanying graphics, thus:

£ = \$
1.7870
↓ 1.3¢

i.e. the pound/dollar ratio (referred to by 15 decoders), the pound closing at 1.78 dollars (referred to by 7 decoders) and the fact this represented a fall of 1.3 cents (also located by 7 decoders). In the third instance, the visual level became dominant. Although we saw that the pound had fallen by 1.3 cents, we were told that it was "down by one and a half cents" (my emphasis). Of the 7 decoders who referred to this lexia, 6 mentioned the visually signified figure of 1.3, and only one the spoken figure of $1\frac{1}{2}$.

Other items where visual/verbal links coincided with the items focal point(s) were the actuality footage of the disturbances in the West Bank (accompanied by actuality sound or descriptive voiceover) and the actuality footage of Whitelaw's speech and the standing ovation he received. These points, as I've shown, had a considerable impact upon the decodings.

Similarly, the most powerful sequence (in terms of impact) of the Drugs item involved simultaneous visual and verbal significations of the

story's hero - Paul Barker. Apart from the general identification that the story involved the manufacture of an illegal drug, this short sequence contained the item's three most frequently mentioned lexias. These were: the photograph of Barker (specifically mentioned by 22 decoders¹⁷); his claim that he knew more than his professor (mentioned by 19 decoders) and the description of him as "arrogant" (mentioned by 21 decoders). Although the significance of the second two has been partly explained by their role in narrative development, it seems likely that the decoders were also able to make direct connections between the verbal and visual levels during this sequence. In the first instance, the photo is linked by authorship to his claim that he knew more than his professor, in the second the description arrogant is linked metonymically to his picture.

The first of these connections - the link by authorship - is perhaps the most interesting, as well as being the most easily identifiable decoded construction relating the verbal to the visual. I shall, therefore, consider it in more detail.

(b) Link by authorship

I have already described cases where the decoders' ability to construct a link by authorship between verbal and visual levels seemed to affect the impact of a lexia: notably the presence of the BL workers (as opposed to the speaker from management) and Menachem Milson, the West Bank Administrator. The Hillhead item, however, contains a number of potential links by authorship cropping up throughout its 9 minutes, not all of which were necessarily constructed by the decoders. Many of these links are, moreover, structurally different.

There are 5 different forms of authorship presented during the Hillhead item:

(1) the broadcaster's voiceover - a form of 'silent' authorship where the broadcaster is not intended to be linked (by authorship) to the words he speaks;

- (2) the verbal quotation from an unspecified source - "Mr. Jenkins arrives at Westminster on Tuesday. His friends expect him to become Mrs. Thatcher's chief opponent - they say, the alternative Prime Minister" (my emphasis), for example;
- (3) the verbal quotation from a specified source - "Mr. Cecil Parkinson claimed the result proved voters were coming back to the Conservatives", for example;
- (4) the verbal/visual quotation with a still photograph of the author - this involves the quotation graphically displayed on screen against the author's picture, while the newsreader reads it out;
- (5) film of the author speaking - be it Roy Jenkins, Francis Pym or Alistair Burnet.

These 5 forms of authorship cover most eventualities on television news, the one exception being the verbal quotation accompanied by a still photograph of the author without graphics visually displaying the quotation.

All other variables being equal, we would expect the link by authorship to be more powerfully constructed the further down the list (from (1) to (5)) we go, from the broadcaster's voiceover to film of the author speaking. On the evidence of the Hillhead decodings, this would appear to be the case. Those filmed speaking were frequently referred to: Jenkins was referred to by 49 decoders and quoted by 14; Foot was referred to by 30 decoders and quoted by 9; Pym was referred to by 22 decoders and quoted by 18 (although 7 of those quoting his statement did not refer to him as the author); Steel was also referred to by 22 decoders and quoted by 10. Those who were (only) accessed through a verbal/visual quotation over a still photograph made considerably less impact - even though their statements were as long as Michael Foot's; Shirley Williams was referred to by 12 decoders and quoted by 3; David Owen was referred to by 7 decoders and quoted by 3.¹⁸ Those who were accessed in terms of a verbal quotation from a specified source, remained comparatively silent - Tony Benn was mentioned only once and Cecil Parkinson not at all - while the verbal

quotations from an unspecified source were never referred to.

The effect of the decoders' inability to construct a link by authorship is, in this case, quite startling. The prospect of Roy Jenkins as an "alternative Prime Minister" was constructed (as I have pointed out) by two thirds of the decoders as one of the item's themes. This was not, I suggested, all that surprising, as the idea is mentioned on 7 separate occasions during the item. What is more significant is that most of the decoders (25 of the 33) were unable to identify the source of the idea or (and this amounted to almost the same thing), felt the news broadcast in general was presenting Roy Jenkins as the "alternative Prime Minister".

The 7 references to the idea were, in fact, only authored by broadcasters twice - the other 5 sources were Shirley Williams, David Owen or various unspecified Social Democrats. Apart from the statements by Williams and Owen, these references were made as follows:

"Is he now the alternative Prime Minister?"

"The Social Democrats have been talking today of Mr. Roy Jenkins as the next Prime Minister" (my emphasis).

"Mr. Jenkins arrives at Westminster on Tuesday. His friends expect him to become Mrs. Thatcher's chief opponent - they say, the alternative Prime Minister" (my emphasis).

"Today Mr. Jenkins could have been facing the political wilderness - instead he's being talked of as a future Prime Minister" (my emphasis).

Peter Sissons to Roy Jenkins: "Are you going for power? Are you going for Number 10?"

Clearly, News at Ten's attempt to root the idea within an identifiable - if at times rather vague - source, failed almost completely. This failure made, for half the decoders, authored (and, as it turned out, decidedly misguided¹⁹) conjecture appear as a prospect legitimated by its origin - the news itself was telling us that Roy Jenkins was now Mrs. Thatcher's main rival and potential usurper.

The consequences of this for news broadcasting are considerable. The decoder's ability to construct a link by authorship is contingent on

that link being structured more directly than verbal quotations or even verbal/visual quotations. It is, furthermore, clear that brief verbal quotations (like those from Parkinson and Benn) are, in some cases, unfair to those quoted as well as being a waste of broadcasting time.

The constructed link by authorship is, on the other hand, a powerful signifying tool. The ability of decoders to construct such a link in response to film of people speaking is, throughout the News at Ten, comparatively high. One reason for this, I would suggest, is that this form of access comes within a broader category of direct visual/verbal links - the action sequence.

(c) Action

I have briefly described how the active verb form sustains a narrative more successfully than a passive verb form. The reason for this, I suggested, was because the active form signified a development, whereas the passive form signified the already developed. The active form therefore encourages the viewer to participate in the narrative, whereas the viewer has already been excluded from the passive form.

This distinction can be extended to the action sequence. The action sequence doesn't have to be existing in itself to encourage narrative development. The shots of Whitelaw, Jenkins or Menachem Milson speaking are all action sequences. What makes them interesting is that they appear to be happening in 'the present' of the story itself (i.e. it has not happened yet in that story) - we are not sure what is going to happen next in the sequence (of actions). The story is actually there, developing in front of our very eyes.

These qualities of the action sequence are, of course, diminished if their developmental quality is subverted by an introductory synopsis, but they do not vanish altogether. The action sequence itself will appear to be happening, as opposed to a descriptive/reported sequence of past events (like, for example, Giles Smith on Cofton Park or David Rose giving the background to the Whitelaw story). Thus it is that Michael Foot in action

carries greater signifying power than the reported speech of Shirley Williams, or that Whitelaw in action makes more impact than David Rose telling us about the Whitelaw story's significance.

Many of the lexias that carried weight in the decodings (during the longer items) were perceived as action sequences: the film of politicians speaking about Hillhead; the BL workers at Longbridge; the scenes of troubles in West Bank; Whitelaw's speech and reception and Jon Snow's ingenious reconstruction of the scene with the victims of the death squads as if it were an action sequence. This fact, on its own, is perhaps not all that surprising. What I hope my analysis of decoding has shown is that our perception of the action sequence - or any other sequence, is a product of a number of variables structuring visual/verbal relations, narrative and, ultimately, the process of decoding.

FOOTNOTES

1. The reasons why decoders saw the ratio differently are, in some cases, due to fairly random factors, such as the level of attention paid by the decoder during the item. There is, nevertheless, a relation between narrative context and the perception of this ratio, as I shall reveal later.
2. 17 of the other group of 24 did so.
3. 4 out of 9 compared to 8 out of 41.
4. The West Bank item, although it could be arranged into a narrative of causes/disturbances/consequences, did not actually encourage such an arrangement. Rather, it directed the viewer - by expectation and via the introduction - to the focal point (the disturbances), which then required explanation and analysis. The Whitelaw story, on the other hand, attempts to construct the focal point within the item's own narrative. Not surprisingly, the Whitelaw item was more successful in communicating this narrative than the West Bank piece.
5. There is a slight tension for the programme producers/presenters here. On the one hand, there is a temptation to advertise the more popular acts in advance, in order to encourage people to watch the show. On the other hand, by not revealing who will appear, you sustain the viewer's interest by the possibility that their favourite artist/band may appear next.
6. The Hillhead item, because it signified (parliamentary) politics in general, allowed the decoders to refer to a range of narrative contexts under this general heading.
7. These codes of narrative identified by Metz, as Heath argues (Heath, 1981) are not, of course, the only codes at work in film. The image is itself coded whether or not it signifies within syntagmatic/sequential relations with other images.
8. These were:
 - (a) the offer by Russia (27 decoders);
 - (b) the cool reception of the offer by China (13 decoders);
 - (c) the need for a Russian withdrawal from Afganistan (12 decoders).
9. These were:
 - (a) the fact that the tax had risen (37 decoders);
 - (b) the fact the rise was 20% (14 decoders).
10. 15 decoders were able to recall that the pound had fallen against the dollar.
11. 2 rather vague lexias were also constructed during this item by over 10 decoders.
12. His name was, in fact, Peter Barker.
13. Those that failed to make this identification were either confused by the nature of the drug, or identified it within a completely different range. 2A, for example, suggested that it was some form of contraceptive pill, while 5B interpreted Barker as a budding medical student, producing a drug not yet approved of by the British Medical Association.

14. For example, had the first lexia been introduced thus:
"The tax on company cars will go up again next year, for the third year running, by 20%. This increase will affect three quarters of a million people."
its signifying power would have been greatly increased.
15. I use inverted commas here to signify that, in broadcasting, the notion of the political is both limited and particular.
16. Raymond Williams more general use of 'flow', in relation to television in general, is, in the same way, dependent upon the style of television in general.
17. Since they had already referred to his presence on the item, many decoders would simply not bother to refer to the visual signification of his presence. Those that did mention his photograph did so because they felt it signified something more than simply his visual presence, e.g. the fact the photograph made him look like a rather dubious character.
18. The greater impact of Shirley Williams can be understood in terms of the process of decoding. The narrative context - 'the story of the SDP' - at that time consistently gave Shirley Williams greater prominence (as one of the Gang of Four) than David Owen. Their positions in the saga have, since then, been dramatically reversed.
19. Roy Jenkins not only failed to become the alternative Prime Minister, he is not even leader of a party with just 6 M Ps.

8 CHANGING TELEVISION NEWS

i. The political and social context of decoding

Throughout the history of television research, I have suggested, there has been a gap between the analysis of programmes and the analysis of the audience. Research has either examined in detail how the T.V. text operates in relation to hypothetical viewers, or else conceived of the audience as a set of socio-political/occupational/economic variables whose responses to programmes are speculatively related to the programmes themselves. This has led researchers to obscure the specific determinations at work in the process of decoding. We may find out, for example, that:

"Home centred expenditure was a highly consistent factor in determining patterns of television viewing. It was associated with a greater preference for B.B.C. over S.T.V. on weekdays, greater selectivity and a preference for informational/educational programmes" (Piepe et al, 1975, p.76).

This kind of correlation attempts to reveal socio-economic determinations (like "home centred expenditure") upon T.V. viewing. It does not, however, reveal any such thing. Certain socio-economic variables may be related to television viewing/responses, but that does not mean one determines the other. In this instance, both the socio-economic variables and the responses to television are more likely to be products of other determinations - determinations producing both a tendency towards/capacity for home centred expenditure and certain television viewing habits. This much I have already argued (see Chapter Three).

This research project has concentrated on the specific determinations in the T.V. text - "the range of discourses at the disposal of the audience" (Morley, 1980, p.18) - for it is on this level of determination that we can explain and understand how and why audiences decode television in the way that they do. This does not mean, however, that we cannot explain why T.V. viewers have access to particular discourses (or, for that matter, what determines the encoding of programmes). What I have stressed is that this can only be done after we have discovered the discursive variables involved in the process of decoding.

As I have suggested, this research project, in focussing on textual and discursive determinations, can be no more than speculative when moving onto other levels of determination (which may or may not involve certain socio-economic or political factors beyond decoding). It seems worthwhile, nevertheless, to briefly contextualise my research findings.

These findings indicate that one of the most significant variables at work in the decoding process is a knowledge of the narrative context (or other protextual contexts) of a news story. Clearly, access to these discourses is dependent upon a variety of factors.

(a) In order to place a story within an appropriate context, a decoder must have fairly regular access to news media. Without such access a decoder is unlikely to reproduce the readings intended by the decoder, and, if no other relevant protextual context is available to him/her, he/she is unlikely to make the T.V. text meaningful at all. However, although such access may be necessary for decoding, it by no means guarantees it. Most of the decoders in my sample (46 out of 50) were fairly regular watchers of the news (i.e. at least once a week, usually much more often), and only two of them had little contact with any national news media.¹ Despite this, many of them (usually a majority) were unable to situate news items within longer running news narratives. Clearly then, access to news media does not necessarily give people access to the discourses contained therein.

Access to television news does, of course, carry with it access to very specific protextual discourses related to the form and style of the news. As I have pointed out, for example, half the decoders characterised the Everest item as 'light' news largely because of its position at the end of News at Ten. They were only able to do this because they were already aware of the conventions of T.V. news programmes.

(b) In order to gain access to the longer running narratives provided by the news media, the viewer must have a 'way in' to these narratives.

This moves us onto the level of the decoders educational experience, which may or may not provide him/her with enough information/interest (in other words, protextual discourses) to enable him/her to produce a significant level of meaning from a news story. In short, access to discourses determines access to discourses. This is the nature of the signifying process (whereby a subject makes the world meaningful) which I described in Chapter Two.

A person's educational experience cannot be limited to their experience within educational institutions, although this is obviously very important. The decoders in my sample with more extensive institutional educational experience tended to have more appropriate (for decoding T.V. news) protextual discourses at their disposal than those with less. Apart from giving them specific protextual contexts for understanding certain news items, it had given them a 'way in' to appropriate (news) narrative contexts. Those with experience of further education, for example, would have access to The Guardian rather than The Sun, which in turn would give them greater access to information about El Salvador.

Nevertheless, not all the decoders with experience of further education were aware of appropriate protextual discourses, while some of those without such experience were. 18A and 18B, for example, came from very different educational backgrounds, yet both used a similar range of protextual discourses to decode News at Ten. This was not all that surprising, since they were married to one another. What it nevertheless demonstrates is that educational experience comes from a variety of sources: the home, the school, social contacts, the workplace and, of course, the media itself. The political activists in the sample, for example, had access to appropriate protextual discourses for decoding the Hillhead item, while the broadcasters all had a high level of access to the narrative contexts of news items.

(c) Factors such as 'occupation' and 'class' are obviously related to decodings in the same way as experience of educational institutions, since both are partly determined by that experience. As I have stated, a person's occupational or class position will itself generate certain educational experiences, but these will tend to be specific (like the broadcasters) rather than general (i.e. people experience their 'class' in different ways) and less significant. The unemployed decoders, for example, did not tend to relate their experience of unemployment to the Jobs item. This does not mean their experience of unemployment was of no significance, but that such an experience may well be overshadowed by other educational experiences. The degree of influence exerted by different sites of educational experience is obviously beyond the scope of this study.

(d) A decoder's political interest or persuasion will obviously influence decoding at certain points, where these political discourses become appropriate protextual discourses. Those decoders who read the El Salvador item as about the cynical/right wing foreign policy of the United States, for example, tended to be left wing. Their politics, combined with knowledge of appropriate narrative contexts, become a relevant protextual discourse for understanding the item, i.e. the shift in position by a right wing American administration is meaningful within a left wing critique of that administration.² Similarly, those decoders who felt the Hillhead item was 'biased' in favour of the SDP tended to be Labour supporters. The notion of 'media bias' would appear, therefore, to be more familiar to Labour Party supporters than Conservatives.

In another instance, the calculation of 'jobs lost' to 'new jobs' made by decoders during the Jobs item was influenced by the decoder's political persuasions. The middle-of-the-road or Conservative Party inclined decoders were more likely to estimate the two figures as 'about the same' or acknowledge that although there were more jobs lost than gained, the two figures were more even than they had been in the past.

The Labour supporters, on the other hand, simply saw the number of 'jobs lost' as significantly outweighing the 'new jobs'. In this instance, the politics of the decoders support certain discourses about unemployment. The pro-government decoders will have absorbed certain ministerial statements that 'the economy is picking up', and will therefore interpret the unemployment item within this narrative context. The anti-government decoders are clearly less likely to have absorbed such optimistic assurances, and will continue to understand the unemployment issue in terms of a narrative about rising unemployment.

The conditions that provide specific social/political contexts clearly require further, more extensive study. What seems fairly certain is that these conditions do not, at the moment, equip most T.V. viewers with the discourses necessary to guarantee the successful communication of messages constructed in a news story. There is a gulf between the encoder and decoder, a gap filled with misunderstandings and misreadings. Most importantly, large sections of the text remain silent, absent from the readings constructed by the decoders.

The failure of our society to educate its citizens to allow them access to one of the most 'consumed' sources of information in that society is, at best, depressing, at worst, a danger to the whole democratic process. As I have shown, however, the problem is not simply that many decoders do not have appropriate protextual discourses available to them - the structure of news items themselves jeopardises communication. I want, in this final chapter, to consider this problem, and suggest ways of improving the form and character of T.V. news.

ii. Problems with television news

It could be argued that this research merely demonstrates the polysemy of the televisual text, and, further, that such a polysemy is both necessary and desirable. Such a view is misleading and socially irresponsible. The evidence I have presented suggests that decoders

rarely have the opportunity to choose between readings (i.e. construct and then reject one reading in favour of another). The decoder is frequently only able to construct a limited range of readings based upon small sections of the text. This means that those involved in news production are unleashing a strange creature into the world, a creature whose potential they neither recognise nor understand. Both broadcasters and their critics tend to assume T.V. viewers' ability to reconstruct the form and substance of news items. Debates about news broadcasting begin from an agreed detailed reading of the T.V. text. Such debates therefore revolve around a set of meanings that, for many people, simply do not exist.

It is essential that news broadcasters - and their critics - begin to understand and anticipate the whole process of decoding. Such an understanding reveals and clarifies a whole range of problems with existing practices of news broadcasting, i.e. problems with existing structures of television news. I have analysed these problems in some detail, but they can be summarised as follows:

(a) Alienation. Although the majority of the decoders did not feel that television news was, in general, overtly biased towards a particular view of the world, many of them had a sense that television news was part of an establishment world, a world distinguishable from their own. This feeling revealed itself most clearly, as I have demonstrated, during the British Leyland item. Many of the decoders saw the item as a public relations exercise on behalf of BL and/or the BL management, yet this perception was not explained in terms of the story's political bias. Rather, decoders felt there was a natural link between the institution of government, the world of management and T.V. news. The world of 'the news' is therefore quite distinct from the world as the T.V. viewer actually experiences it.

It is in this sense that viewers are alienated from the world of T.V. news. The viewer may accept the order of priorities constructed by

politicians, broadcasters and 'experts' within the world depicted behind the screen, but they will not necessarily be able to make coherent connections between that world and their own. Dorothy Hobson's work on Housewives and the Mass Media, for example (Hobson, 1982), demonstrates how women working at home are fundamentally distanced from the world of T.V. news. This alienation effect has made political education a massive problem in Britain today. Most viewing/voting citizens are unable to make anything more than superficial connections between politics as it exists in the world of T.V. news, and the effect of political decisions on their employment, wages, their system of education, the conditions of their environment, the choice of public or private amenities available to them and, ultimately, the peaceful continuation of their whole way of life. As long as this alienation persists, the British democratic system is only a little more than an elaborate sham. During the period up until their re-election in 1983 many political pundits and commentators found it difficult to explain the popularity of a government which had, quite clearly, not acted in the interests of huge sections of the population. I would suggest that the Thatcher government's success during that period would not have been possible without a British public alienated from the political world represented by the news media. This is not to suggest that T.V. news is biased towards Mrs. Thatcher, merely that her 'successes' (like the Falklands war) were perceived on T.V. rather than actually experienced.

This alienation is, to some extent, inscribed within the whole nature of television and television viewing. There will always be something 'other worldly' about a reality signified through a small box in the living room. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that television news frequently fails to make coherent connections between issues/events and the relation of those issues/events to the viewer's own concerns. A classic example is the 'problem' of inflation, which preoccupied broadcasters and

politicians throughout the 1970s. British public opinion correspondingly put inflation at the top of the agenda of 'important issues facing Britain' in the run-up to the 1979 General Election. Yet, incredibly, had opinion pollsters asked the British public (or, for that matter, many broadcasters or politicians) why they thought inflation was a problem - given that wage inflation had more than kept pace with prices, producing a corresponding rise in most people's standard of living - the vast majority would not have had a sufficient knowledge of economics to be able to answer. Many economists, indeed, would have argued that a level of inflation below 10 per cent (as it was in 1979) was a comparatively minor problem for an economy to live with - particularly if that economy was faced with the possibility of extremely high levels of unemployment. This created the absurd situation of an electorate making a crucial political decision on the basis of an issue that was either misunderstood or incomprehensible.

Alienation from television news is, in many ways the most fundamental problem thrown up by this research. Although I shall go on to suggest ways of overcoming this problem, these suggestions imply changes in broadcasting practice that are almost certainly too radical to be realised in the near future. This research has only touched upon the problem of alienation, but I have cited it first because it is so fundamental. Although the other problems I shall list have already been dealt with in greater detail, solutions to most of them are, I hope, perfectly attainable.

(b) News narrative. As the research developed, it became increasingly clear that the inaccessibility of many news items was a product of the way news is traditionally presented. The typical television news item will begin with an introduction by a newsreader (giving the 'essential' newsworthy aspects of the item). This introduction is not the beginning of the story - rather a brief synopsis of its focal points. The bulk

of the narrative will then be handed over to the reporter's film on location, or the appropriate correspondent in a studio. The reporter/correspondent will usually reiterate the salient features of the story, and proceed to contextualise those focal points within selected elaborations of detail, appropriate pieces of film or still photographs, reactions (filmed interviews or quotes) and a final refocus on the future consequences, implications or immediate significance of the story. Although there will be a number of possible variations within this structure, it is a form of presentation that subverts the basic rules of narrative that shape almost all other forms of television. Only on news programmes is the viewer invariably asked to build stories from separate chunks of information, without the help of a developmental narrative to lead him or her through it. Only on news programmes will questions be consistently answered before they have been properly asked.

The consequence of this is profound. On the few occasions when a news item used a developmental narrative and/or the hermeneutic code (as during the El Salvador or Drugs items), the decoders were significantly more able to piece information together into clusters of meaning. The readings of most of the news items, on the other hand, were based upon unrelated sections of the text, so that the narrative logic behind news items remained silent. Thus it was that only a small number of decoders were able to reproduce readings of the three stage narratives underlying the West Bank or Whitelaw items, while the British Leyland item did not encourage the viewer to make any connections at all between its textual sequences. Without a narrative structure to guide the decoder through the information, where the questions giving items their meaning (questions such as: would Whitelaw be in for further criticism? What would be the effect of the Israeli's new hardline approach in the West Bank?) are answered before the decoder is made aware of them, the viewer is restricted to a limited range of meanings based upon limited sections of the news item. The significance of this cannot be underestimated, for T.V. news

is watched less attentively than most other forms of television. Research in the U.S.A. by Thomas Patterson found that only half his respondents could recall even the basic facts of a news report 24 hours after they had watched it (Patterson, 1980). The episodic narrative, with its constant development of character and actions, its construction of enigma and subsequent revelation, is (among other things) an attention-holding device par excellence. It is through the narrative that various kinds of pleasure are generated. If the punchline is revealed at the beginning of a funny story, then the story is neither compelling nor funny - its narrative logic has been disrupted.

The narrative structure of a T.V. news item is rather like - and about as accessible and easy to look at as - a cubist painting. The 'story' shifts around selected focal points, offering a loose succession of images through which the viewer is asked to understand those focal points. The T.V. news item, in this form, is unlikely to generate interest in the focal point(s) - for the viewer's interest to be sustained he/she must be interested in that focal point already (in the latter instance, the viewer's interest will often be generated by him/her understanding the news item within a longer narrative outside the programme).

The problem here is three-fold: not only does news frequently fail to successfully communicate a structured set of meanings, but it relinquishes the power to determine what an item means to a whole range of arbitrary variables - such as its visual/verbal structure, the particular protextual discourses available to the audience³, and so on. Moreover, by establishing itself as one of the least compelling forms of television on offer, it contributes to the viewer's alienation from the world depicted therein.

(c) Focal points, familiarity and style. Deprived of a narrative linking meanings together, readings will often revolve around signifying units whose significance is merely a product of the decoder's familiarity with the form and style of television news. Because the actuality film sequence is

often the focal point of a news story, the decoders attributed both attention and significance to sections of a speech by William Whitelaw that were intended to be nothing more than illustrative. Similarly, because a statement by Menachem Milson immediately followed actuality film of troubles on the West Bank, his statement had a far greater impact upon the decodings than might otherwise have been expected (that statement, furthermore, was generally perceived as a comment about the actuality film, when it in fact referred to the sacking of the Palestinian mayors that preceded it).

The problem here is that the content of a news item is bound up with the presentation of that content, and the conventions surrounding those forms of presentation. This clarifies a point I made in Chapter Three - we cannot analyse what is said without analysing how and where it is said. Many of these conventions are fairly well known. A statement by someone presented as a 'vox pop' is not equal to a statement by someone presented as an 'expert' for example. The 'expert's' statements will have an authoritative veneer that the 'vox pop', regardless of what he/she says, can never have. Despite this, as comparisons between Brian Fox and the nameless workers at BL demonstrated, the 'expert' does not necessarily have more power or impact than the 'vox pop' (furthermore, the conventions that made decoders read Brian Fox within the 'expert' category and the workers within the 'vox pop' category had nothing to do with anything as simple as the setting in which they were interviewed - which was the same).

Similarly, the Everest item, partly because of expectations based upon its position at the end of News at Ten, was interpreted by half the decoders as a 'light' news story of less significance than those preceding it.

While there is obviously nothing wrong with the forms and styles of a T.V. programme carrying with it important consequences for how it is read - the formal and stylistic conventions of any programme will always have consequences for how it will be decoded - the programme makers should

always be aware of such consequences. At the more complex levels I have described (such as the prominence of Whitelaw's speech in the readings of the Whitelaw item), such an awareness is, at the very best, minimal. To recapitulate, this means that those involved in T.V. news production know very little about the nature of the messages they are communicating to the world.

(d) Verbal/visual links. The role of visuals and verbals in a T.V. news item are a problem for precisely the same reason. Unless programme makers have some idea of how T.V. viewers construct and interpret links between visuals and verbals, they cannot hope to communicate successfully.

In some ways, the findings I have analysed in this area of televisual communication were the least surprising. Fairly predictably, the 'action sequence' was seen to have a significant impact upon the decodings - although the boundaries of what comprises an action sequence (Whitelaw's speech is just as much an 'action sequence' as Palestinians throwing smoke bombs) are wider than is often assumed. The 'action sequence' does not necessarily need to be dramatic or visually exciting to have an impact. Its importance also lies in its active status, as a piece of information unfolding before our very eyes.

Similarly, while it was not surprising to find that points where decoders linked verbal and visual levels together tended to create an impact in the decoders, these links were not made as often as might have been expected. The relation of a named, pictured or filmed person (like Shirley Williams, Brian Fox or Alistair Burnet) to his/her statements - i.e. a link by authorship - is frequently not picked up. This meant that speculation by SDP representatives that Roy Jenkins was 'the alternative Prime Minister' following his victory at Hillhead, was actually interpreted by the decoders as a suggestion made by News at Ten. This gave such speculation far greater significance than it might otherwise have had. The consequences of a failure to establish a link by authorship are considerable. It seems highly likely that, night after night, the B.B.C.

and I.T.N. are (unwittingly) putting the weight of their names behind statements by the people they quote. This suggests, moreover, that who the news programmes give access to is of even greater importance than even their critics have assumed.

(e) Refocussing. Finally, there is the very simple difficulty of the refocussing effect. My findings suggest that the T.V. viewer will tend to spend the beginning of each new news item refocussing his/her attention onto a new topic. This invariably weakens the signifying power of the introductory section relative to subsequent sections (with the exception, of course, of the first item), and means that important contextualising information will often be missed.

iii. The value of news

Before suggesting ways of overcoming some of these specific problems, I want to consider some basic assumptions about the use and value of 'the news'. Notions of news value, I shall argue, should be fundamentally reassessed before various presentational problems are tackled. There is little point in making recommendations for restructuring television news to make it more interesting, accessible and comprehensible, if we forget why such an exercise might be worthwhile.

The 'news' is taken for granted, we no longer question why it is there or what it is there for. Attempts to define the nature or function of news have tended to be based on huge and naive assumptions ('news deals with the important issues or events in the world'), or silly epigrams of the 'man bites dog' variety. A B.B.C. pamphlet on 'The Task of Broadcasting News' in May, 1976 (published by the B.B.C. for the B.B.C. General Advisory Council) argued that:

"The news value of a story is something immediately recognisable, intuitively sensed by a journalist who has been schooled in provincial or national newsrooms ... The 'graduates' of that school soon learn to spot the significant news point, the relevant detail, the interesting human touch, which distinguish the newsworthy story - the material with news value or news merits - from the candidate for the sub-editor's spike."

The 'task' of news here is merely to reproduce the arbitrary tautology of existing news values.

How we conceive of the function of news is obviously crucial in determining its nature. If the function of news is to entertain, it will be very different from a product designed to communicate various kinds of information.

Broadcasters today work with a variety of functional imperatives. News is there to interest, to entertain, but above all to inform the viewer of that day's important events. There, of course, is the rub. The construction of the world into a series of newsworthy events is a practice creating its own (specific) functions. Having defined a world of issues and events that are significant - and therefore important to the viewer interested in that world - the representation of those issues and events fulfils a vital information function. Watching the news becomes a way of finding out 'what's going on in the world'.

As critics have repeatedly pointed out, there is nothing essentially significant about a world constructed in terms of existing definitions of news value. The news signifies just one of any number of worlds. An alternative model of T.V. news could merely redefine the 'world of events' according to another set of priorities. The Campaign for Press Freedom (now the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom), for example, attempts to supply us with a "new definition of the aims of broadcasting institutions", this being:

"To represent fairly and accurately the differences within society, and to produce programmes from the different perspectives in society " (Changing Television pamphlet, p.ii).

This acknowledges that news and news value inevitably presents the world from within a limited set of perspectives, and, therefore, urges the presentation of differences rather than attempting an impossible neutrality.

The Glasgow Media Group are more specific in their demands for a redefinition:

"Broadcasters should be required to represent fairly and accurately the divisions within our social world resulting from class, race or sex, and programmes should be made from the perspectives which result from these divisions." (Glasgow Media Group, 1980, p.15a).

The Annan Report, in a similar spirit, argued that:

"... the next requirement for good broadcasting in future is diversity. Our society's culture is now multi-racial and pluralist: that is to say, people adhere to different views of the nature and purpose of life and expect their own view to be expressed in some form or other. The structure of broadcasting should reflect this variety."
(The Annan Report, 1977, p.12).

The suggestions here attempt to replace the world communicated by existing news with a more representative world. To do this, however, would be to retain rather than clarify the existing functional definitions of news. An alternative model of news should seize the opportunity to go beyond the loosely defined 'information' function to assert a coherent set of objectives, providing a concrete basis for redefining news value. In short, the function of T.V. news should be reconsidered. I would suggest the following as focal points for a process of redefinition.

(a) Accountability

T.V. news obviously plays a crucial role in the democratic machinery of our society. Decisions about who to vote for, at both local or national level, are usually based upon information received through the news media - they can be based on little else. There is, furthermore, considerable evidence to suggest that people regard television news as a more useful and impartial source of information than either the press or radio. A MORI/Sunday Times poll (published in the New Statesman, 4th May, 1979) showed that, although press bias is fairly widely perceived - though particularly in the case of the Sun, not necessarily the right way - bias in T.V. broadcasting is not (only 8 per cent thought I.T.V. biased, 4 per cent either way, with slightly more detecting a bias in B.B.C's output - 9 per cent to the right, 4 per cent to the left). The poll also revealed television (in comparison with the press or radio) as a more 'useful' source of information during the 1979 general election campaign. T.V. news therefore has a duty to provide citizens with enough information for such decisions to be made. This accountability function clearly goes beyond overt forms of political representation. All those individuals, groups or

corporations in positions of power should be made 'accountable' in the sense that the exercise of that power should be open to public scrutiny, through the news media.

To some extent the existing T.V. news media fulfil this function already, particularly in relation to the representation (some might say over-representation) of parliamentary comings and goings. As Richard Francis, the Director of News and Current Affairs at the B.B.C. put it:

"... the B.B.C's journalists do indeed find it natural to ask 'an important person' - a senior civil servant or government minister for instance - for they are the people whose decisions largely determine how things will be run in our democracy" (New Statesman, 20th April, 1979).

The notion of accountability, however, frequently gets lost in a mishmash with other news values, insofar as those individuals/groups wielding power are provided a platform regardless of whether or not they are in the process of exercising that power. The news media will frequently use a Chief Constable, Home Secretary or Prime Minister to define or explain an event - like, for example, a riot - that those people know very little about. Similarly, the willingness of the news media to provide (certain) powerful men and women with a platform frequently occurs at the expense of any real examination of their actions. The accountability function, put into practice, would require the news media to shift the focal point of their attention from 'what important people do' to 'what people do that is important'.

(b) Significance and political education

This, of course, raises the question of importance - what is important, and to whom? There is, as the redefinitions by the Annan Report, the Glasgow Media Group and the Campaign for Press Freedom acknowledge, no single criterion for answering this. It would, furthermore, be unwise to do more than sketch out the terrain of this highly problematic area (at this stage).

The most important consideration here, I would suggest, is the problem of the viewer's alienation from the world of T.V. news. It is

essential for broadcasters who take the notion of political education seriously to find a way of bridging the gap between the television world and the viewer's world. This is not to advocate a necessarily more 'in depth' approach (which would, in many ways, simply substitute one form of alienation for another), but to move away from the world as it is constructed in parliamentary discourses, towards the representation of a more recognisable world, full of characters recognisable outside the exclusive world of T.V. V.I.Ps.

Such an approach would clearly have a profound effect upon news values. A news item that could not be represented as affecting the viewer's own world would need to be justified on the basis of other criteria. This is to turn the easy option of the 'man bites dog' approach on its head, and to explore the world where dogs bite men. The world of crime, for example, would necessarily shift from that inhabited by a small group of celebrities (the 'muggers' of the early seventies, the Black Panthers, Irish or Iranian terrorists, rioters and 'organisers of riots', Peter Sutcliffe, etc.) to the genuinely typical (it is an unfortunate irony that a concentration on the atypical engenders a feeling that the exceptional is ubiquitous). This would necessarily involve understanding crime not as a psychological problem - revolving around problems in the celebrated criminal's mental make up - but as a social problem. This approach was taken by The Friday Alternative (29th April, 1983) news programme, which sought to reveal the problems and tragedies behind the typical British murder.

As I have indicated, other news values would need to be devised to structure the representation of foreign news, or news affecting small or (to many) unseen (outside the T.V. world) sections of the community. Once again, the news broadcasters need to view the priorities constructed within various institutional sites with considerably more scepticism. Something is not necessarily important simply because the President of the United States says so (cold war rhetoric, for example). Equally, the concentration

on the exceptional or atypical frequently works directly against the viewers' understanding of the world rather than increasing it.

Throughout the research I have presented, viewers found it difficult to relate to a news story, because that story required the viewer to leave his/her world, and position him/herself within the world of T.V. news (this would be less of a problem if the news used forms of narrative that encouraged the viewer to adopt certain subject positions in relation to the T.V. text). The people, places and objects on the news need to become identifiable with or related to the people, places and objects most viewers (as opposed to most politicians, celebrities or broadcasters, who inhabit a very different world) can understand and recognise.

This, I should emphasise, is not a recipe for making the news dull, simply because it works in terms of the 'day to day' and the ordinary. Coronation Street is no less captivating than Dallas, even though its world is less glamorous and exciting. Furthermore, I am not suggesting that what 'important' people or institutions do is not relevant if those actions are not seen in terms of their effects upon the lives of the T.V. viewers. What I am proposing is that connections are made between these events and a world that most people will find either familiar or recognisable.

(c) Investigation

One immediate difficulty with a news service not dependent upon a small number of well-established institutional sources (like the police force or parliament) for setting and informing its agenda, is the problem of establishing a broader range of information sources for news gathering. Nevertheless, unless this difficulty is surmounted, investigative journalism will remain the exception rather than the rule of prime time T.V. news.

It is a sad paradox that while the investigative function of journalism is frequently thought to epitomise all the most positive aspects

of the profession, the structure of most news programmes necessarily excludes it. The representation of the 'main issues of the day' - partly because of the notions of news value selecting those issues, partly because of the traditional forms of representation - tends to involve a small number of well established information sources. To investigate, in fact, is thought to be going behind/beyond the world portrayed by television news into the land of current affairs programmes like World in Action or Panorama.

Thus it is not merely that investigative journalism is time consuming and labour intensive (and therefore costly), but that the structure of existing news services makes it so. This point is made by Barry Flynn (Flynn, 1982) in relation to I.T.N. Because only a limited range of information sources exists (the Press Association, Reuters, the radio, Fleet Street), the investigative function of news becomes too time consuming to be feasible for a daily news service.

A news service should work to make channels of investigation more accessible and less labour intensive (and therefore cheaper). A broad range of contacts within the society/community would need to be developed. This would work at a number of levels. At one level, for example, the category of 'expert' would extend beyond the existing, extremely small and extremely predictable, elite plucked from the establishment to inform issues and events, to incorporate the vast wealth of research already established within a variety of institutions (e.g. academic institutions, trade unions and local government). At another level, those holding key positions for observing social trends or news at ground level would play a significant role in news gathering. They are, at the moment, only used where 'appropriate' to a particular news story. The community leader or community worker, for example, became information sources quite suddenly during the riots of 1981. Had they been incorporated into the structure of news gathering, television news would have been in a position, if not to anticipate the 1981 riots,

certainly to understand their history. As it was, Brixton and Toxteth exploded on to our screens from out of the blue, revealing problems that had not, apparently, existed before. As the Annan Report recommended, the ability to 'anticipate problems' (rather than simply reflect them) is neglected by existing news services.

iv. Further recommendations

(a) Narrative

There are, I hope I have made clear, a number of problems with the way television news uses (or does not use) narrative to communicate a story. Given the constraints upon broadcasting news - most obviously, newsworthy events do not offer themselves to reporters and editors in a neat package conveniently arranged into a developmental narrative - there are a number of ways of using narrative to make news stories more accessible, more comprehensible and more compelling.

Firstly, the traditional approach of arranging various pieces of information around a focal point or focal points displays a sloppy disregard for the importance of narrative in communicating sequences of information. Broadcasters need to present a news story as a story. This means using a developmental narrative structure, where pieces of information A, B, C ... are presented sequentially, and where B relates to A, C relates to B and so on. Sequences can develop chronologically (e.g. 'this happened, then this happened, then this happened' etc.) or logically (cause of an event or problem, the event or problem, the implications of the event or problem). What is essential, however, is that they do actually develop. The focal point of a story should be presented in terms of such a sequence, it should be a part of the story. If this is not done, as the decodings have shown, the context or implications of a news event simply vanish into the airwaves.

One of the reasons why focal points are invariably presented far too early in a news story is because of a traditional practice inherited from print journalism - namely, the journalistic code that structures

information in sequences of decreasing importance. The most newsworthy elements come first, through to the least newsworthy information at the end (which may then be lopped off by newspaper editors). Such a practice is, I would suggest, totally inappropriate to news broadcasting.⁴ It does not facilitate the task of editing, while it makes the viewer's task in understanding the details of a story far more difficult.

Secondly, if a narrative is to be seen to develop, if the viewer is to be drawn from one sequence to the next, news reporters and editors should use rather than subvert the hermeneutic code. If this means withholding information until it becomes appropriate to the demands of the story, then so be it. This means that the current practice of beginning an item by introducing its focal points must be abandoned. A news event is rarely so important that the viewer needs to be told it at 10.01 p.m. rather than 10.03 p.m. A reporter - like David Rose during the Whitelaw item - may attempt to introduce the focal point of his/her piece with an enigma contextualising it (e.g. given Whitelaw's problems with his own party, what would happen at the Conservative Conference at Harrogate?), but such an attempt (as the decodings show) will frequently fall on deaf ears if the newsreader has already subverted that enigma in his/her introduction.

Structuring a narrative in terms of enigmas and resolutions not only gives the 'solutions' - usually the focal point(s) of the story - greater impact, but allows the viewer to more easily contextualise those focal points. In these circumstances, he or she is far more likely to comprehend what the broadcaster's understand is going on in British Leyland or the West Bank.

Thirdly, when the viewer needs to know a particular narrative context of an item to properly understand that item, such a context should be provided. Further, such a provision should accord with the other points I have made - the narrative context of an item should therefore be given at the beginning of the narrative sequence, so that the following

story can be seen to develop from it. Obviously there will be instances where such contexts, or aspects of them, can be assumed to be fairly well known. On the basis of this study, however, I would suggest that these instances are perhaps less common than broadcasters appear to assume.

(b) Relating visuals to verbals

The arrangement of a news item into a developmental narrative cannot, of course, take place without careful consideration of the relationship between verbals and visuals. David Rose's attempt to contextualise the Whitelaw item, for example, was considerably weakened by the lack of any appropriate visual material to accompany it. Similarly, the sacking of the Palestinian mayors on the West Bank, or the consequences of the Israeli's hardline approach for the Sinai withdrawal, would undoubtedly have had more impact if they could have been signified visually as well as verbally.

The problem here is that direct visual/verbal links - particularly action sequences - are more difficult to set up with some types of information than with others. How, for example, can the withdrawal from the Sinai be signified visually before it has happened? What would the sacking of the Palestinian mayors actually look like? There are two points to be made here.

The first is that direct visual/verbal links only need to be used where possible or appropriate. This does not simply mean appropriate to the film footage supplied, say, by a team on location, but appropriate to the demands of the narrative. Problems relating to the withdrawal from the Sinai, for example, were an important part of the West Bank story. Further, it is a difficult piece of information for viewers to absorb, since it's relation to the story that precedes it is fairly complex. It is, therefore, appropriate that such a piece of information is communicated as strongly as possible, i.e. using a visual/verbal link.

The second point follows from the first. Where the demands of a

narrative require a direct visual/verbal link, broadcasters must use a little more imagination than hitherto in order to provide one. In the case of the future Sinai withdrawal, an easy option would have been to show library pictures of the Sinai (thus establishing a link by metonymy). A more effective solution might have been to use graphics showing a map of the area with moving visual blocks, signifying the Israeli population and their potential movement. The sacking of the mayors could have been fairly succinctly signified with film of a Palestinian - preferably one involved in the civil unrest, or one of the mayors themselves - briefly describing the sackings and their unhappiness with them (thus establishing a fairly powerful link by authorship⁵).

What is important, then, is not so much the links themselves, but an understanding of when and how they are used (or not used) during an item.

(c) Quotations and authorship

There is, of course, no reason to suppose that a viewer will necessarily construct links between the verbal and visual levels of a story - particularly where those links are indirect. This is, I have pointed out, a real problem when people speak or are quoted during news items. The decoder will not necessarily connect a statement to it's author. This meant that the majority of decoders during the Hillhead item, for example, were unable to connect statements characterising Roy Jenkins as 'the alternative Prime Minister' to various SDP sources, although such sources were specified five times during the item.

Failure to establish a link by authorship can have two quite different effects. In some cases, both quotation and author may be glossed over by the viewer. In others, such as during the Hillhead piece, statements that come from certain types of sources will be given a ring of 'objectivity' and authority if those authors are forgotten, i.e. the statements are no longer tainted by the partiality of authorship. This

can be dangerous and misleading.

During a B.B.C. 2 News report of the riot in Southall in 1979 (where Blair Peach died), we were shown filmed highlights of the riot. During this action sequence, a firebomb was thrown out of a window towards the police. This visual sequence was accompanied by the following voiceover:

"Roads to the meeting place were cordoned off - with reactions like this - what Commissioner David McNee called 'unprovoked violence against the police'" (Gary Lloyd, B.B.C. 2 News, 23rd April, 1979).

This quotation, accompanied by 'evidence' linking the statement to the visual 'reality' of the riot, is made fairly powerful by the direct visual/verbal link. The link between the quotation and its author, on the other hand, is less powerfully established. The possible consequences are fairly clear: McNee's statement is given the authority of an 'objective' description of events. Such a consequence, given that his statement - that the violence was 'unprovoked' - was extremely contentious, was profoundly misleading.

The use of speakers or quotations on news broadcasts should, therefore, be dealt with extremely carefully. Moreover, I would suggest that news broadcasters use quotations - invariably from an extremely small elite of speakers (politicians, police chiefs, etc.) - far too readily. Structuring a news story around quotations from various members of the establishment - be they trade union leaders or judges - is not only unlikely to provide the viewer with a developmental narrative (i.e. it is an extremely dull way of presenting information), it is also likely to distance the viewer from the world depicted therein (it will be seen as 'their world, not ours').

There is a strong case for not using quotations on news programmes, unless the link by authorship is abundantly obvious. The list of 'authors' used by T.V. news does not engender the viewers interest or involvement with a news story.

(d) Anticipating decodings

My final recommendation is more general, although it covers a multitude of specific decoding practices, such as the refocussing effect. Throughout this research, the styles and conventions used by a programme like News at Ten have been shown to have consequences for decoding. At the moment, most of those who control news broadcasting have very little conception of these consequences. They are therefore either unable or unlikely to anticipate the short-term or long-term effects of the programmes they make upon the attitudes and perceptions of various sections of the population - for three reasons. Firstly, adequate research in this area, as I have suggested, is simply not being done. Such research cannot be left to academic institutions, where resources are very limited and whose work is frequently ignored. The research departments in the B.B.C. and the I.B.A. need to take this responsibility on board.

Secondly, there is a real sense in which broadcasters can become alienated from the majority of the population viewing the T.V. world from the other side of the screen. Because of their involvement in the encoding process, it becomes extremely difficult for them to understand the commonly experienced distance from the television product. Moreover, the well-established conventions styling and structuring television news have created their own practices of news gathering giving them a permanence and authenticity that does not exist outside broadcasting.

Thirdly, it will always be difficult for those working in news production to appreciate how inaccessible their work is to large numbers of people, as well as the nature of that inaccessibility (i.e. the effects of a partial reading of a news item). Given that the presentation of news appears to be both slick and uncomplicated, misunderstandings or misreadings can easily be dismissed as the decoder's problem rather than the encoders. The importance of T.V. news in the social and political education of British people is clearly too great for broadcasters to abdicate such a responsibility.

Clearly, the changes in the practices of filming, reporting, editing, investigating and filming a story that solving these problems implies, would not, by itself, create a 'pure' form of news communication resulting in widespread political education. The production and control of news by particular interests will continue to influence and set limits upon the nature of that product. My recommendations do imply, however, that changing the product must involve changing its form and style, not just its specific authorship.

(e) A practical recommendation

It seems appropriate to end with a brief example of what some of these recommendations might look like in practice. Even if the news values adopted by News at Ten are more or less accepted, the news stories it contains can be rewritten to overcome many of the problems of communication revealed by the research. I shall use the Whitelaw item to demonstrate these points.

The main problem the decoders had with the Whitelaw story was a difficulty in understanding its significance. The narrative context of the story was clearly crucial to the communication of its particular meaning. Although the reporter, David Rose, referred to the appropriate narrative context (i.e. the difficulties Whitelaw had been having in placating his Party's right wing on the law and order issue), this was missed by most of the decoders - apart from those who were already familiar with that narrative context. Partly because of this, and partly because of its position in the narrative and its verbal/visual impact, the decoders attributed undue significance to Whitelaw's actual speech. This speech, in terms of the story the News at Ten team were trying to put over, was entirely inconsequential.

The failure of News at Ten to get their message across to the majority ^{it} of decoders is, as I have demonstrated at some length, due not so much to absences in the T.V. text, but to the way that text was constructed. Most importantly, the three stage narrative - Whitelaw's problems in his own party, his reception at Harrogate, the meaning of that

reception - was not read off by most decoders for three main reasons:

- (a) the subversion of the hermeneutic code, i.e. the question implied by the narrative context - how will Whitelaw be received at Harrogate? was answered before it was asked;
- (b) the summary of the item's narrative context was further weakened because it was not supported by any accompanying visuals;
- (c) the speech itself was made to appear as the item's focal point (rather than its reception).

All these problems have been avoided in the following version of the Whitelaw story.

Burnet:	Speculation about the future of Mr. William Whitelaw was brought to a head today, at a Conservative Conference in Harrogate. Mr. Whitelaw has had a difficult few months coping with hardliners in his own party - David Rose reports from Harrogate.	Burnet in studio.
Rose:	(Over background noise from the 1981 Conference) Since his rowdy reception at last year's Conservative Party Conference, Home Secretary, Willie Whitelaw, has had a tough time fending off criticism from right wingers in his own party.	Film of Whitelaw speaking to 1981 Conference, with graphics indicating time and place.
	Both in and out of the House of Commons, Conservatives to the political right of Mr. Whitelaw have been saying that the solution to the rising crime figures lies in taking tough action against offenders. They have attacked the Home Secretary for his more liberal approach to law and order.	David Rose, in the conference hall, to camera.
	In the face of this criticism, the response of Conservative Party workers in Harrogate today was seen as a crucial test.	Film of Whitelaw walking onto the platform.
	In the event, the party workers rallied round to give him their full support. During the debate, every speaker bar one supported him. As the party representatives rose to give him a standing ovation, Mr. Whitelaw was clearly relieved.	Film of the debate.
	Film of Whitelaw receiving a standing ovation.	
Whitelaw:	And may I once again thank you deeply for the support and help which you have given to me at a very difficult time.	Film of Whitelaw speaking.
Rose:	There is no doubt that, after his reception tonight, Mr. Whitelaw's position in his own party looks very much stronger. David Rose, News at Ten, Harrogate.	Film of Whitelaw acknowledging applause.

Burnet's introduction merely refocusses the viewer's attention towards the issues at stake in the subsequent report. David Rose is then allowed space to set up the narrative context of the story, accompanied by a direct visual link. Having developed this context, Rose then firmly establishes the enigma, what will happen at Harrogate? The enigma is then resolved, Whitelaw expresses his relief and, as the applause fades away, Rose briefly confirms the significance of what has taken place. This significance has already been symbolised verbally and visually by the story's structure, moving as it does from Whitelaw under attack to Whitelaw receiving support. Pictures of the 1981 conference are replaced by pictures from Harrogate. The story, for the time being, is complete.

FOOTNOTES:

1. Not surprisingly, these two were frequently unable to situate most news items within a narrative context. Both displayed higher levels of recall in response to news items (like the Drugs and Everest stories) that did not require knowledge of specific narrative contexts to be decoded fully.
2. The decoders with access to the fairly detailed narrative contexts that made such an interpretation possible tended also, therefore, to be on the left. This implies that access to a detailed narrative about El Salvador was, amongst this sample, significantly determined by knowledge of particular political discourses.
3. The significance of the BL workers upon the decoding of the British Leyland item, for example, was not because of their importance in the narrative, but because of their relation to particular protextual contexts.
4. It is also, in many ways, inappropriate to print journalism. It exists, on the whole, to make the life of editors simpler. It also allows newspaper readers to pick up the 'newsworthy' elements of a news story by only bothering to read the first few paragraphs. The former may be a good thing from the editor's point of view - whether the latter is beneficial from the reader's point of view (i.e. where readers are actively discouraged from reading the whole story) is more questionable.
5. Such a link would have been comparable to the relation between the nameless BL workers and their statements. Both would have been responding to a potentially unfavourable situation.

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i Frequencies of themes and protextual discourses during the decoding of the British Leyland item

Themes

A	BL is more competitive:	8 decoders
B	A reduction in overmanning at BL:	2 decoders
C	New technology as a source of unemployment:	28 decoders
D	An increase in output at BL:	8 decoders
E	BL is now doing well:	19 decoders
F	Jobs have been lost at BL:	4 decoders
G	Productivity has improved at BL:	18 decoders
H	BL will do well in the future, provided there are no strikes:	3 decoders
J	The acceptance by the workforce of new technology:	8 decoders
K	A new harmony in industrial relations:	20 decoders
L	Robots as efficient workers:	7 decoders
M	The issue of 'voluntary redundancy':	6 decoders
N	The need and inevitability of new technology in industry	7 decoders

Narrative Contexts

A	History of BL as uncompetitive/inefficient:	12 decoders
B	History of strikebound/militant workforce:	16 decoders
C	Myth of strikebound/militant workforce:	6 decoders
D	History of management cutting manpower:	3 decoders
E	History of defeats for the workforce:	3 decoders
F	Pre-war days of industrial success:	1 decoder
G	History of BL under Michael Edwardes:	4 decoders
H	History of overspending on nationalised industries:	1 decoder
J	Bleak future employment prospects	10 decoders

Critical Discourses

A	Critical of 'good news' tone, because of the unemployment question:	9 decoders
B	Critical of the item's failure to deal with the problem of markets:	5 decoders

C	Critical of the implication the BL workers are strikebound:	3 decoders
D	Critical of the item's failure to deal with BL's future problems:	5 decoders
E	Critical of the item's handling of the concept of productivity:	2 decoders
F	Critical of the item's pro-Tory economic management position:	6 decoders
G	The item an attempt to cover up BL's strikebound image:	1 decoder
H	Critical of the news value given to the item:	6 decoders
J	Critical of the confused presentation of the item:	4 decoders

Extra-Textual Contexts

A	Concept of overmanning:	2 decoders
B	Nature of voluntary redundancy:	8 decoders
C	Reference to current unemployment problem:	9 decoders
D	Comparison with other car firms:	6 decoders
E	Knowledge of the 'productivity' concept:	3 decoders
F	Reference to Tory Party logic on the free market and employment:	4 decoders
G	Reference to personal experience in business:	3 decoders
H	Reference to the depressed state of British industry:	2 decoders
J	Reference to Tory Party economic/industrial policy:	6 decoders
K	Knowledge of working conditions at BL:	3 decoders
L	Understanding of the item as a news story:	4 decoders

ii Full breakdown of the British Leyland decodings

<u>Decoder</u>	<u>Lexias</u>	<u>Themes</u>	<u>N.Cs</u>	<u>C.Ds</u>	<u>E-Ts</u>
2A	2c, 3ade, 4a, 5aef, 7b	A,B,C,M	A,D		A,B,C
2B	2b, 3ach, 4a, 5acf, 6bc, 7a	B,C,G	D,J	A	A,C,D,E
3A	2b, 3ade, 5af	D,E		B	
3B	2a, 3ad, 4b, 5a, 6d, 9ab, 10a	F,G,H			
4A	2a, 3adh1, 4b, 5a, 6abe, 9a	C,E,G	C,E,J	C	C
4B	4b, 5a	C,J,K	C,E	A,C,F	
5A	4b, 5ace, 6d, 9ac, 10b	A,E	A		D,F
5B	3ad, 4b, 5ad, 6abcd	A,C,K	F		G
6A	5ac	E			H
6B	4a, 5aef, 8b	A,C,N		A	C
7A	3i, 4a, 5af, 6d	C,G,J	B	B,D	B,C
7B	1a, 4b, 5ad, 6de	D,F,K,L			
8A	2a, 3aci, 4b, 7a, 9a	E,G		E	E,F,G,J
8B	3d, 5acd, 9ad	E,J,K	A,B	D,F	D,J
9A	3ad, 4b, 5ad, 6d, 8a	D,F,L	D		C
9B	5ae, 6ad, 9d	E,K	A,B	F	F,J
10A	4b, 5ace, 8c	C,D,K	A,B		
10B	3ad, 5aef, 6d	E,K	A,B,H	G	
11A	2a, 3adfl, 4b, 5a, 6d	C,E,J,K,M	B	A	B,J
11B	4b, 5ad, 6d	C,N	J		C
12A	4b, 5aef	E,J,K		F,H	J
12B	1b, 4b, 5a	J,K	E	D,F,H	K,L
13A	1a, 3l, 4a, 5a, 6bce, 9a	C,E	G	H	D,L
13B	2b, 4a, 5ad, 6be, 8a, 9ac, 10a	E,K,L,N	A,B,C		
14A	4b, 5ad	C,E	A,H,J	D	
14B	3df, 4b, 5a, 6c	C,G,N	J		B,D
15A	3ad, 4a, 5a, 6c	C,L			
15B	4a, 5a, 6e, 9a	G,K,L	C		G
16A	3ade, 4b, 5ad, 6ce, 7b	C,D		B	
16B	5af, 6b	C,E,G	J	H	B

<u>Decoder</u>	<u>Lexias</u>	<u>Themes</u>	<u>N.Cs</u>	<u>C.Ds</u>	<u>E-Ts</u>
17A	2b, 4b, 5ae, 6d, 8a, 9b	A,C,K	B		D
17B	3ade, 4b, 5af, 6ac	A,C,M	J	A	B,D
18A	2a, 3ac, 4b, 5a, 6b	A,C,G,N	A,B,G	D	D
18B	2a, 4b, 5ae, 6c	C,G	B,C,J	E	
19A	4a, 5ad, 6b, 10a	E,L		J	
19B	1b, 4b, 5aef, 9a	E,K		J	L
20A	2c, 4b, 5a, 6b, 7a, 8a, 9ab	C,E,J,N	B,G,J		
20B	4b, 5a, 6d	D,J,K,L		B	K
21A	4b, 5a, 6d	D,K	B	B	
21B	4b, 5a, 8a, 9ab	C,G,K	A	H	
22A	1c, 2a, 3ade, 4b, 5ad	E,G,M	A,B		H
22B	4b, 5ae, 9c	C,G,H	A,B		
23A	2a, 4b, 5ad, 6b	E,G,N	J	F	
23B	2a, 3ace, 4b, 5a, 6bc	C,G,M	C	A	B,C,F
24A	1a, 4b, 5aef	E,K	B	A	
24B	1a, 2a, 3ad, 4a, 5a, 6b	F,G,K		A,J	
25A	1b, 3acf, 4b, 5a, 6de, 9ab	G,K		J	
25B	5ad, 6bc, 8a	C,G	B		
26A	3fl, 4b, 5aef, 7a	A,C,M	G	A	B,G,K
26B	3d, 4a, 5a, 6d, 8a	D,H,L	B	H	L

iii Full breakdown of the West Bank decodings

<u>Decoder</u>	<u>Lexias</u>	<u>Themes</u>	<u>N.Cs</u>	<u>C.Ds</u>	<u>E-Ts</u>
2A	1, 2, 3, 4, 22	G		A,B,D	C
2B		A	A	D	A
3A	1, 12, 19	K	A		A
3B	2, 3, 4, 6	G			C
4A	1, 2, 3, 4, 9, 12, 15, 20	F	C,E	C	A,E
4B	1, 22, 24, 28	L	A	D	C
5A	1, 22	A,J	B		A,D
5B	1	A	B		
6A	1, 9, 12, 18	B,H	A,E		D
6B	1, 2, 3, 4	B		D	B,C
7A	1, 12, 15	F	C		E
7B	1, 2, 9	B			C
8A	1, 22, 23	B	B	D	A,C,G
8B	1, 22	B,C		B,C	A,E
9A	1	B			C
9B	1	B,C			B,C
10A	1	A,B			A,D
10B	1, 13, 22	B			A,B
11A	1, 13	E		B,D	C
11B	6, 12, 15	F			A
12A	2, 3, 17	E	E	D	
12B	1, 2, 3, 7, 13, 22, 23, 28	F	C	A,C,D	E,K
13A	1, 2, 3, 4, 17	A	A,F		
13B	1, 6, 7, 9, 13, 28	A			A
14A	1, 9, 10, 21	A	A		
14B	1, 11, 15, 22, 23, 28	A,F	B		A
15A	1, 12, 22, 23	A	B	B	C,D,G
15B	1, 12, 14, 15	B	D		A
16A	1, 2, 3, 12, 15, 22	F	A,F		
16B	1, 17	A	E		A,D

<u>Decoder</u>	<u>Lexias</u>	<u>Themes</u>	<u>N.Cs</u>	<u>C.Ds</u>	<u>E-Ts</u>
17A	1, 6, 7, 9, 13, 22, 23	B,D	B		C
17B	1, 8, 12, 13, 22, 25	E,L	B	E	A
18A	1	A	B		A
18B	1, 2, 4, 25, 26	B	B		A,D
19A	1, 2, 3, 4, 9, 12, 27	B	A		J
19B	1, 9, 12	A	B		A
20A	1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 12, 15, 16, 17, 22, 23, 25, 27	F	C		F,H
20B	1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 25	A	A,E		A
21A	1, 8	A,F	B		F
21B	12, 22, 25	L		B	C
22A	1, 2, 3, 4, 12, 22	F	A		F
22B	1, 22	A	B		A,D
23A	1, 9	B,L		D	C
23B	1, 2, 3, 6, 8, 9, 12, 23	E	B	E	A
24A	1, 9, 12, 15, 18, 22	F	E,A		F
24B	5, 12, 13, 22	E		B	
25A	1, 12, 15, 21, 22	B	A	B,D	B
25B	1, 2, 4, 12	B	A		H
26A	1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 10, 12, 15, 18, 22, 23	L	A	A,D	A,C
26B	1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 10, 11, 12, 16, 22	L	C	B,D	

iv Frequency of references to characters during
the decoding of the Hillhead item

<u>Character</u>	<u>Named</u>	<u>Referred to (not named)</u>	<u>Quoted</u>
Roy Jenkins	49	0	14
David Steel	21	1	10
Shirley Williams	9	3	4
David Owen	4	3	2
SDP Supporters	13	8	-
Red Review	6	7	-
David Wiseman	5 (4 prompted)	0	-
Gerry Malone	17 (10 prompted)	14	-
Cecil Parkinson	0	0	0
Tony Benn	1	0	1
Francis Pym	18	11	18
Michael Foot	24	6	9
Alistair Burnet	3	0	-

v Sources of theme - "Roy Jenkins as the alternative Prime Minister" during the Hillhead item

Set up by <u>News at Ten</u> :	25 decoders
Set up by SDP supporters in general:	2 decoders
Set up by Williams, Owen and Steel:	1 decoder
Set up by Williams and Owen:	1 decoder
Set up by Owen and Steel:	1 decoder
No source identified:	3 decoders
Total	= 33 decoders

vi Frequencies of lexias, themes and protextual discourses during the decoding of the Company Car item

Lexias

1.	Number of company cars:	0 decoders
2.	Sir Geoffrey Howe:	0 decoders
3.	Tax up:	37 decoders
4.	Third year running:	2 decoders
5.	20% increase:	14 decoders
6.	More if free petrol:	4 decoders
	No specific reference to any lexias:	13 decoders

Themes

A.	Government sop towards taxing the rich:	3 decoders
B.	Another tax increase by Tory Government:	1 decoder
C.	Surprising news given Tory policies:	1 decoder
D.	Important news because of BL and the car industry in general:	6 decoders
E.	Good news: clamp down on perks/tax on overpaid people:	14 decoders
F.	Only concerns those with company cars:	13 decoders
G.	Means increase for friend/family:	3 decoders
H.	About the general cost of motoring:	1 decoder

Protextual discourses

A.	Tory Government policy on taxation:	5 decoders
B.	The car industry/BL:	4 decoders
C.	Perks enjoyed by management/the rich:	13 decoders
D.	Friend/relative has a company car:	7 decoders
E.	Car taxes in general:	2 decoders
F.	No protextual discourse referred to:	20 decoders

vii Frequencies of lexias and themes/protextual discourses during the decoding of the Pound/Dollar item

Lexias

1.	Pound fell generally:	4 decoders
2.	Pound fell against dollar:	14 decoders
3.	Pound closed at 1.78 dollars:	7 decoders (2 incorrect)
4.	Pound was 1.3 cents down:	6 decoders (2 incorrect)
5.	Pound was 1½ cents down:	1 decoder
6.	American interest rates up:	1 decoder
7.	The Chicago money markets:	2 decoders
8.	Sterling was sold:	4 decoders
	No specific reference to any lexias:	22 decoders

Themes/protextual discourses

A.	Economic barometer/state of economy:	19 decoders
B.	Effects on imports/exports:	9 decoders
C.	Effects on foreign exchange rates:	7 decoders
D.	Means something to market/international traders:	6 decoders
E.	Of no particular significance/meaning:	7 decoders
F.	Completely meaningless:	1 decoder
G.	Low pound is bad, high pound is good:	12 decoders
H.	Completely confused by it all:	2 decoders

viii Frequencies of lexias, themes and narrative contexts
during the decoding of the El Salvador item

Lexias

1.	Reference to Major Roberto D'Aubuisson:	43 decoders
2.	Reference to D'Aubuisson's appearance:	10 decoders
3.	D'Aubuisson as a pathological killer:	15 decoders
4.	D'Aubuisson and the shooting of Archbishop Romero:	3 decoders
5.	D'Aubuisson on the extreme right:	25 decoders
6.	D'Aubuisson on the left:	4 decoders
7.	D'Aubuisson backed (by exiled oligarchy) in Miami:	4 decoders
8.	D'Aubuisson's promise to return their land:	2 decoders
9.	D'Aubuisson's promise to defeat the guerillas ...:	7 decoders
10.	... and to use Nepal and gas to do so:	3 decoders
11.	The U.S. willing to support D'Aubuisson:	31 decoders
12.	The U.S. switch position in favour of D'Aubuisson:	23 decoders
13.	D'Aubuisson not supported by Americans:	2 decoders
14.	The U.S. think D'Aubuisson might win:	12 decoders
15.	U.S. worried about a D'Aubuisson victory:	4 decoders
16.	D'Aubuisson and the death squads:	18 decoders
17.	Dead family by the roadside:	7 decoders
18.	Dead family by the roadside as victims of the death squads:	24 decoders
19.	Death squads responsible for killings in general:	4 decoders
20.	General atmosphere of murder and bloodshed:	7 decoders
21.	Reference to President Duarte:	26 decoders
22.	Duarte on the centre, centre/right:	14 decoders
23.	Duarte on the extreme right:	4 decoders
24.	Duarte supported by the U.S.	8 decoders
25.	Duarte not supported by the U.S.	3 decoders
26.	Duarte as the likely winner:	1 decoder
27.	Candidates are from the centre, right and extreme right:	22 decoders
28.	Absence of left-wing parties:	22 decoders

Lexias

29.	Absence of left-wing parties enforced by exile/death:	16 decoders
30.	The election unfair because of the absence of left-wing parties:	14 decoders
31.	Some unspecified candidates shot/exiled:	1 decoder
32.	Soldiers firing (at nothing in particular):	9 decoders
33.	Guerillas attempting to disrupt the election:	2 decoders
34.	The U.S. Press Conference:	3 decoders
35.	The American's late arrival:	5 decoders
36.	Americans/British overseeing the election:	13 decoders
37.	General flag waving/banner holding:	15 decoders
38.	Ballot boxes being moved:	3 decoders
39.	Reference to Jon Snow:	7 decoders

Themes

A.	About an election in a country full of oppression:	8 decoders
B.	About an election in a country full of bloodshed:	8 decoders
C.	About an election in an uncivilised country:	4 decoders
D.	About an election in a country in civil war:	11 decoders
E.	The British and the U.S. observing the election:	1 decoder
F.	The British and the U.S. observing the election and a suggestion of unfairness about it:	2 decoders
G.	The unfair/sham nature of the elections:	11 decoders
H.	Confusion about the U.S. involvement:	2 decoders
J.	The U.S. attitudes towards/support for the main candidates:	17 decoders
K.	Cynical/right wing policy of the U.S. in El Salvador:	11 decoders
L.	The disturbing involvement of the U.S. in the election:	1 decoder
M.	About the dreadfulness of D'Aubuisson:	2 decoders
O.	Suggesting our interests lie with Duarte:	1 decoder

Narrative contexts

A.	Vague knowledge of civil war:	7 decoders
B.	Vague awareness of El Salvador as a news story:	11 decoders
C.	Vague knowledge of U.S. involvement in El Salvador:	10 decoders
D.	Detailed knowledge of recent events in El Salvador:	10 decoders
E.	History of super power expansion:	3 decoders
F.	No narrative context referred to:	18 decoders

ix Frequencies of lexias, themes and protextual discourses
during the decoding of the China/Russia item

Lexias

1.	Cool reception by China:	13 decoders
2.	Breznev's/Russia's offer:	27 decoders
3.	Patch up of 20 year quarrel:	5 decoders
4.	Actual deeds important:	4 decoders
5.	Withdrawal from Afganistan:	12 decoders
6.	Withdrawal from Vietnam:	3 decoders
7.	Withdrawal from Indo-China:	2 decoders
8.	General attempt to patch up differences:	8 decoders
	No specific reference to any lexias:	8 decoders

Themes

A.	Diplomatic signals between super powers:	10 decoders
B.	Possible upset to world balance of power:	4 decoders
C.	China still suspicious of U.S.S.R.:	2 decoders
D.	Little chance of a reconciliation:	2 decoders
E.	Something about Afganistan:	2 decoders
F.	Various other themes:	3 decoders
G.	No real significance/a non-event:	6 decoders
H.	No meaning considered:	21 decoders

Protextual discourses

A.	World power games/diplomacy:	16 decoders
B.	Russia in Afganistan:	5 decoders
C.	Differences between Soviet and Chinese ideology:	2 decoders
D.	Importance of China in political world map:	2 decoders
E.	Moves by China away from Communism/towards the U.S.:	2 decoders
F.	Other protextual discourses:	2 decoders
G.	No protextual discourse referred to:	20 decoders

x Frequency of lexias during the
decoding of the Drugs item

1.	Illegal drug manufactured ...:	44 decoders
2.	... in a university laboratory:	15 decoders
3.	Barker sent to prison:	10 decoders
4.	Barker sent to prison for 4 years:	8 decoders
5.	Barker as a research student:	10 decoders
6.	The marketing manager ...:	15 decoders
7.	... got 3 years:	2 decoders
8.	Reference to picture of Barker:	22 decoders
9.	He knew more than his professor:	19 decoders
10.	The judge:	13 decoders
11.	Barker "arrogant":	21 decoders
12.	Barker "bogus":	2 decoders
13.	Sussex University:	8 decoders
14.	Bromo STP:	4 decoders
15.	Pictures of drug:	12 decoders
16.	Arrested at a pop festival:	3 decoders
	No specific reference to any lexias:	1 decoder

xi Frequencies of lexias, themes and protextual discourses
during the decoding of the Whitelaw item

Lexias

1.	Introductory context:	12 decoders
2.	Vague reference to context:	9 decoders
3.	Incorrect reference to introductory context:	6 decoders
4.	Reference to points made during Whitelaw's speech:	31 decoders
5.	Whitelaw's reference to Roy Jenkins:	9 decoders
6.	General reference to speech:	41 decoders
7.	Supported by all but one:	7 decoders
8.	Generally receiving support:	38 decoders
9.	Standing ovation for Whitelaw:	13 decoders

Themes

A.	Whitelaw overcoming criticism and winning the support of his own party:	8 decoders
B.	Whitelaw, after a difficult time, gets the backing of his own party:	11 decoders
C.	Whitelaw, after <u>general</u> criticism, gets the backing of his own party:	8 decoders
D.	Whitelaw gaining general support for his measures:	6 decoders
E.	Whitelaw trying to win support:	1 decoder
F.	Whitelaw preaching to the converted:	6 decoders
G.	Whitelaw gets the backing of Tory Party for his handling of law and order:	3 decoders
H.	Whitelaw talking about law and order:	8 decoders
J.	Whitelaw talking about prisons:	1 decoder
K.	Just another politician giving a speech:	4 decoders

Protexual discourses

A.	Whitelaw having had recent problems:	15 decoders
B.	Law and order in general:	10 decoders
C.	Tory Party and law and order:	8 decoders
D.	Tory Party politics:	5 decoders
E.	Politicians in action:	6 decoders
F.	Other protexual discourses:	2 decoders
G.	No protexual discourse referred to:	6 decoders

xii Frequencies of themes and protextual discourses
during the decoding of the Jobs item

Themes

A.	Unemployment continues to rise:	15 decoders
B.	Unemployment still rising, but a few jobs returning:	9 decoders
C.	Jobs beginning to return:	4 decoders
D.	More jobs lost in some areas than others:	6 decoders
E.	Jobs lost in manufacturing:	5 decoders
F.	Jobs gained in the service industries:	3 decoders
G.	Confused by figures:	9 decoders
H.	Figures fairly meaningless:	2 decoders

Protextual discourses

A.	General problem of rising unemployment:	23 decoders
B.	Detailed history of unemployment increase:	10 decoders
C.	History of regional unemployment:	8 decoders
D.	Discourse of economic decline/recovery:	6 decoders
E.	Questioning of source/validity of figures:	10 decoders

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