The Impact of Thatcherism on Representations of Work and

Unemployment in Television Drama from 1979 to 1994

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Abstract

This thesis argues for an analysis of popular television in relation to the dominant political ideas and values of Thatcherism.

Examining the power of popular entertainment genres to inscribe and inform public understanding of political debates, the thesis offers an analysis of television realism in relation to genres such as situation comedy and drama serials. Using the work of Antonio Gramsci, Stuart Hall, Michel Foucault, Roland Barthes and the Bakhtin Circle, the methodology concentrates on a discursive model of interpretation which draws on elements of semiotic and discourse analysis. It refers to the field of hermeneutics in order to address some of the problems of textual analysis and considers the ontological problems of television realism, particularly as they relate to the representation of political ideas.

The thesis also considers the role of realism as an important ideological feature of dramatic representation on television. The contribution of the thesis to the field of Media Studies lies in its engagement with the sphere of political discourse in relation to popular television programmes over a specific period of intense ideological activity. In choosing to examine Thatcherite discourse in relation to work and unemployment, the thesis considers issues of class and gender in relation to changing attitudes to unemployment as expressed through narrative and other discursive patterns in the medium of television drama. The thesis argues that television drama of the period responded to the dominant rhetoric of Thatcherite politics concerning work and unemployment with a variety of identifiable structures and dramatic strategies. The ideological import of these strategies is assessed through a combination of textual analyses and socio-political appraisal of the phenomenon of Thatcherism.

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Introduction

The global tendencies of the mass media have become an issue of increasing concern ever since Marshal McLuhan (1964:11) wrote of the implosion of the western world. Much media research has followed in the wake of gloomy hypotheses about the Americanisation of culture (Postman 1992) and the imminent demise of regional specificity. The term postmodernism has been used by many scholars to describe emergence of cultural hybridity as being an inevitable by-product of post-industrialisation. It has consequently become unfashionable in Media Studies circles to concentrate time and energy on studies which focus on texts or institutions of regional or local significance unless one can *also* identify a global corollary. Such studies run the risk of being considered too parochial and introspective unless they give full attention to the broader configurations of international media practice, particularly as it relates to economics. Whilst it is often necessary to discuss the big picture, there is a danger that something will be lost unless we as scholars in the field of cultural production can see the processes of media production and their impact in our own environment or locale. This is not to say that studies of specific media formations should exist in a vacuum but rather that whatever the global theory, empirical evidence of a specific time and place must always play some part if a study is to have any real significance.

Media audience research is fast becoming the only area within the traditional Media Studies triumvirate[1] where specificities of time and place are still accorded priority even in the age of global simultaneous broadcasting. In an effort to retain that idea of time and place, this thesis aims to analyse a particular political influence in Britain over a discrete period of time. Critics will ask whether it is legitimate to separate the politics of one region from its neighbours, or from what has been sometimes described as a continuing trend across many parts of the world. Surely Mrs Thatcher would never have succeeded in winning so many elections had her economic policies not been in concert with those of international figures

such as Helmut Kohl, Shimon Peres, Francois Mitterand, Ronald Reagan and later George Bush? How far should we go in seeking to isolate influences in the British Media when so much of Thatcherism is contingent on activity at international level? Nevertheless the decision to focus attention on Britain's domestic situation will provide an opportunity for close examination of the interplay between politics on the one hand and the means by which a democratic society chooses to debate the decisions of government and assimilate the political into the domain of culture.

One of the signs of a modern democracy is the extent to which it has integrated an advanced level of media communications into its public institutions. Government must always at least appear to be open and ready for dialogue with the people even if it does not choose to act upon it. Manipulation of the media very often provides the key moment for analysis, when political power resorts to rhetoric in order to maintain its hold on a given situation. Such incidences are not uncommon and have been well-documented in recent year. Richard Keeble (1997) for example, examines American, Iraqi and British press involvement in the Gulf War. John Pilger is another journalist well known for investigations into foreign and domestic issues involving human rights and political dissent. But for all the cases of direct government intervention at times of national or party political crisis, how do we examine the impact of government policy during the periods in between? How do we begin to explain the ways in which the public come to understand their political leaders? How do we as members of the public connect with the will of government?

Media Studies has attempted for many years to identify and examine the various functions of the mass media in relation to a number of issues and debates. These range from questions concerning identity and representation to the economic infrastructure of media institutions and social agencies. The media and their products constitute the main focus of analysis, underpinned by the belief that there is scarcely a human action in the world today which is not susceptible in some form to the process of mediation. The notion of

"susceptibility" implies risk if not deceit. The alignment of media research with questions concerning meaning, interpretation and understanding makes for sensitive enquiry and it comes as no surprise therefore to see how minority interests and the role of gendered and ethnic representation have come to be associated with the subject field and ultimately shaped its development. We might argue therefore that the subject Media Studies is already politicised before we begin, in the sense that it is concerned with the exercise of power in all its media manifestations. This would be politics in the sense of how people organise themselves into systems in order to formulate a society. Such activity can occur at a microscopic level in terms of the arrangement of household chores or the organisation of a classroom. At the macro level we can observe the machinations of international politics at a United Nations assembly or in the division of conquered territories. It is however the very particular sense of politics as *the theory and practice of national government* which will inform the present study. Concentrating on the exercise of power at national level, the thesis is concerned to address the problem of identifying the medium through which a governed people understand the will of their government. Of course one obvious channel for the communication of such information would be broadcast and print news. Whilst news broadcasting on television might convey more than adequately the intentions and actions of government and the chief political opponents' views, it offers no satisfactory explanation of how political change impacts on the ordinary viewer.

The choice of a genre so connected with the translation of events as *information* subtly misses a very important point concerning representation and the communication of politics. News is predicated on the communication of politics as *event*. A research project which looks to analyse the communication of politics as *everyday process* must therefore steer away from genres which are designed to enliven and inform overt political debate. Of course news broadcasting is not immune to the pitfalls of representation; a news report detailing teenage video addiction for example will almost certainly attempt to offer a normative account of family life in order to highlight the issue as a serious threat to society.

It is that need to establish normative and acceptable alternatives which often blinds the broadcaster to the problems of stereotyping and ideology. Clearly news is not solely about *information*, nor is the communication of information a neutral and incontestable process.

The selection of television text in the first place offers empirical evidence that is relatively easy to obtain. Secondly textual evidence is an important source of enquiry because as material which has already been broadcast it effectively demonstrates that such material was judged to be of a suitable quality by the broadcasters themselves. Whatever changes might have occurred in the meantime, television programmes testify to the role and responsibility of media producers in providing what they considered at the time to be acceptable entertainment for the general public. But why choose to analyse texts rather than for example audience responses? Surely the degree to which a political idea achieved common acceptance can only really be discovered by talking to people who observed the political climate?

Given the time-scale involved it would be difficult to expect people to remember their feelings and thoughts at the time of viewing many of these programmes. In addition one would have to take into consideration many factors concerning the interviewees themselves such as gender, class, age and particularly political affiliation. More importantly though it would be very difficult to demonstrate that any of these programmes had a direct influence on the political behaviour or understanding of the interviewees since the programmes themselves are not explicitly concerned with political issues. The nature of the enquiry is less concerned with overt demonstrations of political rhetoric and action and more concerned with nuance. It is the *spaces between* which are of particular interest.

One of the fascinating aspects of television drama is its relationship to the real. It is to coin John Corner's phrase, both of the real and about the real. Drama on television attempts to emulate the real world in many different ways according to generic conventions. At the same time it creates miniature universes which have their own internal logic. What we see

on the screen is both a facsimile and a separate artistic entity. No matter how much we feel the drama is realistic, we can never logically mistake the screen world for our own. Viewing dramatic representations on screen affords a unique opportunity to observe what was once thought by broadcasters and the viewing public to be a creditable facsimile of the real. It is with hindsight therefore and with a heightened sense of technological innovation that we can identify features of interest which may not have been so apparent at the time.

Texts are by their nature historically contingent, forged by political and ideological forces. By concentrating on textual analysis, it is hoped that we can observe the ideological relationships which informed the period of their making, as if such texts were indexical signifiers bearing the imprint of the age. Specifically these texts, though not in themselves concerned with party politics, nevertheless bear the traces of the political climate. Text and context provide the essential materials for gathering empirical evidence so that some conclusions might be drawn concerning the role of such media products. If it is the case that the mass media are formative elements of modern society then it surely follows that media texts deserve close attention as evidence of process and product. The relative success of a programme, judged by the broadcasters in relation to viewing figures, is a further indicator of the degree to which the public's views coincided with the core values and ideas of the text. One cannot however make easy deductions about why individuals watch specific programmes. The acceptance of comedy might militate against the dislike of a particular actor. Equally an issue-based episode of a popular programme might be tolerated because of a general enjoyment of the series.

In short the choice of textual analysis is designed to alleviate some of the problems of audience based research and to permit a detailed investigation of the discourses which were particularly resonant at the time, particularly as they related to government policy.

Why focus on Thatcherism?

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> "Government and industry must work together to achieve key objectives aimed at enhancing the dynamism of the market, not undermining it." (Labour Party election manifesto 1997:3)

These may sound like the words of Margaret Thatcher. They are in fact the words of Tony Blair. Since the landslide victory of the Conservative Party in the 1979 General Election our perception of the relationship between employment and the economy has undergone profound and significant alteration. The Labour Party manifesto speaks unselfconsciously of "business partnerships", encouraging "share ownership", the need to deter "anti-competitive practices" and "enterprise". How has such a change been achieved? How do political ideas undergo significant ideological shifts and how are such ideas conveyed to the public at large?

Simon Jenkins (1995) makes the very persuasive and cogent argument that Thatcherism was not a set of policies concerned with radical institutional change, but rather the attempt to gain control of financial planning which nonetheless resulted in a "Tory nationalisation" of Britain. This may appear contradictory in so far as Thatcher avowed herself as early as 1974, as a conviction politician, even someone inclined to be "a little evangelical" in her desire to rid Britain of the legacy of consensus politics;

> "we were [in 1979] very near to having what I would call a permanent socialist society where freedom was constantly being diminished." (Harris 1987:)

Certainly it is clear from her own memoirs that her intention was to restore British democracy so as to give individual citizens *freedom* from government, and usher in a new era of choice, innovation and prosperity.

Thatcher was seeking a revolution not mere tinkering with the machinery. Heath saw laissez faire doctrines and the Social Market as means to an end: greater productivity. Thatcher saw them as ends in themselves: the social market or free economy was not an

economic device but a moral system which must replace the socialist society and set people free.

If socialism was fundamentally an immoral system because it restricted the individual through its levelling tendencies, then hers really was to be a kind of moral crusade which would in theory liberate the businessman, the school parent, the hospital patient, and the homeowner. But in the attempt to limit the size and scope of government, successive Tory ministers only succeeded in extending government control over virtually every facet of social and political life, in a centralising drive born out of insecurity and pragmatism. The result according to analysts as diverse as Stuart Hall (1983, 1988), Will Hutton (1996) and Simon Jenkins (1995) has been the damaging of many important constitutional freedoms.

If the spirit of free enterprise, undermined by a centralist network of government controls and regulators embodied the dominant character of 1980s Britain under Thatcher, then it is small wonder that the decade should also be viewed by social and cultural commentators as one of style over substance. Icons of eighties style emerged from the shifting values and ethics of the business world. The mobile phone, filofax, power dressing and the company car suggested a generation of business professionals who were on the move and on the up. The effects were felt everywhere, even spawning a new clutch of social identities – yuppies, nimbys and dinkys[2] - which would in turn achieve widespread contempt as the decade wore on. Such trappings indicated a new approach to the method of business – always being in contact with the market, even out of office hours and these in turn became a kind of performance indicator of success. As fashionable executive accessories these business "toys" were also signs of a more serious rupture in working practices. Government would no longer be held responsible for shifting market trends, productivity, financial success or full employment. To be successful in an uncertain world required self-assurance and flexibility. Employment was fast evolving into a politics of lifestyle. The

office-you-can-store-in-your-briefcase would soon become the chief emblem of that eighties phenomenon, the entrepreneur.

It is within this context that the popularity of programmes such as *Minder* or *Only Fools and Horses* can be understood. Such programmes could only have come into being under Thatcher's administration, rooted as they are within the discourses of self-help and respectability for private enterprise, which her government did so much to promote.

In appointing non-parliamentarians to Cabinet posts, Thatcher dared to suggest that civil servants, so long the guardians of government, knew less about industry and commerce than businessmen. It is within the context of such reforming zeal that the fictional Department of Administrative Affairs in *Yes Minister* needs to be understood as the correlation to the enterprise initiative of the likes of Del Boy and Arthur Daley. Lampooning such individuals may appear to have a levelling effect, although this may well disguise the extent to which the ethos of the free market has come to pervade social discourse.

In parallel with the rise of the entrepreneur, particularly in situation comedy, the sphere of the unionised collective of workers as portrayed in popular seventies programmes such as *The Ragtrade, On the Buses* and *Love Thy Neighbour* would soon give way to comedies centring on the professional classes. Towards the end of the eighties when Thatcherism was really beginning to gather momentum, families like the Boswells appeared on television. In *Bread* unemployment has become the natural condition of northern working class communities. *Bread*, viewed in this context, becomes a painful inversion of *Boys from the Blackstuff*. The translation of BBC2 serious drama to BBC1 situation comedy could hardly be more symbolic of a nation's shifting attitude to industrial decline and social decay.

The chief question of this thesis is embedded within several complex and over-lapping areas of enquiries. The thesis argues that television drama should be viewed as an important signifying medium because of its dependence on the codes and conventions of

television realism. Popular television programmes from the period of Thatcher's administrations therefore form an important empirical resource. The central hypothesis of the thesis is that television drama was a significant vehicle for the appropriation and dissemination of important Thatcherite ideas in relation to work and unemployment, in particular the celebration of an enterprise culture and the gradual demonisation of welfare dependency. The research question asks *how* did programmes such as *Minder, Boys From the Blackstuff, Auf Wiedersehen Pet, Inspector Morse* and *Only Fools and Horses* utilise the prevailing discourses of Thatcherism to creative ends? How did they actively engage with the political climate of the day? How did such programmes discuss the nature of work and unemployment at a time of such huge social and political upheaval? Finally, what measure of resistance can we observe within the diegesis of so many television episodes of popular drama serials, as Thatcher's popularity began to wane?

The research which follows is concentrated in two key areas. First of all the thesis argues that Thatcherism was a body of ideas and policies motivated by particular ideological concerns and values. The discussion of Thatcherism is grounded in neo-Marxist analyses which primarily utilise the work of Gramsci (1971), Hall (1973, 1980, 1993, 1998) and Mouffe (1995, 1996). The underpinning concept of hegemony is used to focus the argument that television is a highly significant determiner of civil society and as such, demands close empirical investigation. Hegemony has been a key concept within British Cultural Studies for thirty years but it has recently fallen out of fashion with media and cultural studies academics working in the areas of popular culture. It is as if such researchers are reluctant to concede that areas which they prefer to identify as *personal*, might be susceptible to the wider embrace of dominant consensus.

> "*Moesha* and *Clarissa Explains It All* (and their like) teach semiotic citizenship to their child-constituency. They are *paedocratic* shows in the strict sense that they portray a world governed by a child, and they present that world, that government,

to young viewers not only for their entertainment but also - I contend - their edification." John Hartley (1999:184-5)

This attempt to claw back television from the realm of serious audience or institutional research is laudable on the one hand but disappointing on the other. Hartley is I think justified in his decision to subject such ephemeral television to critical analysis. The *choice* of text and genre is not here at issue. What makes me uneasy is the readiness on the part of the researcher to accept uncritically that notion of civic responsibility which he claims informs such programming. The wider question of what constitutes the *Uses of Television* is overlooked in favour of a personal and parochial ideal which is predicated on overtly middle-class values and broadcast to an affluent middle-class white audience where the concept of political activity is rendered toothless. It is not impossible for children's programming to expose their young viewers to more demanding issues of political significance. *John Craven's Newsround* has been actively doing so for years, whilst *still* maintaining the notion of benevolent authority. If we are to understand anything about the importance of television entertainment in relation to the world from which it draws sustenance, it must be that television is just as susceptible to dominant ideas, ethics and values as any other arena of human productivity. The concept of hegemony needs to be understood in this light. It is not an ideal of abstract government which exists within the realm of the political. It requires a transference from the political to the civil/cultural domain and what better vehicle for achieving this than television entertainment? Hartley's notion of "cultural citizenship" might explain how children learn to say please and thank you, and why seal culling is felt to be undesirable, but it does not look to the broader infra-structure of political ideas which deem such civic lessons to be appropriate, acceptable and generally unthreatening to the status quo. The thrust of *this* thesis is to explode any cosy sense of "civic tv" and demonstrate television's function as an agent of hegemony.

The second area of the research lies in textual analysis. The semiotic and linguistic analysis of television drama will serve to demonstrate the prevalence of certain discourses and political rhetoric, and the creative means by which television drama was able to subvert, reject and appropriate different elements of Thatcherite ideology over the 1980s and beyond. Informed by structuralism, hermeneutics and Bakhtinian concepts such as heteroglossia and dialogism, the thesis will argue for the re-instatement of television drama as an important social history where in we can detect and observe the influence of political ideology. The choice of research models aims to take account of the complex nature of textual analysis. Rather than seeing the text as a closed narrative, I intend to analyse those elements of text which are contingent upon an awareness of the wider issues of socio-political import at the time of viewing. This is not to suggest that a text can be read according to some ideological schema. What I am suggesting here is that textual analysis, like viewing, is a process rather than an end result. As researchers we can analyse text in order to draw conclusions about dominant narrative patterns, generic conventions and codes which enable us to reflect not only on past histories, but our own contemporary situation. Of course one could argue that such analyses are problematic because of the nature of hindsight. Rather than deny this, the research methodology embraces this very question through an examination of the contribution of hermeneutic enquiry. Through a discussion of the researcher as a liminal figure, I argue that such methods do not undermine the utility of text analysis but place it within an ever-evolving continuum. As with the experience of living, rarely do researchers suddenly happen upon a brand new way of thinking or understanding the world. In practice, understanding is contingent upon knowledge drawn from a subject position which is constantly in flux. Bakhtin's notion of dialogism is premised precisely on this idea. I therefore see many creative and illuminating possibilities in weaving together Bakhtin's work on dialogism, hermeneutics and the more traditional methods of semiotic analysis. The finite dimensions of the research are in one sense artificial. In "containing" Thatcherism within a discreet chronology, I am aware of

certain epistemological problems arising. As discussed above, Thatcherism is of course a retrospective concept. It is also highly debatable whether one can so easily demarcate a beginning and an end to what has been and for many, continues to be one of the most influential "isms" of the century. Accepting this issue, the research will focus on the political force of Thatcherism over the period of Thatcher's governments from 1979-1990. In addition the thesis will look to the years immediately following Thatcher's resignation as Party Leader, in order to demonstrate the extent to which Thatcherism had by that time become a somewhat autonomous entity. The thesis examines the evidence of various case-studies in order to show how prevailing political ideas, values and judgements which we have come to identify as Thatcherite, have achieved a degree of acculturation and acceptance in the cultural sphere of the mass media, specifically within the genre of television drama.

Organisation of the research

Chapter one will focus on the significance of television popular culture as a site of ideological investigation. What social function is served by the presence of television culture? Does television drama operate didactically or is it more fluid in its responses to social and political influence?

Chapter two argues for an urgent re-appraisal of existing models of analysis which have come to dominate media theory. Media research has suffered in recent years from polarising tendencies within the field which exclude or trivialise textual analysis on the basis that it is too parochial and therefore divorced from the *real* issues of economic determinism. The argument rejects the centrality of news broadcasting and statistical or content analysis in favour of a more discursive and nuanced method of research. The chapter considers the extent to which *popular* television entertainment has been excluded from academic research. The chapter will go on to argue that the public sphere should be extended to include the entertainment web of television drama amongst others.

Chapter three will address the central issue of Thatcherism itself in an attempt to analyse and explore the prevailing features of a discourse which has become so familiar to us that we barely stop to question its origins, structures or content. Having examined the key elements of Thatcherism and its political lexicon, particularly as it related to ideas about work, chapter four will address issues of discourse. Television drama's emphasis on realism as an artistic mode authenticates discursive mythologies in order to *re*-present society back to us. Dramas which purport a causal relationship to reality, do so whilst simultaneously running the gauntlet of ideological thinking. We need therefore to consider how the dominant values and ideas of a given society come into being. Furthermore, how do such ideas achieve popular consent?

Chapter five will develop the argument by offering a methodological approach to the analysis of texts which takes into account the problems of historical text analysis and concerns around the dominance of text over production and audience. The work of the Bakhtin Circle will prove particularly useful in constructing a methodology which attempts to analyse the synchronic and diachronic elements of Thatcherite discourse in relation to television programming of the period.

Chapters six, seven and eight will concentrate on detailed analysis of the texts under investigation. The choice of texts is designed to cross traditional generic boundaries. Texts have also been selected to coincide with the early, mid-point and late stages of Mrs Thatcher's terms of office.

Different generic forms have tended to appeal to different writers, because of the creative or satirical "weight" that they carry. However it is not necessarily the case that situation comedy need be politically frivolous and that only "serious" drama yields biting social comment. The popularity of a programme such as *Yes Minister* should not obscure the deeply rooted anxiety about political power which lies at the heart of the text. The jocular banter of Jim Hacker MP and Sir Humphrey Appleby amused millions of viewers. Mrs

Thatcher named it as her favourite television programme. Given the hostile shakedown in Whitehall that was to follow in succeeding years, there are surely grounds here for asking questions about the relationship between the circulation of particular discourses within the popular media and the actions of political agents on "our" behalf?

Chapter nine will discuss the findings of the research and draw together conclusions concerning the textual analyses in relation to the arguments of the first five chapters.

Both Conservative and Labour politicians have argued that the BBC and ITV are partisan, each to the opposite party. Given the amount of difficulty faced by all broadcasters under some of the more stringent broadcasting conditions of the last few years, it is not my intention to make any general comments about the party political inclinations of either broadcasters or individual television writers. It is rather the general tenor of discourses surrounding and informing the production and articulation of television texts which is the chief concern.

I believe that a thorough analysis of eighties' television is long overdue. Astonishingly for a period of such intense political activity, there have been few attempts made to investigate the *nature* of programming in the eighties. Studies where they exist are either concerned with "quality" drama aesthetics (Brandt 1993), institutional politics (O'Malley 1994) or veer toward the cinematic (Friedman 1993). It is true that some individual plays and drama series have won critical academic attention but no studies currently exist which attempt to correlate textual content with the presence of significant political dialogues over a sustained period. In other words there is an urgent need for re-evaluating the textual in the wake of all we now understand about the power of ideological constructions and the processes by which *they must be incorporated within popular discourse in order to survive.* Any idea, particularly a political one, must achieve some degree of common understanding if it is to become a concrete reality. A political policy is still dependent in large measure on the extent to which it is understood and accepted by the electorate. This idea invites a modern

interpretation of hegemony, and at the same time it refutes the notion of political leadership as restricted to the domain of Parliament. Thatcher won her third term of office because her ideas had resonated with the electorate for so long that opposition seemed futile. Market philosophy had become so much part of our "common-sense" political understanding that the Left was unable to mount a successful unified attack on her policies. Even those who conceded the immorality of the market felt powerless to withstand it. The research project of this thesis is designed to examine exactly how that acceptance of market economics became sutured into realist texts as television producers continued to find new characters and narratives to entertain audiences. In the case of television, it is my belief that research aimed at scrutinising textual representations of work and unemployment will reveal strong evidence of dialogue between the sphere of the political and the discourses of popular entertainment.

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[1] The other two areas being media institutions and media texts.

[2] "Yuppies" stands for "young upwardly mobile"; "nimbys" stands for "not in my back yard" meaning a person who espouses hypocritical beliefs and values; "dinkys" stands for "double income, no kids yet" in reference to married or co-habiting couples with a large disposable income.

Chapter One

Popular Culture and the Political Domain

The discussion and analysis of popular culture is often located within academic discourses which attempt to celebrate audience autonomy. This leads to studies in popular culture which usually fail to negotiate political ideas, although questions of ideology may be considered.

A survey of the established literature on media research and politics demonstrates that a taxonomy has emerged within the field of Media and Cultural Studies which privileges certain genres, texts, modes of discourse and methodologies. In other words, different areas of analysis have come to be associated with certain methodologies and one of the consequences of this internal hierarchy is the exclusion of *popular* texts from the kinds of textual analysis associated with serious questions of representation, subordination and agenda-setting.

The Glasgow University Media Group and the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies have been unwittingly instrumental in establishing certain parameters for textual research over the 1970s and 1980s. A tension has therefore arisen between the *legitimate* analysis of ideology within newspaper journalism, television news and the operation of professional conventions in the media industries, and audience-based research into popular genres and cultural consumption which celebrates the relative autonomy of the viewer.

In Foucauldian terms one could argue that such a distinction in terms of academic labour can be read as the division between "le savoir des gens", best exemplified by reception theory which takes the close association between audiences and popular texts as its starting point, and the role of the respectable professional who begins from the point of view of expertise lying within the academic discipline itself. As a result, popular texts are routinely considered to be easily accessible and the distinction between romance reading or soap

opera viewing and the serious business of decoding television news is legitimated as obvious and commonplace.

There are of course compelling reasons for regarding soap opera and much can be said about the potential discursive possibilities of viewing. In terms of agency, the rules of textual decoding appear to be different - women and children are apparently able to display competencies and literacies which are both active and engaged. Decoding news however, seems to require a different level of competence because it is asserting truth-claims against which the average viewer cannot pit his or her experience or knowledge to any great degree.

The implication then is that popular television does not operate along the same lines as news broadcasting. Does popular television not also lay claim to truths about our society? The customary use of stereotyping has long been thought to contribute to the reproduction of existing relations of domination and subordination (Hall 1978, Fiske 1987). How can it be the case that television drama is somehow at a discreet remove from other circulating discourses of truth and power? Is it likely that one genre should engage in such a radically different way from another, within the same medium and across the same time span?

In the case of political discourses it can no longer be assumed that the political domain exists only *within* the framework of certain generic models. The public sphere must now extend into the entertainment sphere; television news does not represent the boundary between fact and fiction. The stakes are high when one considers the degree to which interpenetration of media texts is possible. The liminal possibilities are boundless because television drama may have another more radical function than simply entertainment. To what extent does the area of television drama act in "populist ventriloquist" mode to articulate the concerns and debates within a society? Might not television drama operate discursively to re-inscribe, debate, challenge, expel and vindicate political ideas as well as social values?

Paget's (1990) work on documentary drama on stage, television and radio suggests that "true stories" are often presented in order to secure an authority and credibility which will ease the public consumption of the text. He asserts that documentary on television needs to be seen as a debate rather than as a discreet genre, given the complex interweaving of realist conventions with generic forms and popular 'of the moment' concerns.

> " 'Entertainment' serves the hegemony by eliding 'difficult" subject matter into neatly comprehensible structures." (Paget 1990:10)

Paget's findings indicate that popular television drama which lays claim to a documented truth, inevitably fails to convey understanding of political issues, through its perpetual endorsement of the dramatic as *personal* tragedy or vindication. This naturalisation of drama as the story of individual struggle owes much to the rise of the 19th century modernist novel, from which much of our shared experience of story telling derives. It is of course antithetical to any sense of the collective and/or the political; the practice of government is in reality much more of an homogenous activity than we give credit. Political decision making is often collaborative as indicated in the presence of a Cabinet. The implementation of government policy requires the services of thousands of largely anonymous civil servants, whereas our experience of History indicates a preference for well-known personalities. It is little wonder then that historical texts which articulate hegemonic relations between ruler and ruled should occasion such passionate dispute[1]. Our predilection for personalities in politics somehow enables us to simplify the often complex arguments which range from party to party. The very designation of the titles 'Prime Minister' and 'Leader of the Opposition' instils in the British electoral system a normative structure of two combative personalities rather than opposing factions. Television documentary practice, along with drama is thus compromised because of the lack of fit between form and subject matter.

> "Like the documentary proper, documentary drama's very posing of a problem can effect a kind of closure to that problem." Paget (1990:25)

Paget argues persuasively that naturalism has become the dominant mode of incorporation into the hegemony and that this inevitably has consequences for cultural production. He even goes so far as to suggest that cultural production often raises a problem, only to keep it in place. In conclusion, citing *Cathy Come Home*, Paget (1990:91) argues that it is rare for any cultural production within the media to actually instigate political or social change, though it might contribute to the creation of a public climate of opinion which *in turn* may occasion some change. Following a dramatisation of the Carl Bridgwater murder[2], the Foreman of the Jury in the case was moved to write to the playwright of his doubts concerning the guilt of the men he helped to convict. This would seem to fit with Klapper's findings (1960) concerning the media's tendency to reinforce opinion rather than change it. Despite his argument that television (documentary) drama is essentially reactionary, in that it reinforces opinion rather than introducing new ideas, Paget does allow for the possibility of radical activity at the margins of mainstream cultural production. Yet I would agree with him that it is within the mainstream that we find evidence of the "signs of the times" - where the "iconic hegemony" is revealed through close analysis. (Paget 1990:165)

Friedman (1993) has attempted to articulate this "iconic hegemony" in the work of British film-makers during Thatcher's terms of office. The book takes as its premise the idea that during the period under review, film drama was highly engaged with the political domain. This does not mean that the films analysed in this collection are necessarily left-wing polemics; the discussion of Heritage films over the 1980s is evidence of the contrary and populist cultural production which Friedman sees as one kind of response to Thatcher politics. The interpenetration of artistic, cultural and social ideas can be seen most clearly in the emergence of a Heritage industry which has successfully yoked together literature, film, history, art, architecture and landscape within an enterprise culture of national proportions. This commodification of the past as been one of the most telling and enduring aspects of political change within Britain, as it succeeds in levelling difference at a single stroke. It is simply impossible to grasp any sense of the social, economic or class deprivation of a

tenant farmer or scullery maid in the purchase of a National Trust souvenir egg-cup, or by watching the procrastinations of yet another Edwardian screen youth .

The political domain is a virtual space - a discursive domain not bounded by genres. The articulation of political ideas concerning the government of peoples is not restricted to documentary, any more than fiction is restricted to comedy. Whatever chiefly concerns a society at any given time about the manner and conduct of its politicians and the prevailing ethos of government, is likely to surface in the creative and interpretative arts. In this sense, the space within which politics becomes the subject of dialogue between the producer of texts and the audience cannot be located strictly as only occurring at specific times or in specific places. In describing the political domain as 'virtual', the intention here is to convey the susceptibility of political ideas to artistic licence. This is largely because politics as a *science* is always experimenting with the lives of real people. Within any democracy, politicians must come to expect that in the exercise of their power, they will meet with opposition and defiance which at best may take the shape of comic satire and at worst, insurrection and revolution. Film and television production does not happen *outside* of society. It would therefore be naive to suggest that the genres of entertainment are at a remove from both the major activities of political change *and* disengaged from their own audiences which every few years constitute a particular kind of audience called an electorate. For these reasons television drama is as significant a text for analysis as *Newsnight* .

Film criticism has always tended to lead the way in terms of popular cultural analysis and yet it could be argued that television drama has been legitimated in ways which are similar to film in this country. There is a considerable history of social realism extending back to the *Free Cinema* Movement which as well as shaping British documentary and drama in film of the fifties and sixties, also had a huge impact on the development of television drama. Television drama in Britain has enjoyed many years of artistic risk-taking, particularly during the 1960s with the inception of Granada's *Coronation Street* in 1960

and the BBC's *The Wednesday Play* in 1964. Television drama was the vehicle for encouraging and promoting new and raw talent in the shape of Ken Loach, Alan Bleasdale, Troy Kennedy-Martin, Lynda LaPlante and Tony Garnett who have since gone on to be highly influential within the industry as producers as well as writers. Television drama continues to occupy a unique space, as it is often privileged over other generic productions in terms of having quality production values, high costs and priority scheduling. Drama has also become dignified over time by its close association with theatre production[3], as David Reid, then Head of Drama at Anglia Television states in the 1980 IBA Guide to Television and Radio:

> "A play is an opportunity to comment on the society in which we live. [ ] In much the same way that fringe theatre questioned what could or could not be done and finished up heavily influencing mainstream theatre, so the single play can influence acceptability and promote greater understanding in television."

After soap opera, drama in the form of series, serials and individual plays is one of the biggest grossing genres on television. In addition to the home market, many dramas enjoy international success[4]. Increasingly television drama, particularly literary adaptations of major novels in the literary canon, succeeds in reaching new audiences who might otherwise never read the novels themselves. Given this tendency of popular drama on television to win large audiences, the question arises as to how such texts might contribute to a sense of national identity. Watching a drama serial such as *Brideshead Revisited* may serve many different audience needs, amongst which might be a desire to share a particular nostalgic idea of England as historical mythology. But beyond the question of fantasy, television drama may have much more importance as a signifying medium. Can we separate the social and cultural issues circulating within these texts from the political elements within which our shared sense of nation, geography, culture or identity are constituted?

If we accept the argument that television drama does have a function within the political domain, then to what extent does it open up the forum to greater audience autonomy? Are the discourses which pervade the work transparent or are they too well sutured within the generic texts to generate active debate? Paget's work would seem to militate against such possibility within the mainstream.

Goodlad (1971) argues that drama occupies an important role in our culture, operating as a forum for the expression of normative values and behaviours. Having established the historical links between ritual and mythology within western culture and the articulation of social structures, Goodlad explores popular drama in television and the theatre between 1956 and 1966, in order to demonstrate his hypothesis. Goodlad cites Klapper's (1960) conclusions that mass communication tends to reinforce existing beliefs and conditions rather than persuading the individual to take action (Lazarfeld and Merton quoted by Goodlad (1971:86)).

Despite this assertion Goodlad finds little evidence to suggest that television drama does indeed achieve a "narcotizing" (Goodlad 1971:93) effect upon audiences, given the inconclusive and sometimes contradictory findings of research conducted on mass media effects in relation to violence and anti-social behaviour. However Goodlad goes on to argue that drama may occupy a *monitoring* role in terms of reflecting back to a society the *prevailing*, for which we might read *dominant*, social norms of behaviour. This Goodlad describes as "the drama of reassurance", since its principal aim appears to be the establishment of societal rules over and above the expectations of the lone individual.

> "Over and over again, the popular drama reviewed in this study shows potential social problems being resolved and discord turned to harmony." (Goodlad 1971:177).

This argument is not new; for many years media historians have interpreted the Western in very similar terms, identifying in the stories of sheriffs and villains, cattle barons and

drifters, the expression of a society's anxiety concerning freedom, destiny, civilisation and the forces of nature (Buscombe 1982).

Goodlad goes even further when he argues that popular drama may also, in addition to what he describes as "functional equivalents" such as news broadcasts, act as *instrumental* aspects of culture in that it not only reflects back to society its norms and values but also actively constructs them. Pushing Goodlad's argument one stage further, it could be argued that in representing the family, love, or the work-place, television drama may construct the parameters of recognition and in so doing, help to create and sustain a hegemony of popular images and situations which we might identify as simulacra.

The hyper-real tendencies of the mass media have been thoroughly explored by philosopher and sociologist Jean Baudrillard and yet have been relatively slow to enter the academic lexicon of textual analysis in British Media Studies. Baudrillard's chief contribution to the analysis of the mass media has been in relation to what he sees as the *political economy* of signification. Poster's collection (1988) contains some of Baudrillard's earliest essays from 1968 onwards which lay the foundation for the development of his theories of consumption in relation to media production and the transference of meaning from the object to the sign. The mass media have come to dominate human consciousness to the extent that our entire social and political infrastructures have become subordinate to our incessant need for information gratification. At his most pessimistic, Baudrillard (1998) cites the mass media as responsible for the collapse of reality as more and more media coverage of the world's events inevitably leads to saturation point, where it is impossible to differentiate between a real incident and the media's replication of it. Coining the term 'simulacrum' (Baudrillard 1968, 1970) to describe a media-produced image which no longer relates to any actual reality, Baudrillard hypothesises that ultimately our capacity to understand human truth is utterly compromised by our dependence upon the media. His most famous example comes from an article entitled "The Gulf War Will Not Take Place", published in *Liberation* on 4 January 1991, about two weeks before American and British air attacks against Iraqi forces

began in earnest. It described a philosophical problem. How can we know that what we see on our television screens is real when modern warfare exists at the level of the computer game?

> "But this is not a war, any more than 10 000 tonnes of bombs per day is sufficient to make it a war. Any more than the direct transmission by CNN of real time information is sufficient to authenticate a war." (Baudrillard 1995:61)

In short, despite appearances to the contrary Baudrillard's argument is essentially a moral one. He argues that the constant bombardment of information, computer graphics, statistics, strategies, hypotheses and images served to veil the reality of war and ultimately to supersede it to the point where western television audiences, teased relentlessly by escalating tensions became immune to the real horror of the events themselves.

Despite strong criticism by philosopher Christopher Norris (1992), Baudrillard has persisted with his thesis concluding most recently that the only way to deny both the media and the hegemony of western power which dictates the New World Order[5], is to become like a couch potato. The only way to resist the incessant claims of our leaders talking through the hysterical medium of television is *not* to care, *not* to engage and *not* to react (Baudrillard 1986).

Viewing television texts as simulacra rather than simulations opens up important theoretical questions concerning the ultimate impact of such story-telling on public life, and in this case, political activity. It suggests that television drama is potentially an agency for *constructing* truths, rather than merely replicating them. Certainly Baudrillard's call to the masses (1995) certainly suggests that television's power to communicate is both immense *and* fragile – in view of its dependency on the complicity of its audience.

Whilst Goodlad's research may demonstrate that popular drama engages with prevailing social issues of the day and their resolution, his argument falls short of any discussion of the political domain. Popular drama may well have an agenda-setting function, in ways which are analogous to news broadcasting but Goodlad does not identify the specific

similarities which may be said to exist between the presentation of news and drama, in terms of politics, ideology or representation. In looking at social issues, Goodlad's study collapses all aspects of civic life into the cultural, without considering the realm of political ideas and the conflict which arises through political debate. What is *useful* to note here, however is the assertion that popular television drama may have an important social function, which has gone largely unrecognised. Film Studies on the other hand has long enjoyed a reputation for analysing the symbiotic relationship between representation and reality. John Hill (1986) concludes that film does much more than

> "reproduce dominant ideological attitudes and assumptions of the period. [ ] the films were themselves active in the construction of ideological meanings and with results that were often less consistent and coherent than the 'dominant ideology thesis' may sometimes be taken to imply." (Hill 1986:178)

Such conclusions stress the need to take very seriously even the most seemingly ephemeral media texts, because of their proximity to an imaginary real which ultimately draws upon the experience of their audiences.

Goodlad's conclusions regarding the conservative tendency of popular drama do on his own admission, stem largely from his perception of the commercial pressures imposed on theatre production. By comparison, television drama has had to face far fewer pressures partly because of its status on British television, and partly owing to the ways in which television companies have been able to export drama serials overseas[6]. The question which needs to be asked is how television drama represents the negotiation of dominant consensual views and therefore how it participates in the creation and dissemination of hegemonic ideas. In light of the apparent diversity of dramatic presentations, does drama provide an alternative space within which dominant ideas and values come under scrutiny. How reliant are we upon our social and cultural media consumption for our understanding of the political sphere? Is it possible to examine the production of television drama over a period of considerable political change in Britain, in order to ascertain the relative successes

and failures of drama to explore those political changes? Do John Hill's findings offer scope for the investigation of television dramas which like his examples from the 1950s, aim to manufacture a degree of social realism?

In the case of a particular set of political discourses, which we may broadly term "Thatcherism", to what extent did popular drama on television convey the prevailing political ideas of the period, and contribute to their articulation, rejection or acceptance within the community at large?

Sociological enquiry into drama has a long and well-established tradition in the study of literature, linking the consumption of texts with the dissemination of cultural ideas. Literature has long been associated with the articulation of public concerns, to the extent whereby such texts become in themselves historical references[7]. Similarly a sociology of drama emerged in the 1970's (Burns 1973, Hall 1979) which tentatively sought to embrace the 'new' medium of television but which proved to be a piecemeal effort. However starting with the work of Paget and Goodlad, we can begin to move the discussion away from the theatre toward television production and beyond documentary toward mainstream drama production.

The role of the mass media as agents of the dominant social and political order has been well rehearsed within the field of Media Studies (Hall 1977, Deacon and Golding 1994, Philo 1995) and it is from such a cultural materialist position that I now wish to examine the question of agency in relation to realism and representation. Cultural materialism suggests that modern culture is the product and process of human agency operating within economic and political structures which in turn shape the evolution of institutions which house and protect those elements of culture deemed to be worthwhile and meaningful. In other words culture is not an abstract term but one that reflects the political and ideological substance of achievements in areas as diverse as sport, art, media, commerce and politics. Understanding the material basis for the production of culture necessarily means

recognising the extent to which culture is the product of complex and diverse relations involving politics, economics and ideology.

Paget's statement that naturalism has become the dominant mode of incorporation within cultural production underlines a theoretical "truth" which few media academics would question. Certainly the debates which emerged in the 1970s within the pages of the highly influential journal *Screen* were concerned to address the problematic of pleasure, given the insistence by MacCabe among others, on the ideologically flawed Hollywood model of film-making, and its appropriation within Western culture. MacCabe's (1974) Janus-like solution to the problem of the Classic Realist Text was to look back at Brechtian alienation and forward to the anti-narratives of Godard. Resonant within his model were the ideas of Althusser and Lacan, which effectively renounced pleasure as no more than fantasy. This argument perhaps owes something to the work of Laura Mulvey (1975) on male gaze theory, and could be said to characterise much of the dominant film criticism of the period. MacCabe construed intellectual engagement with the radical politics of Godard as preferable to the ideological whimsy of so many Hollywood movies. The Classic Realist Text and its ideological nemesis, the Revolutionary Text are still regarded within film and television drama analysis as the models by which contemporary texts are judged, and found wanting. Other attempts to construct a useful model or schema whereby individual texts may be analysed within a cultural materialist frame of reference[8], are equally occupied with questions of realism and the extent to which a viewing audience is lured into the ideological trap through the promise of pleasure. Thompson (1991) presents a model for analysis which is as ambitious as it is rigid in its adherence to structures through which a text may be scrutinised and judged legitimate, by which we mean *progressive*, or ideological. It is the *easy* distinction between these categories which needs to be re-examined.

Ideology is self-effacing (MacCabe 1985, Paget 1990), and seeks to naturalise and universalise its own doctrines as the true state of affairs. MacCabe's Classic Realist Text is an example of this process since the meta-discourse effaces its presence, with its insistence

on "the rendering of a reality made more real by the use of aesthetic device" (MacCabe 1985:60). It is not surprising, given the privileged status of Realism within television production, to find any number of texts to be ideological in their construction. However, the form or genre of a given text should not necessarily exclude it from analysis. It may be the case that a programme may yet articulate alternative discourses whilst remaining firmly *within* a generic framework[9].

Turner (1990:212) sums up the contribution of Gramsci's writings to the field of cultural analysis by reminding us that cultural leadership is achieved through negotiation with opposing classes, sectors and values and that such negotiation is constant, shifting, heterogeneous *and just as likely to fail as to succeed.* Despite the perceived dominance of far-Right political views over the last twenty years, the 1987 General Election was widely anticipated as a victory for the Labour Party. However, the very emergence of 'New Labour' and its manifesto commitments to private enterprise suggested that the hegemony was still veering towards the Right and that a Labour Government would not be anxious to overturn the economic 'reforms' of the previous Conservative governments (Labour:16-17). This has become increasingly apparent since Labour's election victory in 1997.

> "In Gramsci's view, popular culture is the battleground upon which dominant views secure hegemony; further it is a permanent battleground, the parameters of which are partly defined by economic conditions, but that specialises in political struggle expressed at an ideological representational level."(Turner 1990:211)

It is this engagement with the political struggle which will form the central focus of the thesis. In concentrating on popular television drama, it is the intention of the thesis to demonstrate whether or not the political domain becomes visible at particular moments and how television's articulation of Thatcherism within the generic boundaries of dramatic Realism has resulted in the incorporation of far-Right political ideas within main-stream popular drama. With reference to the work of Peter Dahlgren (1995) and Hans Verstraeten (1994), the thesis will also seek to explore at a theoretical level the fluidity of popular

representations surrounding Thatcherism. Some drama texts may have a didactic political function but many do not. As both cultural object and cultural agent, the examination of popular television drama may offer a link to understanding the relative importance of political ideas within our cultural life. The expression and treatment of political issues within popular television drama may in turn act as a social indicator of public opinion.

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[1] The publication of Goldhagen's Hitler's Willing Executioners is a case in point.

[2] A murder in the late seventies of a young boy on his paper round. Police believe the boy stumbled upon a burglary. Although the prints found on the boy's bicycle were known by police to be inconsistent with those of the four burglars accused of the murder, this information was never made available to the Defence. Three of the men were later released after a protracted sequence of appeals lasting many years.

[3] Drama schools' curricula now run dual strands in theatre and television acting with less emphasis on film acting. It is recognised within the industry that *tv and* theatre work are common destinations despite the different techniques and skills necessary.

[4] *Harry's Game* and *Brideshead Revisited* have earned critical acclaim, substantial profits and much popularity among overseas audiences.

[5] This refers to American foreign policy of the last twenty years whereby Presidents Reagan, Bush and Clinton have all vowed to defend world freedom against whatever they perceive to be terrorism and political extremism at international level.

[6] The BBC's subsidiary company BBC Enterprises markets BBC products world-wide and has an annual turnover of several million pounds.

[7] The novels of Charles Dickens have for example been often construed as social documents as well as literary achievements.

[8] That which assumes that ideology is a lived reality which permeates cultural production through textual representation of relations of domination and subordination.

[9] I have argued this point before in relation to the drama series *Between the Lines* in "Reading Between the Lines:A Critical Space for Citizenship" *Changing English* vol 2 no.2 1996.

Chapter Two

The Political Domain and Media Research

Movements in Sociology and Cultural Studies over the last twenty five years have resulted in the emergence of two main orthadoxies in terms of media research. The establishment of Birmingham University's Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in 1964, under the directorship of Richard Hoggart was to prove a major turning point in the development of the sociological field, in the establishment of one orthodoxy.

The Working Papers which were to emerge over the next ten years would reflect not only the distinct departure from Anthropology and Sociology in terms of object of study, but also significant shifts in terms of methodologies. Ethnography as undertaken by Paul Willis and Dorothy Hobson would help to redefine the role of the researcher, whilst simultaneously legitimating the choice of working class and female communities over the foreign and the exotic. The central principles of the Centre's early work were clearly influenced by Hoggart's book The Uses of Literacy (1958), aimed as they were at the analysis of working class culture. The Centre was also keen to see this new emerging area of Cultural Studies as a meeting place for different approaches from Literature, Sociology, Psychology and History rather than as a discipline in itself. As Stuart Hall comments the Working Papers constituted an "intellectual intervention" which would "put Cultural Studies on the intellectual map"(1980:15). Under the directorship of Stuart Hall (1969-79), the Centre moved away from subcultures and historical analyses towards a more theoretical position which sought to engage with the mass media as ideological agents in the field of cultural reproduction and communication. At the same time, the importance of race was emerging as another area of investigation. The focus lay increasingly on the role of television as opposed to print media, and in the construction of audiences as ideological subordinates within news (Hall:1980, Connell:1980) and advertising (Winship:1980). Media theorists have since then been largely concerned with so-called 'serious' journalism and political broadcasting, rather than questions concerning the power of fictional or popular texts.

The influence of this departure within Cultural Studies at Birmingham can be seen in the work of the Glasgow University Media Group on television news broadcasting, citing in particular coverage of the dustcart drivers' strike (1976). The research undertaken was at the time, extremely significant not only in its conclusions concerning institutional 'bias', but also in the way that the research provided the terms of reference for so much that has followed.

In his forward to the volume Bad News Richard Hoggart (GUMG 1976) drew attention to the pioneering spirit in which the Glasgow University Media Group contributed a fresh understanding of the constraints of television news broadcasting. He criticised the broadcasters' hostility to the group's findings and urged readers to examine the evidence. The argument that news production is not a neutral activity may seem to be commonplace today, given the increasing sophistication of media theory concerning the power of media texts to code, replicate and disseminate cultural meaning. However the impact of the group's findings cannot be underestimated; this was the first major detailed survey which brought together qualitative methodology and quantitative data, collected over many months. If media research has evolved as more sophisticated, then so too have television programme makers. The apparent high ground occupied by television news - as opposed to the supposedly more partisan reportage of the newspaper industry - provided the starting point for a sequence of enquiries into the 'utopia of neutralism' (GUMG 1976:1) which the researchers argued as being the dominant consensual view of broadcasters and viewers alike.

The volumes which followed - More Bad News (1980) and Really Bad News (1982) effectively gave rise to an iconoclastic tradition which was firmly embedded in the politics of the left, and which had adopted as its focus the reporting of industrial disputes within the nationalised industries, Labour party politics and foreign affairs. The work is impressive in terms of scale and detail though it does raise some fundamental questions concerning political motivation.

Clearly the Group's research arose out of a profound concern with the representation of particular economic groups within the media. Structured within a neo-Marxist

framework, the work recognised the discursive role of news broadcasters as instrumental in *creating*, defining and articulating certain sets of identities in line with governmental positions. This alignment of non-political broadcasters with government positions is consistent with the Althusserian principle of the Ideological State Apparatus, but the risk with this approach is the assumption of false consciousness on the part of the audience. The temptation is to attempt to "lift the veil of ideology" (Buckingham 1990) so that the viewing public might be *rescued* and the broadcasters brought to account.

The success of the Glasgow University Media Group can be measured in part by the degree to which members of the government and the media industries rejected its findings. The vilification of the Group goes beyond the immediate research itself, in an attempt to undermine the entire academic discipline which gave rise to it. Really Bad News cites a BBC memo from 1976 in which it is suggested that an attack might be made against Sociology in general (GUMG 1982:11). One could go further in suggesting that the media's current relationship to the subject area of Media Studies still bears the scars of this earlier encounter. The newspaper industry in particular is keen to slate the subject at every opportunity[1].

The dyadic structure of textual and institutional analysis, proved highly effective in demonstrating hegemonic tendencies within the television medium. Indeed the methods were deemed to be so effective as to determine much of the analysis which was to follow in its wake.

The importance of the Group's work in legitimating this field of enquiry can perhaps be demonstrated in the example of a collection of essays which appeared in 1986. Bending Reality: the State of the Media brought together Stuart Hall, Peter Golding, Loretta Loach, Tony Benn and Richard Keeble amongst many others, and was an ambitious attempt to lay down concerns which had come to be seen as primary amongst writers and researchers in Media Studies and Sociology. This union of academics, left-wing politicians and media professionals can be seen as evidence of the extent to which concerns around the press, public information, equal opportunities and government

controls had assumed centre stage by the mid 1980s. This move from sociological investigation to media representation was further underscored by the involvement of pressure groups and lobbying organisations such as the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom, which in association with Pluto Press, was active in publishing such work. Such work has a political ethos, intent upon redressing what are perceived to be social and economic inequalities. Media research has become politicised. However it is not only in terms of methodology that the GUMG have been so influential, but also in the choice of object. The concentration of research in the field of television and press journalism has simultaneously resulted in the legitimation of Media Studies as a focus of *serious study*, and the denigration of popular cultural texts. Within the school curriculum, the advent of GCSE and A Level Media Studies as primary sites for the deconstruction of news programmes, is evidence of one of the many ways in which the research of the 1970s has served to dictate the terms of reference for the future development of the subject area.

The Hoggart/Williams Cultural Studies approach to political issues is born out of a desire to empower subordinate groups and classes. The methodology commonly associated with the audience research that grew out of this engagement, therefore starts from the basis that audiences are active, visually literate, and discerning (Hall 1980, Hebdige 1979, Morley 1980). In short it is the autonomy of the audience which underpins the framework for the analysis of subject groups, whereas textual or institutional analysis is governed by questions of structure and authority. The inevitable conclusion to be drawn here is that an audience may negotiate popular cultural texts because they are somehow *less complex* than news texts. Does the methodology dictate the object of study or does the object determine the choice of methodology?

Fiske (1987, 1989, 1994) amongst others, has argued against the grain of much left-wing criticism that popular culture affords pleasures through resistance. "Popular culture is progressive not revolutionary" (Fiske 1994:161). Popular cultural texts are 'producerly' in so far as they allow for audience engagement in a discursive mode.

Popular culture does not according to Fiske, deliver social order and attempts to make such clear cut conclusions are rejected by Fiske as too narrow and ultimately "politically disabling" (Fiske 1989:194). However one criticism which can be directed at Fiske's work is the inevitable deflation of the political *into the personal*. This is despite the fact that Fiske is all too aware of the power of ideology within popular cultural texts. Fiske's celebration of the polysemic is shared by Buckingham and Sefton-Green (1994) who have demonstrated the complex means by which young children and teenagers engage with and negotiate television texts in relation to their own social relations and experiences. Such work in classroom observation has lead to some illuminating and controversial questions of how and whether television texts help to reform or inform personal identity. Yet if political discourses are *only* to be read as personal identity choices, then any conception of the public sphere becomes obsolete. To argue for a space which deals with political issues *within* popular culture is to raise the stakes above the too familiar argument that there is an élite bourgeois forum which dictates to the majority. Some attempts have been made along these lines. The audience studies undertaken by Morley (1980) looking at the *Nationwide* audience generated interest and some controversy about the extent to which audience responses could be grouped according to demographic categories.

However the legacy of this 'split thinking' with regard to structure and autonomy stretches on into the 1990s. The prevailing social trend indicates that the public are less awe-struck by their politicians than was formerly the case, yet academic studies have yet to cross the invisible boundary between politics as news and the political as lived experience. Media research into the political domain still tends to insist that it is located within the parameters of news broadcasting and broad sheet journalism.

Whereas the political domain was once firmly rooted in institutions such as Whitehall and the Houses of Parliament, Franklin (1994) cites three key reasons why the political domain has increasingly become the preserve of the mass media. His studies which attempt to deal with overt politics, are comfortably embedded within the discreet practices of newspaper journalists. According to Franklin there has been a palpable

shift in terms of public relations expertise in the presentation of politics, much as one might market a consumer product. In recent years the role of Peter Mandelson has for example been of considerable interest to the media in Britain as he is credited with the job of reinventing the Labour Party's image to ensure election success.

Secondly the media offer an unprecedented number of outlets for politicians and political parties to broadcast their message to the electorate. Franklin quotes Liberal Democrat MP Charles Kennedy:

> " 'programmes like *Have I Got News For You* has a gigantic audience compared with *Waldon, On The Record* or *Newsnight* and you're getting exposure with people who never watch politics.'" (Franklin 1994:16)

It is arguable whether a satirical programme such as *Have I Got News for You,* offers a platform for aspiring politicians, given the show's reputation for highly irreverent although entertaining banter. When politicians do appear, they are frequently at the mercy of the regular team captains Ian Hislop and Paul Merton. The status of Hislop as editor of *Private Eye* and Merton as comedian is an essential element in the programme's dynamic, thus ensuring the elimination of politics as serious discourse. This is not satire. It lacks any political or ethical focus. Nevertheless it is a very popular BBC2 late-night programme. Given the nature of the programme, it may be the case that individual politicians who survive the ordeal, may emerge in the public's eyes as more interesting, witty and likeable. Others less fortunate may be viewed as humourless, boring and bland.[2]

Franklin's third point is that there has been increased access for the media into territories previously screened from the public gaze[3]. The core of Franklin's argument is the increasingly important and influential role of journalists in the articulation and dissemination of political ideas, whether through partisan reportage or the uncritical assimilation of political ideas and themes. Franklin like so many media researchers is looking primarily at news and current affairs broadcasting. The underlying assumption must be that such objects of study provide the clearest examples of political manipulation.

There has been a long-standing debate within the Social Sciences as to how effective the mass media are in the communication of political information, particularly in relation to influencing voting patterns. As early as 1940, American scholars were interested to discover the impact of new technology on the political behaviour of the general public. The earliest study of its kind, undertaken by Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudet (1948) in Eerie County, USA during the Presidential election of 1940 concluded that the mass media (newspapers and radio) were instrumental in two significant ways. The media coverage of the election was important in *activating* latent voting tendencies and in *reinforcing* the message to voters who were already certain about who they would support. The *conversion* capacity of the media was found to be very low - only 8% of voters were found to have switched allegiance during the campaign. Although the use of radio broadcasts by the winning candidate was thought to be highly significant in conveying a more familiar image to the voter, the most important aspect of the research findings would seem to be the method via which much of the political campaign messages were actively circulated. Whereas media exposure was found to be highest among interested voters who had already largely determined their voting preference, it was the role of those individuals which seemed to have the greatest impact. Lazarsfeld et al described this as the "two-step flow hypothesis" whereby opinion from the media circulated to opinion leaders who would then convey this information to less informed/interested parties.

In retrospect it can be seen that the study's findings were highly significant in advancing the social element of communication, serving to debunk the commonly held view that the mass media have an all-pervasive effect upon a vulnerable population.

The results of empirical studies on political activity and exposure to the mass media have been legion though there is little to suggest any sense of homogeneity in the research findings. The bulk of research conducted in the 1970s was concerned with television violence and children and as yet there have been no long-term studies to actually measure the 'effects'.

Early studies in the mass communication of political ideas have tended to assume a common identity for the audience which media audience research, reception theory, not to mention feminism, have done much in recent years to dispel. Easy correlations between viewing and behaviour are no longer accepted within academic discourse, having failed to take account of audience diversity and predisposition. McQuail (1979:10) in his survey of the field comments that the notion of audience "effects" is no longer useful in assessing the complex, not to say polyfunctional role of the mass media in the communication of ideas and opinion. Others such as Katz (1981) and Harrison (1966) see the agenda-setting role of the media as far more substantive, and intractable, given the state of journalistic conventions and the institutional policies which govern them.

Negrine (1996) is also concerned with the problematic relationship between individual media professionals and media organisations involved in the translation and transmission of political information as *news* within the domain of newspaper journalism. He argues the damning extent to which tabloid consumption has overtaken newspaper readership and dismisses the "headline service" of television news as "a very poor substitute" (1996:9). Negrine demonstrates the complex relationship between the citizen and the government in the wake of increased and more sophisticated media awareness and the responsibility which lies with media professionals to convey the complex issues of the day and to bring pressure upon government and non-political organisations. He raises significant questions concerning the skills of media professionals in terms of analytical and political judgement and the difficulty for audiences in identifying competing "truth-claims" (1996:9). He makes clear the very crucial difference between the communication of information and the communication of news, given the pressure on journalists to write a good story (1996:14). Citing the case of Jamie Bulger, Negrine examines the extent to which media articulation of public opinion and the creativity of journalists involved in writing the story succeeded in creating and sustaining a public consensus concerning the events.

Buckingham[4] has also examined the media interest surrounding the events of the trial and way in which public opinion was utilised in order to 'expose' the supposedly malevolent influence of a film upon the boys accused of the murder. Such work clearly grows out of an engagement with journalism as discursive, in terms of creating the conditions for, and possibly also the perimeters within which an informed citizenry may come into being.

According to Habermas (1979, 1998), the public sphere only comes into being when people gather together as public bodies to discuss issues of the day and address public concerns. In ideal terms the realm of social life is where public opinion is formed. But 'public opinion' may itself be a discourse, which has over time come to mean different things. Public opinion is often used as a means to legitimate particular views and concerns which do not actually herald from the wider populace. If, as Habermas states the mass media constitute the chief institutions of the public sphere, then we can at least begin to address particular questions regarding agency and representation. Habermas' theory depends upon the notion of active reasoning by the public. Therefore many discourses may generate public opinion which then shapes and develops political decision making, policy or legislation. However it may also be equally true to say that public opinion in turn impacts upon existing discourses, lending them seemingly greater significance. Therefore the establishment of 'public opinion' on a given topic both implies authority to speak and power to create. This double function of the 'voice' of the public, for which we can sometimes read Nation, good citizens, family, voters or even English speakers, will ultimately have consequences for that other abstract concept within the public sphere, democracy.

Negrine (1996) presents the familiar arguments concerning the creation of public opinion as a kind of amplification of what is already present within the private domain, in addition to that which resonates through the political domain. Citing the work of Hall (1977) and Herbst, he establishes the degree to which the concept of the public remains highly abstract and therefore of potentially little use in terms of establishing the conditions for an informed public citizenry. In discussing the case of newspaper

coverage of the pit closures in 1992, Negrine is only able to conclude that the articulation of 'public opinion' did not relate in any demonstrable way to whatever the public were in fact feeling at that time. In the absence of mori polls, vox pops or interviews with 'the man on the street' such newspaper coverage engages the public view whilst simultaneously "by-passing" (Hall 1978:63) the public.

If the case studies undertaken by Hall and Negrine generate any conclusions, it is surely that the articulation of public opinion within the press demands very little of the public at large and that this in turn negates any possibility of activity on the part of the public until it *becomes an electorate.* Public intervention is limited not only by institutional and organisational structures, but also because of the professional competencies of media workers, who by virtue of their training, involuntarily exclude the very audiences they purport to address, defend and represent. Nevertheless according to Negrine (1996:120) there are moments when the actions of members of the public, nearly always identified as stereotypical groupings[5], will confirm the sense of a public mood which the media may have already been instrumental in creating. This interpenetration of public mood and news creation has serious implications for our political understanding and judgement. This can be demonstrated by the rise of television presenters and journalists such as Richard Littlejohn or Jeremy Paxman. Whether politically partisan or not, in the case of such "opinion leaders" it becomes very difficult to separate their individual contributions to public opinion from their political commentaries and combative, if not gladiatorial repartee.

Dahlgren (1995) argues that there can be no easy equation between the public sphere as a forum where issues of public concern are articulated, and the communication of the idea of a civil society where people *do actually meet* and interact, seek to explore their own sense of personal or political identity, and create communities within and parallel to each other. Looking beyond the realm of newspaper discourse, Dahlgren suggests that the tendency towards media concentration runs counter to some of the attempts to make media more accountable to the public.

> "The more centralised and the more 'massive' the media, the more remote and immune they remain to input from civil society."(1995:155)

The irony here lies in the fact that a national paper as opposed to a regional or local paper will inevitably carry more weight in terms of its editorial voice, and therefore may impact much more powerfully upon civil society at the same time as it remains far removed from the agents within that civil society. At the same time, the paper cannot function without the co-operation of so many agents operating within civil society.

Dahlgren (1995) moves the debate about newspaper journalism further in his argument for a public sphere which admits *television* journalism into "the advocacy domain" (1995:155). He sees television journalism as having enormous responsibility for maintaining the sense of cultural plurality which in different ways embodies the geographical, political and social dimensions of the community at large - whether it be a town, region or nation. The function of "the advocacy domain" is "dialogic" in so far as it is a site for many voices who may contest established views, and compete with one another for dominance. Drawing on the work of Gans, Dahlgren calls for "multiperspective journalism" where truth and reality can be understood as polysemic and dynamic. His definitions of what constitutes journalism, admits many forms and genres from audience debate (Livingstone and Lunt 1994) to more elite current affairs programmes. This 'tolerance' at least admits of the possibility that the construction of a civil society does not occur within a vacuum. Indeed Dahlgren's reference to Walzer (Dahlgren 1995: 6) implies that there is much at stake. Considering the importance of journalism and the power of television, and having already stated the rubric of causality between current affairs broadcasting and the creation of civil society, he makes the significant connection that democracy itself is entirely relational.

> "While Walzer sees this [the social dimension beyond the merely political] as a paradox which he feels unable to fully resolve, one can also see this as an important theoretical step: treating the boundary between the political and the socio-cultural in a fluid manner, seeing it as permeable and contestable, may well prove to be a crucial feature of democracy's future." (1995:6)

Verstraeten has argued forcefully for just such a re-thinking of the public sphere, which would acknowledge the extent to which

> "the entertainment side of the media (which is particularly dominant in television) also plays a major part in transforming the public sphere." (Verstraeten 1994:4)

Despite this assertion, Verstraeten and to a lesser extent Dahlgren, are still reluctant to surrender what I would describe as the 'touchstone' of television news broadcasting (and/or newspaper journalism) to a more pluralistic conception of the political domain. One way of advancing the argument would be to site the political domain within *discourses*, rather than within *genres*. It can only be through a recognition of the permeability of political ideas within culture that one can come to understand the real practice of hegemony and therefore the real implications for political action. To do so however does not imply a *reduction* to the level of the individual, which has been brought about largely through Media and Cultural Studies' flirtation with post modernism.

Popular television can also be politically engaged and engaging. The 'domain of advocacy' proposed by Dahlgren (1995) should not exclude entertainment in the form of drama or comedy as Fiske (1982) has already demonstrated the possibilities of examining popular television as a site of ideological activity. Dahlgren and Verstraeten have persuasively argued for a re-appropriation of the entertainment sphere within the analysis of political communication.

Chantal Mouffe's (1986) contention that democracy exists as dialogue rather than resolution and therefore exhibits a fluid and discursive tendency within political discourse, lends further weight to the argument. Our traditional understanding of the *location* of the political domain can no longer be seen as removed from the mainstream discursive channels of communication exhibited in popular genres such as soap opera, comedy and drama.

Dahlgren quotes Walzer's view that

"civil society stands as "the realm of fragmentation and struggle but also of concrete and authentic solidarities." (1995:6)

If this is indeed the case, similar to that argued by Hall (1979) amongst others, then popular television texts may well open up a space for the discussion of such tensions, particularly in the representation of communities faced with social and political change. As Hall suggests, the media also tell us something of each other and allow us (a kind of) access to groups which we might not otherwise encounter. This may be as true of issue-based drama or situation comedy as it is about nature documentaries and news broadcasts.

In order to make the connection between media texts and the political domain, it is first necessary to discuss the political ideas themselves. The next chapter will therefore examine the main constitutive elements of Thatcherism and its ideological implications.

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[1] The most recent example is an article attacking the Cultural Studies Department at DeMontfort University by the Times newspaper in December 1998.

[2] When Roy Hattersley failed to attend for a recording of the show for the third time, the programme went ahead without him, substituting a tub of lard for the Labour MP. Even with this handicap, Paul Merton went on to win that evening. There is no evidence to suggest that Hattersley's political career has suffered through the incident.

[3] Permission for television broadcasting from the House of Commons was conferred upon the BBC in 1980.

[4] Conference paper given at the Institute of Education, University of London, July 1995 on Child's Play III and the Jamie Bulger case as an example of a modern day moral panic.

[5] Negrine quotes from the Guardian which described Cheltenham protestors over pit closures as "shire toffs transformed into militants." Here demographic awareness is overlaid with class assumptions that do more than merely hint at deeper and more entrenched prejudices.

Chapter Three

What was Thatcherism?

"These two basic points - the formation of a national popular collective will, of which the modern Prince is at one and the same time, the organiser and the active, operative expression; and the intellectual and moral reform - should structure the entire work." (Gramsci 1971:133)

"Thatcherism was never an ideology. It was not a coherent set of principles to be used as a guide to policy. Its personification was a tense, intelligent, bossy woman who shared with millions of Britons a background in upwardly mobile mercantilism." (Jenkins 1995:1)

Gramsci's deliberations on the function and aspiration of Machiavelli's Prince address the fundamental ways in which the leader of any nation must recognise the people as being the major constitutive element of the state and the state's power. Although this would seem to be the very cornerstone of modern democratic practice, the significance of this necessary leap - to lead from within as well as from the front - signals a radical departure in terms of political strategy and statecraft. For Gramsci's purposes, The Prince embodies a historical mythology:

a "concrete phantasy which acts on a dispersed and shattered people to arouse and organise its collective will." (Gramsci 1971:126)

Politics then, does not happen over and above the people, but through their activity as much as through the activity of the leadership. Gramsci's use of The Prince, intended to exemplify the importance of cultural reform fused with economic reform in modern times, concludes with the judgement that a modern leader inevitably operates within a secular mode, superseding the Divine and articulating new formations of social relations which will operate in order to assimilate or exclude actions or practices which do or do not conform to the new order.

The creation of a collective will, the root of any hegemonic project, is likely to be bloodless, since the pincer movement of coercion and consent must be employed in such a way that the dissenters and critics are perceived to be antithetical to the will of the *collective* and not merely to the will of the leadership. The sharing of common values through a joint recognition of class interests between the leader and the led becomes the social cement which seals this ideological bargain.

The shared class interests of Margaret Thatcher and the millions who supported her in the early years, and who continued to support her throughout her terms of office, may be loosely described as economically aspirational. Although Jenkins (1995) implies that the strength of Thatcherism lay in her personal philosophy, other political commentators have suggested that Thatcherism is nothing more than capitalist enterprise, firmly entrenched within dominant post-war political policy. The chief difficulty of reviewing the existing literature on the subject is the absence of any agreed definition of Thatcherism itself. Even Margaret Thatcher herself is rather vague about the term she coined.

> "I joined with Ted Heath in a rethinking of party policy which seemed to foreshadow what we later came to call Thatcherism." (Thatcher 1993:13)

Heath has a rather different recollection, describing Thatcher's 1979 foray into monetarism as "the dogma that barked on the Right." (Heath 1998:574)

Thatcher goes on to suggest that the party manifesto on which Ted Heath was to win the 1970 election, was radically conservative, and yet despite this, it is not *his* government which is remembered for the "revolution so quiet and so total" designed to outlast the term of a single Parliament. [1]

If the view of some left wing critics implies a strong sense of continuity between post-war conservative governments and Thatcherism, then such arguments clearly are firmly rooted in a legacy of economic determinism. The decision of Stuart Hall for example to embrace the lexicon of the market, in order to discuss the popularity of Thatcher politics in the

journal *Marxism Today*, is rejected by Anna Pollert and Simon Clarke. This conflict stems from a disagreement concerning the reality or otherwise of the market.

Hall (1977) reminds us that the market, as well as being the site of ideological labour, is also real. His formulations under the aegis of New Times have been criticised as too much concerned with the problems of the Left: how best to negotiate a return to Labour power whilst accepting the existence of market economics. The dilemma is not one of creating a new leftwing hegemony, but of persuading a future electorate that Labour can run a market economy better that the Conservatives. History has shown us in recent years how that ambition has been realised in the emergence of a New Labour government. Mouffe and Laclau (1996) develop this idea by considering the ways in which hegemonic practices depend upon the construction and articulation of multiple subject positions, and the creation of new subject relations. Hegemony is never solely an economic movement, but crucially reliant upon the interrelation of social identities. Laclau and Mouffe argue that hegemony within modern democracies is articulated through antagonistic practices, where the appearance of multiple and competing subject positions and identities ensures that the winning over of consent is never merely a repetition, but rather a complex multi-sited struggle whereby the "frontiers" of the social become increasingly blurred. In other words it is the fluidity of social identity which enables hegemony to assert an increasingly fixed and legitimate set of subject positions.

> "Converted into organic ideology, liberal-conservatism would construct a new hegemonic articulation through a system of equivalencies which would unify multiple subject positions around an individualist definition of rights and a negative conception of liberty." (Laclau and Mouffe 1996:176)

The premise of this argument lies in a discussion of differences between relations of subordination and relations of oppression. A relation of subordination articulates a conception of subordinated difference whereas a relation of oppression modifies the existing relation of subordination into an antagonistic relationship. This can only come

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about through an external discourse impacting upon the existing relation of subordination. According to the "logic of equivalencies" (Laclau and Mouffe 1996:155) the effects of one discourse are displaced onto others which in turn enables 'new' social movements to come into being. They cite the publication of Mary Wollstonecroft's book The Vindication of the Rights of Women and the French Revolution as two historic moments when the discourses of the rights of the citizen and the rights of man respectively, enabled existing social relations to erupt into antagonistic and therefore potentially liberating social phenomena. Citing the post-war embrace of capitalist relations in the West, Laclacu and Mouffe go further in arguing that the pervasive discourse of capitalism has come to influence and redefine social and political relations as much as the economic. Indeed one could pursue Baudrillard's arguments (Poster 1988) concerning the contingency of social identity upon the economic to the extent that modern individual subjectivity no longer exists except when constituted within the act of consumption.

The increasing 'equality' of consumers expressed within the media and society at large, would seem to militate against any democratic contestation of real inequalities when they arise. What Laclau and Mouffe describe as the proliferation of equality from "equality of opportunity to equality between groups" (Laclau and Mouffe 1996:166) implies a certain crisis for any unifying socialist project, as well as a problem for conservative thinking in the West. The liberty of the individual is a central tenet of conservative political thought. Any democratising tendency yields discursive shifts in terms of different subject relations which exist across all areas of civic life. Yet out of the collapse of totalising socialist strategies (Marx 1848, Lukács 1979) which have tried and failed to inscribe the notion of working class unity, Laclau and Mouffe see positive possibilities. Whilst it is currently the case in western democracies that the mobilisation of discourses informed by the belief in individual freedom has so far been unified within a neo-conservative agenda, *it need not always be the case.* Hence the argument concerning equivalence requires that the left "deepen and expand" the present ideology by articulating different sets of relations. An

appeal to class solidarity is bound to fail because of the current emphasis on social mobility and individual freedom.

Margaret Thatcher's pronouncements on class are indicators of precisely this shift which effectively destabilises the traditional leftwing occupation with class. Instead of 'society', Thatcher offers a vision of community where

> "It's our duty to look after ourselves and then to look to our neighbour."[2]

That the concept of society should become susceptible to such a radical rethink, particularly when faced with the supremacy of the Welfare State, is testimony to the extent to which Thatcherism was so successful in undermining the public's confidence in any socialist alternative.

Larrain argues that Thatcherism was an ideological phenomenon:

> "The values of the market - freedom, equality, property and self-interest - return with a new lease of life." (Morley and Chen 1996:68)

This concern with Marxist perspectives in something which Pollert, Clarke and Larrain (Morley and Chen 1996) find lacking in Hall's New Times analyses. For Larrain, the supremacy of Thatcher's return to an economic policy of free market individualism must necessarily conflate with movements within the superstructure. Increased emphasis on certain institutions and the re-presentation of social identities for example the unemployed as dole scroungers and the increased pay and powers of the police, are indicative of the interpenetration between the economic and the cultural spheres. To paraphrase Larrain (Morley and Chen 1996), it has become necessary for the authoritarian features of Thatcherism to protect the economic freedoms promised by the reintroduction of the market economy.

If we think of Thatcherism as a particular brand of economics then it becomes easier to see how discourses of 'the market' have come to dominant cultural awareness of not just government finances, but local and global trade and industry. Other superstructural shifts

might include the renaming of the 'Department for Employment' as 'Trade and Industry', or attacks on single mothers as a drain on the nation's wealth and morale.

Johnson's (1991) assessment of Thatcher's success in terms of economic policy concludes prosaically with the observation that

> "her interventionist temperament was at odds with her philosophical libertarianism".
>
> (Johnson 1991:253)

Despite detailed examination of the economic policies of the successive Thatcher administrations, the balance of success to failures appears to be even handed. Thatcher herself is less inclined to see her contribution to government as purely economic although the fiscal policy does clearly have far reaching consequences for social policy and vice-versa. Johnson, like many 'unbiased' commentators of the period is in the habit of asserting his judgements of economic success in terms of economic growth, rather than for example economic relations. Therefore the frame of reference is inevitably embedded within post-war paradigms associated with micro and macro politics, industrial productivity and inflation. However the Thatcher legacy in economic terms is judged here as part of a continuing pattern which extends back to the days of Wilson and Heath. Some of the critical differences lie in her attitude to nationalised industries and the fundamental social and civic institutions of the Welfare State, rather than economic growth per se.

Even the now famous era of privatisation owes little to Thatcher's vision. Jenkins (1995) and Kavanagh (1990) disagree fundamentally in their assessment of the inception and strategic role of privatisation. With the benefit of hindsight Thatcher comments that although initially cautious, privatisation was to be fundamental in improving Britain's economic performance. Kavanagh is even more convinced of the dynamic played by privatisation as the most radical break with previous government policy. Jenkins however cites Ridley and Howe as witnesses to Thatcher's hostility to the proposal on the grounds of political opposition from strong lobby groups within the public sector. The sale of British Telecom, the largest floatation of a public service utility in the world at that time was

initiated not so much as a political move but rather as a pragmatic response to the problem of public sector spending. The sale of shares to ordinary people was an unpredicted consequence rather than an objective. It could be argued therefore that privatisation proved to be rather a lucky break for the Conservatives. It is perhaps only since 1987 that privatisation has really acquired the distinction of being a Thatcher policy.

Keith Joseph once famously remarked that it was only in 1974 that he became a Conservative. The separation of Thatcherism from conservatism is marked by the populist drive of legislative and policy change and it is this populist drive which has such a fundamental impact on the cultural life of the nation. Legislation is only part of the story. It is the extent to which Thatcher's successive governments were able to maintain popular support even in times of acute economic crisis which is phenomenal. Laclau and Mouffe (1996) argue persuasively that Thatcher's premiership constituted an historic bloc formation, where Gramsci's theory of organic ideology is made manifest. The test of any left-wing countermovement therefore lies, as discussed above, in its ability to work through and beyond the collective will which has already been established over eighteen years of conservative power.

Jessop, Bonnett, Bromley and Ling (1988) offer six possible approaches to analysing Thatcherism and have underscored the valuable insight that these approaches need not be mutually exclusive. Their studies indicate the necessity of moving away from straightforward political discourse analysis to a multifaceted account of Thatcherism(s).

The thrust of their argument is that it is the very uneven and sometimes contradictory quality of Thatcherism which renders it worthy of analysis. This separates them from the work of political science which they describe as too narrowly concerned with electoral models, and from the work of theorists on the left, notably those concerned with *Marxism Today* and the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, as too reliant upon theories of 'authoritarian populism'. This is perhaps best summarised by Hall's (1993) article for *The Spectator* in which he discusses the Conservative Party's "great move to the Right" drive

to secure power with the common people. As a corollary to that piece Hall wrote a follow-up called "The Great Moving No-Where Show" for a one off edition of *Marxism Today* published in April 1998 which did more than hint at similarities between Blair's New Labour government and Thatcherism.

It is certainly the case that studies within political science can potentially expose gaps between political discourse and the wider cultural experience of those discourses. The paradigms associated with studies of electoral activity (Fothergill and Vincent 1985) for example can yield quantitative data without necessarily exploring the consequences of the actions under scrutiny, nor addressing the motivating factors behind such electoral choices. Indeed it could be argued that such studies reduce Thatcherism to an historical glitch.

Jessop et al's criticisms of Hall's work lie in the disagreement concerning whether a Gramscian formulation of hegemony can be used to address the specifics of a political strategy; that is to say to what extent do we need to examine existing state structures in order to situate Thatcherism as an historical rupture within structural and conjunctural formations of the state. Is it sufficient to debate the relative success or failure of Thatcherism as a political-ideological phenomenon? Hall's replies to Jessop indicate a profound engagement with such questions although they do not entirely satisfy the criticisms made. Hall's discussion of race and gender identity seem to take the discussion further away from a consideration of the issue of structural power, and much more toward the crisis of the left in seeking to renegotiate questions of social identity in the wake of structural shifts and balances.

Jessop et al argue that Hall's analyses are too discrete and cannot yield sufficient understanding of the "compenetration" of social moments. In their view Hall's work fails to take adequate account of the complexity of different influences on the emergence of political ideas or action. Therefore they return to an articulation of the Thatcher phenomenon which situates itself between the ideological-political formations of Hall's work and the more material conditions of social production and state structures.

However, having allowed for a space which might make more sense of Hall's interests in the role of the mass media, Jessop et al conclude that nevertheless any discussion which persists in explaining ideological phenomena in terms of other ideological phenomena is bound to be unsatisfactory.

For the purposes of this investigation however, the space opened up between the notion of hegemonic ideological discourse and internal political contradictions as evidenced in Jessop et al's studies of what they term the "social base" and "state strategy" of Thatcherism, might provide a site for investigation. They do at least concede that study of the mass media maybe justified on the grounds that the failure of parliamentary and state structures to legitimately represent the state might account for the increasingly significant "populist ventriloquism" of the media at the same time as it gives rise to an institutional and material base. For in the absence of a credible Opposition party, could it be argued that the media itself takes on the role of Parliamentary watchdog?

"My economic policy was also intended to be a social policy" (Thatcher 1995:698) Stuart Hall argues that cultural and social relations play a fundamental role in the constitution of any economic system. Identifying the population as potential home owners in a "property owning democracy" (Thatcher 1995:698) is the beginning of a swing to the right which ultimately excludes and disenfranchises those who are unable to acquire and maintain a mortgage. One of the most successful integral aspects of Thatcherism has been the articulation of new discourses of social relations which have impacted powerfully on the lives of the majority[3]. To be resident on a council housing estate becomes indicative of a dangerous apathy. To be unemployed is to be considered inadequate and lazy. To be simultaneously unemployed and reliant on council housing is to be held responsible for the nation's decline, rather than symptomatic of the same. Conservative thinking focuses on the family as the mainstay of society. With its emphasis on heterosexual marriages conservative philosophy effectively marginalises other social alternatives. In some cases specific groups are demonised by political rhetoric. This was certainly the case in the early

nineties when Conservative MPs such as John Redwood launched a sustained attack on single mothers. The identification of 'alien' elements contributes to the creation of a new set of relations which privileges some identities and criminalises others.

Traditionally the cornerstone of conservative idealism, the modern British family is apparently besieged daily by acts of violence, immorality and cynicism - the most notable example of depravity being the so-called rise of the single mother. The now familiar spectre of the single mother (still in her teens, unemployed and living in state provided housing) is a useful icon of failure, to be held up as a warning to other presumptuous individuals. The single mother breaks all taboos and therefore epitomises neatly all that Thatcherism despises and fears the most. The rejection of family values, lack of moral fibre, state dependency and above all the "security of tenure" which the single mother supposedly enjoys, have conspired to make her the target of repeated political attacks during the eighties and early nineties. Her failure to earn and her state provided accommodation are the basic reasons for her demonisation by the far Right.

> "Council housing is the worst source of immobility. Many large council estates bring together people who are out of work but enjoy the security of tenure at subsidised rents. They not only have every incentive to stay where they are: they mutually reinforce each other's passivity and undermine each other's initiative."
> (Thatcher 1995:671)

Thatcher's passionate belief in home ownership as "socially desirable" is the starting point for radical reform within the benefits system, local government, taxation and mortgage relief and by extension, the Welfare State. With the sale of council housing during the 1980s she achieved two objectives; a reduction in the powers of local government and another move toward the de-stabilising of the principle of supply according to need. The creation of a market-led housing economy would be central to the creation of an enterprise culture.

The 1980 Housing Act gave council tenants of three years standing the right to buy. The forced sale of council housing would seemingly generate much needed cash reserves for those local authorities, in order to restore inner city estates which had suffered from previous budget cuts, and help to alleviate the growing problem of homelessness. However as Jenkins (1995) points out, the Chancellor's subsequent moves to level out this new avenue of spending, ensured that councils not only were obliged to give up a large portion to the Treasury to pay off existing debts, but were also curbed by a number of statutory provisions so that ultimately it would be Whitehall that decided how councils might dispose of their income.

Thatcher's attitude to local government can best be surmised by a survey of housing reforms which were proposed and enacted as legislation over the period 1980-1988. More than one million people would take advantage of these new rights of ownership by December 1988. Statistics from 1985 show that two hundred and seven thousand council property sales were made in 1982 alone. That represents an increase of 39% on figures from 1979. Removing the traditional source of revenue and effectively pocketing the proceeds from the sale, not only broke the contract between council as landlord and the tenant but also centralised more power within the remit of Whitehall. Jenkins argues that the right to buy was a "political crusade" (Jenkins 1995:177) and that Thatcher was not concerned with either the fiscal or planning consequences of the action. It was never going to be a money-spinning idea. The financial repercussions were to increase government spending rather than reduce it. Furthermore the increase in interest rates was to undermine the move toward the dream of a nation of mortgagees, and to render many hundreds of thousands of home-owners homeless and debt -ridden in the years that followed. As Ted Heath put it, "Until the late 1980s, nobody had even heard of negative equity." (Heath 1998:591). Thatcher does not mention it all.

The sense of personal powerful leadership is one aspect of the debate which goes largely uncontested. Harris (1989) describes in some detail the mannerisms of the premier.

"Her voice was refined, her appearance was elegant, her manner cool and calm, but the commonsense and basic values she expressed came from the grocer's daughter." (Harris 1989:87)

What is lacking in Harris' account is the snobbery which Thatcher experienced as the daughter of a tradesman. Thatcher herself makes a virtue of her humble origins by claiming that not only did her father instil in her the acute necessity of balancing the books, but also a wider appreciation of the "complex romance of international trade" (1995:11). This early love affair with commerce does tend to overlook the exploitative economic policies of empire. Thatcher is quite correct in her assessment that these early influences were to give her "the ideal mental outlook" for the development of her politics in adult life. This pre-occupation with trade and commerce was to be a feature of her thesis when she addressed housewives all over the country on the necessity of keeping a tight grip on the household budget. It could be argued however that it was as much the sense of hostility expressed by the more traditional elements of the Conservative Party to her lower middle class up-bringing that spurred her forward, as her belief in her own certainty. What becomes clear from the many memoirs since published, is the extent to which her policy decisions and those of Cabinet have been the result of profound personal beliefs and expectations. It is commonly agreed for example that the purpose of the successive governments was to limit the extent to which government intervened in the lives of the average citizen. She shared with Heath the conviction that collectivist politics had gone too far for too long. What is debatable is the extent to which she succeeded in that ambition and the consequences of her governments' legislation. This begs the question as to whether "consensus politics" (Kavanagh 1990) ever actually existed, and might lead to a discussion as to the degree to which government intervention has in fact increased through successive attempts on Thatcher's part to centralise control. The establishment of QANGOs[4], the dissolution of local government powers, and moves to cap local spending would all seem

to provide evidence of what Jenkins (1996) refers to in the subtitle of his book as the "Tory nationalisation of Britain".

Phillips (1993) theorises a relationship between rhetoric as discourse and the micro-process of everyday speech, in an attempt to gauge the degree to which Thatcherite discourse has penetrated into the language of individual language users, within and beyond the political domain. Her discussion and use of the term "themesong" as a particular type of rhetoric which comes to permeate other discourses demonstrates the potential for language analysis across socio-political domains, as well as showing through empirical studies how Hall's abstract concept of Thatcherite hegemony might be analysed in concrete terms. (Phillips 1993)

> "The analysis of the language in which people talk about politics provides an alternative route to an understanding of the attempt of Thatcherism to gain hegemony." ((Phillips 1993:11)

A tension arises between Phillips' criticisms of Gramsci for denying

> "the individual independence of thought by locating the origin of common-sense in the philosophy of the elite" (Phillips 1993:55)

and the degree of intentionality which she ascribes to the discourse of Thatcherism. Returning to Laclau and Mouffe's discussion of equivalence, a discourse such as Thatcherism may impact upon existing discourses and therefore create new sets of antagonistic relations. Even admitting the creativity of the individual language users would not necessarily suggest that common-sense becomes the preserve of the individual without the initial discursive impulse. Without that discursive intervention there can be no public debate. Phillips' studies of Thatcherite language at Conservative party conferences and in Cabinet papers demonstrates a top-down (trickledown) approach. Whilst her analyses of members of the public's speech before and after indicates the degree to which certain "themesongs" have been taken up, she is at pains to locate these findings within a paradigm of individual creativity, and choice.

"Some indications have been found that the discourse of Thatcherism has spread across the socio-political domains, that a type of rhetoric played a part in this process and that the discourse of Thatcherism has been transformed by the creative acts of individual language users." (Phillips 1993:451)

Where studies have appeared they are almost exclusively concerned with issues of social policy - most acutely within a framework which highlights the inequities of dismantling the post-war infrastructure. In so far as any consensual view can be said to exist, commentators on the left and the right tend to foreground issues of social policy as discrete from the means by which such policies become widely operated and understood by the electorate. Whether or not Thatcherism was an *inevitable* consequence of post-war settlement, there seems to be sufficient evidence for arguing that the Thatcher administrations constituted a sufficiently radical approach to the economy and trade and industry as to engender considerable debate from both left-wing and right-wing analysts. The social engineering of Thatcherism cannot readily be separated from the legislative moves against local government and state-subsidised housing. This in turn led to significant change in the condition and climate of employment over the nineteen eighties. The creation of an enterprise culture may have been the dream but the reality of unemployment would tarnish any economic achievements that were to come.

However before we can look in detail at the impact of legislative change and political rhetoric on television texts of the time, we must turn to the problem of discourse as a means of conveying political ideas from one sphere of influence to another.

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[1] Ted Heath speaking at the Conservative Party Conference in October 1974.

[2] Thatcher is often misquoted as having said "there's no such thing as society." The fuller version appears above and is taken from her memoirs (1995) p626.

[3] It is worth noting here that the introduction of the Community Charge in favour of council rates has opened up a gap between the population at large and the electoral majority. The collection of Community Charge on the basis of the information contained on the electoral role has proved highly controversial.

[4] Quasi Autonomous Non-Governmental Organisation. Members are usually appointed by central government, as opposed to local councils which are elected.

Chapter Four

Television Drama, Discourse and the Contingency of Realism

How do we begin to talk about political ideas as discourses? Where does a political discourse cease operating as polemic in order to become an established common sense proposition? Wittgenstein's Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus (1995:3) establishes the inherent problems of discovering the limits of discourse. His search for the integral building structures of logical language lead him to create a method based on the identification of illogical semantic constructions. By attempting to map out the illogical permutations of language Wittgenstein hoped to deduce the perfect conditions for demonstrating how language operates to signify meaning. Building on Kant's separation of metaphysical thinking from contingent fact, his attempts to trace the elements of language resulted in failure because he was only able to chart the limits of language from inside the logical space of language statements. The only way to prove that limits exist would be to transgress them. His later work Philosophical Investigations (1997) clarifies his position that there can be no independent objective points of support beyond human thought and speech. Put simply, our language determines our reality. According to Pears (1986), Wittgenstein was obliged to conclude that description is the only possible activity, since language affords too much variety to make the question of essential common elements either relevant or interesting.

In the hands of Richard Rorty this philosophical position is given more concrete purpose. He argues that the power of language is its creative capacity for redescription and metaphor. Rorty (1989) points to the world as largely indifferent to our ability to describe it therefore we should look to language as contingent: there is no such thing as intrinsic human nature - only our own linguistic endeavours to endlessly redescribe and therefore re-invent ourselves according to the shifting patterns of metaphor which arise through political, cultural or social necessity. Rorty argues that truth is contingent upon language;

the creation of new vocabularies is what Rorty prescribes for the articulation of new and different *realities*.

Bahktin's work on heteroglossia is equally important to the argument of this chapter, as his thesis proclaims that meaning is *to an extent* historically, politically and socially contingent. In "Discourse and the Novel" Bakhtin argues

"Thus at any given moment of its historical existence, language is heteroglot from top to bottom: it represents the co-existence of socio-ideological contradictions between the present and the past, between differing epochs of the past, between different socio-ideological groups in the present, between tendencies, schools, circles and so forth, all given a bodily form. These 'languages' of heteroglossia intersect each other in a variety of ways, forming new socially typifying 'languages'." (Bakhtin 1994:291)

But language itself is of course also part of everyday discourse. "Languages live a real life, they struggle and evolve in an environment of social heteroglossia" (1994:292) as the property of many speakers and of course in particular that of the novelist who will employ these languages. Both Bakhtin and Williams (1971) show us that language is not neutral, suffused as it is by the accents, overtones, and intentions of language users:

"All words have the 'taste' of a profession, a genre, a tendency, a party, a particular work, a particular person, a generation, an age group, the day and hour. [ ] Language is not a neutral medium that passes freely and easily into the private property of the speaker's intentions; it is populated - overpopulated - with the intentions of others." (1994:294)

The degree of intentionality on the part of language user is another issue which needs to be considered. At one level the novelist who attempts to convey the feelings and thoughts of a character does so with the intention of displaying, as far as possible the language of a person in reality, although governed by other novelistic conventions such as the use of soliloquy, internal monologue or stream of consciousness. In allocating particular speech

patterns, accents or stylistic markers to a character, the novelist may intentionally describe an individual whilst simultaneously s/he may inadvertently malign or elevate a social group, profession, class or race. The individual character functions not only in relation to the diegesis as a character, but over the passage of time may come to embody a whole nation or class. In short an individual representation may take on the burden of a collective identity.

What is true of language in one arena of cultural production, the novel, may also be true of others. The location of social history no longer lies with the novelists and historians. In this latter part of the twentieth century television and its dramatic stories provide the prime site for the articulation and circulation of 'truths' concerning our social, political and cultural life. The accumulation of individual representations may over a period assume the dimensions of a general truth, particularly where the conventions of television are so keenly aligned with the modality of naturalistic acting, lighting and mise-en scene. History has always been particularly susceptible to dramatisation. Shakespeare's Richard III has proved far more instructive in sustaining the popular myth of Richard's malevolence than any scholarly biography.

Television drama is predicated on realism and this suggests the need on the part of television producers to mold stories to topical and contemporary situations.

The dramatic element of television suggests topicality - making drama out of new and interesting circumstances. Topicality would be the reason for a drama series focusing on a political situation, the creation of certain situations for example, bombings, police actions in Ireland, etc. However realism is linked more subtly to the construction of the diegesis: for example in MacCabe's (1974) meta-discourse which "takes as read" the world in which the drama unfolds. It is the diegetic construction which implicitly conveys common understandings or assumptions about society, the role of men and women, social and cultural norms; many of these ideas contain within them the seed of political convictions - what kind of society are we living in? What is considered to be desirable behaviour? What is considered to be anti-social activity? What are the norms?

Dramatic texts rely upon the seeming objectivity/neutrality of their diegetic construction. Barthes' cultural or referential code

> "refers to the general area of cultural and historical knowledges; it ransacks a whole series of contemporary sciences and ideologies and weaves them into the text. The political and economic situation in France [ ] the list proliferates endlessly. [ ] It must be emphasised that it is not a question of what Balzac's audience knew, but their understanding of the positions from which knowledge was to be produced. What is significant about the references is that they are understood as references to accepted knowledges. They thus figure a position of knowledge which is occupied by both text and reader."(MacCabe 1970:139)

Applying this notion to television drama, it can be seen that in the construction of the diegesis, much depends upon the audience recognising the truth of "accepted knowledges". It is also necessary that the movement between what is generally known and true be sutured seamlessly into the mise-en-scene so as not to disrupt the plausibility or authenticity of the plot. As with Bakhtin's discussion of language the (re)creation of truths about the political, economic or social health of a society is therefore not merely an artistic exercise in realism but one resonant with ideological considerations. The success or failure of a television drama does not rest solely on the presentation of characters and plot but on the degree to which the diegetic setting appears naturalistic. In other words the ability of the diegesis to mask its own conditions of production is the marker of authenticity so highly prized by television producers, critics and audiences.

The analysis of political discourse has been largely concerned with the presentation of political arguments as incidences of rhetoric. Such case study analyses contribute to our shared understanding of how overt political speech acts are formulated according to pre-existing modalities, contexts and discourses. However this concentration on specific "public affairs media" (Fairclough 1995) implies a certain level of dislocation from the wider conceptualisations of politics into which political speech must inevitably dissolve in

order to achieve understanding and acceptance. Such a negotiation between the arenas of public political life as evidenced within the Houses of Parliament or political interviews, and popular culture as expressed through television drama or newspaper features, can be described in terms of a *common cultural currency*. The acquisition of cultural currency is essential for any discourse political or otherwise, if it is to have any long term impact on the conduct of a given society. The continued exercise of power on the behalf of successive Conservative governments needs to be examined as a phenomenon of cultural hegemony. The popularity of Margaret Thatcher as Prime Minister steadily diminished over the period under consideration and yet Thatcherite policy came to dominate social activity from broadcasting to banking. The political ideas of government come to reside within the cultural sphere. To speak in terms of ideology is to offer a framework for examining media texts as incidences of political activity. This is not however to suggest that television operates in tandem with political rhetoric but rather that the realm of the political must necessarily impact upon the popular elements of the public sphere in order to achieve any lasting impression upon society.

The achievement of *discourse* within the public sphere is *the essential corollary to the articulation of a political ideal*. It is the very discursive function of the mass media which therefore merits attention, rather than the rhetorical play of political speeches.

The work of Michel Foucault provides a point of departure for considering the ways in which we might approach objects as texts to be understood as epistemic phenomena.

> "Order is, at one and the same time, that which is given in things as their inner law, and the hidden network that determines the way they confront one another, and also that which has no existence except in the grid created by a glance, an examination, a language; and it is only in the blank spaces of this grid that order manifests itself in depth as though already there, waiting in silence for the moment of its expression."
> (1994:xx)

Foucault's deliberations on the phenomenon of order reveal the paradox implicit in cultural, media or linguistic analysis. According to Foucault the order of things has no intrinsic meaning beyond its own circumference. Yet simultaneously it is the order which appears to provide the internal logic and therefore is at once both expressive and determining. In seeking to unravel or reveal the ways in which things become or achieve the status of taxonomy, one must first pose the question, to what extent do our own methods create the object in question? Whilst Foucault's works offer tantalising glimpses of precisely these problem areas, the engagement with discourse analysis remains frustrated. In order to attempt an analysis of this type it will be necessary to use other means in order to explore how a particular discourse achieves unity, and how it may also fragment when it happens upon another discourse. This discussion of taxonomy may appear to privilege systems over individuals. It is worth remembering however that hegemony itself is a term which belies the complex, disordered and even at times violent nature of consent. Hegemony in the context of this thesis contains within it the necessity for aggressive resistance on the part of individuals, groups, political parties and swathes of the electorate.

In focussing upon a televisual text, it will be necessary to employ a combination of semiotic and language analysis in the service of an investigation into the discourses of Thatcherism as they inform the construction of cultural codes within television drama. In appropriating the term "discourse" the intention is to site a textual analysis within an institutional context, drawing upon some of the factors of its production and the political climate in which the fictional text is situated. As described, the work constitutes one small part of a much larger investigation into the cultural implications of political ideas when channelled through popular media texts.

Representations are both rooted in particular circumstances of their production and of their dissemination. There would of course be many factors influencing the appearance of representations such as for example the women's movement and yet we still find sexual stereotyping across all areas of the media and indeed, despite progress in many areas of

employment, it is still no surprise to find many women in underpaid jobs, and the vast majority of managerial and administrative positions of responsibility in the hands of men.

The Free Cinema Movement's profound concern with issues of social and moral justice has had an enormous influence on the development of film and television drama in Britain. John Hill (1986) argues forcefully that Free Cinema's claim to sever the links with middle class élitist cultural production must be subjected to the scrutiny of its own conventions.

> "Realist innovations thus take place in a kind of dialectic with what has gone before, underwriting their own appeal to be uncovering reality by exposing the artificiality and conventionality of what has passed for reality previously." (1986:127)

As Hill goes on to argue, the decision of the British 'new wave' to take advantage of the latest technology and leave behind the moribund conditions of studio production was essential to the creation of the new 'realism'. Although the directors within the movement were not without their critics, the adherence to a political goal; that of representing working-class communities was underpinned by the desire to utilise film as a poetic and expressive medium (Lindsey Anderson's 1986 television documentary on British Cinema). However despite the realist claims on the part of producers and directors, the media of film and television are essentially bound up with questions of aesthetic judgement, artistry and composition in the service of meaning.

The influence of Free Cinema can be observed in the development of television drama - the creation of single plays and serials to satisfy an emergent audience with little access to the theatre and small experience of literature. Early episodes of *Coronation Street* suggest a movement away from the experience of the theatre toward that of television audiences themselves. The apparent democratisation of the televisual image underlines other important social changes including the increased ownership of television sets and the necessity of creating audiences to fund the independent television network and later, Channel 4.

Given the prevalence of social issues in the construction of drama on television, period or costume drama is permissible only in so far as it can be seen to have relevance for a modern audience. The rash of Jane Austen dramas in recent years could be seen as a comment on contemporary sexual mores, each adaptation, an excavation of issues resonant within its own era. To return briefly to Hill's comment on the iconoclastic necessity of Free Cinema's manifesto, the apparent return to costume drama in the eighties and nineties need not be viewed as a concession to the drive toward realism in television production. It is yet one more example of the ontological demands of the medium to promote itself as more *realistic* even than the novel itself. This predilection for realism need not however interfere with an audience's pleasure. Few members of the television audience can wholly suspend their disbelief. This is particularly true of more recent productions where it is not uncommon to see documentaries appearing about the making of the drama itself[1]. The broad nature of publicity[2] in the promotion of television productions further ensures that the actors become as familiar to audiences as the original characters.

Andrew Davidson's 1995 adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice* places much emphasis on Elizabeth Bennet's independence of mind rather than her crushing economic situation. In the hands of a late twentieth century dramatist the story is re-interpreted through the prism of romance as a superior discourse to notions of economy, moral behaviour or social order. To suggest that Elizabeth's conquest of Mr Darcy is motivated by economic considerations would be to unsettle our conventional view of female liberation. Twentieth century feminism still permits the possibility of romance between the sexes. The early nineteenth century context for the production of the novel however suggests contemporary readers would have been much more sensible of the requirements of marriage as social contract for the security of land and lineage[3] and the importance of decorum and duty for the maintenance of a civil society.

Whereas *Pride and Prejudice* was billed as costume drama, Channel 4's drama serial *Mosley* (1998) based on the life of the British fascist is historical drama. It could be argued

that the timing of this portrait owes something to the recent debates surrounding New Labour policy and the legacy of John Major's government. This particular piece of television history, in its representation of 1929 Labour party politics in Opposition offers some telling parallels between Ramsey MacDonald's strategic support for Tory policy with New Labour's adoption of John Major's budgets. In this instance the text offers the viewer a mediated yet uncontested parallel with which to engage with the political situation as it stood in 1998. By comparison the 1982 serial drama *Brideshead Revisited* deals with the 1929 General Strike as an issue of class warfare where the workers are perceived as faceless thugs[4].

The representation of workers is mostly absent from the dramatisation of Evelyn Waugh's novel and one could argue that since the novel itself does not concern itself with working class life, neither should the television adaptation. However the choice of such a text and its adaptation for a contemporary audience bears further investigation. *Brideshead Revisited* is one of a long list of productions loosely termed "heritage" during the 1980s and early 1990s which operate discursively as a celebration of class privilege and decadent immorality.

Immobilised by a minor injury in 1943 Waugh wrote *Brideshead* in the expectation that the landed aristocracy would soon cease to hold sway over the national culture. It is with some irony then that Waugh's novel should be picked over at a time of great economic change where the country house has achieved a new status as theme park for the upwardly-mobile suburban family. Waugh's discovery in the late fifties that his novel had turned out to be "a panegyric preached over an empty coffin" foreshadowed the re-emergence of his own novel as evidence of a rise in popularity of our own national culture's obsession with values of a bygone age[5]. The production of the novel as television drama thus serves to mask the real conditions of economic policy at the same time as it promotes an historical account of the 1920s and 1930s without reference to the economic and political infrastructures which supported it. In other words both the production itself and the timing

of its 'rediscovery' for a 1980s audience can be read as contingent upon a *contemporary* understanding of the role and function of the aristocratic family in its country seat. Waugh's novel was designed to celebrate in part the end of an era of class power which had for centuries been manifested in the visual iconography of the English country house. The 1980s heritage industry was able to re-package the English country house and indeed the novel itself as evidence of the continued exercise of power on the behalf of aristocratic families. The essence of the heritage industry is its fidelity to period detail at the expense of socio-political context. Ironically much of England's heritage has only become the property of the nation because of the crippling costs of maintenance. The nation is therefore *required* to admire such antique expressions of class rule in order to preserve them.

> "Many visitors to the countryside take it for granted that *our* great country houses are now museums. That is a mistake which needs to be challenged, but at least it indicates how deeply ingrained is the belief that such houses, with their collections, gardens and landscape, deserve to be preserved *for the public good.*" (my italics) Editorial page39, *Country Life* 12 November 1998.

We must be encouraged to see the property of the élite as *our* property. And we continue to pay for that privilege.

Brideshead Revisited is a television drama rich in detail and lavish in production values. The serial has been adapted in keeping with the tenets of 1980s heritage culture, whereby socio-political contexts are considered redundant. The evacuation of the Flyte family during the course of the drama anticipates the necessary evacuation of aristocratic families nation-wide on Tuesdays and Thursdays to make way for flocks of heritage visitors. The aristocratic family is thus obliged to adopt the role of curator, in acceding to the demands of a public educated by television and in search of an historical experience. It is doubtful whether such a television production would generate a mass audience today, given the cultural swing away from the politics of acquisition to one of New Labour Puritanism.

To talk of realism in isolation, is therefore to fail to engage with the very problematic issue posed by modern media productions which necessarily engage with the contemporary and are by implication contingent upon our shared understanding of cultural and political references.

To return to the notion of the cultural or referential code, the construction of the diegesis is dependent upon the degree to which the audience is convinced of the text's authenticity. The necessary "suspension of disbelief" required by realism must exist in balance with the conviction that there are truths beyond debate. In other words the contemporary audience for a television drama will need to be persuaded of two things; that the actions and behaviours of the characters are possible and that the ideologies or belief systems motivating the protagonists are recognisably true both as instances of character and as evidence of the reality in which the audience lives. What goes largely unspoken is the language of common acceptance: the common sense understanding shared by viewer and text about the relation of, for example, location to politics and character to education.

After the success of *Between the Lines* Tony Garnett returned in 1996 with the drama serial *This Life* for BBC2. This was to be an interesting change of format for Garnett, not least for the youth of the actors and the innovative camerawork and extreme naturalism. The roving camera was a convention already familiar to viewers of *NYPD Blue*, a highly successful late-night American police series. The naturalistic style of acting, realistic use of colourful language and location filming might be described as a kind of television minimalism now associated with drama and documentary from the 1990s. The use of film as opposed to video and the camerawork in particular has become synonymous with programmes seeking to imitate the fly-on-the-wall documentary style. The most compelling 'borrowing' of this technique has been Garnett's own production *The Cops* (1998) which successfully combined the elements of drama serial, soap opera and documentary.

This Life achieved an extraordinary success considering its late evening BBC2 scheduling and the initially small numbers of viewers. It quickly acquired the distinction of cult

viewing and achieved considerable publicity in its last few weeks within the pages of the broadsheets. Fêted by the media as symptomatic of the age, the show attracted favourable comment. *The Guardian Review* from 3 August 1997 stated:

> "If you don't know who Milly, Egg and Ferdy are by now, you really should stay in more. Britain's best crinoline-free tv series has made somebodies of a bunch of drama students."

It has since launched the careers of four of the eight ensemble actors: Ramon Tikaram who has taken the lead in the West End production of *Jesus Christ Superstar,* Jack Davenport who starred in C4's *Ultraviolet* (1998), Natasha Little who starred as Becky Sharp in *Vanity Fair* (1998) and most significant of all Danielle Nardini who has had starring roles in major drama serials *Big Women* (1998) and *Undercover Heart* (1998). At the close of the second series, the BBC quickly repeated the first series and in the two years which have followed the show has been broadcast on BBC1, BBC2 and UK Gold.

But despite acclaim, *This Life* is still a good example of how characters are structured according to class, ethnicity and gender. This seemingly radical text depends upon clichéd and conservative alignments of class to education and geography. Egg is from the North of England, working class, mad about football and easy going. Miles went to public school, has a father in the City, expresses homophobic and sexist attitudes and is unable to convey his feelings for Anna, his sometime lover. She is from a broken home in Glasgow; sexy, feisty, aggressive and tarty. Her background and the frenetic energy she displays in building her career as a barrister suggests a desire to escape from alcohol addiction in the family though within the second series it becomes clear that Anna is yet another television Scot with a drinking problem. Milly is Asian and the fact of her ethnicity only becomes an issue when a visitor to the house tries to converse with her in Punjabi. She is embarrassed by this incident: it positions her as an alien when everything else suggests a good, hardworking middle class *English* girl. Warren is Welsh and homosexual. In as much as the writers of the drama have sought to portray homosexuality as a fact of life beyond the

capital, the depiction of Warren's absent family as small-minded and parochial accedes to the common view that homosexuality is somehow not indigenous to the nation. Warren himself is in therapy and conforms to the stereotypical notion of the gay man: promiscuous, sensitive, engaged in risky and illegal sexual encounters and unable to sustain a relationship.

What are the likely consequences of such representations if unchecked and unquestioned: what is at stake? The background presentation of society through television drama is one area of cultural production likely to escape the eye of media theorists unless the drama itself is of a polemical nature[6]. Whilst not polemical in the strictest sense, *This Life* was created as a television soap drama[7] which would examine youth culture in the post-Thatcher nineties. Most obvious in the depiction of five upwardly mobile career professionals is their complete disinterest in politics or religion and their total commitment to money, hedonism and work. The anti-politics of *This Life* can be read as a comment on the profound impact of recent political administrations on young people who have never known anything other than Conservative government. In such circumstances it can come as no surprise to find a generation of young people whose only effective intervention in the political sphere can be expressed in terms of land conservation, vegetarianism and animal rights. Such political activity can hold little appeal for urban twenty-somethings trying to carve out careers in Chambers. Although the drama is located within the capital there are very few scenes which utilise the scenic potential of London. The landscape of the drama is emotional and personal, sited in the shared house in Southwark, Milly's office of solicitors, Chambers at Temple and (in the second series) Egg's cafe. The dramatisation of the workplace may not in itself seem unusual but the reliance of the characters on work is an aspect of modern British culture which requires further exploration.

Hill describes MacCabe's thesis concerning the Classic Realist Text as "an epistemology of the visible" (1986:61). This seems to imply that television realism is dependent upon what is seen rather than what is known by audiences. According to this argument the ideological

or political sources of social injustice or immoral action remain masked from the audience. We are left then with the promise of spectacle rather than meaning.

This approach moves in parallel with Baudrillard's thesis with regard to the television as a space for communicating its own conception of a universe with its own ontology. Taking a particular example of television spectacle, Baudrillard (1986) suggests in his discussion of the media coverage of a terrorist bomb explosion, that television itself is an unstable medium. The implosion of meaning which results when a bomb explodes is the clearest example of the divergence of media broadcasting from the object of that practice (the pursuit of the real). Terrorism is represented without referent; it is "the purest form of the spectacular". An exploding bomb cannot be anticipated and all attempts to 'report' on such an event must rely on broadcasting conventions which have evolved in order to cope with the absence of referent. Broadcasters then typically mask such elisions through the production of graphics, on the spot witness testimonies and re-constructions. Of course a television re-construction belies its own ability to replicate an incident which cannot be replicated except through fiction and the use of pyrotechnics.

When Baudrillard writes of the desire of the media to "exterminate them [the terrorists] with meaning" it is precisely because of the overwhelming need to label these actions as those of the Other and to destroy it. Since a terrorist bombing will never be invited to fit within the prevailing discourses of political activity, democracy, freedom, leadership, struggle, it remains necessary to wipe out alternative readings of the act . The terrorist bomb therefore has no meaning since it is denied any political historical context except that of contemporary Whitehall configurations, and in media terms must be explored as irrational tokenism on the part of an unknown and unknowable Other. To accept the possibility of commonality between mainland victims of the bombing and terrorist perpetrators would be to acknowledge some semblance of equality, or even invite questions about motivation. This is contrary to the demands of the dominant, since it is the power to reduce and annihilate

opposition through the construction of difference and Otherness that is vital to consensus government, even where that government in fact lacks the consensus of the majority.

An act of terrorist violence is frequently described as futile, random, arbitrary, senseless and meaningless although the reality must surely be very different. Terrorist acts are carefully planned and targeted. Far from lacking meaning, they have meaning thrust upon them. However the meaning of an explosion is a disruption. A terrorist explosion is a rupture in the daily orderliness of the news which has already been organised in futures meetings within the major broadcasting institutions. It therefore more truly fits the common-sense understanding of news that most people would have. Yet it is an event which characteristically is divorced from its physical manifestation. It is an event which is so unpredictable that the reportage of it can never get close to the reality of the event itself - the split second when something which was whole became something fragmented and destroyed. Therefore in Baudrillard's terms, a terrorist event only comes to exist in the realm of the hyper-real because it is divorced from its original signifiers. In their absence, the media rush in to fill the void in order to superimpose meaning where there apparently is none.

In parallel with Baudrillard's arguments, the metadiscourse that MacCabe discusses in relation to the classic realist text (1977) describes the apparent neutrality of the text which by concealing its discursive presence, offers the smooth resolution of meaning without contradiction. This is one vital aspect of television news reportage. The need for totality and homogeneity would appear to be as much a feature of modernist discourse as it is of the classic realist textual position. If the classic realist text can indeed be shown to be a key feature of modernist communicative practice, it follows that television news broadcasting, as with programme making in general has much in common with Enlightenment concerns. Just as the classic realist text masks the conditions of its own production by denying the presence of the camera and maintaining its own position of knowledge, so the medium of television continually asserts its own position as mediator of reality. Television, it could be

argued is a *modern* rather than *post-modern* medium. In short, television's content is integral to its form. As a mass medium television attempts to replicate reality *and* explain it to us so that we as audiences feel party to the major events in the world. Television news in particular exists as a continual narrative which must order, articulate, hypothesise and demonstrate the reality of the world beyond. Television news becomes the last great Enlightenment project, the object of which is the essential reduction of the confusion "out there" to commonsensical and reasonable narrative understanding. Television news

"can never be adequate to the multifarious nature of the real" (1974:8)

because it is wholly dependent upon those modernist ideals of knowledge as rational, quantifiable, empirical and absolute. As such television news can never wholly reconcile us to the reality of our everyday existence because it cannot engage in *struggle*. It cannot position itself on one side or another of any debate or issue without balancing the argument. Caught in this ontological dilemma, television which is predicated on the idea of spectacle is still accorded the honour of verisimilitude over virtually every other medium. The demands of the conventions of television for authority and disinterest however, challenges television's ability to connect with the real. Increasingly it is television's own self-referential quality which becomes the dominant means by which this truth-reality claim appears to receive public endorsement.

Harry's Game, a fictional drama by Gerald Seymour exemplifies this point. Seymour's experience as an ITN reporter gives credence to a fictional programme, which could never be attributed to the reality of a live broadcast.

> "Fiction it may be, but the story... is in reality a theme Gerald Seymour knows only too well from his frequent visits to Northern Ireland reporting on the 'troubles' for News at Ten." [8]

Fiction is accorded more status than news coverage because it offers more than a twenty second report. At the same time, the fictional is lent credibility precisely because the author has been in the business of producing twenty second soundbite reports. Seymour is

credited with expert knowledge because of his visits to the place where the "troubles", a media shorthand for Anglo-Irish politics, have been played out over many years. What is significantly absent from the text and the publicity that helped to sell it world-wide is the knowledge of people who do not *visit* the province, but who *live* there. The drama masks the conflict here which could be described in Foucauldian terms as that between established and subjugated knowledges. It is the wisdom of the armed services which dominates the text, providing the context and the motivation for the action. Both diegetically and in terms of its production, *Harry's Game* is a drama which privileges English Establishment accounts of "the Troubles" over the testimony of Irish residents, politicians, characters and viewers.

It is important to the commercial success of the programme that the story is understood and accepted within the dominant discourse of "the Troubles", rather than for example the realm of the domestic, communal or personal. In order that the drama serial be popular with predominantly English audiences, the text must be orientated within familiar discourses so that the viewer is not turned off by the prospect of either a complicated history or a political polemic. The discourse of "the Troubles" solves both problems. The discourse itself is sufficiently familiar so that the audience can expect a programme with tension and topicality. At the same time that "the Troubles" provides a political context, it effectively removes the need for any more serious political debate. Everyone understands that the very term "the Troubles" describes a situation which has baffled successive governments for generations. Consequently it offers an ideal space for drama since it can engage human interest, provide spectacle, appear topical and effectively remove the necessity for political explanation, understanding or persuasion.

The text claims an authorial presence which distinguishes it from the more conventional television drama serial. Television is usually seen as more collaborative than film texts, given the different institutional production process. More recently there has been a growing tendency on the part of television companies to designate programmes by author. We have

come to recognise for example Lynda La Plante's *Prime Suspect* and *The Governor*, Jimmy McGovern's *The Lakes* and Agatha Christie's *Poirot*. The debate over film authorship is well documented. The tendency of such debates is to ascribe greater quality to 'authored' texts. In the case of *Harry's Game*, the aim appears to be the blurring of the distinctions between fiction (entertainment) and news actuality. Gerald Seymour's identification is therefore key to understanding the ways in which the text is meant to be understood and the implications in terms of its contribution to the increasing number of texts which deal with narratives framed by the activities of paramilitary groups. However it is very unusual for texts to centre on the activity of groups other than the IRA. One explanation for this may be the fact that the vast majority of programmes are made by English or American companies. This Anglo-centricism must be viewed in relation to any analysis.

What is the goal of fictional dramatisations of terrorist violence, given that authenticity of a sort, is ascribed priority over creativity? The television account offers the chance for us to witness an expanded narrative of the violence, and possibly to contextualise it within other narratives.

The fictional account serves two functions. Firstly it reduces the power of the real by characterising the terrorist agent as an individual, divorced from political and historical context, and made recognisable within the televisual or filmic diegesis. This is the face of the terrorist. The terror becomes more focussed, less truly terrifying once s/he is revealed to us. Paradoxically the second function of the drama is to make us aware of the ubiquitous danger we face. Once the terrorist is given form and shape, it becomes clear that anyone could be a suspect. The man in the mackintosh on the tube, or the stranger with the Irish brogue. At one level the anxiety of our encounter with the fictive can be confined within the narrative. We could even describe this as deferred anxiety since the expectation of violence is (often) yet to be satisfied by the narrative. If this is the case then what we learn in the

course of viewing is not transferable to the real world. We are no more able to anticipate, avoid or identify an act of terrorism or the terrorist, than before.

Terrorism is designed to inflict terror in a populace. The chief weapon of terrorism is surprise. Acts of terrorism therefore appear to be random. Because of this confusion between what is in fact highly organised but has all the appearance of a random event, news institutions are obliged to always report the consequences of a terrorist action in terms of how it disrupts what would *otherwise have been a perfectly ordinary day*. In news terms the aim is to convey the essence of the event rather than the act itself. Often television news attempts to represent via computer graphics the journey of the terrorist or assailant and to stress the consequential disruption to travel, services, public life. It is unthinkable for a television programme to reconstruct the bomb itself in the style of *Crimewatch* for example, in an effort to jog the memory of potential witnesses. We are therefore offered a condensed 'flash' narrative. The television documentary may seek to address questions of Irish history but rarely seeks to evaluate the terrorist act itself, particularly where civilian casualties are involved.

We therefore have a situation where the real event defies mediasation and the media's ability to explain the event to us. A terrorist act depends upon the activities of many individuals, contingent upon the anonymity of those individuals. Terrorism has no face and no name until potentially after the event, hence the need to name the Aldwych terrorist-victim (O'Brien) and the necessary disavowal on the part of his grieving parents in Ireland. The terror is predicated simultaneously on the knowledge that at any moment something *may happen*, and the belief that *nothing will happen* here at this moment.

> "But reality is not, it becomes - and to become the participation of thought is needed. [ ] And consciousness [ ] is a necessary, indispensable, integral part of that process of becoming." (Lukács 1971:204)

Lukács discusses the contingency of reality upon our *perception* of reality. In media terms, once the terrorist explosion has occurred, the media begin to impose meaning. The front

page assumes the parameters within which the event becomes meaningful to us. Understood within the context of news, the act of terrorism is reconstructed as rupture to the political narrative, fracturing our sense of the real, even as it is integrated and rationalised within the mediated narratives of commentary and reportage. An act of terrorism then in the Baudrillardian sense, comes into being only after it has occurred. Lukács describes reality as that which we consciously understand. In other words our reality accords with our perception rather than with some idealised objective existence. This holds good in so far as the recognition of the event as within the domain of terrorism, does depend upon the extent to which we negotiate the discourses within which meaning is articulated. To do that, requires conscious thought. We therefore underestimate to our cost the extent of the media's involvement in the ordering and manufacturing of discourses as they relate to such politically sensitive issues as sectarian violence across regional, religious and political divides. Once an event has become authorised by having been reported, it loses its own individual status. It has now been incorporated into the lexicon of a discourse or even many discourses which may well operate in strategically different ways - ways which may well run counter to the intentions of the activists themselves. Individuals may well find themselves 'mis-represented' by media reports because of the prevailing logic of certain discourses at certain times.

In the case of television, the problem of identification is often surmounted in fictional representations by the use of familiar signifiers. The semiotic coding of terrorists in films such as *Patriot Games* (1992) or *The Devil's Own* (1996) appears to simplify processes of recognition and identification, and by implication, simplifies the context for violence. Balaclava helmets and combat uniforms operate as iconic signs of violent intent. Personal vengeance becomes the motivating factor, rather than political change. Once de-politicised, the violence becomes subsumed and 'enjoyed' within the realm of the spectacle. The result is a diminution in terms of real understanding or meaning.

If television has its own ontology, that is to say, the medium, irrespective of generic difference responds in similar fashion to both fictional and 'factual' issues and events, then there is a crucial set of issues at stake in terms of public understanding, and political articulation. If it is the case that the majority of viewers articulate their political understanding of the nation state in relation to fictional products rather than news in isolation, then it may be necessary to give more serious consideration to programming which is typically regarded as ephemeral.

So far we have examined the uses of realism in television drama to mediate issues of differing political significance. What do such works have in common? *Brideshead Revisited* arises out of a dialectic relation with an emerging heritage culture; *Harry's Game* operates discursively to contain the threat of IRA violence within a familiar political trope called "The Troubles"; *This Life* explores the legacy of monolithic government through the eyes of a disenchanted and politically disinterested generation of urban youth. Though these productions may appeal to different audiences, target different experiences and relate to different social, class and geographical locations, they carry within them the trace elements of a society's values, norms, aspirations and fears. This is as true of historical or costume drama as it is of any other, since cultural production, of which television drama is one source, will bear the imprint of its own cultural context, irrespective of generic convention; embodying the social concerns, attitudes and presumptions of the society which made and consumed it.

To explore such media artefacts as evidence of social history is to accept the argument that cultural production is contingent, even though stories and myths may have universal qualities. What can drama which is not overtly concerned with party politics tell us nevertheless about the political culture of a society at any given time? How can such media be part of a political hegemony when their conditions of production are so far removed from the domain of political speech? How does the domain of the political relate to concepts like realism and is resistance to dominant political ideas possible within mainstream

television production? How can we know when politics infuses dramatic representation unless we are aware of all aspects of political thinking; and in such a case why would viewing still remain a pleasure? These questions all tend from a position which recognises that media *texts* are both representative of and constitutive of particular ideological positions. With this in mind, any analysis of texts will need to take account of the political context within which such texts are produced. This does not necessarily confine the analysis to either overtly political texts nor the immediate contexts of production. What it *does* mean however is that the analysis will to a large extent ignore the idiosyncrasies of individuals involved in television production. Although this method of approaching text is not new, there are obvious difficulties in insisting on text as product without reference to the people who make it. In order that such an analysis does not appear too divorced from its origins, the emphasis will be on drawing attention to the wider social and political context in which these television texts found their audiences. Whilst semiotic and discourse analysis are useful in isolating the ways in which ideas, values, attitudes and beliefs come to be crystallised within a text, the methods of analysis must also draw upon some understanding of political ideology.

Let us return to the basic argument. Gramsci reminds us

> "Another proposition of Marx is that a popular conviction often has the same energy as a material force or something of the kind, which is extremely significant." (1971:377)

Such an analysis reinforces Gramsci's argument that ideologies and material forces constitute an "historical bloc" - a social formation with political implications of the most significant kind. Intrinsic to the successful creation and maintenance of the bloc is the relationship between the intellectuals and the ordinary people. A necessary "organic cohesion" (1971:418) must exist between these groups so that the knowledge of the intellectuals and the feeling of the people becomes a shared life where representation becomes a reality. Supposing that any government wished to implement important and far-

reaching social change, the starting point would be legislation, yet the reformation of society would need to be undertaken at a cultural level in order to ensure success without insurrection or tyranny.

The role of the mass media is privileged in its close proximity to government administration, largely in terms of news reportage and current affairs broadcasting. Politicians have long since understood the advantages of media coverage and the necessity of being directly visible to the electorate. But the process of hegemony is cultural rather than political. In seeking to represent and discuss the situation of a society at any given moment it is unsurprising if the media turn to their bureaucratic masters for an official view, before countering with an alternative position. Such an approach will become susceptible to ideological influence since oppositional voices must of necessity diverge from the established view. The construction of such a paradigm leads ultimately to a politics of critique rather than one of criticism since the rules of engagement are not themselves at issue. This we may call the *agenda setting* role of the mass media.

Looking at entertainment genres, it is no less certain that dominant views of political, social or cultural activity should be subject to similar patterns of understanding. Whether work is commissioned or adapted the role of the writer, producer and director remains intrinsically bound up with a desire to connect with an audience, and in so doing to propose a mimetic relation to the life and expectations of the viewing subject. Despite the conventional nature of many drama series, the dominant artistic mode of realism (by which I mean fidelity to both generic tradition and dramatic plausibility) promotes a *causal* relation between actions and events. As such television drama can be said to exist in a particular relation to hegemony because it both draws its nourishment from the freely circulating ideas of the dominant and sustains them through dramatic exploration which can only engage with accepted paradigms. It will be necessary to explore in more detail the operation of discourses within television drama and how these contribute to the maintenance of a political hegemony. Using Barthes' model certain aspects of the cultural code can be traced

back to political interests. But does television drama production ever attempt to redefine the terms of the debate? *House of Cards* (1990) was a particular case in point where a drama serial managed to not only focus the public on an extremely topical issue of the day, but also to an extent, was able to dictate the terms within which the event was later discussed and understood.

House of Cards, dramatised by Andrew Davidson, was based on the novel by Michael Dobbs, a former aide to Margaret Thatcher. The first episode of *House of Cards* was broadcast on 18 November 1990; Thatcher resigned from the office of Prime Minister ten days later. It was already apparent that the leadership was in crisis when Thatcher failed to win a large enough majority in the first ballot on November 20th. To any television producer the timing of these events would have appeared Heaven-sent, as the drama opens with the passing of the PM and the emergence of a new round of Tory infighting leading to a leadership battle which centres around the machinations of Francis Urquhart (FU for short.)

The first scene opens with Francis in his darkened library gazing at a framed photograph of the Premier.

"All good things must come to an end. Even the brightest most glittering reign .."

Television' ability to read the public mood at this important historical moment produced a synthesis of comic fiction and real-life epic which held television viewers enthralled whilst the *two* dramas unfolded on their screens. Henry Collinridge, Margaret's television successor bore a marked likeness in political tone to the new Prime Minister, John Major. In this instance television was able to produce for the British electorate what they had been craving for a number of months - the resignation of Margaret Thatcher. The screening of *House of Cards* provided cathartic relief which would soon reverberate around Parliament itself when she stepped down as Leader of the Conservative Party later that month.

How then does television drama convey prevailing ideas from the political domain and in so doing participate in the maintenance of hegemony? What kind of activity governs the

choice of information deemed essential to the fulfilment of the criterion of plausibility? One hypothesis might be that the generation of dramas on television is governed by a concept of *drama-worthiness* akin to the familiar news-worthy agenda of broadcast and print based news production. If so, this can be tested against a variety of sub-genres such as costume dramatisations, police series or political thrillers. The agenda setting function of the mass media has, as we have seen, been the focus of research by the Glasgow University Media Group. Their research however was confined to the role of television news in particular in its relation to industrial disputes. In seeking to demonstrate a relationship between dramatic fiction and political events or beliefs, the analysis will be concerned with the complexity of viewpoint and the dramatic realisation of issues which go towards *the creation of a stable and normative diegetic code.* In seeking to identify the impact of a particular succession of government administrations upon the representation of British society, it may be more fruitful to concentrate energies on those areas of dramatic interest which are in broad alignment with recognisable government policy aims[9] in relation to employment and the creation of an enterprise culture at the time of their production and how those representations have passed into our collective consciousness as evidence of social history.

In conclusion this chapter has argued that television has its own ontology and that therefore fictional texts are as susceptible to the influence of political and ideological activity as is news broadcasting. In other words television's structures and conventions conflate received knowledge - that which expresses the 'realism' of our society - with political beliefs which have emerged from the political domain. In choosing to focus on selected case studies, it should be possible to demonstrate how much drama texts have in common - how similar they are in terms of the meta discourses which inform each text. Above and beyond the ability and, to an extent, the right of any viewer to decode the meaning from the text, there remains the text itself and the possibility of infinite readings is not actually possible within the boundaries of language which is of necessity a shared activity whether oral or visual. The result is the production of artefacts which, owing to the dominant

ideological practice of realism, may have profound consequences for our understanding of political, social and cultural values, truths and ideals. Television drama is a location for the articulation and *confirmation* of political ideas. The establishment of positions from which audiences can determine the legitimacy or otherwise of statements is part of the work of the referential or cultural code exemplified in dramatic realism. Drama maintains the fiction of an essential congruence with reality; it must in *essence* connect with the experience of the television audience. Ien Ang's study (1985) of television audiences of *Dallas* offers evidence of audience empathy where the apparent gap between fictional characters and audience experience seems so wide and deep. This suggests that whilst realism alone need not be a determining feature of audience pleasure, *empathy* with a character or situation is. Dramatic fictional texts are worthy of analysis because they go beyond the merely topical to embrace ideological assumptions about how we live and work, and how we should be governed. In choosing to examine those serials and plays which deal with the experience of work, there are many elements of political discourse which may go unregarded. The intention of the thesis is therefore to examine in detail a selection of texts which achieved popularity during the Thatcher era, in order to assess their representation of work and unemployment against a backdrop of intense ideological activity. The next chapter will explore methods of analysis in order to discuss in detail the methodology appropriate to this study.

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[1] *Middlemarch* (1994) and *Pride and Prejudice* (1995), have been accompanied by books, CD's and programmes concerning the processes of production.

[2] *TV Times* issued a pin-up of Colin Firth as Mr Darcy

[3] Raymond Williams' observations in The Country and the City chart the complex relation of social class to financial and moral improvement in the novels of Jane Austen (chapter 11).

[4] The programme was broadcast in 1982, two years before the miners' strike which saw the beginning of the end to the coal industry and the destruction of many working class communities in the North. At the time of television production Mrs Thatcher had won the battle for the Falklands and was already into her second administration.

[5] The success of the Thatcher governments' drive toward a heritage culture can be observed in the emergence of museums, films, National Trust properties and exhibitions which offer sanitised versions of Victorian and Edwardian history.

[6] Writers as diverse as Jimmy McGovern (*Hillsborough, Cracker, The Lakes*) or Lynda LaPlante (*Trial and Retribution, Widows*) usually explore concerns with the way in which political issues impact on social

mores. Equally a programme such as *Our Friends in the North* is vested with a desire to represent the state of the nation at different political moments.

[7] Tony Garnett on *This Life*.

[8] Publicity pack from Yorkshire Television

[9] The key elements of Thatcherism.

Chapter Five

Methods of Analysis

Up until this point the thesis has been concerned to identify those elements of political rhetoric and legislative action which we may term as essential to our understanding of 'Thatcherism', particularly in relation to the field of work and its necessary corollary, unemployment. The chief argument of this thesis is that Thatcherism constituted a hegemony which exerted a strong influence on cultural production. The research sets out to demonstrate how political ideas were incorporated into television texts. The thesis will argue that this was achieved not as the result of wilful political manipulation but as a consequence of television's ontological dependency upon the artistic mode of dramatic realism.

In isolating one area of television output during the period of the eighties and early nineties, the analysis of television texts will constitute the main object of the analysis. Through close textual analysis the work aims to draw out and explore the implicit and explicit political content of selected television texts.

According to the arguments concerning the operation of hegemony in Western democracies, such cultural artefacts must bear the imprint of political ideas in order that the dominant political will might achieve a degree of acculturation, and in so doing operate to secure the consent of the majority. This is not meant to imply that television production colludes with political parties in the creation of 'suitable' programmes. Rather, it suggests that television, like any other mass medium is subject to the circulating discourses of the dominant. As with any form of mass culture, the consumption of a television programme dealing explicitly with issues of employment or redundancy is unlikely to demonstrate easy distinctions between dominant and marginal political positions in relation to those issues. Equally the popularity of a media product per se may not offer sufficient proof that an audience shares the political stance of the government of the day, even if that representation could be shown to exhibit clear statements of political opinion. Put simply the process of

viewing demands much more complex and concerted investigation than can be attempted here, and previous efforts to examine the reception of texts by audiences have not succeeded in defining the parameters of viewing experience. It therefore remains a theoretical problem. The twin obstacles to a seemingly straightforward identification of audience reception are *pleasure* and *realism*. However one can know that something is untrue whilst enjoying the realism of the spectacle. Such realism may well be a convention of certain genres. Does pleasure necessitate a suspension of disbelief? Can we enjoy something whilst simultaneously acknowledging its conventionality? Despite Fish's (1989) extreme position on the subject of the reader and his/her relationship to the text, empirical evidence is unable to demonstrate any clear correlation between reader/viewer action and text. This has been most famously the case of research attempting to link screen violence with real crime. Such studies have never satisfactorily established a link of any significance. Without wishing to devalue the importance of reception theory and audience analysis, the focus of this study will be texts themselves.

As Ferguson (1998:86) suggests, media representations emanating from specific discourses often arise from previously existing repertoires. This may account for the often conventional application of dramatic situation to an emerging category of experience, for example redundancy, which then assumes the status of topos. The apparent 'leakage' which occurs between one generic representation and another is further evidence of the speed at which new subject positions, experiences and identities come to be legitimated. A television drama which concentrates on the impact of redundancy on family life for example is never merely speculative. The performative role of drama as a material means of cultural production demands a degree of suture to the normative or dominant culture of our society. Given that such cultural production operates within already existing relations of subordination and dominance, a media artefact will already carry within it the seeds of its own relationship to the dominant - whether it be acquiescence, rejection, support or

ambivalence. It is the state of relations between television texts and the politically dominant discourse of Thatcherism which will constitute the main object of analysis.

In order to pursue such an analysis this work will draw upon the ideas and methods of Bakhtin, Voloshinov[1], Barthes and Foucault. The work of Antonio Gramsci and Stuart Hall has already been discussed in some detail and the concept of hegemony remains central to the argument of the thesis. Bakhtin's insistence on the tensions between social unitary language on the one hand and historical social contexts on the other need not be seen as being at variance with an articulation of hegemony through cultural or media practices. Whereas Gramsci is concerned with the definition of civil society, Bakhtin's emphasis on historical concrete utterances allows for a degree of movement in terms of defining and articulating specific instances of power and discourse in relation to social and political relations. There can after all be no consent without resistance.

"Alongside the centripetal forces, the centrifugal forces of language carry on their uninterrupted work.." (Bakhtin 1994:272)

According to Bakhtin and Voloshinov, the dialogic multiaccentuated capacity of language ensures that closure can only ever be an abstract theoretical phenomenon within Linguistics. In their rebuttal of Sausurrean Linguistics, Bakhtin, Voloshinov and Medvedev situate the study of language forms within the realm of usage. This is most clearly demonstrated in their exploration of utterance and meaning.

"Any true understanding is dialogic in nature" (Morris 1994:11)

since the language user occupies a position in relation to both the evolutionary and ever-changing condition of language (hence diachronic) and simultaneously is party to the historically contingent (synchronic) context of the utterance. To paraphrase, Structuralism cannot account for either the creativity of the individual language user, nor the shifts in meaning and understanding that occur within language over time. Language then is always a response to a former utterance and as such the history of a single utterance may be expressed only in terms of a complex 'chronotopic' (Morris 1994:246) web of intersecting

and colliding elements. Raymond Williams' <u>Keywords</u> (1977) could be seen as a modest attempt to consolidate historical and contemporaneous usage with a view to demonstrating not only the contingency of language but also the ideological purposes to which words may become hostage. It is worth noting however that the Bakhtin group does not explicitly relate language use to ideology in the sense of a relation of dominance to subordination. Rather, as Roberts' glossary (Morris 1994:249) reminds us, the use of the term 'ideology' in their work is more closely aligned with a conception of 'world-view' of any social group. However the analysis undertaken within this thesis will be informed by both a Bakhtinian engagement with text as cultural product *and* a Gramscian sense of the operations of ideology within cultural production. In order to construct a method of investigation which will satisfy both goals, I will in addition be drawing upon the work of Roland Barthes.

As Pam Morris suggests, words

> "offer the most sensitive index of social change. Relations of production, political and social structure determine the discursive forms of social interaction across a multitudinous range of [ ] verbal interactions." (Morris 1994:12)

Moving beyond semantics, the social positioning of the language user is of course also very important in identifying the meaning of a given utterance. Equally Bakhtin is keen to stress the tone, register and inflection of language. In short, the discussion of meaning is contingent upon so many creative activities. Nevertheless, the motivation for utterances is rarely aesthetic. Since it is subject to social determinants the open-ended nature of discourse brings the potential for liberation and subversion as well as oppression. Just as socially dominant groups seek to impose meaning and naturalise the historical context of language use, so other marginal or subordinate groups actively contest this centripetal tendency through *reaccentuating* the word. This oscillation between centripetal and centrifugal action accounts for the fragmenting and stratifying of ideological thinking. Each utterance carries within it the seeds of its own refutation. One need only consider a word like "wicked" to

understand that the diachronic evolution of the term must also be understood synchronically. There is a wide cultural diversity in terms of its meaning in relation to different social or generational groups. To be described as "wicked" is to be simultaneously good and bad depending on context, intonation and audience. In one sense the term "wicked" is archaic, reminiscent of Biblical speech. It is simultaneously a throwback to an earlier age which sought to distinguish individuals on a moral basis and a contemporary signal of approval - particularly where the individual or activity concerned is demonstrating qualities which exceed the expectations of the observer. The appropriation of an existing word into a contrary lexicon of meaning is evidence of a subcultural resistance which is formally annotated within the dictionary as the difference between standard usage and common usage or slang. In a different circumstance the creative use of 'new' word can also constitute evidence of the diachronic and the synchronic. 'Blairism' is a commonly used word within media reportage and refers to ideas, beliefs and practices associated with New Labour's first Prime Minister. The formulation of Blair*ism* is historically and politically contingent upon our understanding of Thatcherism. Without Thatcher*ism* there could be no Blair*ism*. This is true linguistically as much as it is true ideologically. In as much as the politics of Blair needed to be seen as sufficiently *other* in order to secure a Leftwing electoral victory, the *maintenance* of power appears to depend upon the extent to which Blairism is approximate to Thatcherism. What might be described as

> "The happy combination of continuity without the style" (Evans and Taylor 1996:247)[2]

Thatcherism has become an established authoritative term for encapsulating the style, action and policies of a particular prime minister over a period in British history whereas the term Blairism is currently favoured by journalists as a mildly pejorative shorthand for describing the burgeoning policies and actions of a relatively new government. We can deduce that the word Blairism operates in centripetal fashion *at present* but it is entirely possible that it may emerge as a centrifugal force in years to come. Words then cannot be divorced from their

historical, political or cultural contexts without some loss of understanding of the nuances of meaning. The dictionary is located centrally in ideological terms within the realm of the centripetal and is locked into an epistemic dilemma from which it cannot escape. The systematic labour of dictionary classification must always be retrospective and therefore obsolete at the moment of completion. The drive toward closure as exemplified in the creation of the dictionary is essential to the *maintenance* of language, both in the sense of preserving a chronological record *and* as a method of remedy and repair. Yet paradoxically the dictionary exists in glorious isolation from the creative daily utterances which are so essential to maintaining language as a dynamic, versatile and necessary corollary to our ever-evolving social condition.

Of course it is also true that dominant discourses impact on language to a greater or lesser extent. In his discussion of Dostoevsky's writing Bakhtin argues that capitalism had such an impact on Russian society as to create a new epoch or 'borderzone'.

"Such dialogic moments are always charged with the potential of creative change."
(Morris 1994:18)

It would seem logical to argue from this standpoint that the emergence of a new discourse out of a pre-existing lexicon of terms should spawn a new wave of cultural creative production not just in terms of dominant iconography but also within the realm of the subordinate. If we apply these criteria to the emergence of Thatcherism then it follows that the multiaccentuated potential of terms such as enterprise, privatisation, market economy, entrepreneur and free society may well have given rise to some creative responses. The tracing of cultural production in relation to a socio-political phenomenon such as Thatcherism (itself a response to existing stratifications of post-war labour relations) demands that cognisance be taken of a variety of creative representations, not just those overtly concerned with economic reportage. Without wishing to undermine the "epochal continuity" (Morris 1994:18) of the Bakhtin school's work, one could argue that *everything* preceding the emergence of Thatcherism was organically material to the

evolution of radical conservatism in the late nineteen seventies and beyond. It is however the synchronic implications over a relatively short space of time which will be the focus of this study. Therefore the centripetal discourses of Thatcherism will be explored in relation to the centrifugal tendencies occurring within the creative borderzone of popular culture, namely television drama. By moving back and forth between texts and the contexts of their production, this study will hope to raise some significant issues concerning the discursive interplay between dominant political ideas and their re-articulation within popular culture.

> "A word in the mouth of a particular individual person is the product of the living interaction of social forces." (Morris 1994:58)

Voloshinov's statement underlines the necessity for an inquiry based upon a politicised understanding of the term 'ideology'. The pressure exerted by the dominant to fix signs as immutable in the face of opposition, no matter how innocent has *real* consequences above and beyond the romantic notion of discursive *play*. There is much at stake. Class struggle is the central motivation for the continuous dispute over meaning. Whilst monologic discourse is always relativized by its dialogic contact with another social position, this acts as both the brake and the spur to the continued exercise of power. It is surely the case that the struggle for meaning is at its most furious when the apparent *truth* of our understanding is under greatest threat.

It may at first seem peculiar if not perverse to attempt to yoke together the philosophies of the Bakhtin school with those of the Structuralist Roland Barthes. What unites these analysts of language is their concern with the naturalising tendency of signification or meaning. In Barthes' terms, it is the ability of realist language to create its own mythology which leads to an exploration of the ideological consequences of text. In particular the notion of anchorage is specified as an important element in the production of visual text (whether written or predominantly image based).

It is the naturalising tendency of ideology to convert culture into nature which Barthes identifies as one of the prime characteristics of what he terms the cultural or referential code

(Barthes 1974:206). The essay *S/Z* is an extended account of the analysis of Balzac's *Sarrasine* drawing upon five 'codes'[3] or systems of structuring as a means of understanding the integrated and intertextual life of this or any literary text. The cultural or referential code refers to that within the text which in essence exists beyond it. That is to say it describes those elements of knowledge expressed as universal truths within a given society.

> "What is the use of trying to reconstruct a cultural code, since the regulations
>
> governing it are never more than a *prospect* (to quote Poussin)?" (Barthes 1974:97)

The rhetorical question is soon answered; the cultural code is ideological in that it

> "inverts its class origin (scholastic and social) into a natural reference" (Barthes
>
> 1974:97)

masking the conditions of its own production and contributing to the creation of myth. Thus Barthes concludes

> "'Life' then in the classic text, becomes a nauseating mixture of common opinions,
>
> a smothering layer of received ideas" (Barthes 1974:206)

which is endlessly repeated throughout literature producing stereotypical figures and "a kind of scientific vulgate" (Barthes 1974:97)

The cultural or reference code operates therefore as a kind of meta-discourse where ideological propositions masquerade as natural truths. Barthes adds that a description of the cultural code may prove valuable in eventually coming to understand the values of a particular epoch (1974:97). It is with this goal in mind that we now turn to the concept of *heteroglossia*.

According to Bakhtin (1994:271-4) all novelist texts are part of the heteroglot language of literary discourse. As such they manifest the concerns, values and desires of a particular social group. Simultaneously the novel functions as an environment for the representation and flow of many heteroglot languages; professional, social, political, generational etc. Just as the novel stratifies language so it also creates subject positions through which each

heteroglot language manifests itself. To analyse the meaning of any utterance within a novel therefore requires that the reader appreciate the status, condition and context of the speaker within the novel. The novelist performs in this way in ventriloquist fashion (Bakhtin 1994:299); both imitating the speech of language users *outside* the novel *and* imparting his or her own speech and subject position through the mechanism of the novel's characters.

> "When heteroglossia enters the novel it becomes subject to an artistic reworking [ ] that expresses the differentiated socio-ideological position of the author amid the heteroglossia of his epoch." (Bakhtin 1994:300)

In his discussion of Dickens (1994:301-330) Bakhtin demonstrates how the authorial voice, simultaneously narratively omniscient *and* temporal, achieves longevity, even authority as a speaker from the past. To push this point further, the novelistic voice exists as a record of the past, even beyond that of the historian precisely because the novel is deemed to exist in a relation to its social context which somehow *defies* its own conditions of production. Is Dickens to be counted foremost as novelist, journalist, reformer or historian? To read his work as novelistic is to misunderstand the sequential importance of each episode, written to be consumed in cliff-hanger magazine issues by an eager public. His trade as a journalist cannot easily be separated from his desire to see social reform, and in playing out the arguments before a public readership, the infinite detail of lower-middle and working class experience proved an efficient means to convince public opinion of the need for reform.

It is surely the case that the more distanced we become from an epoch the more reliant we become on the cultural production which spawned it in order to make value judgements. The cultural codes which inform this creative work are no less evident within the meagrest form of popular culture, than in the supposedly élite forms of art to be found in the gallery. If anything it is the ephemeral nature of such work - particularly that which escapes the institutional eye of the contemporary historian or curator which inevitably becomes the focus of a later generation's curiosity and wonder. It is often the banal, that which was so

common as to preclude historical interest which now becomes collectable, catalogued and preserved as evidence of the everyday-ness of the epoch which it has come to embody. The reason for this is double-edged. That which is most common and most easily replaced is most readily disposed of as having no intrinsic value. Consequently that which has been so readily discarded later becomes most rare, once a society has evolved into its next stage of consumption. It is ironic therefore that the quality of uniqueness in an individual work of art should ultimately be shared with a banal (possibly even mass-produced) artefact of common usage. This does not imply equality of value, for aesthetics also has an economic value. However it does mean that the gallery or the museum must make space for the glass cabinet containing the charcoal sketch as well as the oil masterpiece, the plastic beaker as well as the sculptured nude.

This is no less true of comics, television shows, magazines, B-movies and other media ephemera which carry the rhetorical markers of their own epoch. Such media are also heteroglot in their relation to the social groups which made them, and shot through with dialogic languages of heteroglossia, where multiple subject positions compete, collide and intersect to produce meaning. The individual characters within a television production provide the ventriloquist locus for the articulation of different social groups; their views, values, assumptions, levels of understanding and relative positions of power within society. We can begin to see how utilising the work of the Bakhtin circle, with particular emphasis on heteroglossia and the dialogic nature of language, it becomes possible to construct a hypothesis concerning the nature of television drama as a medium of social relations. Television programmes which explicitly situate the experience of a central protagonist or group within a dramatic narrative will need to harness the *ideologies*[4] of certain groups in order to convey a convincing (but not necessarily true) representation to the audience. Authenticity and accuracy are not the same in all cases. A regional accent may be authentic in that it is spoken by an actor who can imitate or speak the dialect and intonation, yet it may not be true to suggest that such language users are geographically

fixed. Equally, certain generalised concepts of regional accent will act as shorthand for other differences for example class and intellect. Other factors governing the representation of different social groups may be communicated through racial, behavioural, gendered or visual characteristics. The use of stereotyping is therefore not by any means restricted to the practice of the novel. The status of identifiable groups within the television drama is often of diegetic, intertextual and extra-diegetic importance although the complexity of 'reading' such information is usually a seamless activity for the experienced viewer. The portrayal of an individual police officer will inevitably draw upon the assumed knowledge of the viewer from his or her experience of other police officers on television. Simultaneously the representation must authenticate to a degree the expectation of the viewer should they encounter a real police officer. Furthermore such representation must reflect back to the professional group (in this case the police force) a portrayal which is neither injurious nor incommensurate with their own experience of the job, status or public image. Herein also lies the issue of subject position. Whereas Bakhtin and Voloshinov discuss the meaning of utterances as incidences of conversation, Barthes' cultural code offers the potential for an examination of those elements within the culture which whilst part of the fabric of authenticity, go largely unchecked. It is the very *invisibility* of certain discourses which persist into our popular memory as natural phenomena rather than as political or ideological constructions. What is assumed on the part of the television producer as being *beyond explanation* may be as fruitful a location for analysis as looking at what *is* said. Whereas in novelistic discourse the assumed common-sense logic of the authorial voice appears axiomatic, in television what is unexplained may assume the guise of a visual metaphor, or perhaps a silence. An *absence* of speech, subject position, representation or visual icon may be more telling than what is given to us.

We have already seen how the cultural code utilised by Barthes approximates the mythologising tendency of bourgeois ideology in the creative arts. We need now to extend the discussion in order to think about the broader political implications of ideology

particularly as they relate to media representation. Where subject positions exist it must logically ensue that language is subject to relations of power. Foucault's consideration of discourse[5] is best understand by his case-study books (1973, 1975, 1984) where he is engaged in scholarly investigation of ancient texts. The institutionalisation of certain philosophical practices and the collaborative activity of scholars, philosophers, writers, and historians signals in part the importance of the academic in its broadest sense in reifying and thus determining to a large extent the philosophical enquiries which would come to inform our modern day practices of medicine, the law and religion. It is the nature of discourse then to not only describe and articulate but also to inscribe and formulate. Discourse in the Foucauldian sense then has much to do with the articulation of power and indeed necessitates a careful examination when one chooses to consider the operations of language (of which discourse may partially, not exclusively comprise a vital element).

One of the chief arguments against Foucault lies in his refusal to either prescribe or define the rules of discursive practice. In one sense, to do so would fundamentally undermine his entire modus operandi. His work is more concerned with the description of the transformations themselves which occur over time, examining

> "the rules which come into play in the very existence of such [scientific] discourse."
>
> (1970:xiv)

In other words he is not at pains to apportion *blame* by identifying the culprits of ideological practice. Indeed he rejects entirely the phenomenological approach whereby a researcher can stand back from the conditions and circumstances of discourse production. He prefers to think in terms of "discursive practices" (1970:xiv) which might be described as the process of struggle. A discursive practice might be interpreted as meaning the *process* by which certain ideas come to achieve dominance within a given field of social behaviour or thought. Foucault dismisses the notion that the observer of discourse is located in a place which is removed from the influence of discourse. Furthermore his words suggest that we should be more attentive to the degree of oscillation between

observer and object. Foucault makes the point that it is foolish to claim that one's own discourse is somehow "independent of conditions and rules" of which one is "largely unaware" (1970:xiv).

Resting for the moment on Foucault's example of the encyclopaedia, we can see how order effaces itself. The Chinese encyclopaedia offers the example of the "unthinkable space" (1970:xvii) of language. Only within the encyclopaedia would such an array of different objects "meet" on the same site. This leads to the question of what constitutes the proper function of knowledge. Foucault suggests that at one time it lay in interpretation, citing Montaigne's comment:

> "There is more work in interpreting interpretations than in interpreting things; and more books about books than on any other subject; we do nothing but write glosses on one another."(1970:41)

But Foucault goes on to assert that such activity is historically contingent upon the perceived role of scholarship in the C16th as concerned to unmask the truth of everything. Hence this era of commentary gives rise to an endless proliferation of language, since the work of commentary can never be exhausted. In order to escape the ontological problems of endless explication, Foucault suggests a method of enquiry which focuses on the *discontinuities* which erupt, that account for shifts in thinking across historical and geographical trajectories.

> "Discontinuity - the fact that within the space of a few years a culture sometimes ceases to think as it had been thinking up till then and begins to think other things in a new way - probably begins with an erosion from outside, from that space which is, for thought, on the other side, but which it has never ceased to think from the very beginning." (1970:50)

This argument supposes that there is no thought which does not already exist, which we can link back to the example of the order of words or objects. Disappointingly Foucault goes on to suggest that the time is not right yet to pursue this question of how thinking

changes over a period, but rather that we should accept the role of discontinuity for the moment as a working proposition. Here we can begin to see parallel continuities with Bakhtin's notion of language as inherently dialogic. Similarly just as Foucault describes the operations of power through structures and relations rather than as an object, so Bakhtin's formulation of the operations of heteroglossia suggest that the struggle for dominance is the struggle for meaning. By contrast Rorty (1995) is content to regard this movement in thinking not in ideological terms, but as a more naturally occurring, even organic phenomenon.

> "Europe did not *decide* to accept the idiom of Romantic poetry , or of socialist politics [ ] that sort of shift was no more an act of will than it was a result of argument. Rather, Europe gradually lost the habit of using certain words and gradually acquired the habit of using others." (Rorty 1995:6)

Rorty acknowledges the debt to Thomas Kuhn[6], but the end result is disingenuous, divorced from any conception of social and political relations. Kuhn is much more concerned with the strategic uses of power within the scientific community, and the cultural consequences of scientific discourse than Rorty leads us to believe. Paul Feyerabend describes the romantic idea of scientific progress as one where the old system of facts must more often than not be entirely dismissed in the light of a new theory.

> "Professor Kuhn and I have used the term 'incommensurability' to characterise this situation. Moving from classical mechanics to relativity we do not count the old facts and add new facts to them, we start counting all over again and therefore cannot talk of quantitative progress." (1987:156)

The positions of Kuhn and Feyerabend have much more in common with that of Foucault. Discontinuity or incommensurability therefore suggest that the emergence of new discourses is as a result of profound struggle, located not merely at the linguistic level, but embedded within the linguistic practice of certain social classes. It logically also supposes that every linguistic expression of a 'new' mode of thinking or perception of the world is

always already possible. Language's endless capacity for renewal is an issue which we will come to later. At this point however, we run the risk of implying that all this activity somehow takes place beyond the scope of human agency. Having established the contingency of language, power and discourse, we will now turn to the area of discourse analysis, in order to draw the focus back to a consideration of actual texts and the question of agency.

There is much debate within the field of discourse analysis[7] concerning the role of human agency and how best to articulate analyses which arise out of many different disciplines. Van Dijk argues (1997:2) that the practice of discourse analysis has come to embrace so many different areas of engagement where language can no longer be viewed as substantively the provenance of Linguistics.

> "It is typically the task of discourse studies to provide *integrated* descriptions of these three main dimensions of discourse: how does language use influence beliefs and interaction, or vice versa, how do aspects of interaction influence how people speak, or how do beliefs control language use and interaction?" (Van Dijk 1997:2)

Any useful analysis of text (written or oral) must engage with the wider institutional and societal *values* and ideologies which inform social practice in general. Discourse therefore suggests motivation and meaning, and such studies are more inclined to seek the implications for language uses rather than be content to identify and codify the structural elements of language in an abstract theoretical sense. The sociological analysis of text has emerged in recent years as the dominant mode of discourse study, as exemplified in the work of Fairclough (1995), van Dijk (1997), Kress (1988), Cook (1992) and de Beaugrande (1997). As one of the most prolific and in some regards, controversial practitioners of discourse analysis, van Dijk's own work demonstrates the trajectory of interest which has shifted from grammar to psychology to social communication to most recently cognitive analysis[8] and the production of discourse. Van Dijk obviously sees textual study in isolation as redundant and superfluous unless one can demonstrate the

social contexts and implications of language use. To this end his research in the 1980s has been mostly concerned with racism, particularly as it appears in popular media such as newspapers. It is notable that he amongst others sees the role of such analysis as being informed by a critical sociology which militates against inequalities in power and justice. Such work therefore embodies a degree of politicisation where the analysts themselves become "agents of change" (van Dijk 1997:23) rather than Historians documenting incidences of rhetorical usage. The influence of sociologists such as Bourdieu and Bernstein can be seen explicitly in studies of recent years which privilege the real concrete language usage of different social and economic groups in order to discuss issues as wide ranging as social class, nationalism, unemployment, racism, education, politics, ideology and power. Discourse analysis then takes account of the wider social relations of power, seeking to contextualise language, or as Beaugrande puts it:

> "quit segmenting or analysing 'sentence structure' and start asking who says what and why." (Van Dijk 1997:43)

Beaugrande asserts the ethical imperative for such activity because of the way in which Western discourses typically inscribe hierarchical relations which "protect privileges and legitimate social and ethnic discrimination." (Van Dijk 1997:45) It becomes the responsibility of the analyst to wage war against the tyranny of those who have systematically exploited readers of text, by empowering the textual subject to resist the encoded messages - largely according to Beaugrande, those concerned with consumerism, political ideology and profit. The egalitarian and progressive tendencies inherent in discourse analysis suggest a commonality with Media and Cultural Studies. It can come as no surprise then to see that increasingly it is *media* texts which have come under the spotlight.

Such texts are regarded as *multi-modal* since they are predicated on visual iconography, graphics, music, oral speech and written language. This kind of text necessitates a multi-

accentuated approach that can take account of the different devices of representation utilised by the makers and receivers of text. As Kress states, language

> "exists as one representational element in a text which is always multi-modal, and it has to be read in conjunction with all other semiotic modes of that text." (Van Dijk 1997:257)

Despite the reference to the semiotic, analysis of the Saussurean kind is limited according to Kress (Van Dijk 1997:257-291). Drawing on Barthes' later work, Kress et al argue that there is nothing which escapes the prism of re-presentation. In other words texts are material and crucially, they are motivated. That does not however rule out the possibility of the reader seeing more or less, or differently than was intended by the maker of the text. It does however suggest that *everything* is socially determinant. Kress and Hodge (1988) push the notion of the semiotic in visual texts in order to suggest that in fact the space of representation is subject to ideological influence.

What emerges is a paradigmatic scheme for the modelling of texts along two axes - ideal and real, given and new. This approach suggests that irrespective of content, all (Western) texts derive from the same rules of organisation which are embedded in ideological propositions. Such an argument may be difficult to sustain in the face of so many texts, and critics such as Brown and Dowling ( ) are quick to assert the problem of Kress's work particularly in relation to sociological analysis of texts. A text could come to mean any feature of cultural and social production such as a theatre space or an excavated fortress. Even Kress criticises Bordwell (Van Dijk 1997:268) for example on the basis that his detailed discussion of film elements such as mis-scene, lighting, camera movement etc, does not adequately take into consideration the social or ideological properties of the codes and conventions themselves.

Allan Bell and Peter Garrett (1998) have tried to bring together different frameworks for the analysis of media text. True to the critical aims of discourse analysis, the contributors focus primarily on television news

"as the most prestigious of daily media genres, and its role at the centre of the exercise of power in modern societies." Bell and Garrett (1998:4)

Whilst few would want to quibble over the importance of news broadcasting, it is disappointing to note the almost total neglect of visual signification in preference to speech. The exception is Kress and Leeuwen's account of newspaper front pages and their organisation. If this volume represents a "state-of-the-art statement on media discourse" (1998:19) then it is puzzling that no account has been taken of the work of Hartley, Fiske, Masterman or Schlesinger and their contribution amongst many others to the analysis of news as social production, utilising notions of iconography, visual grammar, ideology, power and discourse. In short the field of discourse analysis, having recently discovered the mass media, is in danger of re-inventing the wheel. A pluralist approach which takes account of the multi-modal capacity of television representation therefore needs to embrace semiotic visual analysis as well as language/speech-acts.

This leads us to consider the mechanics of analysis. An investigation of television texts cannot proceed in the same way as a piece of literary criticism. Bell and Garrett inadvertently advertise the shortcomings of such an approach. Despite this I am not persuaded by Kress's insistence that *all* multi-modal media texts can be read according to the same schema. Both seem too reductive when one considers the complexities and creative demands of television production. However there are good reasons to suppose that any analysis of ideological and discursive tendencies within television texts should be undertaken through consideration of television's formal qualities. Characterisation which will depend to a large extent on modes of dress, behaviour, accent, tone and the choice of actor is but one aspect of television's formal properties of signification. The creation of a television aesthetic in harmony with the diegesis may include the use of pathetic fallacy to suggest mood, atmosphere or even ethical values. Narrative structures and generic conventions form the basis for the articulation of character, conflict and culture. The establishment of values and ideas does not therefore occur at a metaphysical level, but must

be embedded within these signifying structures. The use of camera techniques molds an audience's understanding of the moral truth of a situation. The use of music and sound is well-established within cinema as a means of identifying with moments of emotional or physical excess. Though often more modestly executed in television drama, the use of incidental music or non-diegetic sound can be no less powerful or efficient in terms of structuring our enjoyment or informing our understanding of a particular character or situation. The mise en scene of television is never merely window dressing but must be observed as an integral part of television's complex pattern of signification. The dependency of television on the artistic mode of realism makes the task of analysis all the more urgent.

The central aim of the analysis will be to establish how television drama operated as a creative medium of expression in relation to the dominant ideology of employment during the Thatcher administrations. Taking the discourse of Thatcherism as the prime centripetal influence on the language of work, commerce and unemployment during this time, it will be the focus of the analysis to consider the centrifugal possibilities expressed through representative fictitious figures in drama, to disrupt ignore or challenge the hegemonising power of Thatcherite discourse. Case-studies will therefore be drawn from across the spectrum of BBC and Independent Television production from 1979 to 1990. This is not meant to be an exhaustive content analysis but rather a themed approach to the reading of texts as part of an historical continuum. To that end the analysis will test the extent to which we can regard television drama at that time as influential in representing and sustaining a cultural response to the language of Thatcherism. What creative possibilities were manifested through the dialogic tensions of Thatcherism (as discourse) in relation to the discourses of various professional and social groups?

This brings us to the final question in terms of establishing a method of enquiry. How are we to proceed in view of the historical nature of these texts? How are we to disclose the meaning of texts which are not in themselves overtly polemical? Indeed to relate the

political dimensions of Thatcherism to a popular entertainment genre *presupposes* a connection or sequence of interpretative links which *may* be proven. Let us suppose then this relation between the political and the cultural, and move on to the problem of method. One of the chief problems of any kind of textual investigation is the situation of the researcher in relation to the text. There is no shortage of literature on the problem of the text and the relationship of reader to author, however the aim here is to discuss the merits of a particular approach which it is hoped will support the stated aims of the thesis. Rather than seek to catalogue textual moments, it is proposed that an interpretative approach to the texts be adopted which takes account of both the circumstances of textual production and the 'knowingness' of the researcher/reader. The historical context of textual production is therefore of prime importance. However the relationship of the author(s) to the texts themselves will not form a significant part of the study. The method owes much to the practice of hermeneutic enquiry, particularly as discussed by Gadamer and Ricoeur. Gadamer's concern with the ontological problems of hermeneutics arises out of the problem of identifying the conditions whereby understanding takes place. He advocates the position of understanding as an act of will rather than as a passive receiver as if the meaning of the given text were obvious and immediate. The recovery of meaning from the text is therefore dependent upon a "disciplined reconstruction of the historical situation or life or context in which it originated" (Gadamer 1977:xiii). In this endeavour Gadamer's work is more closely aligned with that of early scholars such as Schleiermacher and Dilthey, however the contribution Gadamer makes to the field of enquiry is his refusal to deny the historicity of the position of the researcher/reader. Rather than seeking a kind of communion with the originator of the text, Gadamer's ontological problem is precisely located in the present. The reflexivity of hermeneutics cannot be substituted by a withdrawal of the interpreter from the trajectory of the text. The vital element for Gadamer is the notion of the present as "a vital extension of the past" (1977:xiv). He refers to the location of the interpreter as within the "hermeneutical situation" yet he resists the elision of

the present with some idealised space of observation. He accepts and espouses the role of prejudices as necessary and ubiquitous elements of human consciousness. Without such, no interpretation could exist. This brings us to the philosophical and spiritual aims of hermeneutics.

The hermeneutical scholar of the C19th may well have intended a resolution between author and self which would enable the individual to divine a closer relation to the godly. In secular terms, the engagement is no less concerned with an evaluation of the present in relation to the past. This does not mean however that the thread linking these positions is exact, finite or unique. The interplay of researcher/reader to text and author suggests an altogether more imperfect and polysemic network of meanings and relations. One might go as far as to suggest that the meanings suggested to the reader are bound to be of a personally engaged variety, given that knowledge and understanding operate dialectically. One could not claim that one's knowledge of a given historical situation was necessarily unique, and yet one's understanding of the situation cannot stand as a universal truth. It is becoming apparent then, that Gadamer's approach to hermeneutics is dialogic rather than cyclical[9]. The present does not then offer a privileged account of the past; it is as Linge observes, "a fluid relative moment" (1977:xix). Intriguingly Gadamer also suggests that the author of the text is similarly disenfranchised in this respect. Just as the reader cannot hope to capture and contain the entirety of meaning in the text, so the text itself always exceeds the original designs and intentions of the author. The text then operates in excess, simultaneously veiled and open.

Ricoeur is less concerned with the relative values and positions of the author to reader, preferring instead to highlight the issue of the text as an incidence of discourse. In his essay "What is a Text?" (Thompson 1995:145-164) Ricoeur argues for the centrality of text in any hermeneutic enquiry. Since reading and writing are not dialogic - the reader does not enter into dialogue with the writer - nor does the writer take account of the reader's response -

"The text thus produces a double eclipse of the reader and the writer. It thereby replaces the relation of dialogue, which directly connects the voice of one to the hearing of the other. The substitution of reading for a dialogue which has not occurred is so manifest that when we happen to encounter an author and to speak to him (about his book, for example), we experience a profound disruption of the peculiar relation that we have with the author in and through his work." (Thompson 1995:147)

Ricoeur goes on to suggest that "to read a book is to consider its author as already dead and the book as posthumous." (Thompson 1995:147). Such a position is also to be found within post-structuralism, most notably argued by Roland Barthes. Ricoeur is not suggesting however that the written text exists in isolation, but rather that the process of reading acts to "fulfil the reference" (Thompson 1995:148) which otherwise would occur through speech-dialogue.

"Each text is [therefore] free to enter into relation with all the other texts" (1995:148)

by virtue of the interpretative nature of reading. Ricoeur's work then is primarily concerned with the problem of reconciling interpretation with the notion of understanding. The act of understanding is profoundly important given that texts are never symbolic or imaginary, but concrete instances of discourses which are derived from and relate back to the world as we know it. This brings us back to the question of discourse, and allows us to move forward to consider the uses of interpretation.

Ricoeur argues that reading is an act of appropriation, and since each individual is differentiated by historical circumstance, to read "signals an original capacity for renewal" (1995:159). This enforces the argument that interpretation is very much an activity in the present; neither satisfying the call for objectivity, nor elucidating the past as a lived reality. This opens up the problem stated by Ricoeur, of how to satisfactorily unite the demands of textual analysis with the interpretative function of a hermeneutic reading. Text analysis

requires the observation of structural relations and elements and this Ricoeur describes as the *explanation*. To interpret is

"to place oneself *en route* toward the *orient* of the text." (1995:162)

In other words, the role of the interpreter of text is to follow where the text leads. Thus Ricoeur concludes that the acts of explanation and interpretation, here defined as structural analysis and appropriation of meaning, are held suspended, "indefinitely opposed and reconciled" (1995:164). This tension can be understood as a working compromise, a *dialectical positioning* of the reader/researcher to the texts under observation. This shift in hermeneutics characterising Ricoeur's contribution to the field marks a movement away from the Romantic tradition which placed the spiritual life of the author at the centre, toward an endeavour which seeks to understand better the world as it is enfolded within the text. In his essay "Gadamer and Ricoeur on the Hermeneutics of Praxis", Domenico Jervolin (Kearney 1996) focuses on this very issue when he seeks to explore the implications of "objectified discourse" (1996:74) or text as a way to re-engage with a Marxist view of history. It is precisely this view of a dialectical relation between text and action which Jervolino sees as fundamental to Ricoeur's work, and which offers a new answer to the old problem of understanding the past.

"According to Ricoeur the structuralist explanation needs to be dialecticized by incorporating the moment of *comprendre*, which presumes a 'semantic' consideration of the text (and hence of action). The text says something about the world; it is a world project. [ ] In other words, an answer to the question of the 'meaning of history' - no longer frameable in terms of Hegel's absolute knowledge - can be found in the force of the present, that moment of expectation between memory and expectation [ ] This is to say, it can be found in the historically situated and ethically responsible initiative of subjects, finite and plural, through mediations that are themselves historical, finite and imperfect." (1996:74)

The idea of oscillation between reader and text and the impact of understanding on social action is not lost on other philosophers such as Rorty (1995) who advocates a revision of Literature, rather than Philosophy as a means to the promotion of liberal thought. The contingency of social action on historical circumstance and the centrality of language in the creation of human consciousness offers a direct counterpoint to the idea of a transcendent human nature. Understanding meaningful social action is still a process of interrogation which according to Jervolino takes place *in the present before* (in front of) the text rather than *within* it. However, it is not the intention of this thesis to propose that all textual encounters are relative. In examining a specific period of considerable political turbulence, it is possible to explain or define (to a limited degree) the structural formal properties of the texts, in this case audio-visual, whilst attempting to supply the reference back to the world from which they emerged - to interpret their meanings as relevant to the present, and in so doing to articulate a relationship to the past, without necessarily closing down the texts themselves. Closure in the structuralist sense of providing definitive structural (and thereby meaningful) *blueprints* indicating the intricate operations of a given textual encounter are never complete and are only productive to a limited extent. One of the problems of this kind of critical analysis is the distance which the researcher supposes to exist between himself and the text. Ricoeur specifies a degree of distance as essential to the work of interpretation, which according to Thompson (1985:66-70) addresses one of the problems Gadamer poses concerning the prejudicial nature of human understanding. It is important at this point to refine the notion of distance as it becomes a significant factor in Thompson's own model for studying mass media texts, based on the work of Ricoeur, Habermas, Gadamer and, to a lesser extent, Wittgenstein.

Critical distance according to Thompson is achieved through the recognition that texts operate ideologically to distort communication (1985:67), thereby providing false realities. In modelling a method for detecting ideological utterances, Thompson (1991:60) proposes a schematic approach which enables the critical analyst to subject the text to examination.

There are two issues which it is crucial to consider at this juncture. The conception of ideology which Thompson derives from Ricoeur suggests a top-down dissemination of ideas which sits uneasily with the current model of cultural production within a late capitalist democracy such as Britain. The utilisation of Gramscian concepts such as hegemony assists in providing a more general structure whereby the political domain can be seen to fuse organically with the cultural domain. This *organic* necessity is fundamental to the operation of hegemony and discloses the significance of public communication in the dissemination and articulation of dominant of political ideas, which may well include the dominant *oppositional* views of powerful groups and lobbies.

Secondly the model proposed by Thompson runs the risk of appearing exhaustive rather than exploratory. It may well be the case that texts operate in the ways suggested to stratify individuals within relations of power, and yet the multiplicity of texts and the diverse activity of so many individuals and institutions in the production, dissemination and reception of those texts indicates that a more pluralistic or dare one suggest, even *creative* approach be adopted.

In studying the cultural production of television texts under a specific series of government administrations, the thesis proposes a more pluralistic methodological approach which will open up the possibility of *discursivity* in textual readings, rather than seeking to enumerate and classify texts according to their ideological properties. As Beaugrande reminds us in his discussion of television news stories,

> "what people use in communication is not *the* language but *one small version* of *it that self-organises expressly to support the discourse.*" (Van Dijk 1997:56)

In other words, the absence or suppression of certain facts, details or modes of enquiry take account of prior knowledge and genre-familiarity on the part of the viewer. What we see is not all that we get.

The following chapters will look at television drama which as a popular genre of narrative fiction may bear the traces or inflexions of a particular political era. A semiotic analysis will

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be linked to a linguistic analysis utilising Bakhtin's notion of heteroglossia. In this way the aim is to interpret the texts as examples of the interplay between different social and political "voices" and their relation to dominant concerns and attitudes to work and unemployment.

The programmes which have been selected for particular attention fall into a variety of genres across the spectrum of light entertainment, from serial drama to situation comedy. What they have in common is a large audience share, and enduring popularity. In choosing those programmes which had lasting appeal with television audiences, it is not my intention to create some kind of league table of excellence. The purpose of the selection is an attempt to contextualise their popularity in relation to the political circumstances of the time. How do we begin to identify the operation of discourse; in short, what would constitute the *leitmotifs* of Thatcherism? It will be necessary to identify the circumstances within which the programme achieved significance, since it is my intention to argue that not only did certain programmes 'capture' the mood or public opinion of the moment, but that these texts were to a greater or lesser extent contributing to the discursive field, sometimes in an expansive sense, but sometimes in terms of closing down possibilities. By drawing upon the political and social histories of the period the analysis aims to situate the study of text as part of the fabric of public discourse and consequently to explore those points of cohesion and conflict between the public rhetoric of Thatcherism and its appropriation within the field of television entertainment.

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[1] Although I am aware of the debate which surrounds the identity of the Russian scholars Bakhtin, Voloshinov and Medvedev I take the view of Pam Morris who writes "It would seem horrifying to repeat the terrible practices of those years by denying rightful authorship and identity to any of them." Morris (1994:3-4).

[2] Although Evans and Taylor are here referring to John Major, the reference nevertheless seems particularly apt when applied to Tony Blair.

[3] The hermeneutic, proairetic, cultural, symbolic and semic.

[4] Used here in the Bakhtinian sense of 'world-view'.

[5] See M.Foucault (1970) in which he first describes the effects of discourse without ever defining exactly what discourse is.

[6] Rorty acknowledges Kuhn's contribution to the debate within the Philosophy of Science, concerning the notion of scientific progress. Kuhn argues in The Structure of Scientific Revolutions that science is a significant arena of ideological, political and economic contestation where the notion of *revolution* better describes the movement of thought than *progress*, since struggle within the scientific community is the essence of paradigmatic shifts in thinking.

[7] Van Dijk indicates the difficulty of identifying one area which would adequately do justice to the many variations which go under the title of discourse analysis (1997:1-60).

[8] *Analysing Political Discourse* Conference at Aston University July 1997.

[9] Heidegger's theory of the hermeneutic circle encompasses the problem of textual knowledge; as one progresses through the text, one's knowledge of the text is informed by one's progression so that to read is to be redefined by the reading.

Chapter 6

The Rise of the Entrepreneur: *Minder* and *Only Fools and Horses*

The series *Minder* introduced a new variation on a familiar theme. Arthur Daley, second-hand car dealer and entrepreneur was to become a household name in the late seventies and early eighties. Synonymous with shady dealings and petty criminal exploits, the figure of Daley is rendered ambiguous however by his connection to elite culture and his disavowal of popular culture, as embodied in his minder, Terry McCann. The presence of McCann serves three important functions in relation to Daley. The necessity of having a minder informs Daley's clientele that he is a man of some importance. Secondly it reinforces the division of labour; McCann is supposedly the muscle while Daley proposes himself as management. It is this misunderstanding of Arthur's role which provides much of the comedy to the drama. Thirdly it provides the comic tension between Arthur's roots and his own self-image. Arthur Daley's 'pedigree' is little different to that of McCann, but by virtue of his chosen lexicon, accessories and wardrobe, Arthur conveys an image of worldly business acumen which is no more than an illusion. The success of *Minder* in comic terms can be seen in the emergence of the situation comedy *Only Fools and Horses* which uses the same basic formula to create comedy in the shape of Delboy and Rodney Trotter.

Arthur Daley and Delboy Trotter believe in the potential of the free market. Though neither of them ever achieve the business success they seek, they have indefatigable hope that the next deal will set them up in comfort for life. Ironically when Delboy and Rodney become millionaires it is purely through chance and neglect. An antique watch found amongst the debris of house clearance is auctioned at Sotheby's for 3.5 million pounds. In the end it is their belief in the market which rewards them, although it is the elite art market which proves to be their benefactor, and not the free market economy. A further irony resides in the fact of the legitimacy of the transaction which brought them the watch. It is one of the

earliest deals for which Rodney has the relevant paperwork. Both Delboy and Arthur are crooks who are too sentimental and too ignorant to be successful in the world of business. Ironically it is the image of the entrepreneur which lends them both a veneer of respectability in fictional worlds where the accoutrements of a business lifestyle are simultaneously conceived as self-conscious attempts at self-improvement and also markers of the dominant iconography of a particular work-oriented culture. Arthur Daley sports a trademark sheepskin coat and porkpie hat (fig 1.3), familiar style icons from the racetrack, which together with the spotless pinstripe suit, collar and tie suggest the legitimacy of his enterprises at the same time as his partially concealed south London accent and knowledge of cockney rhyming slang lend evidence of his criminality. But for all his efforts to establish his image as an executive managerial figure, Arthur is not overly flash. His taste in cigars, gin and tonic and horse-racing indicates a degree of cultural capital which he would like to indulge. He aspires toward the upper echelons of society by mixing with his perceived elders and betters, individuals who often turn out to be as crooked as Arthur himself and much more successful. Yet Arthur maintains a belief that class is an indicator of quality and it this ability to travel hopefully which affords the viewer so much pleasure.

At the same time as Arthur extols the virtues of the middle-class executive lifestyle, he recognises that the landed gentry of the aristocracy are in a far more secure position to enjoy their wealth. In this he is irresistibly bourgeois, whilst the character of McCann suggests a working class outlook which has been unaffected by the evolving political climate, and therefore still espouses a more traditional view of work as a means of earning a living rather than creating a lifestyle. It is notable that Terry has spent some years in prison, bringing his promising career as a boxer to a premature close. This may in part explain his disinterest in the economic boom which Arthur is keen to exploit. Terry is not at pains to improve his situation; he lacks ambition and self-interest. Arthur sets a great premium on self-improvement, particularly in relation to elite culture. He recognises

however that refinement is a valuable asset only in so far as it lends credibility to his own business enterprises.

"Confidence in Capitalism"

The concepts of freedom and self-improvement characterised the period of the Thatcher administrations, particularly in relation to shifting patterns of employment. Thatcher remarks in her memoirs that her proposals to abolish exchange controls in October 1979 had initially been met with some hostility in the City.

"But not every capitalist had my confidence in capitalism. I remember a meeting in Opposition with City experts who were clearly taken aback at my desire to free their market. 'Steady on!', I was told. Clearly , a world without exchange controls in which markets rather than governments determined the movement of capital left them feeling distinctly uneasy. They might have to take risks." (Thatcher 1995:44)

The idea of taking risks was to become an indicator of those who were worthy of success and those who were not. Deregulation was a major policy in the early days of Thatcher's administration and this led to an upturn in the business and finance services industries. Monetary controls were removed and reform of the Stock Exchange in 1983 made way for greater freedom on the part of individuals and small businesses to invest in overseas markets. It is against this background that popular characters such as Arthur Daley and Delboy Trotter can be read as figures of comic excess. Indeed the very notion of being a risk-taker forms the basis of the Trotter family motto. "He Who Dares, Wins" graces the uniform of the SAS and in true parodic fashion has been adopted by Delboy. Against a background of economic reform, new structures of professional self-regulation, deregulation and the creation of free market competition in the business and financial sectors, we can see the entertainment potential of comedy drama.

George Cole was already well known to popular audiences of the 1950s and 1960s for his role as shady but loveable Flash 'Arry in the *St Trinian's* films (fig 1.1 and 1.2), and for the Light radio programme *A Life of Bliss*. In many ways Arthur Daley (fig 1.3)

represents the apotheosis of so many characters reprised by Cole and this is a notable factor in understanding the popularity of the character.

Arthur's embrace of the opportunities afforded by the new economic climate is both serendipitous and climatic in the sense that Daley's profession of confidence-man come shady dealer has at last been superseded by the arrival of a new social category of businessman known as the entrepreneur. It is as if, given enough time, all kinds of practice, whether legal or not, should sooner or later be integrated into the establishment. Daley's appearance on the small screen then signals an acceptance on the part of television audiences of the role of the free marketeer and his shadow. The legitimacy which Arthur enjoys as a business-minded entrepreneur serves as a satirical reminder to the television audience of the thin line between being a crook and being a capitalist. This is the meta-discourse or cultural code which underpins the audience's enjoyment of the comedy.

Minder

Terry's escapades are often the result of Arthur doing a favour for a friend or business acquaintance. Since Terry is nominally 'employed' by Arthur as his minder, Arthur takes the executive view that he can make some money on the side by leasing Terry's services to customers who require a bit of brawn. Typically it is Terry however who manages to unravel the mystery or at least alert Arthur to the real problem facing the 'client'. Despite Terry's brains, he is happy to jog along with Arthur. He has no partnership in the car dealing, nor does he take financial part in the many and varied schemes dreamt up by Arthur to make a fortune. Terry's role is predominantly concerned with Arthur's well-being. Terry is only concerned to make a enough money to get by. He enjoys the life which could see him minding a turkey farm one minute or living over a posh Kensington antiques emporium the next. His tastes, compared to Arthur, are simple and inexpensive. Fond of the ladies, Terry enjoys light ale and dog racing. He despises upper and middle class pretensions and makes no apology for his working class roots.

In *National Pelmet*, Terry's patience is tested when Arthur takes him to a point-to-point meeting. For Arthur this is a perfect opportunity to make contacts. Continually flirting with what he thinks are trustworthy aristocrats, Arthur is readily seduced by the trappings of money and class.

> Arthur: "Smell that affluence. You don't get that at Hackney dog track."

> Terry: "It's dung - you're standing in it."

Arthur's optimism stems from his belief that everyone is a potential consumer, or in Arthur's lingo, "a punter". On the train from London to Brighton Arthur maps out his philosophy. Having bought forty-eight "100% genuine reproduction" nineteenth-century Staffordshire china statues of the poet Milton, Arthur is poised to make a killing in the antiques trade. His faith in the corruptibility of the market and the gullibility of the consumer means that Arthur is always choosing to see the endless possibilities of the business world. According to Arthur a price tag of £3.50 persuades the "average punter" that the item is cheap whereas a price tag of £90 suggests quality, even a potential bargain. Assured of the value, the customer is less likely to question the price. Although Arthur does not know it, this lesson in market politics will be played out in the episode with a surprising twist.

The main plot of *National Pelmet* centres on a valuable racehorse which is under threat. Arthur leases Terry to mind the animal in the stable. Since the owner is a gentleman and an antiques dealer, Arthur hopes to curry favour, particularly as his new sortie into "antique statute-ware" will require some good contacts in the trade. A detailed analysis of the first meeting between Terry and the client/villain demonstrates the dynamic between Terry and Arthur which underpins the entire narrative.

The scene takes place in the client's antiques shop. Arthur is admiring a china ceramic of a racehorse and its rider.

Arthur: "A rare 19th century commemorative Staffordshire equestrian figure you got there Terry. Worth a bob or two I can tell you that."

Terry: "What, more than Milt?"

Arthur: "What? Your pottery equestrian's a different class to your pottery poet in he? I mean that's really kosher. You're into the ton and a half club there I should say."

Terry: "Really, let's have a look."

Jeremy: "Rather more than that Arthur."

Arthur: "Oh yes, hello Jeremy, how nice to see you again."

Jeremy: "Thank you," [removing the ceramic from Terry] "so this is the friend you were telling me about, Arthur."

Arthur: "Terry - Terence McCann, the Honourable Jeremy Burnham-Jones."

Terry: "Pleased to meet you."

Jeremy: "Hello Terence. You like the Archer?"

Terry: "I don't know what you mean."

Jeremy: "Fred Archer Mr McCann. He rode over 2750 winners. Six Ledgers, five Derbys, four Oaks, two thousand guineas four times, one thousand guineas twice. The greatest there ever was. Oh you haven't heard of him?"

Terry: "No, it's not up my street."

Arthur: "No-no it's not his strong subject, the history of the turf Jeremy."

Terry: "Now that, that's more like it. {Moves over to another table and picks up a ceramic of a racing dog.} Master McGrath, winner of the Brownlow, Stannisbrick and Douglas cups. The only dog ever to win the Waterloo three times."

Jeremy: "Hardly the sport of kings."

Terry: "How about queens Jeremy? Royal command. Presented to Queen Victoria at court."

Arthur: "He will have his little joke."

The stand-off between Terry and Jeremy is played out in terms of cultural capital. Jeremy attempts to put Terry in his place, rather cruelly. However Terry, though not a horse racing enthusiast, is very knowledgeable about greyhounds. Arthur's aspirations to move in the right circles with landed gentry are clear from the way in which he distances himself from Terry's working-class leisure pursuits. Terry has no such ambition, and consequently has no qualms about demonstrating his allegiance particularly when insulted by someone as pretentious as Jeremy. The innuendo concerning "queens" is of course a dig at Jeremy's sexuality. It turns out that Jeremy is indeed "bent" but not in the way that Terry supposes. The scene confirms Terry's unfamiliarity with dominant elite culture and Arthur's upwardly mobile desire to know it. Whilst Arthur *recognises* the importance of elite culture, he has scarcely more knowledge than Terry but he accepts Jeremy's apparent knowledge unquestionably. In his belief in the supremacy of upper class culture, Arthur is irredeemably bourgeois.

The mise-en-scene draws distinctions between Arthur and Terry in their relation to Jeremy. Initially Arthur and Terry are seen together (fig 2.2) as Arthur gives his opinion as to the value and price of the Archer figure. The language construction conveys a sense of ease and familiarity which evaporates once Jeremy comes between them, both metaphorically and literally (fig 2.3). Jeremy's credentials are established by Arthur through the attention to the family name. The double barrelled surname carries with it a certain prestige whilst Jeremy's low-key attire demonstrates that this is a man who does not need to power dress. The contrast with Arthur's porkpie hat and single-breasted camel coat is stark. With his cigar in hand, Arthur is unable to shake off the appearance of a man who is socially out of his depth. Whereas Jeremy's clothes are fashionable yet discreet, Arthur always appears to be overdressed. His need to convey presence and authority is signalled in the ever-present cigar and the sharp suit. He even attempts to modify his language by introducing his minder as "Terence". Despite the incongruity of Arthur's appearance - he looks like an

upmarket bookmaker - the camera reveals the extent to which Jeremy and Arthur are already in league (fig 2.3, 2.4, 2.5). Terry becomes the victim of Jeremy's barbed wit and finds himself deserted by Arthur as Jeremy steps between them (fig 2.5) and then crosses Terry to replace the Archer as if to suggest that the figure is unsafe in the hands of such a philistine. As Terry crosses the room to admire another figure (fig 2.6), he is able to disarm Jeremy by reciting the history of Master McGrath. Jeremy's response is conveyed semiotically as the camera comes to rest on Arthur and Jeremy (fig 2.7). Terry is 'squaring up' to Jeremy and Terry delivers the coup de grace concerning Jeremy's sexuality as if it were a body blow. Without Arthur in frame (fig 2.8), Jeremy is no match for Terry. Although Arthur is a rogue who lacks sufficient judgement to understand the full unpleasantness of Jeremy and his class, his presence is necessary for us to take Jeremy seriously. When faced with McCann, the camera effectively gives full reign to his powers of perception. In this case, we are encouraged to see Jeremy for what he is; an aristocratic effete bully who is no match for the straightforward 'manly' Terry. In terms of narrative, *Minder* operates in tandem with two view-points. When both Terry and Arthur are together the tension arises from the understanding of both characters and their personalities. In other words, disagreements between Arthur and Terry are a matter of personal trust and betrayal. Arthur tuts disapprovingly at Terry's easy-going lifestyle. Terry distrusts Arthur's shady entrepreneurial activities and yet they both need each other. Semiotically the camera cannot contain both of them when a dispute arises. As Terry makes his reference to "queens", the camera focuses on Arthur's reaction. This is important because it enables us to see Arthur's dilemma. The moment when Arthur registers the innuendo is caught by a close-up shot of his face (fig 2.9). He suspects Terry might be correct, yet he is at pains to make this deal go through and if Terry offends Jeremy, Arthur will be the financial loser. He therefore decides to try to laugh it off (fig 2.10). Terry innocently concludes with the anecdote about Queen Victoria. He has rebutted Jeremy without damaging Arthur's business prospects. Honour has been satisfied. However, just as Terry is savouring his victory, Jeremy makes

reference to Terry's suitability for the job in question. At this point we realise that Terry has been set up yet again by Arthur. The medium shot of Terry and Jeremy (fig 2.8) is not sustainable once Jeremy asserts his position as the employer and Terry realises his situation as employee. Terry's discomfort is double-edged. First of all he cannot stomach working for a pretentious snob, and secondly he suspects Jeremy of being a homosexual. The scene concludes therefore with Terry moving out of shot in order to "have a word" with Arthur outside (fig 2.11). Arthur and Jeremy appear in a close-up shot which establishes formally the relationship between them (fig 2.12) and once again conveys Terry's marginal position in relation to the business deal in which he paradoxically figures as the central commodity. Terry's marginalisation within the scene functions to establish again the aspirational motivations of Arthur who wishes to move in more cultured society. Despite this, it is Terry who is the chief protagonist in the scene. It is his actions and reactions which the camera follows. Arthur's close-up punctuates the drama of the scene (fig 2.9). The camera shot confirms that the nature of *their* relationship is always the primary source of interest within the narrative.

Later in the episode when it is revealed that Jeremy has been instrumental in "nobbling" his own horse in order to make a large profit on the second favourite, Arthur and Terry still do not fully appreciate how they were duped until the last minute. However the dramatic irony at work here lies in the earlier discussion concerning punters and mugs. Arthur has been taken in by Jeremy because of his upper class breeding. Arthur does not expect the elite to be crooked. Both he and Terry attribute manners and behaviour to the upper middle classes which are found to be undeserving. Authentic and legitimate culture in the Bourdieu sense comes into conflict with low and popular culture. It is representatives of the former which are shown to be immoral and illicit. Terry is keen to impress the attractive jockey, Jocelyn Maxwell-Saunders. In conversation with her he tries out his new-found knowledge of English Literature. Whereas she refers to the classics, Terry's dictionary of quotations begins and ends with George C.Scott.

Arthur is left with his store of ceramic Miltons which he decides to reinvent for a different market. Unable to break into the patrician world of antiques, Arthur is undefeated.

The closure of the episode is dependent upon Arthur somehow regaining the trust and affection of his minder. Terry enters Arthur's kitchenette to find Arthur surrounded by small figurines of the poet Milton (fig 3.1). Once again, Arthur is overdressed for the occasion. Sporting a dark pinstripe suit and clutching a fat cigar Arthur motions for Terry to join him in painting each figure for sale in a different market. Quoting from *Samson Agonistes* (fig 3.2), Arthur persuades Terry that a lick of blue and white paint can transform the figures into commemorative Chelsea footballers. As a conclusion to the misunderstandings of the episode, this scene is important in re-uniting the two members of the partnership. Football is of course a team sport and, more significantly it provides a meeting point for both Arthur and Terry since football is traditionally identified as a working class leisure activity. The mise-en-scene is domestic. Back on home turf, Arthur can relax. There is no need for him to pretend with Terry. He pulls himself up as he offers Terry a new scenario for selling the commemorative pottery (fig 3.4);

> Arthur: I have another contact in commemorative pottery - nah, nah -be honest, I've got another mate who runs a souvenir shop not far from Stamford Bridge. I'll stand a loss but he'll knock 'em out for me as Chelsea footballers.

Arthur's indefatigable spirit is manifestly communicated to us through the shot of him holding up in Blue Peter style[1], one he made earlier (fig 3.5). Terry's recent brush with the establishment gives him a moment's pause (fig 3.6).

> Terry:"Leave it out. You can't do that. He's a famous antique poet. He's got a book in his hand."

Arthur's solution is simple. "FA handbook innit." The semiotic closure of the episode is achieved through the medium shot of Terry and Arthur with their paintbrushes at the ready (fig 3.8).

Terry: "I've got one for you. 'When the ball hit the back of the net, I was over the moon Brian.' Kevin Keegan."

Terry draws the running joke of literary quotation to a close by citing Kevin Keegan. This also signals the end of their association with bourgeois villains, at least for the time being. At the end of the day, Arthur and Terry are back where they started, comfortable within their own class and cultural environments.

"I'm a law abiding ratepayer."

The episode *"In"* from 1981 sees Arthur arrested on suspicion of drug smuggling. When the police come to question Arthur about a recent BMW import, he takes umbrage at the suggestion that he should accompany them "down the nick". Whatever the circumstance, Arthur likes to maintain a veneer of respectability. His trailervan office boasts a poster of Prince Charles and Lady Diana Spencer on the occasion of their engagement. Arthur's patriotism is legendary as is his admiration for the Royal Family. Two telephones on his desk suggest a man of some importance although Arthur is no more than a petty villain in the estimation of the local constabulary. When quizzed by a visiting police officer from Germany, Sergeant Rycott explains that Daley is extremely unlikely to be mixed up in international drug trafficking. He's a "scallywag", too much of a "devout coward" and altogether too "slippery". Rycott concedes however that Arthur is "well overdue". In other words it is about time that Arthur was convicted of something. At present his file is full of "not guilty" verdicts. Arthur is obliged to spend the weekend in a cell since his solicitor is away on a shoot. Rycott is apologetic because he knows that Arthur is unlikely to be involved in the major charge. Meanwhile Terry goes looking for the driver who delivered the BMW, Frank MacFadden.

Terry locates MacFadden's sister. She refers to the riots as the principal reason for leaving Brixton. Eventually, after an extended fight sequence on a double decker bus, both Terry and Frank end up being delivered into the hands of Sergeant Rycott. Arthur, a free man,

reluctantly returns to the police station in order to assist Terry who is now on a charge of GBH. Throughout the episode we are reminded of the relatively cosy relationship enjoyed by Arthur and the police. Arthur interprets his status of petty villain as a sign of minor celebrity. His claims to be "a simple car dealer, C of E, free enterprise, true patriot, British army, King and Empire -well no, Queen and Commonwealth, well whatever it is we've got left now," are met with sarcasm by Rycott. Yet despite this, Rycott and the visiting officer are obliged to let Arthur go, since there is no evidence to charge him. Arthur clings to his reputation as "a man who is respected, even loved", someone who has achieved a degree of success in the business world. he informs Terry that his honour is at stake. His children attend private school. They mix with "the scions" of gentlefolk. Terry reminds Arthur that one of the stockbroker parents is doing time. Arthur responds quickly that "that was business not crime". This is a distinction which would be lost on many. Those who succumb to the temptation of fraud in the financial sector only appear to count as criminals if they are apprehended. Furthermore, Arthur's definition of crime seems to depend on the degree of violence involved. A coward himself, Arthur is adverse to any bloodshed, particularly his own. One of the reasons he employs a minder is to prevent himself from becoming the victim of assault by business rivals. Whilst in the cell overnight, Arthur meets up with a known police informer called "Ferret". Ferret tries to flatter Arthur by telling him how his reputation as a hard man has earned Arthur the respect of the local criminal fraternity. In his attempt to assert himself, Arthur accidentally knocks Ferret's head against the wall which immediately gives him cause for concern. This is not the behaviour of a hardened criminal.

Arthur is only interested in petty criminal activities which could be described as white-collar if Arthur were a more sophisticated and established business professional. In the 1980s there was growing concern at the degree to which businessmen and financiers were involved in fraud. High profile cases brought against figures such as DeLorian and later Guinness, suggested that the rewards of capitalism lay in all kinds of illegal schemes such

as evading tax and insider dealing. The collapse of Lloyds' investments indicated the extent to which high profit was anchored to high risk. In such a climate, Arthur Daley can be excused for mistaking crime for business.

Arthur's relationship to the world of high finance is tenuous. However his belief in free enterprise means that he travels hopefully and manages overall to make enough money to support himself and his family in a manner to which they have become accustomed. Arthur lacks "class" which is why he appreciates it so much in others. When he undertakes to sell the car on his forecourt to an unsuspecting "punter", Arthur first suggests that the car has been promised to his own wife and then fabricates a story that the car used to belong to the Duke of Norfolk. Since the car is a mini, this latest ruse is laughable. According to Arthur the aristocracy always look after their vehicles. Once again he peddles his own mistaken belief that we can expect better of the upper classes. In similar rhetorical vein Arthur poses a question to Terry,

> Arthur: "Whatever happened to the good old English workman eh? I mean time was he'd go off in the morning, couple of slices of Hovis in one pocket, a lump of cheese in the other, do ten, twelve hours toil. What do you get nowadays? - 'where are me luncheon vouchers?'"

Arthur's vision of England's past is romantic nonsense derived from television advertising and the rhetoric of conservative liberalism. It sustains his belief in a class-based society where free market politics can enable the average working man to attain the dizzy heights of success. Arthur embodies the Thatcherite dream where hard work brings reward, and those who make welfare demands on the state are to be despised. Arthur is happy to give time and energy to local charities to support veteran footballers, has-been celebrities and old age pensioners, but his largess is of the Victorian kind, distinguishing between the deserving and the undeserving poor and needy. In *"Whose Wife is it Anyway?"* Arthur's respect for the elderly is demonstrated in his visit to Terry's grandmother. He has bought her an enormous bouquet of flowers and a large box of chocolates for her birthday. Whereas Gran

has been glued to an open university programme on quantum physics, her face lights up when Arthur appears, eclipsing Terry's gift of a (dodgy) watch and a modest bunch of flowers. Despite his charitable streak, Arthur is not above swindling an "angel of mercy" when he visits his friend Alex in hospital. Arthur flatters the ward sister that her work is too important to trust to a shoddy NHS fobwatch; what she needs is a quality timepiece, which he just happens to have in his pocket. Nevertheless Arthur does have the good grace to be embarrassed when the watches turn out to be faulty. Arthur subscribes to an old fashioned working class idealism where everyone knows his place, public servants have vocations, and hard work yields a decent living. Despite this, Arthur operates on the wrong side of the law, preferring to make his own luck. Terry, like Arthur, would prefer to trust to his own wits than rely on the state. Indeed Terry is most offended by the suggestion that he is on the dole. He prefers to think of himself as self-employed. A life of welfare dependency does not sit well with his ethics. The concept of 'a minder' is understood commonly to refer to criminal relations. A minder is therefore one who is employed to intervene should the criminal boss be attacked or threatened. In Arthur's case it is extremely unlikely that he should require this kind of protection. He is not that significant a figure to warrant much attention from serious gangsters and hoods. One could look upon his employment of Terry therefore as partly a favour to a friend, and partly to engineer a little public relations so that other businessmen recognise Arthur's credentials. Terry McCann has a history. The credit sequence (fig 4.1 – 4.3) links Arthur and Terry over a long period of time, showing them together with wives and at significant moments during Terry's life; in prison, released from prison and when Terry was a boxer. The audience must decode the information which is being supplied in piecemeal fashion. Terry's term in prison may well have had something to do with a fight which went wrong. Perhaps he killed an opponent in the ring. The oblique references to Terry's past life establish Arthur as a significant and regular point of contact. he represents the continuity in Terry's life both past and present. Whatever the circumstances Terry has been down on his luck, having once enjoyed the

high life. In offering Terry a job, Arthur has been able to satisfy his own image and maintain a strong bond of friendship. In return, Terry provides a stable down to earth point of reference for Arthur and ensures that he does not get into too much trouble. It is however interesting to consider the implications of a television series about an entrepreneur and his minder in the 1980s.

The principles of free market economics would imply a certain abstraction from the realities of supply and demand. The market's success depends upon confidence and this intangible virtue is linked to the maintenance of currency rates of exchange and the degree to which money circulates around the stockmarkets of the world. *Minder* suggests that activity in the business world is real and tangible. The programme does not therefore depend upon some "shadowy metaphysics" (Eagleton 1992:67) but rather it supposes a direct relationship between individuals and their achievements. The eponymous hero of *Minder,* Terry McCann, does not espouse market philosophy. He is unaffected by the lure of wealth and social status which Arthur so desperately desires. He owes his livelihood to his physical presence and he is in turn defined by his suspicious disregard for anything which lacks substance. He is therefore ideal for spotting confidence-tricksters and hustlers. His plain common sense approach to life depends upon his experience. McCann usually requires some kind of empirical evidence before he will trust a stranger. Unlike Arthur, he is unwilling to fantasise about his future and distrusts those who lack sincerity. Terry is therefore a throwback to an earlier age of heroes. His fists are the only things he can really depend upon. When Arthur decries the disappearance of the honest labourer, he is actually describing his minder. Terry espouses the old fashioned working class distaste for charity or hand-outs from the state. He is self-contained and self-sufficient. In his experience there is not one social institution which has not become susceptible to immoral or illegal activity. He therefore resists the Thatcherite dream, preferring to trust only to his own experience and gut instincts. In some ways, Terry acts as *our* minder. He constantly reminds *us* of the vagaries of the social and political climate through his adherence to those first principles,

whereby he expects nothing and is therefore never disappointed. His contentment is based upon the fact that he lives without desire. If Arthur represents the acquisitive new breed of entrepreneurial confidence-men, then Terry's presence reminds us that free enterprise is a dangerous business where people can get hurt.

It is a strange kind of morality which places a former pugilist ex-con in the position of guardian angel but as we shall see in the case of *Only Fools and Horses*, it is the tension between the lure of the free market and its repellent qualities which would continue to underpin another hugely successful television comedy series.

"By This Time Next Year, We'll All Be Millionaires."

> "But I knew that this entirely justified lack of faith in the wisdom of the state must
> be matched by a renewed confidence in the creative capacity of enterprise."
> (Thatcher 1995:92)

Thatcher always insisted that the root cause of Britain's economic crisis in the late seventies was owing to low productivity particularly in the nationalised industries, which as she saw it, could not compete with overseas trade. Trade Unions were targeted by successive Thatcher governments as the most guilty culprits in holding back Britain from participating fully in an international market. The closed shop, annual pay bargaining and propensity to take strike action were all factors which Thatcher considered injurious to the manufacturing industries. A strong pound and an international recession also made for some tough decisions by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Geoffrey Howe in his 1980 budget.[2] Trade Union reforms followed swiftly on the heels of the economic policies of the Conservative Manifesto. Having met with TUC General Council in June 1979, Thatcher was of the opinion that it was the trade union membership whom she should address, rather than their leaders. Her speech to the Party Conference in Blackpool in October set the mood of the confrontation which would follow. In drawing the attention away from the government, she implied that striking industrial workers would affect everyone in raising costs and lowering efficiency. Thatcher herself draws attention to this theme in her memoirs, citing

the speech she made to the Conservative Trade Unionists' Conference in November where she invoked the spectre of the union movement as one which inhibited the freedom of the consumer. In appealing to the families of trade unionists directly, working class people who had elected her to govern in May 1979, Thatcher was able to utilise popular opinion in order to achieve her goal of minimising the power of the TU movement.

By 1981, having withstood the battles of the British Steel Corporation (BSC) and the Steelworkers' Union, begun the task of dismantling British Leyland for selling-off, and introduced a very unpopular tax-raising budget, Thatcher was confronted by the Civil Service strike, a dispute with the National Union of Miners and industrial action at GCHQ (Government Communications Head Quarters). Urban riots followed in April in Brixton, London and July in Toxteth, Liverpool. In the case of the city riots, Thatcher blamed the media, particularly television for failing to provide the kind of programming which had in the past united working class communities with a shared sense of morality. She was also highly critical of the culture of dependency which she attached to the welfare state and its cycle of benefits. Her criticisms of local council housing policy which wrecked established communities and squeezed them into badly designed estates thereby producing a sense of alienation also contributed to a feeling at large that something of an underclass was beginning to emerge in the early eighties. The creation of enterprise zones in the 1980 "budget for business" (Thatcher 1995:95) had targeted wastelands up and down the country for economic growth in the shape of small businesses. However it was not the chief priority of the first Thatcher government to look at social policy and the effects of economic change on the social infrastructure. The 1980 Housing Act which gave council tenants the right to buy would be further endorsed by the 1983 manifesto. 100% mortgages would be made available, enabling people without investments to make the leap to property ownership. Home ownership in the council sector might have killed several birds with one stone. Not only would it diminish the revenue and autonomy of the local authorities but would presumably give back to the residents of those "ill-maintained estates" (Thatcher

1995:146) a sense of pride and responsibility. Thatcher visited Toxteth in July 1981 to see for herself whether the rioting had as some commentators maintained, been the result of poor housing and urban deprivation. She concluded that the general dilapidation of the sites and the unkempt grasslands were sufficient evidence that if youngsters were bored they could set about cleaning up their environment.

> " I asked myself how people could live in such circumstances without trying to clear up the mess and improve their surroundings." (Thatcher 1995:145)

Civic pride may be the mark of prosperity but it cannot create jobs where there are none. In the wake of national events such as these the first episode of *Only Fools and Horses* was transmitted in 1981.

"Big Brother"

The title sequence of *Only Fools and Horses* uses montage to convey both the locations for the drama and the class milieu of the characters; a street market, the interior of a pub, a large carpark, outside Oxford Street tube and a dilapidated council estate. The final image is of a grimy three-wheeled yellow van, bearing the logo "Trotters' Independent Trading Co. New York, Paris, Peckham" (fig 5), the final clue to the comic nature of the programme, and the real extent of the Trotter trading emporium. This zooms into a window high up in one of the two tower blocks. The accompanying music and lyrics by John Sullivan leave us in no doubt that we are entering a different kind of working class territory.

> "Stick a pony in my pocket, I'll get the suitcase from the van,
>
> 'Cos if you want the best stuff but you don't ask questions then brother, I'm your man,
>
> 'Cos where it all comes from is a mystery, it's like the changing of the seasons and the tides of the sea,
>
> But here's the one that's driving me berserk, Why do only fools and horses work?
>
> La la la la la.."

The first shot of the interior of the Trotters' establishment (fig 6) shows Rodney and Granddad relaxing in a sitting room full of junk; a spare car tyre, mismatched furniture from several three piece suits, multiple cardboard boxes and two televisions placed side by side suggest the nature of the Trotter business is probably illegitimate. Early conversation reveals strong South London accents. The presence of a highly ornate telephone behind Rodney and various carefully positioned figurines suggests an attempt by someone to inject a little class into the establishment. The energetic appearance of David Jason, with his penchant for the occasional French phrase or two confirms the understanding of the audience, that Delboy is a self-made man who likes to dress sharply and is clearly the motivator of the action. With his grey suit, fake gold medallion, flash watch and rings, Delboy epitomises the working-class lad who would love to be nouveau-riche. Rodney on the other hand, dressed in jeans, shabby leather jacket and T-shirt is more disillusioned with the state of the business and his role within it. Delboy is outraged that Rodney is keeping business accounts. "Rodney, you dozy twonk, that's prima facie evidence". The Trotters do not pay income tax, VAT or National Insurance, but with impeccable logic Delboy reasons that this is only fair since they do not claim dole or any other benefit. "The government don't give us nothing, so we don't give the government nothing." Rodney wants a career, rather than eternally selling out of a suitcase on Oxford Street. "You're self-unemployed, that's a career 'aint it?" Rodney's aspirations are modest and honourable whereas Delboy apparently enjoys the life of a street-wise racketeer. Full of optimism, he is constantly reminding Rodney of others such as Marks and Spencer who started from humble beginnings to emerge as household names. Equally Delboy knows his limits.

> Delboy: "I like this life though don't you eh, Rodders, duckin' and divin', wheelin'
> and dealin' you know, it's exciting, unpredictable. You know in this game you
> could go out in the morning with fifty pence in your pocket -"
> Rodney: "And come home at night skint."

Delboy: "Exactly, yeah."

Delboy sees himself as one of life's gamblers, someone who is born to the world of business - a player in the market. One of the most powerful features of the ideology of free market competition is the belief that anyone can join. The status of the small business man is available to the working and non-working classes alike. No experience, premises, qualifications or references are required. All the entrepreneur requires in the early 1980s is money, a telephone and contacts. This is contrary to the employment market as Delboy points out when Rodney confesses that he is thinking of getting a job.

> Rodney: "I'm thinking of getting a job, Del"
>
> Delboy: "Eh? What chance have you got of getting a job? Ha ha ha, do leave it out, have you heard that Joycie (barmaid) he's only thinking of getting a job"
>
> Joycie: "A job eh?"
>
> Rodney: "I've got GCEs and I took that year's course at the Art college in Basingstoke."

The idea of Rodney getting a job is not only laughable but tragic. Clearly he sees it as a last resort. At the same time, the attitude of those around him indicates the scarcity of jobs for young men like Rodney with few qualifications. With the collapse of the manufacturing industries in Britain, there are no more apprenticeships and no more jobs for life. Even without Rodney's suspended sentence for possession, Delboy is in no doubt as to Rodney's true status in life.

> Delboy: "No, I'm afraid not Rodney, at the ripe old age of twenty-three, you are a social leper. Society has placed you in the darkest corner of its deepest cellar to grow moss and be forgotten about. Still never mind eh? *Vive La France* as they say in Rome! No need to get depressed."

Delboy's indefatigable optimism at the age of thirty-six testifies to the existence of a popular belief in market capitalism. Rodney's discomfort and Delboy's enthusiasm are

ciphers through which we understand the real-life predicament of the unemployed, and simultaneously the apparently boundless rewards open to those who dare seize the opportunities created by deregulation and the new monetarist policies. At the same time, the fact of Delboy's class origins provides a cheeky reminder to the establishment. If you fully espouse the ethic of free market enterprise, then you must be prepared to make room for the arrival of the working-classes in entrepreneurial mode. When middle-class professionals have crises on television it is usually within the genre of serious drama; working-class crises are still more often than not the prerogative of situation comedy.

Delboy's business transaction with Trigger over twenty-five "old English vinyl" briefcases affords the audience several running jokes. Delboy is certain that he can sell them down at the squash club. He clearly overestimates both his own credibility in moving in a milieu associated with stressed executives with high-powered jobs and underestimates the extent to which such individuals will know the difference between quality merchandise and foreign rubbish. Trigger's decision to carry the sample briefcase into the pub without a wrapper is an oblique reference to terrorist activity at the time and the onus of responsibility on the public to report suspect packages. The incongruity of Trigger's appearance however is not wasted on Delboy who remarks sarcastically on Trigger's sling-back wellington boots and off the shoulder donkey jacket: "you look like an executive hod-carrier." This is another oblique reference to the concept of power dressing, which was fast becoming a marker of success in the business and professional world. Delboy's ability to spot contradiction and pretension in others does not give him any insights into his own self-image. Delboy has clearly never seen or had reason to use a good quality executive briefcase, never having had a position which warranted the accessory. He is nevertheless convinced that this icon of style and status is the kind of merchandise he is destined to sell. When it becomes apparent that none of Delboy's contacts will take them off his hands Rodney suggests chucking them in the river.

> Delboy: "Chuck 'em in the river, chuck 'em in the river. That's our profits you're talking about. What do you think this is a nationalised industry?"

The briefcases have now become a matter of pride. Delboy has to demonstrate to Rodney that the deal was worth the money. In a sense he has to be able to justify his own belief in the market. When it emerges that the briefcases are rejects because the combination codes are locked inside each one, Delboy has to admit defeat. If nationalised industries are going down the tubes, then perhaps the future of Britain's economic recovery lies in enterprise. In the hands of the likes of Delboy Trotter however, British enterprise initiative in the field of international commerce looks set to take a tumble. When pressed by Rodney to explain the perimeters of their partnership, Delboy takes credit for the financial acumen, contacts and money and suggest Rodney's capabilities lie in the field of three wheel van driving. Rodney's response, that with a GCE O level in Maths, he could be the financial advisor meets with a terse comic rebuttal.

> Delboy: "A financial advisor? *Bonjours Trieste!* You are beautiful you are Rodney. Today I just about clinched a deal to buy these briefcases for £175 when my financial advisor stuck his nose in and advised me to pay £200, all right? And having paid the £200 my financial advisor then advised me to chuck the bleedin' lot in the river. Now with financial advisors like that, who needs a bleedin' recession?"

All around them the Trotters are confronted by failure, incompetence, corruption and decay, yet they are buoyed up by ambition and a determination to overcome the limitations of their environment, class and upbringing. Far from "reinforcing each other's passivity" they strive for success. Though fundamentally amoral in their business practices, and impossibly naive, Delboy and Rodney are both product and process of the Thatcherite vision of Britain as a nation of go-getters. The myth of the independent advisor, consultant or executive business operative is subject to parody within *Only Fools and Horses* because it offers us characters who take the mythology at face value. The application of market principles to a real market in Peckham and the discontinuity between abstract concept and

concrete example provides the tension which results in comedy. Delboy Trotter *is* a Thatcherite, one who represents the working class vote that eschewed a century of socialist affiliation to put her into No 10 Downing Street.

Almost a decade later, the 1989 Christmas special, *The Jolly Boys' Outing* sees the Trotters more firmly ensconced within the world of "inner city dealing"[3]. Granddad has passed away and been replaced within the programme structure by Uncle Albert, whose abiding passion is telling stories about his war time service in the merchant navy. Delboy is still trading at the local market and dealing in dodgy merchandise. The biggest change can be seen in Rodney who has overcome the handicap of his early days and now the veteran of several back-to-work schemes, has landed himself a job with prospects in a local printing works. Writer John Sullivan acutely observes Rodney's rise from unemployed 'social leper' to computing manager. Rodney is one of the fortunate few who has shown his determination to become a self-starter.

In the early months of 1982 unemployment was running at 3 million, almost double the figures of 1980. Political commentators Simon Jenkins (1996) and Christopher Johnson (1991) agree that this was one of the prime reasons for the sudden dip in government popularity and even Thatcher acknowledges that her popularity as Prime Minister was severely brought into question by the media and Opposition MPs alike (Thatcher 1995:153). Christopher Johnson (1991:240-49) records how urgent improvement was sought following an important House of Lords Select Committee report from May 1982 which placed unemployment as one of the root causes of "ill-health, mortality, crime and civil disorder." Continued concentration on the perceived problems of the inner cities resulted in David Young's 1986 Restart initiative whereby long-term unemployed were invited to interview in order to begin the process of re-training for the job market. Other schemes followed such as The Community Programme which had a flat rate of pay, and its replacement Employment Training which paid benefits in addition to a low employer-subsidised wage. The YTS (Youth Training Scheme) had been in operation since 1983 in

an attempt to keep school leavers off the dole. The underlying goal of the successive governments was to reduce the numbers of people claiming unemployment and supplementary benefits and to support where financially viable, the acquisition of vocational qualifications in a workforce which was predominantly a failure of the education system.

In addition to the initiatives for unemployment, Young was keen to see the creation of new jobs primarily in the service sector, as a replacement for the massive losses in the manufacturing industries. One of the consequences of this was the emergence of more part-time female employees. Women were more financially attractive to employers since they were often cheaper than their male counterparts and more adaptable. On the small business front, Young's Small Firm Loan Guarantee Scheme was a scheme operated by the larger high street banks in order to introduce modest lending to small firms wanting to expand and thereby create more jobs.

Rodney has married Cassandra, an ambitious young woman with a steady job in one of the large high street banks. her father Alan is the owner of the small printing works where Rodney has been made manager of computing services. The acquisition of IT skills was seen by many in the eighties as a sure route to success in terms of increased productivity, communication and marketing. One of Rodney's jobs is to prepare the sales projections for Alan to present to the bank in order to negotiate extra financial backing. Rodney, once a Restart candidate, now has a young trainee working under him though it is doubtful as to whether Rodney really knows more than the new recruit. Early on in the feature Rodney is shown in his office at the printing works, struggling with the new technology (fig 7.2). The ensuing conversation between Rodney and his father-in-law sets out the broad concerns of the plot and the dilemma facing Rodney and Cassandra.

> Alan: "Well, I really am looking forward to your anniversary dinner."
>
> Rodney: "Yeah so was I until I found out that she's invited that Steven and Joanne."

Alan: "Well, now you gotta be fair son, Steven is the Assistant Head of the Bank's Overseas Investment Bureau, he's Cassie's boss. She's applied for promotion so she's got to stay on his good side."

Rodney: "I know, but he's such a yuppie. It's all that 'oh yeah for sure' and all that 'okay can I just run this past you' (tut) prat."

Alan: "Yeah, I can't stand him either but he's the sort of man who might do the company some good one of these days and I'd rather have him inside the tent spitting out than outside the tent spitting in, understand?"

Rodney: "Yer."

Rodney's appearance has been greatly revised. In contrast to the leather jacket and jeans of his youth, he now sports a dark blue suit with pinstripe shirt, tie and pocket handkerchief (fig 7.2). The mise-en-scene of the printworks office establishes Rodney's move away from his class origins and the extent to which he has successfully negotiated his escape from the life of the "self-unemployed". Seated in front of a computer screen (fig 7.2) he is totally out of his depth with the new technology, but reluctant to explain his inadequacy to his boss. Behind the glass wall, the printworks appears to be thriving (fig 7.1). Even though Rodney is effectively part of the managerial tier, it is significant that his job should still be closely associated both with the new information technology boom *and* the traditional machine based labour of printing. Alan's business has not yet moved into the league of desktop publishing. His is still a warehouse operation where computers are used primarily to manage the accounts. Rodney's credentials as a *worker* are therefore assured by virtue of Alan's own class origins. Although Rodney wears a suit to work, he is still identified semiotically as part of an industry. This is an important distinction which differentiates him from Steven who is located in the intangible suspect world of financial markets. We do not see Steven at work. We only hear about it, primarily from his own lips. His dislocation from the site of *real* work - that is work which is tangible, physical

and product-based- is important because later in the dinner party scene, the audience is invited to make a judgement concerning Steven's legitimacy as a business professional. Delboy, like Rodney, has matured into middle- age and is keen to dress well. He still however has a tendency to over-compensate for his lack of education and awareness by pretending to a level of sophistication which he cannot maintain for more than a few seconds. His appearance in company at Cassandra's dinner party is subtly contrasted with Steven, the *real* entrepreneurial figure of the 1980s.

If the meritocratic ethos of the eighties implied a level playing field then this was never part of the grand scheme. Thatcher herself espoused the view in her October 1975 speech to the Conservative Party Conference that "everyone has the right to be unequal" (Johnson 1991:232). Steven is set up from the beginning as someone despised by both the worldly wise middle-aged printshop owner and the sympathetic but modestly incompetent management trainee. Steven's status at the bank is as much a clue to his character as the lexicon of self-important phrases ascribed to him by Rodney. A figure of the establishment, Steven is everything that an ambitious employee should aspire towards which is why Cassandra is at pains to put on a good show for him. Promotion is not merely a matter of qualifications or experience. As Alan points out, Cassie's new job will require a good deal of entertaining of clients. It is very important therefore that the dinner party, another feature of the eighties professional lifestyle, goes well. The news that Delboy and Uncle Arthur have been invited too, signals the end of Cassandra's dream of achieving promotion.

The scene of the dinner party opens in Rodney and Cassandra's tastefully co-ordinated flat with Uncle Albert (fig 8.1) trying to make sense of the game *Trivial Pursuit*. This frames the scene which follows; the competitive visual metaphor serves to anchor the episode in the late eighties and suggests the element of one-up-man-ship which is about to ensue. At the dinner table, Steven is holding forth on the latest news regarding overseas investments (fig 8.2).

Steven: "All right at first glance it may appear to be slightly off the wall but the word in the City is big bucksville."

Alan: "Right so what is this big secret then?"

Cassandra: "Well Steven's about to tell you if you give him half a chance."

Steven: "Alan this is no stock market secret or insider information, it is merely my humble opinion for what it's worth. Okay let me run this one past you, try and get your heads round this. I'm going to say one word but bear in mind that I am talking future long term investment, ya?"

Joanne: "It's hang-in-there time!"

Steven: "Ya for sure. Okay this is the bottom line, take it on board if you wish. The word is...Africa."

Delboy: "Africa. Africa, I'll make a note of that in my filofax if I may Steven - do you have a pen?"

Steven: "No. (pause) The two main ladies in my life, Joanne and Cassie know where I'm coming from on this one."

Cassandra: "Steven was telling me about the projected world growth areas the other day over brunch."

Steven: "And Africa is where it's at. Recently Joanne and I spent a little time down in *Afrique sur Mer.*"

Delboy: *"Fabrique Belgique."*

The mise-en-scene establishes Rodney and Cassandra's flat as a tastefully co-ordinated space with low soft lighting and uplighters creating an ambient sophistication and attention to detailed styling worthy of a professional interior decorator (fig 8.4). Black leather seating, chrome and smoked glass tabletops and a collection of assorted vases and ornaments convey the middle-class aspirations of Rodney and his wife. This is a room designed with entertaining in mind rather than home comfort. At the dining table (fig 8.5) there is evidence of red and white wine, presumably to go with each different course and

candles. The guests are wearing smart "office" clothes There is no tablecloth and no sign of a sauce bottle. Soft music plays in the background. This is a world apart from Delboy and Granddad's usual experience of supper.

Steven is dressed in a dark blue suit with light blue shirt and grey tie (fig 8.2). He is looks fit and tanned. In contrast with Delboy, Steven's appearance is restrained and sombre. Delboy wears cufflinks, a signet ring and has a pink silk handkerchief in his breast pocket (fig 8.5). Steven wears a stickpin but is otherwise the picture of urbane sophistication. Delboy on the other hand looks flamboyant in his double-breasted grey suit with the trademark cigar - a direct iconic link to Arthur Daley. Steven is self-confident and apparently knowledgeable in the world of high finance and international markets. His discourse is peppered with self-aggrandising phrases which speak of the abstract lure of exotic places. He is so full of his own self-importance that he cannot see how little he impresses his fellow diners. Only the women are prepared to be dazzled. Joanne his wife is clearly cut from the same cloth (fig 8.9). Pamela, Cassandra's mum is anxious that her daughter keeps in with such a bright young man and Cassandra herself is obviously impressed by the confidence of her boss and eager to accede to his vision (fig 8.8).

Rodney not only despises Steven for his arrogance *and* success but also suspects Steven of having a roving eye where Cassandra is concerned (fig 8.10). Alan is politely tolerant for the sake of his own and his daughter's future prospects. When the moment comes for Steven's pomposity to be punctured, it is Delboy who momentarily stops him in his tracks, not with a witticism, but by literally taking at face value Steven's airy opinions on the viability of African investments.

Having attempted to convince Steven that he too understands the importance of the banana market, has multilingual skills and knows a decent brandy, the final straw comes when he pretends to like the latest executive sports craze of American Baseball. Rodney, annoyed by Delboy's pretensions contradicts him: "You've always called it silly boys' rounders" (fig 8.10). This is as much a jibe at Steven as it is a warning to Delboy not to continually court

favour with a prat like Steven. Delboy's own self-assurance in seeking to cement a common bond with Steven, as a fellow yuppie, meets with a stern denial.

Delboy: "..nowadays it's the sort of game that guys like me and Steven enjoy." (fig 8.11)

Steven: "How do you mean, 'guys like me and Steven'?" (fig 8.12)

Delboy: "Well, you know, yuppies."

Steven: "Yup-? Derek I am not a yuppie." (fig 8.14)

Delboy: ""You are Steven, you are guaranteed."

Steven: "No, no, wait-"

Delboy: "Take it from me son, you are." (fig 8.15, 8.16)

The comedy of the moment is double-edged. Delboy may have aspirations in the yuppie department, but deep down he *knows* he is a fraud. Delboy may wear a sharp suit, carry a mobile phone and filofax and enjoy the occasional cigar, but ironically his business interests are, by virtue of his petty criminal status *more honest* than Steven's high-flier pretensions. In that, he has the advantage over Steven who does not have the experience or wit to understand that it's *just a game*. To be described as a yuppie is for Steven, the archetypal upwardly mobile slime merchant, the ultimate put-down. Delboy plays the game even though he knows it's just play-acting. When Delboy confirms Steven's darkest fears regarding his identity, we understand that for all Delboy likes to pretend to a status that will forever elude him, he knows that the creature before him is not a fellow traveller. Neither does Delboy really want to become what Steven represents. Delboy is a sincerely honest crook whereas Steven is a dishonest charismatic huckster. The semiotic coding of Steven and Delboy's choice of suit is as much an indicator of their class and professional difference as their accents and attitudes. Delboy's confident flamboyance is echoed in his body language which is expansive and open (fig 8.11, 8.15). Steven appears intense and self-contained to the point of being repressed (fig 8.14). He is so concerned with image that he is unable to cope with Delboy's view of him, no matter how innocent. This gulf of

awareness between Delboy's serious joking and Steven's damaged ego is further demonstrated in Steven's challenge to a game of *Trivial Pursuit.*

Trivial Pursuit is a difficult marathon of a board game which requires a lot of detailed knowledge across a variety of categories. The game induces strong competitive feelings in the players and was in the late eighties one of the best selling games on the market. Favoured by executive middle-class professionals, ownership of the game signals a strong willingness to compete in the world of corporate entertaining. It is a game of one-up-man-ship, requiring excellent powers of recall. Unfortunately mastery of the game usually makes for tedium since there is no significant element of chance. People who play the game avidly therefore, are less concerned with the process of playing, and more intent on winning. As described, the game epitomises many of the chief characteristics of the executive working style of the eighties; target-oriented, motivated by winning rather than participating, and dependent to a large degree on strategy in the final stages. This is exactly the kind of game in which Steven expects to excel. His challenge to Delboy is both an indicator to the audience of his middle-class executive status and a signal of his determination to demonstrate his superiority. The fact that the game belongs to Cassandra and Rodney suggests their willingness to play the yuppie game of self-improvement. Delboy is undeterred by the prospect of jumping into the arena with Steven. His complete ignorance of the meaning of the game is what endears Delboy to us. *Trivial Pursuit* is after all just a board game. It is only prats like Steven who would surely see any greater significance in it.

Steven recognises that he cannot overcome Delboy's innate enthusiasm and fears Delboy's attempt to form a common bond with him. In challenging Delboy to *Trivial Pursuit* Steven expects to inflict a humiliating defeat on Delboy, by demonstrating his own intellectual superiority. Once seated around the board game, Steven again dominates the conversation. He speaks of the holiday to Africa and the wonders of watching the sunrise over the Serengeti plains. Positioned between Cassandra and his wife, Steven plays the role of

masculine hero to an adoring female audience who cannot , or chose not to see beyond his image (fig 8.17). Opposite him the Trotter brothers sit with Alan hunched together on the sofa (fig 8.18). They look uncomfortable with their shoulder pads jostling for room. This is not familiar territory for these *real* men who emanate from a working class culture. Steven's silver tongued charm is registered through the camera as a threat to Rodney's security; he is anxious that Cassandra might fall prey to Steven's smooth talk.

The title of the Christmas special *The Jolly Boys' Outing* refers to the annual pub daytrip to the seaside organised by Delboy. Steven's description of water-buffaloes grazing beneath the sunrise spectacle of Kilimanjaro is wasted on Delboy who happily suggests that Steven might want to come on the 'beano to Margate', as a bit of a change. Here we see the clash of class interests represented in the cultural capital of Steven and his exotic holidays compared to the more immediate gratification of the traditional working-class coach party with beer and sandwiches. The class lines are clearly drawn when it emerges that Uncle Albert, Rodney, Delboy and Alan are all planning to go on the trip, contrary to the expectations of Pamela and Cassandra. "You're going to get drunk aren't you, and make yourself sick on jellied eels." All pretence at middle-class manners evaporates.

Cassandra's position as a young career executive might fit with the spirit of the times, but diegetically her ambition poses problems for Rodney. Most obviously the fact of having to mix socially with people like Steven and Joanne is not an attractive proposition. Cassandra's easy familiarity with executive concepts such as brunch (working lunch come breakfast), market forecasting, creating the right ambience for the dinner party, and her readiness to flatter those in authority at the work-place suggests that she is on a different plane and probably a different trajectory to Rodney, who so far cannot even master the computer keyboard.

During the daytrip in Margate, Delboy and Rodney take a few minutes on their own to muse over their domestic situation:

> Delboy: "You know your Cassandra, she reminds me a bit of mum, y'know."

Rodney: "Oh good."

Delboy: "She's got drive 'aint she? You know that's one thing mum had, she had a lot of drive."

Rodney: "Yeah. Cassandra's very ambitious."

Delboy: "That's good in'it?"

Rodney: "Um. Nothing gets in the way of her career. No doubt about that."

Delboy: "You must be well pleased, 'cos she's an achiever."

Rodney: "Yeah."

Delboy: "Yeah. She's a bit like me in many ways."

Rodney: "Yeah I suppose so."

Delboy: "I've always been an achiever. I've never actually achieved nothing mind you, but I've always been in there with a shout."

It is one of the few times where we see Delboy in reflective mode. Cassandra's career potential is obvious although it carries with it a warning against female excess in the world of work. Rodney feels inadequate compared to his wife, and though proud of her achievements, knows that her career takes precedence within the marriage. Delboy's tale of an early venture 'eels on wheels' is another example of his belief that there is absolutely no reason why he should not become a huge commercial success just like Steven or any other go-getter. The pathos is predicated on the understanding that the audience sees exactly why Delboy will never make it big. He does not fit with the prevailing culture. He is too honest to be a really successful criminal and too ignorant to make a successful con-man. The truth of the matter is his self-belief. "Never stop believing eh brov?" He who dares wins.

The centrifugal possibilities of comedy

Comedy drama is probably the genre where reaccentuation of a given word or idea is at its most visible. In the mouths of Delboy Trotter and Arthur Daley, "enterprise" takes on a new inflection of meaning. The initiatives of these entrepreneurs are of the criminal variety. The apparent freedom of the new market place is best understood diegetically as the

economics of infinite possibility. Delboy's catchphrase "this time next year we'll be millionaires" is not a throwaway line. It signifies the philosophy of a true believer in the free market. Arthur Daley's catchphrase "the world's your lobster" is a similar marker of his respect for enterprise and initiative. The ironies of these representations are complex and manifold. Arthur for example considers himself to be a "true patriot". He espouses a romantic mythical vision of England where workers and aristocrats once lived together in rural harmony. Yet despite his nostalgia for this imagined country, Arthur would not wish himself back amongst the labouring classes. He sees the potential for wealth and prestige through his connections to the upper middle classes, even as he extols the virtues of the working man. He claims to respect hard work but in practice his energies are directed toward schemes which will reduce the burden.

His appearance is characterised by smart tailoring. He is very self-conscious and understands the importance of self-image in the business world. Despite this he is forever disappointed in the people he meets - many of them possessing all the appearance of respectability and class which he so admires and craves. But despite his aspirations to join the hunting and shooting set, Arthur is more at home with Terry than he is with anyone else (fig 3.8). It is through Terry that we can make a judgement as to the legitimacy or otherwise of Arthur's activities. Terry's credentials as a working class hero are never in question. His simple requirements in life - a drink, a woman and time on his hands - both contrast with and complement Arthur's persona as the dapper executive. This is supposedly management versus muscle. Yet Arthur's lack of discernment is legendary. It is Terry's dead-pan, intuitive "working class" suspicion of the middle classes which usually alerts the audience to the unreliability of the villain. "Toffs" on the other hand seem to be in a separate category which confirms some of the ideological weight of the programme. Whilst Arthur's insistence on calling himself an entrepreneur satirises the notion of the free market, it also serves another function. Being a crook is clearly not the same as being a free marketeer and yet Arthur has achieved a degree of success through his embrace of market

capitalism. Or at least the notion of supply and demand has become dignified by the new economic climate. Within the romantic Victorian world which Arthur conjures, his position would have been equated with the trading class. This would certainly have limited his aspirations to join the upper echelons of society. But the new Victorianism of Thatcherism has granted Arthur a degree of respectability which he otherwise would never have enjoyed. What is clear from Arthur's dealings with educated well-spoken businessmen and "toffs" is that the real power resides within the middleclasses. It is they who have ownership of the majority of the nation's new economic wealth. This is the final irony. Whereas Arthur appears to be the object of satire, for believing himself to be a player in the world of serious business, it may in fact be the idea of entrepreneurial capitalism which is being called into question. When Mrs Thatcher talked about the "expansion of self-employment" (Thatcher 1995:93) as a means of creating new jobs, she surely did not have Arthur Daley in mind.

Television offered up Arthur Daley and Delboy Trotter as incarnations of the Thatcherite dream. What qualifications or skills were deemed necessary for success? Neither Delboy nor Arthur have any training or qualifications. They operate from makeshift premises, relying principally on contacts to make business deals. Apart from the merchandise itself, business is to say the least an intangible entity. There is a striking absence of paperwork even though Arthur keeps an accountant. Delboy is positively outraged by Rodney's suggestion that they should keep accounts. Records are sketchy and receipts illegible or non-existent. This is a world where confidence matters more than integrity. It is an unregulated arena where "he who dares wins" and seemingly one should hazard everything in order to make a profit. There are no safeguards against fraudulent operators or corrupt institutions. It is a world bereft of state control or welfare support. At the same time as Delboy and Arthur epitomise the new breed of upwardly mobile citizens, they also represent the most vulnerable and invisible section of the community. This is particularly true of the Trotter family.

In Conclusion

As we consider the *function* of terms such as "free enterprise" and "the entrepreneur", it becomes clear that certain patterns begin to emerge through television representations in the 1980s. The entrepreneur is a figure of derision who occupies a space which is becoming embedded within television comedy. The entrepreneur is presented as a maverick unscrupulous figure who is more concerned with image than substance. His mannerisms are designed to distract the client or customer from the real activity of making profit with the least amount of effort. He is distinguished from the general population by his smart tailoring and clean hands (fig 8.2). He is far removed from the idea of television labour, by which we understand the manufacturing industries. He is unwilling to get his hands dirty and is offended by the suggestion that his business is not legitimate.

We can also see the re-instatement of a working class ethic in the shape of Terry McCann (fig 2.6). He epitomises the romantic ideal of an honest worker without pretensions, who knows his place and seeks not to change it. He espouses an apolitical traditional attitude to life. He would never call himself a liberal but at the same time he has no time for racists. His attitude to women suggests a certain sexism which is nevertheless rendered harmless. He is suspicious of homosexuals but this is more to do with maintaining his image as a hard man rather than because of any personal prejudice. These are the values which infuse the culture that television has created as a foil to the entrepreneurial spirit of the times. The programme *Minder* can give licence to a figure such as Arthur Daley whilst ensuring that the excesses of capitalist enterprise are kept within certain boundaries by the presence of Terry McCann. His "minder" function therefore extends beyond the diegesis to society itself. It is however unfortunate that the only acknowledged power of restraint should lie in the reactionary character of McCann. The implication in social terms is that the free market can only be kept in check by reverting to an old-style ideology of feudal dimensions.

Delboy's excesses are counter-balanced by Rodney's incremental achievements. Whereas Delboy represents a flamboyant disregard for the consequences of his deals and activities,

Rodney is the straight man who attends to Delboy in times of crisis and attempts to dissuade him from ludicrous "get rich quick" ventures. The entrepreneurial drive of Delboy within *Only Fools and Horses* is therefore moderated by Rodney's distrust of market capitalism. Like Terry McCann he represents the older working class tradition, but by the end of the decade, Rodney has undergone significant change. Nevertheless he is unpersuaded by the glib opportunism of entrepreneurial figures like Steven and is ill at ease with the social pressures which his wife Cassandra sees as necessary to improve her career prospects.

Like Terry McCann, Delboy does not recognise himself as one of the unemployed. They reinvent themselves semantically as self-employed - thus becoming members of the burgeoning new category of Thatcher's workforce. But unlike Thatcher's ideal, these self-employed workers give nothing back to the government. They pay no income tax and no national insurance. Consequently they claim neither unemployment nor supplementary benefits. Officially they cease to exist, except as part of a political lexicon. But more than that, they resist the idea of state intervention. As a result, another complex mythology becomes embedded within the text. Those who seek the *charity* of state aid are, by implication even lower in the evolutionary chain than those who practise illegal and fraudulent business deals. We are now faced with a serious proposition. Not only do these programmes implicitly ascribe a quasi-morality to those who refuse state welfare, but they suggest that the *working* class has all but disappeared. It has been subsumed into two new social categories; the self-employed and the unemployed.

The next chapter will examine two television dramas which were explicitly concerned with these emergent social categories.

[1] *Blue Peter* is a children's programme with which the catch-phrase "here's one I made earlier" is associated. It refers to the necessary 'magic' of television whereby cookery and crafts are prepared in advance so as to demonstrate what the final product should look like when finished.

[2] See chapter1/2 for discussion of the Red Book and the formal abandonment of state responsibility for economic growth

[3] Video packaging from 1991

Chapter 7

Class, Unemployment and the Collapse of Unionised Labour

This chapter proposes a comparison between the series of plays *Boys from the Blackstuff* and the serial *Auf Wiedersehen Pet* in an attempt to explore the differences and similarities between two programmes dealing with the experience of unemployment in the early 1980s.

When Mrs Thatcher was elected Party Leader in 1975, her commitment to reform of the trades union movement was as firm as ever. Sources differ as to whether legislative change was a conservative success or not, given a) the work of the Conservative Trades Union movement and b) the degree to which TUC leaders allowed change to proceed. Although in her memoirs Thatcher expresses anger at Jim Prior's intervention, other critics suggest that he was right to proceed gradually with the reforms. Seven major pieces of employment legislation were enacted from 1980-1990. These included the Employment Act 1980 which prohibited secondary (flying) pickets, introduced postal ballots and began the process of an end to the closed shop. The Trade Union Act 1984 introduced secret balloting. Gradually the tide of public opinion could be said to be turning in favour of these new legal moves. Christopher Johnson links the various legislative and policy measures to the character of the different Employment Secretaries over the period (Johnson 1991:222).

In 1983 a "Special Measures" manifesto was produced, designed to reduce unemployment which had soared to over 3 million.

> "Unlike some of my colleagues, I never ceased to believe that, other things being equal, the level of unemployment was related to the extent of trade union power."
> (Thatcher 1995:272)

Anxious to put an end to the closed shop, Thatcher had appointed Norman Tebbit as Employment Secretary in the Cabinet reshuffle of September 1981. They both worked toward further trade union law reforms which would become the 1982 Employment Act.

Most important amongst the new measures was the erosion of trade union immunity from damages and compensation claims. Although liability was limited, there was no limit on judges when deciding penalties for contempt of court. Thatcher was in this way successfully allowing another arm of the establishment, the courts, to systematically undermine the power and authority of a movement which she felt to be "overbearing". The link between trade union activity and unemployment was made explicit in a government green paper *Democracy in Trade Unions*, citing excessive wage claims and low productivity as reasons for curbing the unions' power to take industrial action over issues which did not come under the rubric of what the government deemed to be "legitimate trade disputes" (Thatcher 1995:273). Inevitably, one of the consequences of unemployment was the loss of membership within the unions representing the largely manufacturing industries. The populations chiefly affected by redundancy and unemployment were in South Wales, the Midlands and the North of England.

Boys from the Blackstuff

Screened in the autumn of 1982, *Boys from the Blackstuff* brought to television audiences for the first time a television drama which made explicit the experience of unemployment and its relationship to welfare provision. In the estimation of many critics (Brandt 1993:119-139) and reviewers it was a major broadcasting event. Divided into five 50 minute plays, the drama attempted to contextualise unemployment within a specific location; Liverpool. Much has already been written concerning these plays but the relevance of the production to this thesis cannot be overlooked. The title sequence of the first play *Jobs for the Boys* establishes the main characters at the ironically named Employment Office as they try to collect their unemployment benefit. The title sequence opens with shots of men going about their daily business on the streets of Liverpool (fig 1.1). Despite the cockiness of individuals outside, the main hive of activity is to be found in the Unemployment Benefit Office. Here the contrast is quite shocking (fig 1.2). It is noisy,

dirty and thronging with people. It has the look and feel of a betting shop which is perhaps not such an unlikely comparison. Dozens of young men wait interminably (fig 1.22). Scores of administrative staff, mostly young women, work in line behind the wire grill which divides the workers from the jobless as if the one might infect the other, should they ever meet or touch. There are no winners here however. Both employee and unemployed are caged by the system, each regarding the other as some kind of alien specimen (figs 1.9, 1.11, 1.14, 1.17, and 1.20). This is best observed in the exchange between Yosser and his claim officer (fig 1.14 -1.17). Though they speak to each other, it is not the same language. The alienation of Yosser, and to some extent his interlocutor stems from their relationship to the wire grill. He who sits in his suit and wearily tries to follow the painfully cumbersome procedures is aware of his own collaboration in a system which is failing. In his code of dress he unwittingly mimics the uniform of the business professional which serves as both a telling indication of his own need to bolster his self-esteem and enlarges the gulf of empathy between him and his clients. Yosser who stands before him has no power other than his physical presence which he uses menacingly in order to exact payment of his allowance. Yosser's face in extreme close-up behind the grill (fig 1.17) is a visual reminder of the human cost of unemployment. Without work, such men have nowhere to vent their strength except in anger and violence. His aggression is proof of the need for the grill to protect the officials of the state. The image also shows that Yosser has reached his limits. The attention to detail in the opening sequence signifies the reluctance of the state through its office-bound agents to relate to the unemployed on a humane level. Bleasdale draws attention here to the semiology of the unemployment benefit office as a hostile environment where claimants are herded like animals and treated like criminals.

Whereas Chrissie and Dixie express resignation in the face of bureaucracy, Loggo fights fire with fire. Not to be out-done or intimidated by the official before him, he swaggers and preens in his suit and fur coat, as if he were a man of leisure (fig 1.11). He treats the official behind the grill as if he were a lackey. Bleasdale's humour is often bleak and

ironic; Logo's posturing is a reserved solely for the benefit of the dole office. It is his occasional opportunity to perform in a manner to which he would like to become accustomed if only he had a job. Any humour to be had from Logo's appearance leaves a bitter aftertaste. Similarly fig 1.18 uses a visual metaphor in the shape of a book of matches as a cheeky reminder of what's missing in the lives of these men. Towards the end of the title sequence, Dixie's last words suggest a kind of closure at the same time as the drama is about to begin. His officer reminds him that the two sons on benefit cannot be considered in relation to Dixie's benefit claim. His response, "No-one on the dole counts, friend" is brutally succinct. The move to closure here is significant because for many the title sequence has already provided sufficient drama. This is the first and last moment in *Jobs for the Boys* where we see the main characters in a formal relation to the state. It is the domestic and the personal which form the chief arenas of conflict and interest for the drama. The choice of the unemployment office as the opening scene therefore suggests a particular relationship between the government and the governed. The state exists as a separate entity - rigid, bureaucratic, inhumane, autonomous and impotent and those who serve the state are themselves made impotent and hollow.

The final insult lies in the last frame; "Social Security, thirty years of progress" reads the poster on the wall (fig 1.28). The mise-en-scene contributes to the creation of a 'drab' aesthetic where action is predicated on two kinds of camera shot; establishing long shots suggest confusion, bustle and weariness whilst close-ups denote the misery of mass unemployment by focusing on individuals. Thus Chrissie and his friends act metonymically for the thousands of ordinary men obliged to seek state welfare. This is as close as it is possible to get to an identification of collective suffering since television drama by its nature empathises with the *individual* protagonist.

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Aesthetic values and Realist Conventions

The semiology of the title sequence bears close investigation. The location is designed to look as authentic as possible. Here we see the creation of a televisual aesthetic that is quite apart from the familiar conventions of situation comedy. *Boys From the Blackstuff* draws upon a sense of the *present* in a completely different way. The use of diegetic sound such as traffic passing, the clatter of machinery, conversation, telephones, coughing and other noises associated with public spaces marks the setting as authentic. The locations are real. This negation of the studio and the associated paraphernalia of studio lighting, costume and special effects re-inforces the quality of drabness which *Boys* so successfully cultivates. The decision to shoot on location also demonstrates the influence of the Free Cinema Movement with its concentration on naturalism. However unlike the Free Cinema of the 1950s and 60s, *Boys* makes very little use of musical scoring. Bleasdale's realism is concentrated much more on technologies of representation which bring an immediacy to the programmes that in turn makes for difficult and uncomfortable viewing. The use of video rather than film conveys a powerful sense of the domestic and the "now". Such tactics would come to influence programme-making for a decade, most notably the Liverpool soap *Brookside* which employed the same use of camera and location shooting. The absence of voice-overs and the minimal use of music allow the audience closer proximity to the narrative. We are not distanced from the story by sentimental devices designed to conjure the emotions. We are instead brought face to face with a raw quality of realism where shots of the neon-lit unemployment office and the faces of bored young men are suggestive of a nation's disillusionment and apathy. But we must also recognise the artistry employed in order to produce this particular brand of realism. There is pathos and poetry in the use of the camera, though the effect may be orchestrated in a seemingly insouciant manner. There is however a moral purpose employed here in the choice of angles and close-ups. The realism of the programme may appear to inhibit an audience's emotional response to the drama. This is not the case. It is not that the programme is not

affecting, it is rather the typology of our emotions which differs. This is not a melodrama. *Boys* avoids the cinematic by inscribing a "tv" aesthetic which is as seemingly impoverished as the characters themselves. It plays on the idea of television as the disenfranchised cousin of the big screen. There are no luminous close-ups of suffering faces. Instead the grill obscures the camera and individuals are grouped in non-descript fashion. We are confronted by the *banality* of the real and yet we are still witness to a choreography of images and sounds which draw us into the diegesis as efficiently as an operatic overture. The poetry lies in the occasional detail such as a close-up shot of a cigarette paper or a poster on a wall. The ironic composition of such shots serves many functions. It subtly suggests a "fly-on-the-wall" documentary style with the roving camera going in search of evidence rather than drawing attention to its contrived position within the scene. The camera speaks silently via the montage of images. What *Boys* captures so well is the indignity of the dole office and the passivity of the claimants. Paul Graham's photographs *Beyond Caring* utilise similar aesthetic devices to extraordinary effect. The dole office is instantly recognisable (fig 5.1). Graham's low angle shots of dirty waiting rooms, scattered with cigarette butts and empty coke cans denote the squalid conditions of these institutions and are suggestive of the poverty and deprivation enjoyed by those who stand and wait. The occasional poster of a horse or an alpine mountainside are feeble attempts by a hard-pressed corps of officials to inject some colour and interest into these public spaces (fig 5.3). They only serve to re-inforce the ideological gulf between image and reality, desire and need, government and people.

Comparison with Graham's photography from 1984, demonstrates how the realism of *Boys* had become so well established as a rhetorical counterblast to the promises of Thatcher's enterprise culture. Bleasdale shows an unemployment office swamped by claimants. By 1984, Graham's pictures testify to the emptiness of those same waiting areas. It is as if even making a claim has become a redundant activity in the face of so great a social and economic depression.

Illegitimate employment

Chrissie, Jimmy, Dixie, Yosser, Loggo, Snowy and George represent a working class community betrayed by government. Snowy, the most outspoken pro-union member of the group voices his concerns early on in the first play as the "boys" set off for work on a local building site.

> Snowy: "But the way things are going with this government, the swing to the Right, tax relief for the rich, redundancies for the poor, mass unemployment, poverty, curtailing their freedom starting with the unions, it's all heading for one thing and one thing only, a fascist dictatorship and a police state."

His "work" colleagues who fail to see the significance of politics any more deride his arguments. To Loggo and Chrissie the most important thing is to take action as individuals rather than focus on a collective political strategy. Throughout *Boys from the Blackstuff* we are reminded of the need to find pragmatic solutions to unemployment. Unemployment within the diegesis is shown in human terms to be a situation which effects principally men, then women and families. This is largely in keeping with the idea of the working class family having one breadwinner whilst the wife remains at home with the children. It is a production that poses no overt political solutions but attempts through a combination of satire and social realism to describe the dilemmas afflicting individuals who are caught between the inadequate support of the welfare state and the demands of family and personal responsibilities.

Although the men are defined as illegitimate workers because of their status as benefit claimants, they are not alone. In *Jobs for the Boys* the question of what constitutes legitimate employment is referred to again and again. Whilst on route to the building site Snowy's tirade is momentarily halted as he witnesses two police officers apparently arresting "two working lads" (fig 2.3). This lends fire to Snowy's argument that the police are engaged in illegal and violent crimes against certain sections of the community. What he

does not realise is that the "lads" in question are two "sniffers" from the dole office who have been assigned to follow the boys on suspicion of moonlighting. The dramatic irony provides a moment of comic relief particularly when it emerges that the DoE driver Leslie, only has a provisional licence. Snowy's accusations of police brutality and corruption are briefly assuaged as we see the supposedly legitimate workers from the dole office suffer the indignity of police scrutiny (fig 2.4). Not only are the "sniffers" breaking the law by driving without insurance but they are also reminded of their meagre status in the eyes of the public. The protestations of being on "a very important mission" are met with sarcasm. It transpires that one of the police officers has himself been unemployed and clearly has no time or respect for the work they are undertaking. "That's why I'm here today giving you a ticket. I've met your type before."

Meanwhile Snowy's act of rebellion, yelling "bastards" at the police as the van passes (fig 2.5) is dealt with swiftly by the larger of the two police officers. The boys happily surrender their colleague to the policeman who asks Snowy to repeat what he has just shouted (fig 2.15). The comedy is reinforced by the difference in size between the six foot officer and the diminutive Snowy. On hearing Snowy repeat the offensive word, the officer bends down so that he is at eye level with him and says deliberately "midget" and ruffles his hair in patronising fashion. Snowy's authority on police intimidation is instantly diminished by the incident.

The question of legitimacy is pertinent to the whole issue of employment. The police's actions are construed as petty and unnecessarily intimidating as are the activities of the "sniffers". Although both agencies are in the business of law enforcement there is a hierarchy at work here which positions the DoE as incompetent and tiresomely bureaucratic. Malloy refers to the police as "another growth industry" and given the levels of pay one can see the attraction of joining the force when the only alternative is the dole office. It is claustrophobic universe which Bleasdale creates in order to make the point that

unemployment touches everybody. It is a social issue not a matter of personal failure. Everyone is implicated; the police, the boys on the blackstuff, the benefits agencies. Even the more experienced Donald murmurs dolefully that he cannot see the point of such investigations since chasing moonlighters is really only trying to catch "tadpoles". The real object of their investigation is Malloy the site agent who illegally hires the men for cash but avoids paying income tax, national insurance and sick pay. The establishment is therefore shown to be caught in a strange dilemma – obligated to follow policy and legislation laid down by government but increasingly disillusioned and frustrated in its attempts to take action. By contrast the boys' illegal activities are nevertheless construed within the diegesis as the lesser of several evils. Morally they have the high ground. However Chrissie makes the compromises that have to be made to keep food on the table explicit in answer to Snowy's call to arms.

> Chrissie: When you're scared, unless you're very special, you think about yourself and yours. You think about feeding the kids and paying the rent and the effect it's having on your tart and even what Christmas is going to be like this year. I'm a married man with two kids and your beliefs go right out the window when the debtors knock at your door."

The text constantly underlines the futility of individual action and the abstraction of leftwing political rhetoric. In *Shop Thy Neighbour* Chrissie and his wife Angie come to blows as each seeks to vent their frustration. Chrissie is unable to make a stand. Angie cannot understand why he does not fight back at the system which is dragging them under. Snowy's monologue on the pleasures of doing a good job are treated by Chrissie as evidence of a harmless lunacy which is out of touch with the realities of day-to-day existence. Snowy's idealism is tragically found to be unworkable within the parameters of the situation. Attempting to abseil from a window with the DoE *Sweeney* style raid in progress, Snowy is killed when the rail to which he has anchored his rope gives way.

Snowy is quite literally a victim of the "shoddy workmanship" which appears to be typical of the age. Snowy has already spoken of his unwillingness to undercut prices in order to satisfy profit-hungry bosses. He is too good a craftsman and this along with his faith in working class solidarity proves fatal. An innocent in many ways, he is simply no match for the powers of the establishment, whether legal, political or commercial.

The legitimacy of the "sniffers" is broached again by Donald who complains of the bureaucratic nonsense he has to put up with back at the office. Things come to a head in *Shop Thy Neighbour* when Donald is assigned to follow Chrissie and Loggo. Miss Sutcliffe, the head of the Fraud Investigation Unit, has been ignoring Donald ever since the disastrous raid at Malloy's site. Frustrated and angry he demands a job. Sutcliffe thinks Donald is too nice a man to really enjoy catching people, to which he answers "the only reason I'm here is because I don't want to be queuing out there". He sees his task as a job, nothing more; "it was looked upon as promotion". Sutcliffe's decision to put Donald on the trail of Chrissie and Loggo merely underlines what she sees as the lunacy of the policy she must enact. Following the boys will simply "pass the time for them all". She decides to prosecute Malloy rather than the other two because "He's the really naughty boy, practically making a profession out of it". Once on the street Donald approaches Chrissie and tells him that he has been ordered to follow him, and to ask if Chrissie and Loggo would give a thought to his situation of having to follow both of them simultaneously. "It's not a joke, it's an outright madness," he says. Donald refers to the analogous situation of the W.W.I troops who left their trenches to play a game of football one Christmas and temporarily forgot "the absolute lunacy of what they were doing to each other". Desperately ashamed and contemptuous of his role, Donald decides to take a stand. He fights back against the system by rejecting the responsibility heaped upon him. He resigns his position on the spot; "I'd sooner be back on the counter in Wigan". Of course Donald has a job, no matter how displeasing so he is probably going to lose only a portion of his salary as a

consequence. Nevertheless it is significant that he should finally concede his involvement in a system which does nothing but persecute the most needy.

Sutcliffe also realises the "massive and total futility of her life" describing herself as "a creeping Jesus sprat catcher". In an effort to stem the tide of realisation she devises a number of small gestures of authority. She keeps Chrissie and Loggo waiting outside her office. She deliberately allows Donald to sweat it out in his office whilst she benignly conjures a job to keep him busy (but not satisfied). She employs a strictly patronising yet polite mode of address and engages in petty abuses of power with her colleagues. Her decision not to prosecute Loggo and Chrissie appears to be the arbitrary decision of a frustrated middle-aged woman. Yet her logic is sound. The case has so far been so fraught with chaos that it would be little short of a farce if ever brought to court. Sutcliffe's domestic arrangements seem to impacting upon her work ethic. Like Donald she experiences the bitter taste of under-achievement. Her job gives her no satisfaction even when officers produce results. When Leslie and Jackie come in to claim their expenses she is less than friendly. She is sarcastic when giving the name and address of a woman for Jackie to harass;

> Sutcliffe: "She's been accused of, let me see, prostitution, co-habitation, mass murder, drug smuggling, huh and a leading role in the Afghanistan rebellion. The informant is a person by the name of Ms Minnie Mouse."

Clearly Sutcliffe views the persecution of such people as nonsensical. She dislikes Jackie and Leslie for the keenness and satisfaction they derive from catching people even though her own role is thoroughly compromised. At home Miss Sutcliffe enjoys a breakfast table of plenty (fig 3.2), in sharp contrast to Chrissie and his wife, Angie (fig 3.1). We see Miss Sutcliffe draw a bottle from a full wine rack, to place in the refrigerator for later. However her life is not without problems. Cruelly teased by her senile and incontinent

mother, Miss Sutcliffe suffers private humiliations which may account for her peremptory and hostile management style at work.

Whereas much of *Boys from the Blackstuff* depends upon a realist aesthetic derived from naturalistic acting, location shooting and a sensitivity to the ways in which ordinary people speak, the characterisation of the DoE employees owes more to farce and caricature. Jean Boht, the actress who played Miss Sutcliffe, would later go on to become a household name for her performance as Mrs Boswell in the BBC1 situation comedy *Bread* by Carla Lane. The comedy of *Bread* is predicated on the bizarre and ingenuous manoeuvrings of the Boswell family to outwit the benefits' agencies while conducting any number of shady business deals. Set in Liverpool, the programme's humour depends upon the dead-pan representation of DoE employees as unimaginative, small-minded and hostile.

Bleasdale seems much less interested in his DoE characters who exist mainly as plot devices underpinning the human interest narrative of the whole. But their inclusion signals an important dimension to the story-telling. In quasi-surreal fashion the experience of interviews, form-filling and cross-referencing for claimants is brought to the screen and rendered ridiculous. Dixie's experiences in *Moonlighter* are Kafkaesque, reflecting the ambiguity of officials themselves caught up in the impenetrable bureaucracy and the frustration of the individual pulled in for "routine administrative checks".

Heteroglossia in action

Bleasdale's series of plays make explicit a variety of issues and concerns within what has traditionally been portrayed as a homogenous social group. The urban working class is here displaced and fractured. If Snowy speaks for the disenfranchised union member, he does so, knowing that the power of the union movement has been forever dismantled. And yet Snowy is not a pessimist by nature. He still takes inordinate pride in his own work and therefore sets great store by his autonomy as a working man. This portrayal of the

individual craftsman who believes in the power of the working class collective is too idealistic to survive the real world. Belief is not enough.

By contrast Chrissie's impotence, made real in his marriage and metaphorical in his dealings with Malloy, focuses our attention on his preoccupation with family responsibility. Family is at the heart of this fragmenting community. This is made evident by the periodic appearance of Snowy's elderly and incapacitated father George. A mythology is recreated and sustained regarding the role of elders in a society which sees itself as shut off from all conventional means of support. All government and public service agencies such as the police, welfare and even the NHS are depicted as alien and alienating. This is so self-evident within the drama that no-one comments upon it. In *Yosser's Story*, the power of the establishment to obscure the individual is so well established that Yosser's resistance leads to mental collapse. In this episode of the series Yosser exhausts every significant human refuge from the confessional to a police cell. His failed suicide is the last attempt to make something happen by his own volition. It is both a desperate cry for help and an affirmation of his earlier statement, "I am a man". The hesitancy on the part of the policemen who reluctantly "save" him from drowning is an ironic comment on the role of a public service which has become morally compromised in recent years. Yosser stands for a generation of men who will never have a job. His masculinity becomes the armour which he uses to protect himself from outside interference. When Yosser does finally exhibit the violence which has been intimated during the previous episodes, it is against those agencies which would under *normal* circumstances operate to protect and support an individual in crisis. Bleasdale's indictment of the welfare state is nowhere more explicit than in the scene where Yosser tries to stave off the invasion of his home. Unable to gain access, the Social Services team are obliged to seek police assistance. Horrified by the brutal way in which the police subdue Yosser, the team drag Yosser's children into a waiting van. At no point in the course of Yosser's deterioration does anyone show any genuine concern or professional expertise. What is particularly

striking about this scene is the depiction of local public service officials as utterly ill-equipped to deal with the consequences of central government policy. By the close of the narrative, Yosser is like any one of the other vagrants and homeless living on the streets of Liverpool.

The DoE is depicted as a monstrous administrative labyrinth which is a mystery even to those who work in it. The experience of unemployment seems almost preternatural to people like Sutcliffe, Donald and Jackie. The division between those who work and those who are categorised as unemployed is, as we have seen fluid and permeable. All of society is involved and much of society is to blame. Unemployment may appear to be a working class experience, but it is not merely a working class problem. The ramifications in terms of social relations, political decisions and professional attitudes have profound consequences within the diegesis. The police in particular, though seemingly peripheral, have an important strategic role within the drama. We see the rank and file officers on the street and observe their responses. Chasing dole scroungers is not considered to be a worthy means of employment. "Sniffers" like Leslie may enjoy the thrill of the chase but their shenanigans are nothing more than a kind of wish-fulfilment. The raid which "killed" Snowy was a bizarrely amateur attempt at cowboys and Indians. Similarly when the police arrive at Yosser's house they are contemptuous of the liberal concerns of the Social Services agents who stand by while officers wielding baseball bats beat Yosser. The prevailing theme of the police representation is thugish bullying and a distinct lack of concern for community relations. The police force as pictured here is an unreconstituted organisation, divorced from any idea of public service. It represents quite explicitly a repressive enforcement agency of government policy which is a view that resonates with some critical thinking of the period.

The DoE employees are divided between those who see the potential for career advancement, Sutcliffe's assistant, Jackie and Leslie, and those who are either too near

retirement, as in the case of Sutcliffe, or too "nice" as in the case of Donald to attach much importance to the prosecutions. The overall impression is of a government agency that has become more powerful than the sum of its parts. Donald and Leslie were obviously never recruited to do the job they are now being required to do. The one is completely incompetent and the other is entirely uncomfortable. They have somehow fallen between the cracks. Originally catering as an employment exchange, the role of the DoE has radically changed. It has now become a instrument of repression rather than an agency to enable individuals to support themselves. It serves within the diegesis to emasculate the men who go there, diminishing their autonomy and rendering them infantile in the face of bureaucratic state power.

Villains and Victims

In *Moonlighter* Dixie takes a job as a night-watchman on the docks. In addition to his wages, Dixie receives a bundle of ten pound notes which is pushed through a hole in the wall of the toilet cubicle each night. Dixie does not know who is paying him but it transpires that the ship under his supervision is being raided each night by a group of former Dockers. Dixie is expected to turn a blind eye. The Dockers threaten violence when Dixie tries to talk himself out of the situation. Reluctantly he concedes defeat. Dixie's situation is somewhere between a rock and a hard place. His wife has been caught by the "sniffers" doing a few hours work and Dixie's benefit seems to be in jeopardy. His children laze around at home all day, thoroughly disenchanted by the world beyond the front door and Dixie's wife has been receiving threatening phone calls. Although Dixie risks losing his benefit, the money is too good to pass up. But Dixie has principles. His alienation from Chrissie and the boys stems from the time when they lost their jobs in Middlesborough through a dodgy investment scam. Since then he has chosen to remain distant from his former colleagues, spurning their offers of work in order to make his own way. Married to a weak and ineffectual woman, Dixie has no friends to turn to as things

reach crisis point. Dixie is unable to contain his anger when he finds his children still in bed at midday. The eldest son Kevin has been unable to find work in the two years since he left school. The younger son cannot see the point of going to school when "you need nuclear physics to be a binman these days". Dixie is trying to hold together a family unit which is unable to function, having lost its essential structure. Without the routine of work and the self-esteem that honest work supplies, the family implodes around the head of the household.

Despite all the compromises he has to make with his family, Dixie finally decides to do the right thing and report the Dockers. He turns to Mr Marley the chief security guard in the expectation that he can take responsibility for the chaos. Forced by the Dockers to stay whilst they unload the cargo, Dixie is brought to breaking point by the gang leader.

> "You are shite, you're nothing. You're the dregs dragged here off the dole, so you just stand there and do what you're supposed to do - watch us work."

The final indignity of his situation, coupled with the stress of constant intimidation brings Dixie to his lowest point. Having received his last payoff in the toilet, Dixie takes a peek at the man who has been masterminding the entire operation, only to discover it is Marley himself. Like Snowy, Dixie's ethical stance is found to be out of step with the prevailing ethos. Subjected to surveillance for the sake of a few quid a week, there are no distinctions to be drawn any longer between earning a living and breaking the law. It seems that no-one can be trusted. Even the assistant manager at the dole office is playing a game of cat and mouse, reliant as he is on anonymous informers, rather than hard evidence.

Dixie's experiences lead him to the conclusion that his eldest son must leave home in order to find work. Kevin is at first disbelieving; "on the blackstuff?". Leaving Liverpool would mean losing his benefits and probably having to travel a fair distance to get hold of a contract job, possibly overseas. It signals the end of an era in working class history. This is depicted in the painful separation of Kevin from his mother (fig 4.2). In Norman

Tebbit's phrase it has come to the point where you have to get "on your bike" to find work. The last shot of the episode is of Kevin thumbing his way on a motorway sliproad (fig 4.3). He holds a guitar and a bag sits at his feet. Dixie has given him the last few hundred pounds from the dockyard payoff to get his son started. As the cars drive by, Kevin is dwarfed by three large road signs. One is a large arrow on the right hand side of the frame which seems to point to the other two which read: "Traffic island, keep in lane" and "No Stopping, No U-turns" respectively. The semiology seems irresistible. As discussed above, it is these tiny rhetorical moments which impress upon the memory. As Thatcher herself put it at the Conservative Party Conference in October 1980;

> "To those waiting with bated breath for that favourite media catchphrase, the 'U-turn', I have only one thing to say. 'You turn if you want to. The lady's not for turning.' I say that not only to you, but to our friends overseas - and also to those who are not our friends."

Auf Wiedersehen Pet and the Black Market

What Kevin in *Boys from the Blackstuff* is looking forward to is a life on the road as an illegal contract worker. He represents the only hope left for the next generation of unemployed. Government policy was set to continue as before even with unemployment rising and a worsening recession effecting British industry and business overseas as well as at home. Against this backdrop Central Television introduced a new comedy drama series in 1983 which starred a number of unknown, but soon to be famous actors such as Kevin Whately and Jimmy Nail. It suggests a subtle but telling shift in tone as the drama of unemployment becomes the basis of a comedy of characters. *Auf Wiedersehen Pet* draws upon similar aesthetic devices to *Boys From the Blackstuff*. The use of location shooting, naturalistic acting and unknown northern actors lends a dimension of credibility to the series even though the overriding comedic nature of the programme ultimately undermines any serious discussion of unemployment within the diegesis.

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Because they are black market workers, the characters in *Auf Wiedersehen Pet* have no rights, no welfare entitlement and no benefits. They have chosen to leave their homes and families in order to find work with contractors abroad. Yet this is still perceived to be a better deal than what they can expect at home where the dole queues are getting longer by the day. Dennis is the unofficial liaison between the lads and the management. He fulfils a role which might otherwise have been that of a shop steward. However he is reluctant to employ any of the vocabulary associated with union practice in Britain. This is a labour force without representation or protection. Dennis is careful and tactful in his dealings with the German foreman. He is also scornful of Oz's little England mentality which he describes as "ridiculously nationalistic for the country that can't even employ them." Dennis's role is conciliatory and at times even paternalistic. In *"I wish I was a Carpenter"*, Dennis is concerned that the younger Neville is not liberated of all his earnings by unscrupulous tricksters on their night out. Oz by comparison is completely self-serving and a trouble-maker. The foreman perceives him as rude and unmanageable. Following a number of petty run-ins with the foreman, and a drunken brawl in the local bar, Oz is sacked and ordered to return to England. Unable to accept responsibility for his own actions, Oz is determined to blame the Germans for any and every conceivable misfortune of the British. His lip-service to union solidarity is met with a mixture of indifference and scorn by his workmates. The message being given to Oz is clear; if you work well and keep out of trouble there should be no friction and consequently no need of industrial action. In the end, ironically it is the German co-workers who threaten to walk out if Oz is not re-instated.

The mise-en-scene of the German building site with its hut for the British workers offers a home from home. Whereas in Britain the work force would go home every night, the lads are obliged to stay on site to save money. The hut becomes a handy metaphor for the predicament in which they find themselves. The comedy value is also made apparent from

the first moment on seeing the accommodation. Oz announces his intention through reference to the film *The Great Escape*;

"I'll start tunnelling tonight. I'll square it with the Escape Officer. The problems goin' be the dogs though and what with the sand, and I'm goin' to need false papers and civvie clothes.."

The hut known informally as "Stalag 17" becomes the centre of Oz's world. An avid reader of spy novels, Oz quickly identifies the Germans as the enemy and sees any attempt at integration as collaboration. His obsession with "hut morale" is dismissed by the others, but Oz is the only member of the group to make explicit the need for some co-operation to ensure that they get a fair deal, even though it is Dennis who speaks on behalf of the men in dealings with the management. Although Oz's sense of solidarity is warped by an absurd xenophobia, he recognises the value of representation. However he is also shown to be the most selfish, irresponsible, tactless and unreliable of them all. His attitude is more resonant of shop steward stereotyping from the films and television programmes of the 50s, 60s and 70s. His readiness to criticise what he sees as poor work on the part of the local workers is roundly dismissed by the rest of the group. Nevertheless it is made clear by Herr Ulrich the foreman and the German workers that the British work fast and well. The German bricklayers are heard telling the Brits to work more slowly so as not to show them up. Oz persists in an argument concerning the origin of the phrase "jerry-built" as implying shoddy German workmanship. The lads call upon the bookish Barry the Radish in order to settle the argument. Having listened patiently to Barry's answer detailing the Biblical story of Joshua and the walls of Jericho, Oz is undeterred concluding that the reason the walls were so unsteady in the first place was probably because they were built by a German.

Barry (fig 1) is the only other character to espouse any kind of political beliefs in relation to the nature of unemployment. Early on he describes the situation back home as resulting from misguided policy. Barry is from the first depicted as bit of a berk - in his mouth even

the most sensible observation becomes an occasion for laughter. This is not a programme intended to pontificate on the causes of unemployment. However, in its *absence* of comment, we can determine several note-worthy issues arising. Unlike *Boys From the Blackstuff, Auf Wiedersehen Pet* creates distance between the harsh realities of working life in Britain and the main characters of the serial. It is clear that the chief motivation for coming to Germany is financial. Britain in 1983 had unemployment levels far in excess of other European countries, despite talk of a world-wide recession. The lads are obliged to go to Germany in order to find work. They are black-market workers like the Turkish *Gast-Arbeiters* and consequently they earn a good rate of pay but are not entitled to benefits or health insurance. Obviously they lack official representation and in the case of wet weather or illness, no work means no pay. Whereas in *Blackstuff Malloy's* racket for the procurement of black-market workers is shown to be immoral, illegal and even dangerous, the German agent Fischler runs a very smooth and efficient operation. He is every inch a respectable businessman, despite the fact of his working out of motorway transport cafes to secure men for the building sites. The British contingent of building workers on the continent are estimated at around 30,000 which puts pressure on those with a job, no matter how unsatisfactory, to keep it at all costs. Most of the money earned is sent home to the wife and kids in order to help ends meet. In the case of Oz he argues that payments to Maureen would only jeopardise her entitlement to benefit.

The majority of the lads accept their situation as a necessary evil. Neville in particular finds it difficult to keep up with the decorating demands of his wife Brenda back home. In desperation he takes a part time job at the local curry-house to supplement his wage packet. Dennis sends money home for the kids whilst his estranged wife is insisting on instituting divorce proceedings. Bomber also sends money home, though he is in the habit of visiting the local brothel and has already lost £900 savings at poker.

Working Class as Community

In the absence of a union, the lads create their own sort of community to protect each other (fig 2). The text offers a discourse of working class solidarity as synonymous with unionisation, whereby Dennis as the eldest and most experienced assumes the position of representative to Herr Ulrich and Herr Fischler. Oz embodies the most disagreeable elements of English nationalism in his role as renegade. Moxey, Neville, Bomber, Wayne and Barry, are sympathetic to the idea of comrades-in-arms, and as the first series progresses, we see examples of solidarity; the lads club together to pay for Bomber's flight home when his daughter runs away from home *in "Home Thoughts from Abroad";* when Neville is arrested in *"The Accused"* the whole building site puts in money to post his bail of 3000 Deutschmarks. When Neville tries to fill the post of carpenter, the other men rally round in order to cover for him - partly out of friendship and partly in order to undermine the position of Ulrich the foreman. The programme operates according to three important dynamics: the interaction between the prime characters as a group, the relationship of the group to the Germans and the relationship of the men to their women. Underlying this dramatic framework is a sense of working class solidarity which is expressed in communal terms. Each man may have his own story and yet the impression is of a collective. This is reinforced in several ways. The majority of the men are from the North of England and they all espouse working class values. They have all been rendered unemployed and made sacrifices of one kind or another in order to earn a living. The wives, Brenda, Maureen and Audrey socialise together and in so doing keep tabs on what their husbands are up to. The relationship between Neville and Brenda, at first a source of amusement, becomes a battle of wits for all the lads. Whilst out on a drinking binge, Neville has a tattoo made on his right arm with the legend "Neville and Lotte" entwined around a heart. The men come up with an ingenious solution to prevent Brenda from seeing the tattoo; Neville must wear a bandage and pretend to have suffered a minor accident. At the close of episode 6, Neville is

reunited with Brenda after the horrifying experience of being arrested for sexual assault. It is down to Barry to remind Neville to wear the bandage in bed.

The notion of community is presented here as somehow endemic to the national character. Wherever British workers find themselves, they will apparently work together. This is parodied in Oz's desire for hut harmony. The desire for a collective implies that workers are of a particular breed. This is signalled in the difference between management and the workers as in any traditional representation of industrial relations. The German managers are purposeful, organised and middle-class. They are also business-like in their dealings with the men. Consequently they appear humourless and lacking in character. There is always the subtle suggestion of the building site as a German work camp in which the British play the role of POWs. When Barry and Moxey decide to plant a herb garden with seeds from the local tandoori, the site manager regards it as an act of idiosyncrasy on the part of a nation obsessed with gardening. Ulrich gives his consent but the POW joke is so well embedded in the programme's structure that we cannot help but see the connection to *The Great Escape* and the ruse of the allotment in order to hide evidence of tunnelling.

Although the men talk about going home, the situation abroad does have its positive side. Bomber is able to indulge his weakness for women, Oz enjoys liberty from the accusations of his wife, Dennis is to some extent able to escape from the misery of his divorce and Wayne plays Casanova to the local girls. Only Neville really suffers from being away from home and this mostly owing to his own domestic nature. Romance enters the life of Dennis in the form of Herr Ulrich's secretary, Dagmar.

Unemployment is a working-class problem. It doesn't apparently affect middle class employment. *Boys From the Blackstuff* emphasises the plight of individuals, unable to form a collective and therefore unable to make a stand. *Auf Wiedersehen Pet* offers the chance for working-class solidarity but the enemy is foreign, and the dispute is abroad not at home. If anything, *Auf Wiedersehen Pet* suggests a community which is de-politicised

and yet manages to take action. Even the loss of protection is seen as a worthwhile sacrifice.

Ironically *Boys From the Blackstuff* implies a collapse of community with the collapse of socialism. *Auf Wiedersehen Pet* describes necessary circumstances for recovery. Whereas Tebbit's advice can be seen as the last nail in the coffin of working class communities up and down the country, *Auf Wiedersehen Pet* suggests not only that this is inevitable, but that it is ultimately desirable too. The boys on the site are heroes. Their illegal status is no threat to the British economy because it does not add to the benefits bill. Secondly, their conditions of employment are at first the object of derision by their wives who imagine them to be living a care-free existence. However gradually it becomes clear to the women that their husbands and dads are sacrificing the comforts of home to provide for them. The hut boasts no amenities, no table tennis and no catering. The only saving graces are the local club, German beer and friendship in adversity.

The second series establishes the lads back at home and still unable to get work. Oz and Barry have enjoyed a stint of work in the Falklands, repairing the damaged landing strip and other amenities. Moxey is in an open prison, Neville and Bomber have been unable to find regular work and Dennis works for a local gangster, Ally Fraser. Barry has set himself up as an independent builder with his own van. Intent on marrying his girlfriend Hazel, he employs the lads to work with him on renovating a house to begin married life. Unfortunately Hazel has second thoughts after a heart-to-heart with Oz and breaks off the engagement. When Dennis proposes a job in the north of England, the others decide that a regular income is worth the sacrifice of being away from home again.

"Haves" and "Have-Nots"

Ally Fraser is a gangster well known in Tyneside. Dennis has run up gambling debts of £6000 which keeps him indebted to Fraser, despite his sister's objections. The introduction of Fraser establishes another model for comparison within the programme structure.

Fraser is a successful businessman who spends a great part of the programme at his villa in Spain (fig 3.2). Although ostensibly legitimate, Fraser is in a position to bargain with the local ex-pat criminal fraternity on the Costa Del Sol when it appears that an extradition treaty may come into force. Although it is clear that Fraser runs a number of casinos and clubs, his latest enterprise is in the property development industries. during the nineteen eighties, the building industry was put under significant pressure to adapt to a market which privileged private sector expansion. One of the few areas of substantial growth was property development. Run down or derelict housing was sold, often at prices below market value, to be converted into private flats targeting professionals who were looking to make a stake in the housing market. High interest rates and mortgage relief supported the trend toward independent property ownership, even when such policies were untenable in financial terms. Thatcher was keen to maintain MORAS as part of her vision of creating a home-owning society.

Ally Fraser's decision to convert an old manor house into time-share flats for urban professionals smacks of greed. Property development quickly became associated with unscrupulous building practice and shady money, particularly when profit could be made relatively quickly, at the expense of council tenants, elderly property owners and public buildings which hard-pressed local councils could ill-afford to maintain. Ally Fraser therefore becomes a peg on which to hang a number of associations and common-sense ideas, chiefly that those engaged in property development are criminals in all but name. In addition, Fraser's consorting with criminals such as porn-king Harry (fig 3.3), invokes the memory of other famous fugitives from justice such as Ronnie Biggs who currently resides in Brazil. Biggs's well-known patriotism is comically endorsed by Harry's fondness for *Country Life* magazine (fig 3.4). We are invited to laugh at Harry's depressing realisation that life on the Costa Del Sol with its sun, sea, sand and gorgeous women is really no more than a prison (fig 3.5,3.6). Fraser's characterisation serves many functions within the plot of the series. Unlike the lads, he is keen to distance himself from his working class origins.

Fraser has cultivated a taste for high living which includes a large house, a villa in Spain, fat cigars, golf, and a jaguar car. His leisure pursuits are in sharp contrast to those of the boys back home where evenings are spent either in the pub or at the local country and western themed bar. He uses the lexicon of the business world, referring to his thugs as "industrial PR consultants"; his business dealings are referred to as his "investment portfolio" which includes the Thornley Manor conversion. His motivation for the project is presented as another scheme to make money quickly. His original plan to create holiday flats for stressed out executives reflects much of his own taste and opinion on the market and who is likely to be able to afford his properties. His plan to equip the residential development with Jacuzzis, swimming pools and luxurious fittings suggest that Fraser is himself seduced by the appearance of wealth. His own tastes are opulent and obvious. He recognises the kudos of owning 'a place in the country' and is keen to exploit the pretensions of others in order to maximise his profits. When planning permission fails because of a preservation order, Fraser decides to renovate the house as an old people's retirement home. Immediately the operation is scaled down, much to the disgust of Dennis and the others. Quality materials are rejected in favour of the cheapest as Fraser tells his architect "let no corner go uncut." His attitude to the elderly as clientele shows a marked disregard for a most vulnerable section of society. He appears then as a shockingly self-serving, immoral and unscrupulous man. But he has also achieved a large degree of success. In fact he and his architect are shown to be the only ones who have benefited from the economic climate.

Ally Fraser's architect is represented throughout the second series as equally unscrupulous, though more comfortable with the role of middle class professional. The men first meet Bob when he arrives at Thornley Manor with a new set of plans for the conversion (fig 4.1). They are immediately wary when they see the land rover; Oz quips "What's the difference between a land rover and a hedgehog? The hedgehog's got pricks on the outside." (fig 4.2) Their suspicions are further compounded by the appearance of

Bob, wearing red rimmed glasses, apparently a guaranteed indicator of Bob's crass middle class pretensions (fig 4.4, 4.6). He is shown to be a man apart from the labourers; he is too jocular, in the manner of a feudal lord greeting his servants. His dealings with Dennis indicate a man who is unconcerned with the ethical nature of the conversion, and one who is unwilling to risk his own employment neck for the sake of ensuring the basic safety of future residents. His status as an architect, working on the side of the boss marks him as a man without integrity. He manages to procure for himself a comfortable office and accommodation near the site (fig 4.7) but is quick to inform Fraser about the men dossing down in the manor rent-free. Partial to percolated coffee as opposed to instant, Bob's office signifies a cosy middle-class indifference to the world outside which is seen to be populated by ordinary working class men like Dennis and his comrades. The profusion of books, papers, certificates and office plants suggest a working environment that is both successful and symptomatic of a professional office lifestyle. Bob's self-employed status as an architect draws a line between the illegal shenanigans of Ally Fraser and the hand-to-mouth existence of the builders. This intermediary figure embodies everything that Barry aspires towards (fig 1) and simultaneously represents a class apart from Barry and his friends.

Bob and Dennis come head-to-head in the matter of the revised conversion. Dennis argues that this is now becoming a 'cowboy' operation with low grade materials and low quality work as a result. Furthermore the house itself will undergo severe alterations to provide "small bedrooms, big bogs" in keeping with Fraser's aim of securing large profits with minimal expenditure. Bob's response is that the men are getting paid and that should be their only concern. Dennis and the other men are offended by the implications of the work demanded on their qualification as skilled labourers. Furthermore they are appalled at the lack of consideration being given to the elderly residents who will be at the mercy of poor facilities, and in no position to seek recompense for accident or injury. As one of them puts it, the residents will be obliged to live in little boxes, in preparation for the littlest box of all.

When put under pressure however, Dennis must capitulate to save himself. He is forced to argue with his sister who is worried about his involvement with Fraser: "You can't be too choosy about the work you do - particularly up our way." Dennis' gambling debt binds him to Fraser, and it is personal loyalty which bind the men to Dennis. At the end of episode 6, *"Cowboys"*, they take on the heavies sent by Fraser and succeed in winning the first round of their strike. Fraser's desire to turn them into cowboy labourers only succeeds in making them live up to their fantasy of the magnificent seven, resisting the bandits.

Ally Fraser and Bob have achieved their financial and social success by dishonest and unscrupulous means. The role of the council and various government departments is also referred to and the implication is that councils are fairly easy targets whilst government departments are grindingly slow and inefficient bureaucratic entities. There is another social group within the series however, which has also prospered. The women in the first series are depicted as dependants with domestic needs who are constantly unsettled by their fears for the men away from home. The second series reveals very different circumstances in which the men are obliged to take second place as the breadwinners in their respective families and relationships.

There is a great deal of poignancy in the case of Neville, whose ambition to achieve some degree of financial security is constantly thwarted. He is concerned that his position is ultimately no different to his experience in Germany. *His* "upward mobility" is nowhere to be seen and this begins to impact on relations with his wife, Brenda. Having had a baby, Brenda has now returned to nursing and is able to support the family while Neville searches for full-time permanent employment. Her work has unexpected benefits in that she quickly makes new friends and finds herself entering into social activities with colleagues from work including doctors. Neville is immediately suspicious and unhappy at the thought of Brenda having so full a life outside the marriage. She continues to play squash and badminton, both middle class leisure pursuits in Neville's view, and a world apart from his

own idea of relaxation. Brenda it seems has become quite self-sufficient and is becoming used to Neville's absence. Brenda is prepared to work the occasional Sunday which disrupts Neville's idea of a traditional weekend. Left to cook the Sunday roast, Neville muses on his unhappy situation (fig 5).

Brenda is not alone. Barry's fiancée Hazel has a very respectable job as a conference organiser at a local hotel and conference centre. Her work brings her into contact with successful business and sales professionals. The women's appearances and their environments further demonstrate the contrast between the working situation of the men and their upwardly mobile partners. Hazel's working environment is a world apart from her fiancé's. Similarly she represents a different class of individual by virtue of her smartly tailored appearance (fig 6). Dennis' sister Vera is working and Bomber's wife Audrey has even taken to stripping in order to support her daughter. The women have had little trouble in finding work, largely because they are prepared to work for less and are more flexible. Whereas the building trade is shown to be at the mercy of investors like Fraser, other professions are enjoying a revival, particularly those in the service industries. The programme reflects a change in the employment climate with service industry jobs and public sector employment taking account of a larger female workforce in place of the manufacturing industries and their reliance on traditional male roles. Within this spirit of new enterprise, Barry's attempt to forge a new life with Hazel is brought to an abrupt close. Although Barry has taken all necessary steps including joining the SDP and becoming self-employed, he is confused by the complexity of book-keeping and income tax records. Ultimately his position is found to be untenable and he reluctantly returns to the fold. Even in the most casual of encounters the male is shown to be in a subordinate position in terms of wealth and environment. This can be demonstrated semiotically in the telephone conversation between Neville and Vera (fig 7, 8).

If Thatcher's claims that the tide of public opinion was turning in favour of union reform were justified, then can the same be said about the public's attitude to unemployment? *Boys from the Blackstuff* was something of a watershed in terms of breaking broadcasting taboos. By way of contrast *Auf Wiedersehen Pet* returns the idea of unemployment to a more conventional television format, comically reinventing the jobless as a kind of ex-pat working men's club. Any explicit reference to the *political* factors which may have occasioned their voluntary exile to find work is comically subverted. When Oz returns home at the beginning of the second series, we see him facing the camera directly (fig 9.1).

> Oz: "You know the reason I left this country in the first place don't you eh? I'll tell you in a word - Margaret bloody Thatcher that's why. I'd had it up to there with what she'd created. A bloody wasteland, desolate, nay job, nay hope, nay nowt. Where kids get to twenty-one and never done a day's work in their life. Honest men have to go out thieving to feed their families. Young bairns can buy heroin in a bike shed at school - oh, dear, well I thought no, no, no. It's got to be getting better. It canna be as bad as what it was can it? I was willing to give you lot the benefit of the doubt on this one. But no, no, and what happens? What happens is I've been back on my native soil for fourteen minutes and I'm subjected to this, act of fascist intimidation, 'cos that's what it is you know, that's what it is."

This diatribe is delivered to camera so that at first it seems like a genuine appeal but as Oz is stripping off his clothes, what he is saying becomes more and more incongruous with the image. Finally the camera reveals two Customs and Excise officers going through Oz's suitcases (fig 9.2). One officer is putting on a pair of surgical gloves. Oz is being required to undergo a full body search. Given Oz's propensity for making speeches about national identity, it is ironic that he should be the one subjected to such an invasive procedure. However patriotism as the adage goes, is the last refuge of the scoundrel. It is therefore

fitting that Oz should be the one to make such an overt connection between economic policy and intimidation. Is this what Snowy means when he talks of a police state?

Boys from the Blackstuff shocked audiences by its portrayal of economic hardship. The plays underscored a theme of government indifference and a bureaucratic inability to address even the simplest of welfare issues. The text achieved its principal aim of highlighting the poverty in one particular part of the country although ostensibly the drama does not seek easy answers to what Bleasdale has always acknowledged to be difficult questions. Despite the largely oblique references to Thatcherism, *Boys* is a product of its time. The superimposition of unemployment on a post-manufacturing working-class community must be understood within the context of union law reforms. Snowy and his father George are famously "killed off" which commentators such as Millington and Lovell (Brandt 1993:134) have regarded as Bleasdale's rejection of traditional left wing activism as an "answer" to the problem of unemployment. Nevertheless the series does not make sense without reference to the decline of the manufacturing industries in the North of England and the loss of union representation. The destruction of community which is at the heart of *Boys* was an issue which would later come to symbolise the conflict between Arthur Scargill's NUM and the Coal Board. Given the geographic specificity of coal mining, it was an issue which could not easily be extrapolated from the debate over economic feasibility and the future of the industry.

Boys therefore represents the end of an era of labour and social relations. The bleak conclusion to the series of plays appears to signal an end not just to a way of life, but the end of work itself. Work has ceased to be a communal activity, except where individuals defy the law in order to form a gang of labour. Thus we see Chrissie supervising an illegal building operation for Malloy, and Dixie forced to stand by and watch the Dockers "work" as they steal boxes of cigarettes which are heading for the black market.

Auf Wiedersehen Pet further embraces the notion of the working-class collective as apart from the legitimate structures of employment. The location of the comedy drama in West Germany underpins the alienation of the group from traditional working practices and familiar sites. Ultimately on their return to "normality", the lads find themselves perpetually disenfranchised - even homeless. The shift of emphasis toward women in the workforce completely undermines the sanctity of male working-class solidarity. Not only is the essence of masculinity under threat, but the new breed of workers - female, mostly part-time or shift-workers and largely career oriented - is a reminder that the *kind* of work being undertaken is of necessity, very different now. The creation of new jobs depends on the public services and the private sector service industries. The male worker must adapt to the shifting roles of women; he is forced to acknowledge the female as potential breadwinner. Whereas the male arena of work represented in *Boys* and *Auf Wiedersehen* is shown to be obsolete, women's roles as individuals within organisational hierarchies appear to have a real future. The key feature of this movement from collective labour to individual careerism is the loss of community. This is evident in more recent productions such as *The Full Monty* where male solidarity in the workplace is compromised by the rise of individual career women.

Another consequence of the working woman is the diminishing role of welfare benefits. In *Boys* Dixie's wife is under investigation because her pin money affects Dixie's claim. As government policies increasingly restricted entitlement to unemployment benefit, it became more and more important for all members of the household to find work. Thatcher's scathing indictment of Labour's post-war welfare policy makes clear her view on the symbiosis between lack of employment opportunity on the one hand and moral depravity on the other:

> "Welfare benefits, distributed with little or no consideration of their effects on behaviour, encouraged illegitimacy, facilitated the breakdown of families, and

replaced incentives favouring work and self-reliance with perverse encouragement for idleness and cheating." (Thatcher 1995 :8)

Neither programme text endorses this view of the benefits' system, and yet benefit fraud was to become an increasingly familiar theme in newspapers headlines and government speeches on welfare policy alike. The question of unemployment was however becoming less of a topic of sincere regret and more of a reflection of the status quo. That *Auf Wiedersehen Pet* should run for two series over the period 1982-3 and 1983-4 is proof of the degree to which unemployment was becoming a permanent feature of British society, without any real demands for radical solutions.

Hugo Young puts it succinctly:

> "One of the successes of the Thatcherite enterprise consisted in re-educating the electorate not seriously to care about unemployment. The longer it lasted, the more it was accepted as a seemingly unalterable fact of life." (Young 1991:502)

Programmes such as *Boys From the Blackstuff* and *Auf Wiedersehen Pet* have inscribed the notion of unemployment as a commonplace feature of British society. Taking a collection of men and exposing them to the pitfalls of redundancy, unemployment and the hazards of illegitimate work camps, both programmes reflect upon unemployment as an issue of human need. If we look to the success of *The Full Monty* we can see how this argument develops. Putting aside the international success of *The Full Monty* it must be remembered that this film was originally written for a British audience and intended for television. What begins in 1982 as a dramatic narrative in which we witness the cost of unemployment in human terms - the loss of family, pride, dignity and freedom - gathers momentum through mid- eighties comedy, into a film drama which focuses on the emasculation of male culture and the rise of the economically dominant female. The discourse of male unemployment has evolved into a trajectory which has carried it forward into the late 90's. Throughout this period, the semiotic construction of the dole office has

undergone little change. The dole office has become a significant icon of unemployment for British audiences. Its place is so well established in the repertoire of television/film locations that the familiar sight of men queuing for their dole money can *even* provide the setting for a comedy dance routine (fig10.1, 10.2), without the *slightest hint of irony.* What is astonishing about this discursive movement away from tragedy towards comedy is firstly that it could have been achieved in so short a time frame. Secondly the use of the dole office as a strategic location and the discursive treatment of unemployment as a social issue reveal the extent to which different programmes invite different moral and political judgements. Early on in Thatcher's administration *Boys* poses a moral universe in which immoral things are allowed to go unchecked by incompetent and callous government. *Auf Wiedersehen Pet* proffers a climate of self-help which picks up on Tebbit's rhetoric to demonstrate how enterprise is possible even amongst the working-classes. *The Full Monty* capitulates to the Thatcherite vision by suggesting that enterprise is the *only* solution to long term unemployment . What is also striking about these representations is the extent to which politics itself is elided as Thatcherism itself begins to gather momentum through the 1980s and 1990s.

As this and the previous chapter have demonstrated, the representation of work in television drama from the early 1980s is inseparable from questions of class identity. The next chapter will therefore examine the function of middle-class culture in relation to employment, as represented within the popular programme *Inspector Morse.*

Chapter 8

The middle class professional: *Inspector Morse*

Policy, Policing and Public Sector Funding

One of the first decisions of the first Thatcher government was to make a substantial pay award to the police, who had, according to the findings of a report commissioned by the former Labour government, suffered a severe crisis of morale over previous years. Rumblings of a police strike may have further motivated the new government to act sooner rather than later, thus reaping the benefit of Labour's policy decision to arrange a settlement. The pay review further committed the government to regular index-linked salary increases which would have the effect of increasing a police constable's salary by 25% during Thatcher's first term of office (Young 1998:238). The police were one of the few major public services which benefited from sustained increased funding over the period of 1979-1990. Figures show an average of 53.3% increase of funding over the ten year period in real terms(Johnson 1991:287).

Much of the *moral* support lent to the police was in regard to difficulties faced by police forces during the miners' strike of 1984-5 and the riots of Brixton and Toxteth in 1981. Following meetings with Ian MacGregor and Leon Brittan during the first week of the strike in March 1984, it was becoming clear that the police were not as efficient in deterring flying pickets under the new criminal law as Thatcher would have liked. This was in spite of increased weaponry, communications equipment, vehicles, riot-gear and protective clothing and the establishment of the National Reporting Centre at Scotland Yard[1] in the wake of the 1981 riots. Leon Brittan resisted Thatcher's desire to intervene; he argued that the police must at all times appear disinterested and removed from the political arena. Nevertheless it is difficult to see how a public service so clearly favoured by the Prime Minister of the day could remain impartial. The eighties saw several moves to increase and support the powers of the police in terms of combating civil disturbance and preventing terrorism. The 1984 Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE) created new powers for the

police which enabled them to engage in a more speculative approach[2], in that it availed the police of greater powers of surveillance and intrusion in an effort to combat terrorism and serious crime. It was also highly significant in revising the process of handling detainees. The Act obliged every stationhouse to appoint a custody sergeant responsible solely for detainees on the premises. This was seen as a measure designed to prevent the abuse of prisoners; records were kept detailing all visits and refreshments which were reviewed by a senior custody sergeant at regular intervals. In addition it became incumbent on the police to provide court evidence within designated time allowances for the continued detainment of an individual. One can read the introduction of such legislation as emerging out of a number of concerns at the time. The spectacular allegations of police corruption in the seventies, coupled with a zealous determination to ensure convictions were not quashed on a technicality of process might well account for the stringent new terms of the Act. Deaths in police custody, particularly in South London were also a major cause of some communities' suspicion of policing techniques. More legislation followed. The Criminal Justice Act (1988) was designed to enable government through the post of Attorney-General to overturn sentences which were deemed too soft on crime. The 1990 Criminal Justice Act is better remembered by the majority of people as the legislation which conferred extra discretionary powers on the part of Chief Constables in the monitoring of public gatherings including rave parties and demonstrations. This was viewed by some as a flagrant abuse of power whereby the police service was becoming merely an extension of the government's will.

However investment in the police service did not come without conditions. As with the NHS, police forces were increasingly being called to account. It was in *The Right Approach to the Economy* (1977) that the idea of curbing public spending was first mooted. The Conservatives in Opposition saw the Labour government's attempt to protect public spending by borrowing as inhibiting industrial growth. Consequently Thatcher's

right hand men, Howe, Joseph, Prior and Howell wrote of the necessity of curbing the state's consumption of the nation's wealth

> "by central and local government and those agencies and authorities which spend the taxpayer's money but produce nothing"(Johnson 1991:79).

If this was a direct offensive against the principles of the Welfare State, then by the arrival of the 1979 budget, Howe was promising to maintain public services *and* improve standards. One of the key problems facing government is how to measure efficiency in public services. One option is to transfer elements of the public service into the private sector in order to create shadow markets which will supposedly boost productivity and reduce costs. Whereas this had been attempted within the health service, there was little mileage in applying the principle to the agents of law and order. Nevertheless, regional forces were obliged to work within strict budget guidelines. The financial management techniques utilised in the private sector would now be introduced into the public sector, coupled with the new regulations encouraging a division of labour between management and day to day policing.

The swing toward a management style in the public services can be seen in drama serials and series of the period, where it becomes commonplace to demarcate the role of the professional as distinct from that of manager. In the case of *Inspector Morse,* the gulf of experience between 'managers' and 'workers' is displayed in terms of their relationship to the service and the degree to which they see themselves as career officers. Thus the concept of *vocation* is gradually superseded by the notion of career. To speak of "a career" is to stimulate the opportunity and desire for promotion, leading to increased wealth and status. This is what principally distinguishes Morse from his colleagues, superiors and subordinates.

Policing as moral guardianship

It might at first seem to be something of a red herring, but *Inspector Morse* can tell us a lot about the world of police work in the late eighties, largely because of what is *assumed* on the part of the text. *Morse* is probably one of the most celebrated programmes in the police genre of the period; partly because of its popularity, and partly because of its high production values. The feature length episodes ensure a more filmic quality of programme which dominates the schedule, rather than the more usual 50 minute slot. There is an ambient quality of serious drama tinged with personal reflection as if the figure of Morse were in some classical Teiresian role here, to remind us of our own mortality. But aside from the classical construction and the melancholia of Morse himself, we have a drama which is situated very explicitly in the modern era and lent realistic credibility by Morse's own entourage of side-kicks and helpers.

Inspector Morse signals an elegant return to the crime detective story in a fictional world unaffected by rioting miners or belligerent politicians. Morse, played by John Thaw is cerebral, ponderous and melancholy. In keeping with the character of the central protagonist, the series is more interesting for what goes unspoken, rather than for any heavy handed attempt to whip up public sympathy for a hard-pressed public service. Much has been written and written well about the production and its relationship to other television police dramas. Richard Sparks (Brandt 1993:88) has commented on the heroic alienation of television cops of the seventies, citing John Thaw's role as Jack Regan in *The Sweeney* as a seminal case. Certainly Thaw's maturation into the role of Morse carries with it some of those early traits though a fondness for real ale has replaced the whisky bottle. Morse is both squeamish and unfit; his modus operandi is of a more sedentary and intellectual nature. Morse enjoys opera, classical music, his red leather upholstered vintage jaguar and classy well-preserved intelligent women. His weary, often tetchy exterior is (of course) merely a facade, beneath which the audience appreciates, lies a good deal of integrity, passion and sensitivity, which occasionally surface when encountering a beautiful woman.

Inspector Morse is far removed from the action adventures of generic siblings such as *Begerac* or *Dempsey and Makepeace*. His investigations are conducted by gut feeling. He has a great deal of ambivalence towards Oxford, the place of his youth, where we are teasingly reminded from time to time, he did not take his degree. Despite this Morse is clearly a man of culture, refinement, education, wit and subtlety. In short, *Inspector Morse* is not overtly concerned with law and order - not in the same way as *The Bill*. Rather, it is a character study in which the Chief Inspector encounters vanity and corruption in order to arrive at a truth, usually unpalatable which only confirms his suspicion all along that the real world is a dangerous and ugly place, made tolerable by art and music. Morse's women usually turn out to have feet of clay and it is often left to his Sergeant, Lewis to return the plot to some kind of procedural closure. In his moral endeavour Morse owes more to JB Priestley than Kennedy-Martin. Nevertheless, *Inspector Morse* is also far removed from the patrician sentiments of *Dixon of Dock Green*.

In what kind of work is Morse engaged? To understand the kind of working practice exemplified by Morse, we need to look at the characters surrounding him. In essence it is what is *absent* which is of interest to this analysis. Sergeant Lewis, the foil to Morse's wit and bearer of his moods is a keen career officer, quick to spot procedural issues. He is essential as a counterweight to Morse's cerebral ruminations. Lewis, married with children, expects the job to be just that - a job. He likes to go home of an evening where he can relax away from the pressures of work and spend time with his family. His wife Val, though never seen, is forever making sandwiches for the Inspector, on whom her husband's promotion will finally rest. As a younger man in his early thirties, Lewis has energy and commitment but the police force is a career, not a vocation. Lewis certainly matures as the programme continues through the eighties and into the nineties, and he is increasingly seen as a partner in this duo rather than a fledgling. On occasion he is even in a position to put Morse straight about a thing or two.

The Dead of Jericho

The first episode from 1986, *The Dead of Jericho* introduces Morse via the 'mini-story' montage of the title sequence. Morse is established as a man fond of classical music. It appears that he is on his way to a choral practice in his jaguar. On route it seems as if he is stopping off at a local garage for a minor car repair. However it quickly transpires that he is still on duty and that a raid is about to be made on the garage. Whilst other officers go inside to confront the villains, Morse remains detached from the action - that is until one of the men tries to drive off. Morse manoeuvres his car to block off the exit and as the getaway vehicle crashes through the wall of the garage, it skids into Morse's car, thus effecting a rather large dent in the passenger door.

Despite the activity of the opening, this is not a cops and robbers action drama. The diegetic use of music on Morse's car stereo as a counterpoint to the pop music in the garage assumes an extra-diegetic function as it orchestrates the violence which ensues. The contrast here is stark between Morse and the villains. He exhibits the self-assurance of one who believes himself safe within his surroundings; no coarse popular music pollutes his leather upholstered environment. Morse winds down his window but never leaves the vehicle (figs 1.4, 1.7, 1.14). Others can be relied upon to do the dirty work and it *is* shown to be violent and dangerous (figs 1.13 – 1.17). Significantly Morse's immunity is not secure. The damage to the jaguar attests to the indignity of his situation. How is such an act of violation to be born? (fig 1.17). Curiously, given Morse's occupation, here is a man who is *in* the world but not of it.

Just as the choral practice is reaching its conclusion, Morse enters the chamber, rushes over to his seat and sings the final phrase in a strong baritone, much to the amusement of his peers (fig 1.18, 1.20). We might presume at this point that Morse though an enthusiast is often late for rehearsals. Though his lateness is a direct consequence of his work commitments, Morse does not use the glamour of policing as an excuse. Neither does he seek to impress others with tales of his exploits.

Within the credit sequence we observe a number of emerging discourses. The wooden panelled chamber in which the choir meet is hung with paintings which suggests an affluent college setting (fig 1.1). The choir is amateur rather than professional, as indicated by Morse's participation, and functions as a social event: after the practice, the choir retire to a local pub. Morse's tardy arrival is greeted sympathetically even indulgently (fig 1.20). This would not be the case if the practice were a professional rehearsal. Such pursuits are the mark of the middle-classes, indicating a certain cultural capital which values classical music and fine art. Morse's refinement is enacted therefore twice over in the opening few minutes. His ownership of a jaguar, his disengagement from the fray and his extra-curricular pursuit of the arts all contribute to a characterisation which distinguishes him as a cerebral figure. This is an altogether different kind of television policeman. The detailed attention to the jaguar (fig 1.3) suggests that Morse's choice of car is as particular and significant as his choice of music. A jaguar is not the most convenient efficient or obvious choice for a working detective. A glimpse of gleaming chrome (fig 1.3) suggests one very careful owner and this stately entrance by Morse (figs 1.3, 1.4) complete with seat belt serves to emphasise Morse's personal style; elegant but understated. The jaguar returns throughout the different series as a significant presence. As an emblem of masculine refinement it acts metonymically to suggest the attributes and personality of its owner.

We are also presented with Anne (fig 1.6), a fellow member of the choir whom Morse engages in conversation afterwards. She too exudes class and intellect, though her beauty is of a fragile kind. The credits punctuate the on-screen mini drama informing us that Anne's presence is likely to be of short duration (fig 1.6). Towards the close of the sequence she bestows on Morse a kindly smile (fig 1.19). Later, Morse's tentative, slightly clumsy attempt to ask her out signals his bachelor status and also suggests that Morse is in some senses unused to women. His demeanour is courteous, even gentlemanly (fig 1.21) and later in the episode his sensitivity to Anne's desperate situation is a poignant reflection of his sense of failure in having been unable to protect this woman, despite his occupation.

Anne is shown to be the perennial victim of the men who surround her. The irony is that Morse is the only one who would protect her, and yet he is the last person to gain close acquaintance with her. It is already too late for Anne, and of course Morse. The burgeoning friendship is never going to flower into romance. This sets the tone for the several encounters Morse will have throughout the series that follow.

His personal attachment to Anne leads to his judgement being questioned by his Superintendent. Sergeant Lewis is now working with Morse, and this arrangement would seem to serve an additional purpose; Lewis can be relied upon to keep tabs on the Inspector. Lewis has been working for Chief Inspector Bell, who has achieved promotion. The exchange between Bell and Lewis at the crime scene offers tantalising details of Morse's background and character. Bell implies that Morse is a bit of an oddity; "Morse, you know who he is, don't you [ ] wandering around Jericho eh? I wondered what he did at night besides the booze". Lewis counters, "I've heard he's meant to be a very clever man". Bell is in competition with Morse for the Superintendent's position, but we have already heard from Morse himself that he considers police work to be "okay" but nothing to really boast about. He does not appear to have a profound attachment to the service, nor does he demonstrate any strong career ambitions.

A visit from the Chief Super confirms the dominant view of Morse and his attitude to the job.

> "You're a clever sod but you don't say the right things to the right people - you never will. It doesn't bother me but it doesn't do you any good."

The Chief Super points out Morse's "unorthodox" approach and manner have blighted his career prospects. Bell on the other hand, though "not exactly a brain merchant", does at least do his paperwork and "fills in the forms, says the right things". Bell is fed up with anti-social hours and late evenings on duty. He wants a desk job - something Morse would never tolerate. It is as if Morse has risen through the ranks despite himself. The Chief Superintendent appears to be fond of Morse in a way and offers to take him for a beer.

Throughout the series he will act as the elder statesman figure, calling a halt to some of Morse's more aberrant abuses such as drinking during working hours and failing to follow police procedure. Viewed from this angle, the role of the Chief Super is more concerned with internal discipline and budgets than law enforcement or crime solving. Morse's situation is something between a rock and a hard place. Bell is now the superior officer and a man of little imagination. Lewis is a family man who is unwilling to break faith with his wife and would rather incur the wrath of his new boss than upset his domestic arrangements.

The murder suspect Alan Richards is the managing director of a small company which has achieved international success through the development and marketing of a high quality sound system incorporating their own design for a turntable. Morse possesses a Richards' system and initially he demonstrates a sincere admiration for the work and the business enterprise. As it becomes evident that Anne was having an affair with one of the brothers, Morse's sense of propriety is outraged, particularly when he learns that Anne left the firm to prevent a scandal. Though Morse is not a feminist, his emotions do him credit and he is determined to exonerate Anne's reputation. Although Morse is persuaded early on that the culprit for Anne's suicide/murder may have been one of her pupils, his dislike and distrust of the Richards family leads him to conclude that one of them may have been responsible for the death of a blackmailer. His original theory based on *Oedipus Rex* is found to be completely irrelevant. Morse's predilection for the classics leads him up the garden path. It transpires that the Richards family has indeed been guilty of murder and conspiracy. Morse is happy to "ransack" the company's offices without a search warrant - indeed he clearly relishes the opportunity - and his pursuit of the truth yields a blackmail letter supposedly written by the dead man, Jackson. Morse at this point in the narrative demonstrates his suspicion that all three - Alan, Tony and Adele Richards, are covering up for each other. The "self-righteous" attitude of the Richards family is not merely an aspect of their character. It is a *function* of their character. As members of the middle class business

fraternity, the Richards clan are shown to be self-serving, hypocritical and cruel. In the closing scenes, Morse visits the piano pupil who has blinded himself. It is he who wrote the blackmail letter to Alan Richards in an attempt to feed his heroin addiction and seek a kind of revenge for the woman who had looked after him. He describes Alan as a cruel man who used Anne and drove her to commit suicide;

> "I had no qualms about trying to get money off him, he had plenty and he was so cruel to Anne".

As representatives of another culture and experience, Morse has pity for the young Oxford undergraduate who has lost his closest friend. Although a blackmailer in the making, Morse has a greater degree of compassion for him than for those who hide behind money, status and privilege. Anne Staveley appears to have been a victim of middle class mores.

Driven to Distraction

In *Driven to Distraction,* Morse takes an instant dislike to car dealer Jeremy Boynton, whom Morse targets as prime suspect in a double murder enquiry. Morse's inability or refusal to follow police regulations increasingly dismays Lewis:

> "There's no procedure. It's crime solved like a crossword puzzle."

The intuitive nature of Morse's enquiries reaches an all time low for Lewis when Morse decides to ransack Boynton's business records in the absence of a warrant. Sergeant Maitland, a female CID officer on secondment is happy to take a chance on finding some evidence to link Boynton to the two victims. Lewis's objections, though correct, are interpreted by Morse as a matter of personal conscience rather than a principle of law or professional ethics. Trapping Boynton into a confession has become an obsession. Yet Lewis's insistence on following correct procedure is a mark of his junior status, even though Morse is behaving in a maverick and prejudicial manner. Morse's willingness to overlook procedure is an indicator of his longevity of service and his gut feeling for the job. When quizzed by his Chief Superintendent he replies

> "You get an instinct, you *know* - I *know* he did it."

By comparison, Sergeant Maitland's decision to work with Morse is predicated on her understanding of the role of the senior officer. She can learn something from Morse. *Her* career ambitions are not in the same vein as Lewis. Whereas Lewis will work through the cases and take exams to make Detective Inspector, Maitland is already on a fast track through CID. The introduction of a female CID officer signals an unusual departure (fig 2.2). Her qualifications, though impressive sit uneasily with the detectives under Morse's leadership (fig 2.1). Lewis introduces her as a specialist in investigating assaults on women and although Lewis himself can see the value of such expertise, he is alone in his welcome to Maitland. The other police officers are embarrassed and cynical. Their body language signals discomfort and the mise en scene captures the degree to which Maitland has quite literally to manoeuvre her way through the ranks in order to speak (fig 2.3). Unfortunately she does not make an instant convert of Morse or his men. Her more instinctual approach to the job has yet to reach maturity; her exercise in surveillance yields disappointing results. However her approach to the murders is both reasoned and creative, giving Morse pause for thought. Maitland may well turn out to be a chip off the old block - unmarried, intellectual, creative and ready to work long into the evening, she has more sympathy for Morse's tactics than does Lewis. Nevertheless, Morse's commitment is more truly a reflection of his fascination for a puzzle - Lewis's crossword analogy was right on the mark, whereas Maitland's dedication arises out of a sense of justice, or in the case of Boynton, injustice at his temporary release. It is all the more significant that Boynton should turn out to be entirely innocent of murder, though morally compromised in other ways, and that Morse and Maitland should realise their mistake. It demonstrates how inappropriate and non-productive it would be for Morse to have an acolyte as his assistant. Lewis's vision of the job is totally vindicated. Not only do procedures have to be followed, but the follow-through of routine enquiries sooner or later turns up the evidence that will provide the missing link. Intuitive theorising will only get you so far. It requires painstaking legwork to break the case. The emphasis placed on public accountability and

the necessity of following regulations marks the programme as having emerged at a time of renewed interest in the operations of the police, though this is never made explicit. The series *Between the Lines* which was screened in the early days of John Major's administration is a good example of the legacy of Thatcherite concerns with expenditure, the creation of a management culture and the impact on policing. However Lewis's disappointment at Maitland's readiness to assist Morse in his illegal raid on Boynton's files is expressed within a discourse familiar to audiences, concerning the tension between policing as partnership with the community, and policing as an extension of the power of the state. The programme *The Bill* neatly encapsulates this dual character of the police, giving precedence to the idea of policemen as part of the social fabric rather than as agents of repression. The increased surveillance powers of the police during this decade are generally seen as necessary in the fight against terrorism.

Inspector Morse represents work as *lifestyle*. Some way into the investigation Maitland and Morse take time out from their paperwork to discuss their relationship to the job. Maitland is surprised to learn that Morse is a bachelor. He responds philosophically; perhaps policework is like the Church - one really should be married in order to understand the work. The yoking of holy orders and policing is not so difficult to see in the case of Morse. His is a largely celibate life, monastic after a fashion if one considers his home filled with music and private reflection. In many ways Morse is like a secularised latter-day anchorite in pursuit of truth and knowing. It is not the most obvious scenario for a television detective.

Morse's instinctive dislike of Boynton appears when he visits Boynton's car salesroom (fig 3.1). Morse displays his distaste for the flashy 'car of the week' and is rather displeased to see Boynton running his hands over Morse's prized E reg jaguar (fig 3.3, 3.4). He is even less impressed by Boynton's sales patter and ostentatious display of 'taste'. It transpires that Boynton owns several jaguars himself, but Morse's attitude suggests that Boynton is one who knows the price of everything but the value of nothing. His need to collect implies

a degree of promiscuity and this is born out in his dealings with women other than his wife. Morse has need of only one jaguar and he is utterly faithful to it. Boynton is revealed to be chauvinistic, dishonest, arrogant and cruel and this does not appear to contradict his status as a businessman with his own franchise. Morse even goes as far as to mention his job of car dealer during a minor spat, reassuring us of Morse's moral and professional superiority over this self-made man. The almost tangible dislike of each man for the other is suggestive. Morse the public servant is viewed by Boynton as a petty and officious bureaucratic bully. Boynton on the other hand is a greedy and self-serving individual working in the private sector. In addition he lacks class and seeks to overcompensate with his car collection, flash tailoring and expensive cigars. Morse is nothing if not a snob. Boynton, played by Patrick Malahide is too slick for Morse. His physical presence appears almost predatory and the nasal intonation of his voice is accompanied by a sneering tone. Boynton is unpleasant but he is not a murderer. As the episode progresses Morse takes pleasure in needling Boynton and we sense that the gulf between the two men is unassailable. The clues to their difference are subtle yet revealing. Morse's single-breasted Marks and Spencer suit (fig 3.7) contrasts with Boynton's sharper double-breasted variety, replete with gilt buttons and jaunty red pocket handkerchief (fig 3.6). Boynton's close attention to dress suggests vanity and affectation which is further emphasised in his choice of cigars and the detail of a gold signet ring. Class is inscribed as a significant discourse within *Inspector Morse* and this has interesting and unexpected consequences which will be discussed in the conclusion.

The Sins of the Fathers

The episode *The Sins of the Father* broadcast in 1990 offers another example of a kind of class consciousness in relation to work. The Radford brewery is the scene of a brutal murder. Whilst Morse and Lewis investigate the death of Trevor Radford, MD of the company, it appears that a hostile take-over by the brewery company Farmers is imminent.

Following the murder of the second son, Stephen, it emerges that a fraud has been perpetrated in order to inflate the value of the business and stave off the merger.

The suspects are clearly divisible between the immediate family who though rich and distinguished are unpleasant and snobbish. Whilst the family regards Stephen's wife, Thelma as little more than a gold-digger, Trevor's wife, Helen is having an affair with Stephen and this is accepted by the two sons' mother Isobel; in her eyes Trevor has never really achieved anything. Stephen on the other hand is an obviously good catch. George Linacre, the manager from Farmers International, the brewery chain is keen to push through with the take-over although the family are divided over the best course of action. Isobel favours the sale whilst her husband, the descendant of the original family business would prefer to keep control in order to provide for the grand-children. His sense of family fealty is strong. The articulation of private enterprise versus family business is a theme underscoring much of the antagonism within the narrative. Morse, a connoisseur of real ale is somewhat disappointed at the thought of a 150 year family business being swallowed up by a hungry commercial competitor.

There is thinly veiled animosity between Morse and Linacre which though dating from some early student experience, nevertheless becomes the source of some jibing around current employment status and professional ethics. The interview between Morse and Linacre takes place at the brewery plant owned by Linacre. The significance of the scene is twofold. Firstly the setting offers a stark indictment of the corporate nature of modern business and its reliance on technology rather than workers. This is importantly diegetically since it not only presents an avenue of investigation but also emphasises the character of Radford's as a *family* business with a long tradition of service. Secondly it gives moral weight to Morse's probing inquisition. Beyond the narrative of the episode, this scene is emblematic of an important discourse which underpins *Inspector Morse*.

> Morse: "It's a long way from SPARTA George."
> George: "Sorry?"

Morse: "The little club we ran at Oxford or you ran should I say. Yes the Society for the Promotion of Traditional Real Ale. I never worked out what the first A stood for."

George: "Boys' games Morse. It's a competitive world out there."

Morse: "So I keep hearing. If you get Radford's who'll run it?"

George: "We haven't got it yet."

Morse: "Someone from Radford's or will you put your own man in?"

George: "It's a corporate decision."

Morse: "Trevor Radford couldn't hack it, is that the story?"

George: "Trevor Radford's no longer the issue."

Morse: "That's one way of putting it."

George: "Look Radford's is a sick company. Bad marketing, bad pricing structure, bad financial strategy. It needs someone as the Americans say to 'kick ass'." (fig 4.4)

Morse: "Their freehold's worth quite a bit too."

George: "I'm not an asset stripper Morse so don't come the Guardian editorial with me. We're talking commercial synergy here. Either Radford's gets an injection of outside capital or the whole lot goes down the tube and the family with it. I'm their white knight." (fig 4.5)

Morse: "But who's the dragon George?"

The location is reminiscent of a science fiction set (fig 4.3,4.4). The vast steel piping and enormous vats which fill the frame dwarf both George Linacre and Morse. It is as if both figures were inside an enormous cybernetic organism and the conversation which takes place between them is similarly devoid of emotion and impersonal in its discussion of the human element. This is a momentary intrusion of the cinematic into what is otherwise a domestic drama. In keeping with the alienation of the setting we are afforded no close ups or shot reverse shot editing. The camera work moves in harmony with the shocking

technological landscape that can so easily eclipse the human. For the regular viewer, Morse's reaction will come as no surprise. A devoted real ale drinker, Morse's natural habitat is outside a country pub on a summer's day. This contrast between the business end of beer making and its consumption is therefore effected in moral terms by virtue of the choice of scenic rural and claustrophobic space-age landscapes (fig 5). Morse's understanding of beer as recreation and his hostility to Linacre endorse the notion of corporate Britain as a soulless wilderness. There is no pleasure to be had in profit.

George's new age conversion to the world of corporate finance is conveyed via the cynicism of Morse as nothing more than the unscrupulous means to make a fast profit. Notions of integrity, loyalty and even customer care are seemingly lost on George, whereas Morse is counted rich in these qualities. The scorn engendered in this exchange positions the audience on the side of Morse and his old-world perception of the function of big business as a means to a profitable end. Though Morse clearly dislikes the Radford family, particularly Isobel Radford, he seems to have a great deal of sympathy with the idea of a small family firm trying to hang on to its independence.

George Linacre's defensive retort about asset stripping is neither persuasive nor sincere. The duelling with Morse aligns the latter with a view of modern business principles as scurrilous and alien. This may be owing to the impersonal lexicon which accompanies the new corporate vision of Britain. George describes Radford's brewery as a sick company in need of drastic action. The choice of metaphor is apt given the dysfunctional character of the family. However the whole exchange is split into two world views. Morse is interested in people, their motivations, behaviours and desires. George sees only objects, systems and processes. His manner of speaking contrasts sharply with Morse. Morse asks questions about people - he instinctively draws upon his experience of human action. George answers him with slogans, drawing upon a perception of the world as a space in which human agency is not predicated on individual desire. Thus he talks about 'we' rather than 'I' and 'you'; he lays responsibility on corporate decision-making rather than personal

judgement; he refuses to offer an opinion on Radford's death, preferring to think in impersonal terms about the situation of the brewery; his description of the brewery reads like an inventory, never once mentioning the employees, or even showing an awareness of the impact of the take-over on the real lives of the people who work there. Finally his sensitivity to Morse's dry comment on the value of the land suggests a political resonance to George's belief in the power of corporate business. "Don't come the Guardian editorial with me" is a provocative reminder of the marginal yet forthright voice of left-wing liberalism in the eighties and its attempt to counter the tide of Thatcherism. By 1989/90 however the 'threat' of Socialism had largely been eradicated by the combination of newspaper political allegiance to the Right, low morale in the Labour Party and the apparent strength of the Tory Party's leadership.

Morse's attitude to George Linacre, Jeremy Boynton and others of their type is perhaps best described as moral indignation. Morse does not have an answer to the pressing needs of business and the economy; he is not a political animal. There is very little evidence to suggest he has any interest in politics or government. One suspects Morse of reactionary views and one of the pleasures of the text is seeing him challenged in the course of his investigations by individuals who espouse prejudiced or egalitarian beliefs. In a later episode from 1989 his encounter with a radical group of women priests demonstrates his political naiveté although he is shown to have innate sympathy with anyone suffering under the yoke of discrimination or intolerance. The investigation into the death of a young female cleric ends with a pharmaceutical company bearing the brunt of responsibility through its failure to follow ethical guidelines. Once again it is corporate business which is the enemy of society. Even the Academy cannot escape either economic consideration or Morse's condemnation. In *The Daughters of Cain* the murder of a senior don ultimately provides a hard-pressed college with a fabulous fundraising opportunity;

> "We'll call it the [ ] memorial fund. That should get the old boys digging harder into
> their pockets."

A Climate of Unease

Beginning with examples from *Inspector Morse*, we can see how the drama series is organised around particular discourses of class and occupation. Central to the programme text is the figure of Morse himself. He resists the prevailing ideological climate which is represented within the diegesis as a concern for business and the material trappings of financial success. This is manifested explicitly in two different ways. Morse is depicted as an older officer of long service who is reluctant to pursue success in terms of promotion. His modus operandi is antithetical to the ethos of modern policing, which is increasingly perceived as a public service under administrative pressure to perform according to external indicators. The figure of Chief Superintendent Strange represents the administrative hierarchy which must at all times respond to any breaches of procedure, and cope with the organisation and control of expenditure.

Sergeant Lewis's career aspirations throw the weathered figure of Morse into stark relief, providing ample scope for tension between the two characters. Lewis has responsibilities and commitments. He expects to "get on" in the job. At the same time he is reluctant to fall in with Morse's bad habits, particularly if it means staying out in the evenings. What distinguishes Morse from the younger Lewis is chiefly his attitude to the police service. Morse is a public servant who has achieved a large degree of success, but who is unlikely ever to be promoted again because he is unfit for the upper administrative echelons. His unsuitability is expressed by way of his cranky impatience with bureaucracy. In class terms Morse's tastes are possibly too refined for him to experience satisfaction in a desk job. Ironically his iconoclasm takes the form of a profound engagement with classical art, literature and music. He is a scholarly and erudite man who values the intangible qualities of refinement, intelligence and wit, but only when accompanied by compassion and integrity. Those qualities seem to be singularly redundant for the role of a Chief Superintendent or even a Chief Inspector which is why Morse appears to be so alienated from his own police community. Morse is rarely if ever seen in the company of the men

who work under him; the programme is not predicated on the idea of policing as a fraternity. Any solidarity is merely incidental. Morse is a middle-class individual, rich in cultural capital and yet exiled from the police establishment. Those who are welcomed into the hierarchy are much more overtly working class and upwardly mobile. In the textual examples given, officers Bell, Strange, Lewis and Maitland all speak with identifiable regional accents whereas Morse speaks Standard English with received pronunciation. Morse's background almost seems to count *against* him in this era of positive discrimination and meritocratic achievement.

Similarly the Alan Richards, Jeremy Boyntons and George Linacres of this world are shown to be the likely inheritors of wealth and prosperity, leaving behind the monolithic and largely redundant spectre of the landed gentry and its country houses. The irresistible force of progress is expressed therefore in relation to class and this in turn mediates our understanding of business and the world of work. The spirit of enterprise infuses the textual background to the programme, situating and *explaining* the relationship of greed to success. The world of *Inspector Morse* is thus a strangely ethical space in which apostles of the new creed of individualism are pilloried. In this endeavour, *Inspector Morse*'s apparent reactionary spirit is bred out of a work ethic which espouses process over product. Morse is a "purist" whose middle-class credentials enable him to sneer at the upstart pretensions of the bourgeois self-made man.

The text is orchestrated around the figure of Morse in such a way as to preclude overt criticism or contradiction. Even though Morse often stumbles across the answer to the "who dunnit?", the pleasure of *Inspector Morse* lies in observing his encounters with suspects. He speaks for us. Morse is allowed to give reign to opinions and feelings which would in the real world have profound consequences for social relations and peer group communities. The programme steers away from the *really* dangerous issues of racial violence, deprivation and police corruption - all regular features of other crime drama

series - because they do not apparently sit comfortably within the television world of middle-class criminality. Such issues are either irrelevant or invisible.

Inspector Morse encapsulates a view of Britain as a place where it should not be necessary to demonstrate or protest. As Richard Sparks concludes

"Morse's Oxford has no Blackbird Leys estate" (Brandt 1988:100).

It is a vision of Britain where the operations of the police themselves do not come under close scrutiny. However it is misleading to suggest, as Sparks does, that *Morse* is so locked into a heritage culture as to be merely a *"divertissement"*(Brandt 1988). *Inspector Morse* does indeed inscribe a sense of the decadence of the times. Beneath the narrative drive of the text there are implicit structures of feeling at work which locate contemporary enterprise culture with corruption, self-interest, and greed. There is a kind of privileging of corporate Britain as a place where the unscrupulous can practice at the expense of the major institutions; the Academy, family life, the Church and even the police itself. The apolitical liberalism of *Inspector Morse* belies its own unease. Traditional in its affiliation with the literary genre of the detective story, and perceptive in its ambient understatement of the hegemonising tendencies of enterprise culture, it reflects a *malaise* of the times without offering radical alternatives. In that, the programme executes a very problematic and socially significant relationship to the period of its greatest popularity. It appears to offer a haven *and* a subtle critique of the broad sweep of Thatcherism in the mid to late eighties and the early nineties. Certainly the eponymous hero seems to embody the dilemma facing the middle-classes in the latter half of the decade. Despite economic recovery and rich profits for those in the financial sectors, the general malaise or melancholia of programmes like *Inspector Morse* suggest an underlying dis-ease with the status quo.

Pressure at the Top

Inspector Morse had become increasingly critical of moves to economise and target police resources in latter years and this is most eloquently pursued in *The Daughters of Cain* where not only is Lewis's promotion suspended but the case is closed without a conviction

even though Lewis and Morse know that murder accomplices are still at large. Superintendent Strange makes it clear that justice though a worthy end in itself, cannot always be pursued at the expense of adequate resources. Budgets are increasingly seen as driving the investigation rather than the other way around. In comparison with *Inspector Morse* Anglia Television's production *The Chief* represents a profound shift towards the drama of accountancy.

Tim Piggot-Smith starred in the first series as a maverick Chief Constable constantly juggling budgets, local politicians and petty bureaucrats. It is a far cry from the bobby-on-the-beat dramas of the 1960s and 1970s. The second series from 1994 starred Martin Shaw who was already familiar to audiences from his role as Doyle in the cult 1970's programme *The Professionals.* Based in the fictitious constabulary of Eastland, *The Chief* locates its conflicts within and between the upper ranks of the police service and their government masters in Whitehall. It therefore attempts to penetrate the world of boardroom decision-making rather than focusing on the antics of police officers in the field. This attention to the political dimension of policing in a television drama serial is suggestive of the extent to which government, political and commercial interests had reached a level of synergy.

1994 marks the midpoint of John Major's administration. Following the resignation of Margaret Thatcher in November 1990, John Major's succession to the Party leadership was assured in part by the common knowledge that he was her favoured candidate. She expected him "to protect her legacy"(Hogg and Hill 1995:4) and his influence was such that the early 90s can be seen as a period of settlement whereby the more extreme and far-reaching policies of Thatcherism begin to achieve a level of consolidation. The era of privatisation for example is best demonstrated in the period 1987-94. Yet despite this John Major's election victory over Neil Kinnock in 1992 was both unexpected and slim. It proved a disaster for the Labour Party. Disillusioned, Kinnock resigned and was replaced by John Smith. But Major's position was far from secure. In 1995 he fought off a leadership contest which effectively split the Party. 1995 was also the year that Will

Hutton's book *The State We're In* topped the non-fiction best-sellers' list for more than six months. Hutton's attack on Thatcherism and its latest incarnation under Major, appealed to many hundreds of thousands of people who might never otherwise read a book about politics. It seemed both at the time and in retrospect that the tide of opinion was turning in favour of a change of government and a change of party politics.

An analysis of episode two from the second series will go some way towards re-enforcing the argument that such programmes exist in relation to the wider political climate. Two discourses chiefly inform the episode; the role of the private sector, and government policy on immigration control. The plot of episode two centres on the activities of a local business called Calvin Security. Under the management of Simon Duval, Calvin Security is a private organisation which has been assisting immigration officers in the pursuit and detention of illegal farm workers. The death of a Bosnian worker in the custody of police and security officers leads to a bitter and complicated investigation. The Chief Constable, Alan Cade, comes into conflict with Duval and Gemma Marshall, a solicitor representing the dead man's sister and *Liberty Watch*. This is an organisation similar to *Amnesty International*, dedicated to publicising and prosecuting human rights' offences.

The issue of privatisation in the police and prison services was already big news. The security firm Group 4 had won a franchise to escort prisoners between the courts and prisons. Following two highly publicised escapes from Group 4 custody, further privatisation in these areas was temporarily suspended. The creation of a fictional security firm is no co-incidence then. Its inclusion within the drama suggests a certain topicality and restates the issue of privatisation as a problematic feature of a changing police culture.

The terms of PACE (1984) offer clear instruction on the means by which prisoners should be attended whilst in custody. Cade makes it clear to his Deputy that the kind of restraints used in the raid to subdue the Bosnian immigrant were unlawful. The man asphyxiates when a gag is place in his mouth for the duration of the journey. In addition his legs and arms are strapped to his body with gaffer tape which leads to broken ribs and difficulty in

breathing. The opening sequence shows the officers arriving at the edge of the fields. The dialogue of police and security men is indistinguishable; the pursuit of the immigrant workers is conducted in the manner of a field sport. Senior officers egg on the junior constables as they rugby tackle the escaping workers.

The investigation by the Police Complaints' Authority is routine and hastily concluded. Cade is not satisfied by the process and duly informs the PCA to hold a full enquiry. He is not at this instant however persuaded by Marshall's demand for a public enquiry. The result of the second investigation is the worst of all possible results; no indictment and no exoneration either for the officers involved. Marshall decides to prosecute Cade on behalf of the dead man's sister, since he carries the responsibility for all police activity at the end of the day. By the close of the programme Cade has succeeded in embarrassing Duval, whom he believes is taking unnecessary risks in order to make a good profit out of policing in the area, and has demonstrated his goodwill with regard to *Liberty Watch*. He is pleased that the prosecution against him will go ahead. He is now persuaded that the public do have a right to know how police operations are being compromised by the activities of private sector businesses like Calvin Security. A day in court will enable him to express that view publicly.

Simon Duval, the Managing Director of Calvin Security is portrayed in a way which suggests that he enjoys the role of the country squire. However his only real attachment to the countryside seems to be a fondness for shooting game. Affluent and well-connected, Duval enjoys the patronage of former heads of state as well as prominent Whitehall officials. Framed photographs of himself in the company of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan adorn the mantelpiece. Duval has a vision of the police service becoming a franchised concern in the near future, whereby individuals like himself can acquire vast influence and wealth. In his first meeting with Cade he outlines the future as he sees it.

Duval: "In the new order of things, we're going to have to work more closely. Privatisation of certain areas of the police force is going to give you more time, more money and more opportunity to do what matters - catch the criminal."

Cade: "And you opportunity to make more money."

Cade's objections to Duval are made explicit in the exchange between them. The death of a man in custody is by Cade's standards, an unacceptable indicator of the failure of the 'service' element in its responsibility to the general public, whether immigrant or native. Duval's pragmatism however smacks of self-service. He is only concerned that the incident should be dealt with as soon as possible and that his company should not suffer from negative publicity.

Cade's antagonism towards Duval is also the subject of his meeting with Deputy Under Secretary Crimmond at the Home Office. Cade argues that the police force is a service where officers are expected to meet certain ethical and moral standards of behaviour. He does not see the same ethics informing the practices of the business sector. Crimmond points out the error of making an enemy of the private sector. According to him, "everyone agrees" that privatisation is the future. Cade further insists that the influence of private sector business can only do harm to the reputation of the police and that any degree of complicity will undermine morale and damage public confidence in the service.

Cade's second meeting with Duval is at a dinner thrown by the latter in his country mansion. According to Duval the public sector is "the fastest growing area of the economy." Cade is unmoved by Duval's manifesto. The black tie event is intercut with scenes of the gangmaster's mal-nourished workers as they are herded into Calvin Security vans to be deported. This is an attempt by the Home Office to remove an embarrassing problem before it becomes a major *cause célèbre*. Cade instructs his Deputy to intervene to prevent the deportation. In this way he is sending a message to Duval that *his* men are the real police officers. Delaying the action will also give the workers time to instigate appeals. In Cade's view, Duval is "taking liberties" and it is time that someone stood up to him.

The other aspect of the discourse on private sector business concerns the instigation of new inspection procedures to determine police efficiency. The programme *The Chief* is of course itself evidence of the degree to which the role of enterprise and business culture had come to permeate the public sector by 1994. Within the diegesis, Anne Stewart, Cade's former Deputy returns as a member of HM Inspectorate. Her role is to report on the efficient deployment of senior police officers in relation to mundane tasks. "Market testing" is not something which Cade claims to know much about, and he is clearly not keen to find out about it either. Stewart informs him that it consists of "measuring police work against business models." She adds that luckily there is a computer programme which actually makes the calculation. Such mechanistic processes meet with little enthusiasm. Having used the Inspectorate as a side-ways promotion, Stewart regrets the fact of her involvement with a process which does not in her view, even target her *own* talent appropriately. One of the consequences of costing the police service is that other government departments may choose to go to alternate sources for equipment and man-power. Calvin Security's success lies in its ability to undercut Cade's service. Immigration officials have therefore taken to using Calvin Security vans and guards in order to reduce the costs of each operation. Cade is suspicious of such arrangements when he inspects the duty roster sheets and discovers that the senior officer in charge is abusing overtime rates. Calvin Security are receiving the tender and police officers are encouraged to work overtime. Cade's concern with cost management is therefore shown to be integral to the issue of corruption, and this in turn is linked diegetically to the influence of private sector competition. Cade's final summing up is an explicit condemnation of the prevailing climate of business economics;

> Cade: "Now I feel that market forces and financial pressures and turning the police service into a police business and all that, probably did contribute to Marco Graitchi's death."

In the case of *The Chief* righteous indignation on the part of the eponymous hero satisfies the audience that there are areas of resistance within institutions of public service. Despite

much criticism then, the police service still endeavours to breed numerous screen representations which endorse the popular mythology of police officers as men to be trusted and even on occasion, revered.

The spectre of privatisation and the erosion of the public sector by unscrupulous private sector marketeers can be seen to inform both *Inspector Morse* and *The Chief.* Morse exhibits a certain distaste for the vulgarity of enterprise; Cade also expresses his discomfort at being obliged to wine and dine in the company of people whose politics he finds repellent. Both characters are represented as "dinosaurs" resistant to change. Both however occupy the morally superior position. *The Chief* puts the business of policing itself centre-stage. What is background texture in *Inspector Morse* therefore becomes the focal issue in *The Chief.* Although he thinks of himself as a policeman, Cade is really more of a politician who must wrangle with corporations, government agencies and Whitehall mandarins. Issues of class *prevail*, both in relation to the central characters and as indicators of wealth and power in Britain in the last two decades of the twentieth century.

The unease which infuses *Inspector Morse* has become open conflict in *The Chief* as Cade battles with men like Duval who already have the sanction of government. But the fact of television's persistent demonisation of private sector business demands closer investigation. The following chapter will therefore assess the meaning and importance of such representations and how the legacy of Thatcherism has impacted on contemporary film and television.

[1] The National Reporting Centre enables police constabularies to pool resources; the division of the police into different regional forces often meant that the implementation of policy occurred at a local rather than national level.

[2] PACE applied to police and Customs & Excise which were agencies much concerned with the prevention of terrorism during this period.

Chapter Nine

Summary and Conclusions

Two central issues emerge from the case-studies discussed in the previous three chapters. Firstly how do individual texts relate to each other within the field of television drama and secondly how do long-running drama series evolve in relation to the political, social and cultural climate of the period? The first question necessitates a synchronic analysis which compares and contrasts texts which emerge out of similar historical conditions of production. The second kind of analysis looks diachronically at the way in which discourses or authorities shift or adjust position over time, in relation to social or political change. The methods necessary to engage with these dynamics must themselves be fluid and flexible. The chief argument of the thesis is that the operation of hegemony is subject to these kinds of tensions and movements. In seeking therefore to answer the broader question of whether Thatcherism did indeed meet the criteria of a hegemony, the methodological approach discussed in chapter five must now be applied in greater depth.

Bakhtin writes of the need to look at historical concrete utterances in order to undertake meaningful analyses of text. Rather than concentrate on novelistic discourse, this thesis argues for the citation of televisual text as a means to explore what kinds of concrete utterance informed and were informed by the dominant ideas and policies of Thatcherism during the 1980s. When for example in 1982 the character of Delboy Trotter speaks of the state of nationalised industries, his speech-act registers as a concrete utterance which stands as evidence of a subject position. He is articulating a view which may be understood by the audience as emanating from a particular political view-point. Yet no mention is made of Mrs Thatcher or the Conservative Party. The remark operates to solidify Delboy's status as a member of the urban working-class un-employed. Significantly by virtue of his London location, Delboy represents one who is at a remove from communities dependent on manufacturing industries. His attitude to nationalisation indicates that he is ripe for a change of political dogma. Delboy is signalled to the audience as an individual representative of

many millions, who has been won over already to the new politics of enterprise capitalism. He is a have-not who believes that he can be a somebody if he works hard enough in the market-place, which in the programme is constituted literally to mean Peckham market.

The authority of abstract concepts like the free market are comically undermined and shown to be ridiculous when endorsed by a figure like Delboy, who nevertheless manifests all the necessary characteristics of the newly enfranchised. Delboy accepts the invitation on the part of government to be part of a new style mobile market economy. But this is in the manner of an Althusserian joke because Delboy has in one sense been ideologically duped. When Thatcherism called upon people to stop relying on the state and go to work for themselves, it did not have Delboy Trotter in mind.

The self-belief engendered by the climate of enterprise initiatives may have been intended for the middle and working classes; it was not intended to supply an alibi to the petty criminal. Thus the programmes *Only Fools and Horses* and *Minder* provide synchronic evidence of the centrifugal possibilities of free enterprise. Since Thatcherism refused to admit class as a significant social or economic issue, both programmes are in a position to satirise the emergence of the respectable entrepreneur. The former undeserving poor have had the burden of respectability thrust upon them. In the case of Arthur Daley and Delboy Trotter it is as if finally they have a government that has come round to their way of thinking. Both programmes play on the issue of legitimacy versus illegitimacy, whilst always espousing the ethics of the free market. Capitalism has become the hostage of the criminal in a metaphorical sense.

If government and parliamentary discourse is at pains to centralise meanings of political ideas such as enterprise then programmes such as *Minder* and *Fools and Horses* undermine that intention. It is debatable however as to how far such texts do so in a playful manner. More is at stake than merely a collision of world-views for when deviation occurs, we can see resistance at work. In the moment of resistance however we must also be aware of the *concretisation* of the dominant idea. What Bakhtin describes as the dialogic tension within

words to convey competing ideas and meanings necessarily implies the simultaneous presence of both dominant and subordinate interpretations. In other words we may scoff at Arthur Daley's pretensions to be a respectable businessman when we know him to be a crook. However in his desire to accede to the legitimate domain of the entrepreneur, we must also recognise that such a domain exists. This dialectical relationship of dominant ideology to subordinated resistance lies at the core of hegemonic activity. One polarity ensures the existence of the other. So in the moment of resistance we witness the authority of the dominant. But the additional factor which we must not overlook here is that this oscillation occurs not just at the level of semantics but between different spheres of influence within civil society. The interjection of political ideas into the realm of popular entertainment ensures the succession of political thought into civilian life. The process and activity of hegemony can therefore be observed in these seemingly small and insignificant ways.

This discursive process of de-stabilisation then depends on the apparent stability of a discourse, idea or truth. Comedic success depends upon the audience recognising the impossibility of certain characters of achieving their desires of success. Alternatively the comedy may derive from the lack of fit between self-belief and self-awareness. Each comedy situation therefore exploits its characters in such a way as to continually yield the promise of success whilst forever with-holding the means of achieving it. The dynamic of *Only Fools and Horses* which suspends the Trotter family between desire and achievement conveys a number of messages about the nature of success in the 1980s. Confidence is the essence of Delboy's business philosophy but his confidence in the system which supposedly enables everyone who works hard enough to reach the top is constantly undercut by his experience. In the end it is his sheer carelessness that is rewarded by an act of pure luck. The reason for Delboy's failure all these years would seem therefore to be merely a matter of bad luck. But Delboy was never destined to succeed in business because he was born in the wrong class and lacks the sophistication of his betters. Delboy, unlike

Rodney, epitomises a class identity which will never benefit from the initiatives of government enterprise schemes because it remains outside of the Conservative agenda.

Barthes' cultural code effectively *inverts its own class origins into a natural reference* thus converting culture into nature. This is how myth is created. The myth which is generated by *Only Fools and Horses* is that the Trotter family are unworthy of success. We are encouraged to see Delboy's failure as endemic to his nature. He is not bright enough, quick enough or resourceful enough. Certainly this continuing failure could be the subject of some painful episodes but the resilience of Delboy and his stereotypical cockney chirpiness reassures us that all is well. We need not feel guilty for enjoying Delboy's disappointments. Delboy takes on the attributes of political thinking by embracing concepts like the free market, and then is apparently not clever enough to make them work for him. Concepts such as the free market coupled with the lexicon of private sector business practice are incongruous in the mouths of Delboy Trotter and Arthur Daley despite the fact of their unconditional enthusiasm for the new order. This incongruity renders the concepts themselves more visible whilst at the same time the comedy value of such tactics effectively undercuts any radical edge.

This brings us to a further point concerning the tone of *Only Fools and Horses*. Ostensibly a comedy, it is nevertheless profoundly sad in its depiction of working-class life. The humour is so often of a painful kind and this is but one of the features also common to *Auf Wiedersehen Pet* and *Minder*. In *Boys From the Blackstuff* the cruel comedy of character and situation has become a razor sharp tool for raising political consciousness. Whatever the arguments in relation to television's political *knowingness*, the programmes produced at the time of Thatcher's greatest power, share an endemic quality of pathos which seems to resonate a degree of unease with the new climate of enterprise. Possibly one could argue that such nuances are part of television's commitment to observing the phenomenal world in which class poverty continued to be a real issue. Alternatively television's decision to make programmes which focused on the working-class experience might suggest an industry

which intuitively sought to represent the political culture from the point of view of those *least* able to take advantage of it. Is such sadness merely a sentimental response to a mythology of working-class lifestyle which no-one would *really* choose to adopt? This is doubtful as such pathos is not reserved exclusively for comedy cockneys. Even towards the close of the decade, a programme like *Inspector Morse* continued to exude an air of melancholy as the eponymous hero is daily confounded by the corruption around him.

Nostalgia and Desire: Television as Social History

The melancholia of the eponymous hero in *Inspector Morse* is more than a feature of characterisation. *Morse* mourns the passing of a culture which never really existed except within literature and the arts. The nostalgia expressed within the text is aimed at a pre-enterprise age when human relationships were valued above economic considerations. This is a drama series predicated on a longing for another time. But *Morse* does not look to real history for its pre-lapsarian idyll. What Chief Inspector Morse longs for is the kind of social history *evinced by television itself*. It is as if the fictional character of Morse dreams of waking up in an episode of *Heartbeat*. What we see in *Inspector Morse* is a nostalgia dependent upon an audience's familiarity with other police fictions. Television's self-reflexive quality is more significant than its ability to report on its own production. Certainly one could argue that unlike any other medium, television feeds off itself in order to generate more programmes, viewers and advertisers. Such a phenomenon has come to be seen as an aspect of post-modern culture to the point where the *meaning* of such parasitic activity goes unremarked. The television comedies and drama series analysed in chapters 6,7 and 8 all share a common feature; discontent. *Only Fools and Horses* expresses a discontent fuelled by injustice. Delboy and Rodney want the success which they see as their entitlement under the leadership of Conservative government. *Boys from the Blackstuff* examines the degradation suffered by a community at the hands of a misanthropic government. *Minder* and *Auf Wiedersehen Pet* demonstrate the gulf between ideology and reality by showing the frustration of individuals obliged to surrender to market forces. The

choice on the part of television producers and writers to focus dramatic narratives around working class collectives is symptomatic of a nostalgic romanticism for working-class culture. *Inspector Morse* and *The Chief* offer more cynical judgements on the function of market capitalism. The despair of the early eighties as identified in a programme like *Boys from the Blackstuff* translates into middle-class *ennui* in a programme like *Morse*. What unites these texts even more fundamentally is however *the absence of a critical political dialogue*. Thus we may conclude that one of the most telling aspects of television dramatic production during the Thatcher years was the increasing reluctance to offer political arguments in the face of the Thatcherite agenda. Does the absence of political analysis in such programming constitute an argument for uncritical acceptance of those policies which are sutured within the programmes under analysis? Not necessarily. The unease within these texts is evidence of the extent to which Thatcherism had to continually rewin consent in order to maintain its dominant position in the political rhetoric of the period. Examples drawn from *The Chief* [1] offer clear evidence of the pervasive nature of discourses of privatisation and their impact on public service accountability. Similarly the nature of private sector enterprise has been identified[2] as a significant feature of narrative structure in *Inspector Morse*. Such texts can be described as politically aware. They are *knowing* texts which appear to offer us two possible responses: we can weep for the loss of authentic working-class culture as epitomised in *Carry On* films of the 1950s or we can smile wryly with the Chief Inspector as we acknowledge our loss of innocence. Either way we are confronted by representations which engender sentimental rather than intellectual responses. Thus we can argue that television drama of the period functioned in a particular way with regard to the political climate. Its engagement was *antagonistic* to *particular* areas of Thatcherite ideology but not politically demonstrative. We were encouraged to identify *emotionally* with the emerging political and social changes.

What we see in television drama of the period is a phenomenon difficult to characterise. If we take for example Morse's conversation with Jeremy Boynton[3], we can observe how

Morse's dislike of this character translates into codes of dress whereby the audience is encouraged to align itself with Morse's understated "good taste". The attendant discourse of private sector enterprise is sutured into the text under the guise of Boynton's flamboyant "wide-boy" appearance. Alan Cade's conflict with Simon Duval operates in exactly the same way. In other words we disengage from Boynton and Duval because of the *manner* of their representation. The politics of free enterprise become inseparable from the *iconography* of the entrepreneur. Cassandra's boss Steven also demonstrates the same attention to dress, the same arrogance and the same superiority of manner. We can see a pattern emerging across dramatic and comedy genres, where the figure of the entrepreneur becomes subject to similar conventions of representation. Despite the fact of the entrepreneur's unpleasant connotations, the mode of representation owes less to political opposition than it does to *taste*. In other words, even where television drama displays hostility towards policies or ideas associated with Thatcherism, it does so from the point of view of *bad manners* rather than through a detailed examination of the flaws in political argument. We are obliged to dislike the Boyntons, Duvals and Stevens depicted within television drama because they occupy a space designated as *villain*. This does not mean that television drama necessarily operated out of a sense of political conviction. The maintenance of hegemony in *drama* can be seen to occupy a space just as powerful as the newsroom or the debating chamber. The representation of a single bank manager or used car dealer may have no significance beyond the text. However when patterns of signification can be detected above and beyond the single text, then we can say with some confidence that the representation is part of a wider practice which may in turn reveal a consensual viewpoint. The representation of the figure of the entrepreneur appears to have achieved such a level of consistency as to constitute a popular idiom or mythology. In short, television texts *can* provide empirical evidence of the hegemonising tendencies of ideas *beyond* the sphere of popular entertainment. Whilst the popular representation of the entrepreneur in 1980s drama does not accord with Thatcher's vision of the enterprising small business man, it is highly

suggestive of a *resistant strategy* employed by producers, writers and actors in answer to the dominant rhetoric of the time.

Realism, Aesthetics and the Television Screen

It has been argued in chapter 4 that realism is the dominant means of dramatic representation and as such renders television drama particularly susceptible to ideological influence (Hill 1986, Fiske 1987). Realism cannot be easily separated from the question of aesthetics, particularly when one considers that the mode of realistic representation is subject to alteration so that what an audience defines as 'realistic' can quickly appear dated and ineffective. The analyses of television texts undertaken as part of this research project demonstrate the differing modes of realism employed across different genres and timescales. Television aesthetics are commonly ignored in favour of the cinematic experience with its indulgent and intrusive qualities. Television represents a more domestic sphere.

The creation of a distinctive television aesthetic is clearly imperative for dramas such as *Inspector Morse* and *Boys From the Blackstuff* where the realistic enterprise becomes subject to a particular vision. The use of film results in very different qualities of representation. *Morse* and *Minder* are both shot on film. *Morse* employs cinematic devices such as extreme close-ups and establishing panoramic shots which suggest high production values and an expansive view of greater philosophical consequence than an average episode of *The Bill*. *Minder* offers a realist representation of London which owes much to the iconography of back streets and pubs. Here we see how class representation structures the use of the camera. *Auf Wiedersehen Pet, Boys From the Blackstuff* and *Only Fools and Horses* are shot on video. This cheaper, recyclable technology carries connotations of ephemerality. However the choice of video also serves to bring an immediacy to the mise en scene which coincides with the televisual sense of the domestic.

Above all else, the decision to examine television texts as opposed to films stems from a conviction that television's formal qualities can provide the starting point for an analysis which privileges television's immediacy, longevity and popularity as a signifying medium.

Generic Formats and Narrative Structures

The avoidance of political *analysis* discussed above can be seen in the narrative structures utilised by different programmes over the period. The structure of the thirty minute situation comedy provided writer John Sullivan with a format which would in effect absolve the text from any allegations of political bias. The format also provided the opportunity for a sustained evolution of the Trotter family which picks up on topical cultural moments and social changes such as the growth of IT industries, Rodney's reincarnation as a trainee manager, and Delboy's maturation as husband and father. By contrast *Inspector Morse*'s 2 hour film format not only invokes a more complex narrative structure but also satisfies an audience less concerned with topical reference. Like most situation comedies, *Only Fools and Horses* carries an expectation of topicality with reference to issues or concerns connected to its weekly viewing schedule. The production of an episode of *Inspector Morse* prohibits such close proximity to current affairs. As discussed above, it is a text more reminiscent of the literary detective genre. Similarly its discussion of contemporary British society is therefore likely to be of a more generalised nature. This is also true of *Minder*. *Boys from the Blackstuff* however, though five years in discussion with producers, benefited from a short video production schedule. Bleasdale was asked to write an extra play to take account of the role of women. Julie Walters' monologue is still remembered by women today, as a powerful and prescient comment on women's reaction to male unemployment. The ability to tune into the popular at any particular moment of crisis is an option open to only certain genres - most obviously news and current affairs broadcasting. What is striking about these television dramas is how they responded through and beyond the constraints of their format and narrative structure to engage with a kind of typology of the times. It is the fact of their determination to do so which brings us to conclude that

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Thatcherism was a discourse which penetrated even the most conservative of television genres.

Thatcherism as Discourse

There are several conclusions to be drawn from the texts and how they interrelate. Did we merely acquire the habit of thinking in terms of enterprise capitalism and grow to accept long-term unemployment as an inevitable feature of modern society? Over a period of years the piecemeal yet sustained struggle of television drama with the politics of Thatcherism constituted a kind of cultural revolution. On the basis of the evidence provided the cultural response within television drama to Thatcherite concepts such as privatisation, the free market, and enterprise culture was complex and protracted. There was by no means a sudden embrace of those ideals; rather television producers, writers and dramatists sought to exploit the ironies and inconsistencies of the new politics of the Far Right, often by pitting traditional establishment values and ethics against those of the new market economics. Kuhn's notion of incommensurability which describes the paradigmatic shift of new ideas as revolutions, not progressions, is important in this context. The period under review represents an era of discontinuity where political ideals were to some degree tested within the parameters of fiction.

It is not satisfactory to say this text is ideological, this text is not. In examining dramatic texts from a particular era of political change, the challenge is to qualify judgements through understanding the dialogic tension of media texts which are charged with representing reality. Such texts do not therefore merely posit the new as successor to the old. They do in large part attempt to represent the oscillation of public opinion although such intentions are themselves subject to a network of professional and industrial concerns and conventions.

It is noteworthy for example the degree to which class relations and conflicts are made visible through the diegesis of plays and series of the 1980s. This was the moment when politics appeared to be offering the most far-reaching and ambitious rejection of class origins seen so far this century. Yet despite this political endeavour, television drama has

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persisted in viewing modern social experience through the prism of class interests. This is mostly clearly demonstrated in the resurrection of an imaginary working-class through programmes such as *Auf Wiedersehen Pet, Minder* and *Only Fools and Horses*. The definition of workers as illegitimate, un-employed or self-employed is constantly shifting yet the overt display of class interests in terms of leisure pursuits, manners and accents, ambitions and of course, solidarity, provides reassurance of social and historical continuity. The mythology of cheerful working-class men and women who are by virtue of their class consciousness, largely resistant to the ebb and flow of political ideology is the core of Terry McCann's characterisation in Minder. Arthur Daley's embrace of market capitalism is nothing more than chirpy opportunism. Equally we see characters emerging through the series *Inspector Morse* and *The Chief* who embody a common-sense understanding that those who imbibe the rhetoric of the free market are unscrupulous and materialistic. This is also evident in the portrayal of Steven in *Only Fools and Horses*. Such men are shown repeatedly to lack moral values and ethics - qualities which are televisually associated with members of the establishment, the urban working-class and those connected with public service. It is telling that even in the case of *Inspector Morse*, individuals within the Academy who demonstrate repellent codes of conduct are usually infected by a desire to participate in the wider world of private enterprise.

Boys from the Blackstuff with its criticism of the welfare system would seem to be an exception. However the issue of welfare is conveyed as the government's only answer to the problem of unemployment. There is no offer of re-training or vocational counselling. Those initiatives would come later as unemployment continued to grow. The benefits system is perceived within *Boys* to be the creature of the government and therefore no longer free from political influence. The Department of Employment has become an emblem of government indifference to the plight of the unemployed. Welfare dependency is portrayed as brutalising and inadequate. It emasculates adult men and women and should be resisted wherever possible.

The notion of *self-employed* is used wherever possible in preference to *unemployed*. This is also the case in programmes other than *Boys from the Blackstuff.*

But the institutions of the establishment which will presumably call a halt to the excesses of Thatcherism have themselves already undergone significant alteration. Both *Inspector Morse* and *The Chief* exemplify the changing nature of police-work in a political climate which appears to privilege market testing over crime prevention. Indeed *Inspector Morse* is a particularly good example of increasing hostility to the private sector, even as within the programme itself, the meritocratic advantages of a modern police hierarchy are shown to be at odds with the hero himself. The iconoclasm of *Inspector Morse* takes the form of Morse's ambiguity toward the newer generation of sergeants and the increasingly formalised nature of police bureaucracy. This resistance is coded through Morse's preference for Radio 3 and difficult crosswords. It is not a political solution but rather a retreat from the distasteful spectacle of so many uncultured and uncouth individuals attempting to better themselves through the pursuit of the material. Criminality is not the greatest sin in the world of *Inspector Morse*. To be indifferent or ignorant of elite culture is much more villainous.

Even as recently as the 1994 production *The Chief*, public services such as the police are forced to grapple with government schemes for cost-management. A Chief Constable is still presented as a credible hero for the modern age, particularly when he makes speeches about the iniquities of privatisation. However the programme also reflects the extent to which so many regulatory bodies have come into existence. The scrutiny of institutions by HM inspectors is shown to be a common, though not exactly welcome feature of everyday life.

Methodological Considerations

Chapter 5 argued for the inclusion of textual analysis as a source of empirical evidence. Whilst the methodology has steered away from imposing a schematic model for the analysis of text, it has drawn upon a variety of methods in order to examine the structure,

characterisation, discourses and narratives of different comedy and drama programmes. The "textual tradition" Hartley reminds us (1999:56-70) is embedded in the ancient history of semiosis. "Textuality" becomes "the evidential archive of the cultural analyst" (Hartley 1999:222). Using the Bakhtinian notion of heteroglossia, the evidence of the texts themselves demonstrates how different characters came to be associated with different political viewpoints and differing social categories and classes. Textual analysis also reveals the extent to which in programmes such as *Inspector Morse* and *The Chief* the main protagonists functioned in strategic opposition to dominant Thatcherite discourses of enterprise culture and privatisation.

It is possible then to draw out certain key findings concerning the representation of work and unemployment in television drama during the term of Thatcher's administrations:

- Television drama was engaged in a *dialogic* relationship to the emerging ideals of Thatcherite policy concerning work and unemployment. It sought to represent the tensions and conflicting claims of different social and professional groups at a time of political change.

- In representing certain public service institutions and social groups, television drama effectively participated in the cultural consolidation of those political ideas, whilst simultaneously initiating and reflecting resistance to certain elements of Thatcherite philosophy - namely privatisation and the creation of an enterprise culture.

- Thatcherism as a set of policies and an agenda for social and economic change resisted class as a defining issue. In television drama however, class remained a significant prism through which the conditions and experiences of social groups and individuals achieved resonance. Class representation is endemic as a strategic mode of representation in all of the programmes under analysis. This is perhaps most evident in *Boys From the Blackstuff* and *Inspector Morse.*

- Television drama of the period integrated elements of Thatcherite rhetoric regarding work, unemployment and self-employment. It also attributed certain moral and ethical qualities to particular groups and individuals, namely the urban working-class, public service and the key elements within the British establishment. This can be demonstrated in the representation of workers in programmes like *Auf Wiedersehen Pet* as distinct from their entrepreneurial gangland bosses. Similarly the narrative structure of *Inspector Morse* operates to distinguish career officers from vocational public servants, and represents members of the business fraternity as unscrupulous and self-serving.

- In general terms, the entrepreneur occupied a liminal position as a quasi--legitimate figure. Although not technically criminal, the entrepreneur was often portrayed as morally bankrupt and indifferent to the social consequences of his own pursuit of wealth and power. The figure of the entrepreneur is a powerful negative signifier in all the texts under scrutiny, from Malloy in *Boys from the Blackstuff* through to Steven in *Only Fools and Horses,* Duvall in *The Chief,* Harry and Ally Fraser in *Auf Wiedersehen Pet* and Boynton and Linacre in *Inspector Morse.* Even the amiable Delboy and Arthur Daley are presented as dangers to themselves and others.

- At the same time as television drama suggested that traditional working-class life had been subsumed into lower middle-class self-employment, it superimposed a mythology of class solidarity which went some way toward reassuring audiences that society was no worse for having a high rate of unemployment. Such class representation is an important structuring narrative in *Minder, Auf Wiedersehen Pet* and *Only Fools and Horses.*

- The representation of the private sector was predominantly shown to be antagonistic to the welfare state and public services in general. This is a trend

which began in early eighties drama and persisted into the mid nineties. Both *Inspector Morse* and *The Chief* resist the dominant rhetoric of privatisation and business enterprise.

- Welfare culture including unemployment benefit was depicted as a last resort. Those receiving dole money were represented as desperate and lacking autonomy. There was a great deal of resistance on the part of characters in television drama of the period, to being identified as unemployed or the recipients of benefits. *Boys From the Blackstuff* epitomised the despair of unemployment. The dole office becomes a significant *absence* in the programmes *Only Fools and Horses, Minder* and *Auf Wiedersehen Pet.*

There are two major criticisms that could be levelled at this thesis. First of all, in selecting programmes with large audience ratings I have neglected two significant areas of research in television: Soap operas and the news. My reasons for so doing are twofold. Long running soap operas such as *Coronation Street* and *Eastenders* have much to tell us about cultural and social trends, as much as about television conventions and the generic possibilities and limitations of those conventions. Equally, much has already been said about the composition of the weekly audience for such programmes, and in the case of *Eastenders*, there have been lucid arguments made concerning the importance of audience viewing in terms of the messages and meanings which the Eastenders text conveys (Buckingham 1987). Topicality, or an engagement with "real life issues" is always there before us in the plot narratives and character creations which go to make up the several episodes each week. Soap opera in the British vein, was equated in the early days with the new "social realism" being developed by the pioneers of free cinema. That movement proved hugely influential in terms of drama and drama-documentary forms that would follow[4]. However soap opera is so much the province of a particular audience grouping, although this may well change with the advent of mass unemployment and shifting social

attitudes, as to render it in some ways, too local for the kind of analysis being pursued here. The advent of *Eastenders* in 1985, though clearly engaged with topical issues, has become a regular feature of evening viewing. But the intention was to attempt a broader examination of the relationship between popular television and the political sphere, which crosses generic boundaries and audience demographics.

American soap operas such as *Dallas* and *Dynasty* achieved huge viewing figures particularly over the period of the early eighties. This was due in part to Terry Wogan who brought the programme to millions of Radio 2 listeners through a combination of mischievous comment, involving a personalised recap of the week's plot, and later guest interviews with some of the shows' stars, and the encouragement of fandom through his own letter section, and creative wit. "Who Shot JR?" became a national radio competition and it was Patrick Duffy who had good reason to thank Wogan for the enormous amount of free publicity generated over the years, when he appeared on Terry's early evening chat show in 1985. However much *Dallas* may have been a product of American ideas and anxieties, it became a fantasy saga enjoyed by millions of British viewers. Despite this, I have elected to focus on those programmes which were made and produced in Britain during the years of Thatcher's administration. Therefore the programmes which have been selected for particular attention fall into a variety of genres across the spectrum of light entertainment, from serial drama to situation comedy. What they have in common is a large audience share, and enduring popularity.

The decision to negate news and current affairs broadcasting may appear too radical, in-as-much as direct reportage and comment of the day must also have played a significant role in the articulation of political and cultural trends. However true that might be, what seems overwhelmingly important is the extent to which the political mission of Margaret Thatcher came to be accepted *in spite of* her enduring personal unpopularity, and *in spite of* the ever growing criticisms of the electorate, to the point where her vision of the universe as a *moral system* became ingrained within British popular culture in a way which no other political

leader has achieved before or since.

The second question concerns audience research or rather the lack of it. It could be argued that it is senseless to attempt an argument concerning political activity of any kind on the part of the viewer, *without* recourse to audience research data. This issue lies at the very root of the investigation. Thatcher's dominance over British political life from the period 1979-1990 was such that she won three consecutive election victories, two of which owed more to the inequities of the current 'first past the post' electoral system, than to the popularity of her policies. Opinion polls may tell us what some of the electorate were feeling at different times, but not necessarily why. Attempts to isolate and classify the viewing responses of audiences at the time would not only involve problems concerning memory and hindsight, but would be unlikely to shed much light on the reasons for the swings in public opinion or the factors which made *electoral resistance* to Thatcherism such a difficult and complex matter. Equally, focusing on television, to the exclusion of print journalism, radio, novels, magazines or film, constitutes limitations and would provide other arenas for the investigation of discourse over the same time frame.

The research undertaken within this thesis has focused on the texts themselves and the extent of the 'meaning' which such texts came to be associated with, within the public domain. The meanings attributed to phrases such as "Gis a job" and "By this time next year we'll be millionaires" are complex, because when taken out of context, they still retain something of their original dramatic power. Yet how do certain words, phrases, styles of behaviour or ideas achieve this kind of popular currency? How is it possible for the phrase "loads of money"[5] to become a byword for a decade of consumer culture? And if such words do convey powerful political truths about our society, then to what extent is that channel of communication a dialogue, rather than merely a catalogue of empty slogans? If *political discourses* of consumption, wealth, power, autonomy and values can inform the everyday *entertainment* sphere of television, then what are the likely consequences for real political activity? Is it in fact the case that one's consciousness of injustice or poverty can be

raised only in relation to the fictional, and if so, does the ever increasing drive of television to emulate 'the real world' in all its greyness, only serve to weave more and more myths of our own impotence in the face of governmental action or inaction.

Future Research: The View From Here

What is the legacy of eighties drama? How do contemporary writers respond to post-Thatcherite working practices and conditions? After a decade of the heritage film, British cinema of the 1990s has refocused on the plight of working class collectives. Unlike the Free Cinema movement's pictures of the 1950s and 60s, workers are represented as leaderless, disillusioned, displaced - literally redundant. This is in total contrast to British television which is saturated with programming focused on employment. How can we begin to understand this divergence between two such closely related cultural industries? Let us consider first the situation of British Cinema.

Contemporary film such as *The Full Monty* has in recent years been financed by television companies and intended for the domestic television market. *The Full Monty*'s success both at home and abroad is emblematic of a rupture occurring along an historical trajectory which can be traced back to the roots of social realism. How has the shift from drama to comedy been articulated and to what extent does it signify a hegemonic departure from the traditional film incarnation of the British worker?

Media texts subtly re-inscribe the cultural landscape making familiar that which is new or different. Television dramas and popular film can be read as indices of cultural hegemony, particularly in relation to dominant ideologies concerning employment in the UK. One of the hidden ironies of *The Full Monty*'s popularity is that the success and development of one British industry should have occurred at the expense of another. From the ashes of British manufacturing industries arises the phoenix of British film. And so it is toward the end of a significant era of right wing political administrations that a new spawn of 'heritage' films is produced, this time featuring the dispossessed and the anti-social. The social realism of the Free Cinema Movement is refracted through the prism of a very

different social and economic landscape: one in which employment is no longer a right and where dependency on state benefit has become a fact of life.

Accepting Laclau and Mouffe's 'logic of equivalencies' (Mouffe 1996 :154) argument, whereby the effects of one discourse are displaced onto others, enabling 'new' social movements to come into being, we can begin to see how social changes were becoming inevitable. Icons of eighties' style emerged from the shifting values and ethics of the business world. The creation of new and contested social identities has provided evidence of a hegemonic shift in our attitude to work and unemployment.

Such has been the achievement of government policy in engineering social change that the emergence of new cultures of welfare dependency acts as confirmation of political agency in society at large. When such social groups come to achieve a degree of fictional media representation, we can say with some confidence that the political culture has exercised sufficient will in order for hegemony to have been re-won and re-inscribed in its 'new' image.

Outgrossing *Four Weddings and a Funeral* and set to recoup its production costs five times over, *The Full Monty* has broken box office records both in the UK and America. The extraordinary financial success of the film, both in contrast to the recent demand for costume drama, and in comparison with other films of similar origin e.g. Channel 4 funded *Brassed Off* and *Naked,* is not easily attributable to any one factor. However Hugo Speer's comments suggest that the film's greatest asset is also what undermines its basic message;

> "But the film's not even about strippers [ ] It's actually about the lengths people will go to when they're desperate, but all people seem to notice is loads of blokes in the buff."[6]

A film that might otherwise be a morality play on the deprivations of unemployment and the sorry spectacle of individuals forced to strip for money, is given a comic twist. Yet the film is not without serious moments. Gerald's rage at Gary for disrupting his interview is

difficult to watch. The comedy of Gerald's interview is thrown into stark relief by Gerald's suffering. In laughing at Gerald the spectator is implicated in the shame which follows Gerald's impassioned pleas to Gary. The emasculating nature of redundancy is suddenly brought into sharp focus so that even Gary comes to understand what a terrible thing it is for a man of Gerald's age and status to lose his job. The cost of redundancy is measured and explained in human terms. It is not redundancy that destroys Gerald's marriage but his dishonest attempts to keep the truth from his spouse. Yosser Hughes[7] wanted a job, any job, where there were none. Gary's refusal to take a job as low paid as the women on the shopfloor is emblematic of a shift in expectations where being on the dole has become an acceptable alternative lifestyle for some. Gary's motivation to strip stems not from a desire to create a job for himself - rather it is a one-off gamble to make enough money to pay his child maintenance arrears. Ironically, the ever-pervasive spirit of free enterprise is as much a feature of Gary's life as his unemployment benefits. Unemployment has become a naturally occurring phenomenon, divorced from political or economic context, and therefore by implication, attributable to neither government policy nor regional neglect. We are given no indication for the collapse of the steel industry in Sheffield. Such events have become disassociated from the political arena.

This is in sharp contrast to *Brassed Off,* a much more self-conscious attempt to describe the effects of pit closures on a mining community, within a specific historical moment. *Brassed Off* is explicitly concerned with the wheeling and dealings of management and the efficacies of redundancy in preference to strike action. It deals therefore with the events of 1992, rather than the spectacle of the Miners' strike of 84. The film is uncompromising in its depiction of the lengths to which people will go when they are desperate. Voting for the redundancy package is the action of the 'scab' and much of the film's tension rests upon the question of which of the men has 'sold out' to the management by accepting the deal on the table. Like *The Full Monty* however, the film's necessary 'feel-good factor' leaves the spectator facing uncertain closure. What happens when the redundancy money runs out?

What do Gary and his pals do the morning after their performance? Is it the job club as usual? The opportunity afforded within *Brassed Off* for a rhetorical 'reply' to the politics of the pit closures marks a polemical moment for audiences to assess their own complicity in the affairs of government. Despite this the film ends with romantic hope for the young lovers, softening the blow of redundancy.

Brassed Off is a bitter film, doomed to the video rental circuit or offered at a special discount price if purchased in tandem with *The Full Monty*. The latter does not implicate its audience in moral terms but only asks that we empathise. Detached from the political arena *The Full Monty* is both symptomatic of a culture acclimatised to the vagaries of unemployment and *at the same time* an indicator of political determination in its refusal to connect political action with social consequences. The iconoclastic manifesto of the Free Cinema Movement may once have produced films which sought to explore the poetic realism of the urban working class experience. Forty years on the drama has been comically inverted.

If we turn to the situation of British television we find a very different culture emerging. From wheel-clampers to environmental health officers, nurses to prostitutes there appears to be no end to the soap-dramas currently flooding our television screens. Where British cinema appears to be mourning the passing of work as we know it, British television is rapacious in its appetite for more and more documentary style video footage of ordinary people going about their ordinary jobs. There is a self-conscious quality to these programmes which borders on paranoia. It is as if television producers were anxious to document work as proof of its existence. This is surely an area which demands closer investigation.

A further avenue for research is the shifting dynamic between male and female working patterns and their representation within popular media. *Boys From the Blackstuff* largely ignores the female breadwinner, choosing instead to concentrate on the emasculating qualities of unemployment. The opportunities for women afforded by a higher

concentration of part-time employment become the focus of programmes which followed. A pattern of signification can be seen in the narrative structure of *Auf Wiedersehen Pet, The Full Monty* and *Brassed Off.* Even in *Only Fools and Horse,* mild mannered Cassandra is presented as a castrating figure when she objects to Rodney's "Jolly Boys' outing" to Margate. One of the legacies of Thatcherism as represented in drama then, seems to be the alienation of masculine and feminine workers. It is as if women were in some sense functioning as the fifth column - the enemy within. Within the middle-class dramas of *Inspector Morse* and *The Chief,* female ambition is registered as a modern-day phenomenon. The career woman is more often than not the object of fear and suspicion. Certainly her presence is unsettling. There is surely work to be done here, particularly in relation to Thatcher's own presence as a powerful career-oriented woman. Could the rise of popular representations of the female careerist be theorised as a fearful response to Thatcher herself?

This thesis has been engaged in exploring the interface between political ideas and their manifestation through television entertainment programmes over a period of considerable political turmoil. It has been the central aim of the thesis to demonstrate through close textual analysis the varying ways in which television drama of the period registered, modified and re-presented key elements of Thatcherism, and to identify some of the common features of television artistic production in response to an evolving political climate. To paraphrase John Hill (1986), the analysis of texts does more than simply offer "a reading"; the implicit nature of many of the political ideas and assumptions within the texts themselves, arising from the circumstances of their production suggests powerful ideological messages were "able to pass without notice" (1986:3). Thus the textual analyses themselves are organised in relation to a socio-cultural critique of Thatcherism which draws upon political histories, memoirs and policy statements.

There are many directions in which further research could develop from these findings. Class representation is one area which demands closer attention given the extent to which

television drama continues to depend upon class as a signifier. This is particular true of situation comedy - an area of production which has held little appeal for media academics. A comparative analysis with a foreign media history over a period of similar political ideology would also yield a fascinating study. Some academics and political commentators have already looked to Australia for evidence of New Labour's antecedents (Frankel 1997). Given its political history, Australian television would provide an interesting counterpoint to the findings of this research project.

In the wake of New Labour's election to government in 1997, there are good arguments for an analysis of television's responses to the change of government under Tony Blair. This is particularly pertinent when one considers the policy statements in the Labour Party Manifesto:

> "Government and industry must work together to achieve key objectives aimed at enhancing the dynamism of the market, not undermining it. In industrial relations, we make it clear that there will be no return to flying pickets, secondary action, strikes with no ballots or the trade union law of the 1970s..." (Labour Party Manifesto 1997:3)

The legacy of Thatcherite thinking is still with us. The transition from conservative government to New Labour has already engendered debate over the appropriation of the Thatcherite lexicon of free enterprise. Only recently we have witnessed programmes attempting to analyse Thatcher's impact on the cultural and social life of the country. C4's *The Trial of Margaret Thatcher* asked a television "jury" whether her true legacy was the promotion of greed over compassion. Was Britain worse for the experience? Their verdict was guilty on all counts. But as much as television producers might see mileage in such programming, we are already having to face the fact that New Labour would never have been created, had Thatcherism not prevailed. Journalist Bruce Anderson refers to New

Labour as "Genetically Modified Tory". In television production we will no doubt begin to observe the subtle shifts in representation denoting the cultural re-alignment of audiences and producers to the "new" era of political influence.

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[1] See pages 206-208
[2] See pages 196, 199-201
[3] See page 197
[4] *Cathy come home, The War Game, Z Cars,* to name but a few.
[5] Comedian Harry Enfield invented the character "Loads-of-Money".
[6] Interview with Hugo Speer in Minx Magazine April 1998 p150
[7] Alan Bleasdale's protagonist in *Boys from the Blackstuff*

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Teleography

Production details, where available are presented here for television programmes cited in the main body of the text. Programmes are arranged in alphabetical order by title with a brief synopsis/description.

Agatha Christie's Poirot

exec prods Nick Eliott and Linda Agran, London Weekend Television, 12.2.89

dramatised by Stephen Wakelam

starring David Suchet, Hugh Fraser, Pauline Moran

Period detective series with high production values. Inspector Poirot (Suchet) investigates various crimes and misdemeanours within high society between the wars. Aided by his assistant Captain Hastings (Fraser) and the redoubtable Miss Lemon (Moran), Poirot applies "the little grey cells" in order to maintain his reputation as the greatest detective in the world.

Auf Wiedersehen Pet

prod Martin McKeand, exec prod Allan McKeown, Witzend productions for Central Television, 1992

written by Dick Clement and Ian La Frenais

starring Tim Healy, Kevin Whatley, Pat Roach, Jimmy Nail, Gary Holton, Timothy Spall, Christopher Fairbank

A group of unemployed builders set off for Germany in order to make ends meet. Spurred on by a growing sense of comraderie, the lads engage in various adventures, before returning to England where they are contracted to work for local gangland boss Ally Fraser. A comedy drama noted for its performances by hitherto unknown stars Jimmy Nail, Timothy Spall and Kevin Whatley.

Bergerac

prod Alwyn, prod from 91 Gallacio, BBC, 18.10.81

starring John Nettles and Terence Alexander

Set in the tax haven of Jersey, *Begerac* follows the activities of a divorced policman (Nettles) encumbered by the petty criminal exploits of a shady father-in-law (Alexander). Popular family viewing which established Jersey as a favoured holiday destination with British tourists.

Between The Lines

prod. Norris, Island World for BBC, 1992-3

Starring Neil Pearson, Siobhan Redmond and George Robertson

A glossy drama serial which ran for three series, centring on the dilemmas facing police officers working in the Complaints Investigation Bureau. The series was noted for its strong characterisation of the three leading roles, terse writing and an ability to handle difficult subject matter such as homosexuality, police racism and sexism. Unpopular with the police, who felt the programme brought certain elements of the force into disrepute, the series achieved successful ratings and was awarded a BAFTA.

The Bill

prod. Chapman, Thames Television, 16.10.83 -

starring

An extremely popular soap drama set in the fictional Sunhill police station in South-east London. The drama has undergone many incarnations in terms of format. Orignially *The Woodentops*, the series concentrated on the experiences of rookies fresh from police training in Hendon. The drama locates police action within a small community and tensions between the bobbies on the beat and the more flamboyant CID officers, are well observed. Although a very sanitised programme, it has proved enduringly popular with audiences, particularly teenagers. It is also popular with police forces as *The Bill* claims precise attention to detail which some officers see as highly instructive.

Boys From the Blackstuff

prod Michael Waring, BBC, 1982

dir. Phillip Saville

writtenby Alan Bleasdale

starring Micheal Angelus, Tom Georgeson, Bernard Hill, Alan Igbon, Petter Kerrigan and Julie Walters

Five plays depicting the deprivations and misery of unemployment in Liverpool. Chrissie (Angelus) and his friends are obliged to moonlight for site agent Malloy. The consequences are far reaching as first Snowy dies and then Chrissie and Logo have their dole money stopped pending an enquiry. Yosser's mental health deteriorates to the point where he becomes a danger to himself and others. In the wake of all these problems, Chrissie's marriage to Angie (Walters) comes under severe strain. A highly acclaimed classic realist drama from the 1980s.

Bread

prods Robin Nash and John Hobbs, BBC, 1986

written by Carla Lane

starring Jean Boht

Situation comedy following the fortunes of the Boswell family - a permanent thorn in the side of the Liverpool DHSS. Starring Jean Boht as the matriarch of the extended scouse family, trying to hold the household together whilst her eldest boy Joey uses his considerable charm to secure the family finances.

Brideshead Revisited

Yorkshire Television 1982 for ITV and C4

Screenplay by John Mortimer, based on the novel by Evelyn Waugh

Starring Jeremy Irons, Anthony Andrews, Phoebe Nicholls, Diana Quick, Lawrence Olivier and Claire Bloom

Lavish production of Waugh's celebrated novel of the downfall of an aristocratic English family and the young narrator Charles' fascination for brother and sister Sebastian and Julia Flyte.

Brookside

Devised and produced by Phil Redmond

Original cast: Rickly Tomlinson, Sue Johnston, Amanda Burton, Katrin Cartlidge, Danny McCall and John McArdle

Mersey TV for C4

2.11.82

A soap opera set in Liverpool. Unusual for its use of location shooting and interior camera angles produced by commandeering an actual cul de sac for filming. Redmond describes his approach: "I was fed up of watching dramas where people wandered into a pub and spilled out their most intimate life details – you know, 'A pint of Guinness please – and have you heard about my prostrate operation?' Nobody does that."

Butterflies

prod Gareth Gwenlan, BBC, 1978

written by Carla Lane

starring Wendy Craig and Geoffery Palmer

Ria (Craig) is a frustrated housewife who faced with the routine of shopping and cooking finds refuge in a fantasy love affair with a wealthy batchelor. This low-intensity situation

comedy-drama drew a faithful audience of women who ephathised with Ria's situation. A bitter-sweet comedy expressing some of the frustration of the forty-something generation who missed out on hippydom and free love.

Cathy Come Home

prod.Garnett, BBC, 16.11.66

Dir. Ken Loach

Starring Carole White

Seminal play made for television which used documentary film methods to portray the fictional story of a young family in search of a home. The play was well recieved by audiences and its depiction of homelessness was felt to be so compelling as to raise questions in the Houses of Parliament. Legislation followed to improve the condition of families seeking work and accomodation. It remains one of the most significant examples of British social realism.

The Chief

prod Boswell, Anglia Television, 20.4.90

Starring Tim Piggot-Smith (first series); Martin Shaw (second series)

A police drama series which concentrated on conflict at senior management level. The appointment of a maverick Chief Constable in the fictional Eastland constabulary tests the patience of those around him; the local landed gentry, fellow officers and Home Office officials. The series was very popular with adult audiences who for the first time were invited to see the machinations of government policy in conflict with police concerns and duties.

The Cops

exec prod Tony Garnett, a World production for BBC, 19.10.98

From the same stable as *This Life*, and the 1978 documentary *Law and Order*, comes a rivetting drama-soap focused on the experience of rookie officers on the beat. Here any similarity with *The Bill* ends sharply. *The Cops* presents a gritty documentary style view of police officers confused, unsure and out of control. Using similar camera techniques to *This Life* the drama is a fascinating example of a text seemingly unaware of its own generic conventions and constraints. It is as a result highly absorbing and unpredicatable.

Coronation Street

Granada Television, 9.12.1960 -

original story by Tony Warren

Britain's longest running soap opera known popularly as "the Street". A soap famous for its strong female characters. Originally designed for television by Tony Warren who described the programme as more of a pantomime than real life. Despite this, the series boke new ground in 1960 and lead the development of soap opera as a major television genre.

Cracker

prod Hilary Bevan-Jones, Granada Television, Oct 94

written by Jimmy McGovern

starring Robbie Coltrane, Christopher Ecclestone, Geraldine Somerville, Ricky Tomlinson

Major television drama serial which re-launched the career of Coltrane as Fitz, the alcoholic gambling psychologist assigned to help police with their murder enquiries. Razor sharp dialogue and excellent performances mark this as a superior drama from the early 1990s.

Crimewatch UK

prod Morrison, BBC, 10.8.88 –

Presented by Nick Ross and Jill Dando

A flagship programme for the BBC, *Crimewatch* encourages television audiences to phone into the studio if they have any information regarding crimes featured during the programme. Popular with audiences, research also suggests that it may have become a victim of its own success; it appears that the programme is also popular with criminals. Seen as a valuable aid by police forces, *Crimewatch* continues "the fight against crime" and has on occasion been criticised for frightening vulnerable sections of the community with its insistence on reconstructing violent crime.

Dallas

prod Aaron Spelling, prod Mike Frost for BBC, 1978

starring Larry Hagman, Patric Duffy, Victoria Principle

Southfork provides the setting for much of the drama between two brothers and their fight for control of Ewing Oil. A latterday story of Cain and Abel, *Dallas* gripped the nation and was one of the most enduringly popular televison programmes in the world. It created one of the most infamous tv villains in the shape of JR Ewing.

Dempsey and Makepeace

exec prod Paul Knight, London Weekend Television, 1985

starrng Glynnis Barber and Michael Brandon

Action drama series which teams British police officer with American cop. Formulaic and overly dependant upon car chases and explosions for visual effects, this was a programme designed to fill the gap left by LWT's hit show, *The Professionals*.

Dixon of Dock Green

prod Moodie, BBC, 9.7.55

Starring Jack Warner

A popular long-running serial which centred on the patrician figure of Constable Dixon. This was a programme which offered an idealistic vision of the police as guardians of the community. Sentimental and reassuring, Jack Warner's future was assured when he featured as the honest bobby shot and murdered in 1950 film, *The Blue Lamp*. The police were so pleased with his performance that five years later his character rose from the dead to star in the BBC series. For nearly three decades, Jack Warner's portrayal of Constable Dixon was recognised internationally as the kindly face of Britsh justice.

Dynasty

prod Mashiah for BBC, 1982

starring Joan Collins

A *Dallas* imitator, the show followed the fortunes of the Carrington family of Denver. *Dynasty* picked up on the theme of family feuding over oil fields and created Joan Collins' most famous character Alexis Carrington, ex-wife to Blake - the patrician head of the Carrington family, estate and corporation. What *Dallas* and *Dynasty* brought to British television was a combination of glamour and vicious back-biting. All the characters seemed to be motivated by greed and revenge.

Eastenders

prod Smith, BBC, 26.2.85 -

A long-running soap opera set in fictional Albert Square in the eastend of London. Close attention to realism and an emphasis on family drama mark this programme out as an extremely popular example of the genre. Its topical approach has lead to storylines focusing on AIDS, teenage pregnancy, drug addiction, homosexuality, rape, murder, suicide, philidamide, alcoholism and impotency to name but a few. The programme has launched the careers of a succesion of unknown stars such as Nick Berry, Suzanne Tully, Michelle Collins and Martine McCutcheon.

The Governor

London Weekend Television, 14.5.95

written by Lynda LaPlante

starring Janet McTeer

Prison Governor (McTeer) must face endless attacks on her professionalism in a male dominated world. Criticised for the depiction of graphic violence, the show was discontinued after a second series was commissioned and screened in 1996

Have I Got News for You

prod Colin Swash, Hat Trick production for BBC 1992 -

hosted by Angus Deayton

Satirical quiz show which focuses on topical news stories of the week. A poor relation to the week. Influenced by the 1960's show *That Was the Week That Was.*

Harry's Game

Yorkshire Televsion, October 1982

written by Gerald Seymour

starring Ray Lonnen and Derek Thompson

Topical realist production set in Belfast and London. An IRA hitman assasinates a Tory Cabinet Minister and Captain Harry Brown (Lonnen) must go undercover in order to find him. A tense drama which captured the underside of the "Troubles" as experienced by the people living in Northern Ireland. Powerful performances netted the production several awards.

Heartbeat

prod Stuart Doughty, exec prod Keith Richardson, Yorkshire Television, 10.4.92

starring Nick Berry, Derek Fowlds, Bill Maynard

A popular drama set in the Yorkshire Dales in the 1960s. A new constable (Berry) from London must learn to adapt in order to survive his new environment. Music provides the central device for structuring and elaborating upon the nostalgic appeal of the drama series.

Hillsborough

exec prods Ian McBride and Gub Neal, Granada Television, 1996

written by Jimmy McGovern

starring Christopher Eccleston, Ricky Tomlinson, Ian McDiarmid, Rachel Davies

Shocking dramatisation of the events leading up to and the disillusionment following the tragic disaster at Hillsborough. The police officers are portrayed as individuals whilst overall responsibility is placed firmly at the feet of police management. Moving drama from a highly experienced television writer.

A History of the British Cinema: A Personal View
ITV, 19.3.86
written and presented by Lindsey Anderson
Thames Television Production
Producer David Gill

House of Cards
BBC, 18.11.90
screenplay by Andrew Davies
based on the novel by Andrew Dobbs
starring Ian Richardson and Susannah Harker
Francis Urquhart (Richardson) is the Chief Whip passed over by the new PM Henry Collinridge. Fuelled by revenge, Urquhart sets about the systematic removal of all opposition in order to secure the highest position of all - Prime Minister. Using the naive but talented journalist Mattie Storin (Harker), Urquhart will let nothing, not even murder, sway his ambition for power. A prestigious television drama which captured the mood of the country just as Thatcher stepped down as leader, thus iniating one of the most crucial leadership battles in the history of the Conservative Party.

Inspector Morse
prod McBain, Zenith Films for Central Television, 6.1.86 -
adapted from the novels by Colin Dexter
Starring John Thaw and Kevin Whatley
A drama series with lavish production values, *Inspector Morse* has enjoyed prime time audience ratings for over fifteen years. Even the repeats are given priority scheduling on Wednesday and Saturday evenings. Centring on the morose figure of Morse, the series moves with laconic grace from one murder victim to another whilst the ponderous Chief Inspector puzzles his way through the lies of the Oxford intelligentsia. Much of the appeal derives from the literary qualities of the drama; as with the novels of Agatha Christie, it is impossible to work out "whodunnit". The university town of Oxford offers an

inexhaustible supply of scenic backdrops - all shot in high summer, which lends the programme a quintessential air of refinement.

John Craven's Newsround
Devised and presented by John Craven
BBC1
April 1972
A news programme devised especially for children, this programme has taken up environmental issues and wildlife as some of its major features over the years. Also instrumental in educating young children about the Space race and new technologies.

The Lakes
prod Charles Pattinson, BBC, 14.9.97
written by Jimmy McGovern
starring John Simm, Emma Cunniffe, Clare Holman, Robert Pugh, Mary Jo Randle
Series 1 explores the tragic aftermath of the death by drowning of four schoolgirls in a small Lake District village community. New resident Danny (Simm) the boathouse supervisor, is persecuted by the village when the local "Lolita" he snubbed, decides to take revenge by accusing him of rape and manslaughter. A dark drama which examines the claustrophobia of small village life in an area often associated with picturesque tourism. Writer Jimmy McGovern's most recent drama serial, following on from *Cracker* and *Hillsborough*.

Love Thy Neighbour
prod Allen, Thames Television, 1972-5
starring Jack Smethurst
A situation comedy popular with audiences, it focused on the antoagonistic relationship between a racist white workingclass family and their black neighbours. The white family have a black front door and the black family have a white front door. The humour of the programme derived from the inevitable name-calling which resulted whenever conflict arose between the two men. Although colleaugues in the local factory, their dislike of one another is mainly confined to arguments at home where both wives endeavour to keep the peace.

Middlemarch
prod Louis Marks, BBC, 12.1.94

starring Juliet Aubrey, Robert Hardy, Patrick Malahide, Rufus Sewell

Elegant and expensive costume drama based on a faithful adaptation of George Eliot's novel. Billed as the highlight of BBC production for 1994, the series generated a teaching pack and video, introduced by Cary Bazalgette in association with the BFI. A rich text which makes good use of innovative camera work and sound/music to suggest the atmosphere and metaphorical imagery of the novel.

Minder

prod Verity Lambert, Euston Films for Thames Televsion,1979

written by Leon Griffiths

starring George Cole and Dennis Waterman

Carefully observed comedy drama which made best use of the comic genius of George Cole. Focusing on the relationship between wannabe entrepreneur Artur Daley (Cole) and his cockney working-class minder Terry (Waterman), the comedy of each episode was drawn as much from the characterisation as from the convoluted plots themselves. A good example of the craft of television writing.

Mosley

Alamo production for Channel 4, 12.2.98

starring Jonathan Cake and Jemma Redgrave

A biographical drama for Channel 4, *Mosley* depicted the early years of the womanising Fascist's political career.

Newsnight

prod Sian Keville, BBC, 30.1.80 -

Flagship late-evening news discussion programme with heavy-weight presenter Jeremy Paxman. The original team of presenters included Peter Snow, Peter Hobday, Charles Wheeler and John Tusa.

Only Fools and Horses

prod Ray Butt, BBC, 1983

written by John Sullivan

starring David Jason and Nicholas Lyndhurst

A robust situation comedy featuring Delboy (Jason) and his younger brother Rodney (Lyndhurst) as they try to improve their financial situation by a combination of ill-fated

entrprenuerial deals and shady confidence tricks. A very popular programme which undercut the basic premises of entrepreneurial capitalism with wit and humour.

On the Buses
prod Stuart Allen, London Weekend Television/Granada 1970's comedy
written by Ronald Wolfe and Ronald Chesney
starring Reg Varney , Stephen Lewis, Bob Grant and Doris Hare
A situation comedy set in a London bus depot. Bus driver (Varney) and "clippie" (Grant) engage in convoluted escapades in order to do as little work as possible and undermine the morose and disaffected Inspector Blakey (Lewis), assigned to supervise them. Another seventies programme which pivots on the antagonism between cheeky trades union "workers" and bigoted self-important "management".

On the Record
prod David Jordan, BBC, 2.10.94
presented by John Humphries
Original presenter Jonathan Dimbleby
Topical news magazine programme which features interviews with politicians and senior public figures in relation to the week's main political stories.

Our Friends in the North
prod Charles Pattinson, BBC,1997
written by Peter Flannery
starring Christopher Eccleston, Gina McKee, Roddy McDowell, Peter Vaughn and Alun Armstrong
A drama focusing on the relationships between four friends set against the backdrop of a changing British society from the sixties to the nineties. Ambitious in its range, the serial offered an intelligent and well-observed commentary on the changing face of British politics and the cultural shifts which accompanied it. In particular the drama described the disillusionment of leftwing activists and the failure of Labour Party rhetoric.

Pride and Prejudice
associate prod Julie Scott, BBC, 25.9.95
4 episodes
screenplay by Andrew Davies
starring Jennifer Ehle, Colin Firth, Alison Steadman

Lavish screen adaptation of Jane Austen's most famous novel. This production is noted for its portrayal of Elizabeth Bennet as a thoroughly modern heroine. Colin Firth's Mr Darcy also won much high praise although Davies' additional scene depicting Darcy swimming across the lake to Pemberley, tested the patience of viewers familiar with the more restrained 19th century text.

Prime Suspect
prod Leaver, Granada Television, 7.4.91 and 8.4.91
written by Lynda La Plante
Starring Helen Mirren, Tom Wilkinson, John Bowe, Zoe Wanamaker and Tom Bell
A two-part drama following the uphill struggle of a female DCI (Mirren) to handle a serial murder investigation in the face of sexism and bureaucracy. This gritty portrayal of CID won La Plante a BAFTA and proved so successfull that she went on to write three sequels starring Helen Mirren as Jane Tennison.

The Professionals
LWT
Martin Shaw, Lewis Collins
Seventies action series based on the fictionalised escapades of MI5, here renamed CI5. Very popular in its day though never repeated in later years as Shaw (now a serious actor) has consistently refused permission on the grounds of "good taste".

The Ragtrade
1950's BBC comedy revived for ITV series in the mid seventies.
starring Miriam Carlin and Peter Jones
A breezy situation comedy set in an East London sweatshop. Dominated by the Miriam Carlin's inimitable jewish shopsteward, the shenanigans of unscrupulous management were met by threats of strike action each week with the call "everybody out!" The ensuing chaos depicted a workforce where the aim of each working day was to outwit the bosses as far as possible and do as little work as possible in the process. A comedy of its time, the humour owed much to popular (mis)understanding of the role of trades unions in private sector industries.

The Sweeney
exec prod Shirley and Taylor, Euston Films for Thames Televsion, 2.1.75

Starring John Thaw and Dennis Waterman

A brutally realistic drama series following the exploits of two maverick officers in the Flying Squad. Popular with die-hards in the service, Thaw and Waterman were often guests at Police Federation charity dinners. The drama was notable for its reliance on street language. Its claim to realism lay therefore as much in its linguistic representation as in its scenes of graphic violence. Popular in its day, its portrayal of the police as hard-drinking "filth" became synonymous with 70's metropolitan policing tactics.

This Life

producer Jane Fallon, World production for BBC, 18.3.96 (series 1)

exec. prod Tony Garnett

written by Amy Jenkins

starring Jack Davenport, Daniella Nardini, Amita Dhiri, Jason Hughes, Andrew Lincoln

Cult viewing for the twenty-somethings, *This Life* attracted a serious BBC2 following. Centred on the lives of five bright law graduates trying to carve out careers in the city, the drama-soap broke new ground with its use of camera techniques and diegetic sound. Unafraid of tackling serious issues, the drama made reference to drugs, alcoholism, sex and homosexuality without sentimentality or sensationalism. Billed by many as the drama series of the nineties. A very interesting example of contemporary British television realism.

Trial and Retribution

La Plante Productions for ITV network, 1997

written and produced by Lynda LaPlante

Stylised and innovative drama following a murder investigation on a London council estate. The use of split screen techniques hightened both the tension and emotion of the piece. A creative exmple of contemporary television realism.

Trial and Retribution 2

La Plante Productions for ITV network, 1998

written and produced by Lynda LaPlante

starring Ian Glenn

A second example of the techniques of split screen writing used so effectively for *Trial and Retribution*. This dark and morbid tale of murder, rape and torture is notable for the charasmatic performance of Ian Glenn as the chief murder suspect and the final denouement where his suspicious and brutalised wife provides the evidence to seal his fate.

The Trial of Margaret Thatcher

C4

4.5.99

Presented by John Snow

A mock trial of the former Prime Minister with John Redwood and Bruce Anderson defending whilst Gerald Kaufman and Beatrice Campbell prosecute.

Undercover Heart

BBC, 1.10.98

starring Daniella Nardini, Steve Mackintosh

Intense emotional drama. When the husband (Mackintosh) of one officer goes under cover as a pimp, she (Nardini) has little idea of how her life will change as a result. Loyalties are tested as passion stirs between Nardini and her partner. A complex drama with dark undertones, it suggests the fragility of a police service compromised by its close proximity to the criminal underworld.

The Walden Interview

exec prod John Wakefield, London Weekend Television, 1988 and 1998

Presented by Brian Walden

Topical political programme where former Labour MP for Ladywood, Brian Walden interviews a major figure from the week's top political news story.

The Wednesday Play

BBC 1964-69

Producers Peter Luke and James McTaggart, Lionel Harris and Tony Garnett

Radical departure for the BBC in allowing raw talented writers access to the airwaves. Notable for Nell Dunn's play *Up the Junction* and *Cathy Come Home*.

Widows

prod Linda Agran, Euston Films for Thames Television, 16.3.83

written by Lynda La Plante

starring Ann Mitchell

Dolly (Mitchell) has recently been widowed when her husband and his three friends are killed in a carcrash following a bank robbery. Using the ledgers and guide left by the husbands, Dolly and her new female partners join the police hunt for the money, whilst

also fending off rival gangs. A very successful shpw for Thames which marked a significant turning point in television crime fiction and the representation of women.

Yes Minister
prod Sydney Lotterby, BBC, 24.3.80
written by Anthony Jay and Jonathan Lynn
starring Paul Eddington, Nigel Hawthorne and Derek Fowlds
Situation comedy satirising the political and bureaucratic motivations of government ministers and civil servants. Popular with MPs and senior civil servants, the programme's appeal lay in the closely observed relationship between Jim Hacker (Eddington) and Sir Humphrey (Hawthorne). Noted as Thatcher's favourite televison programme and winner of several awards including a BAFTA for Best Comedy Series.

Z Cars
prod Rose, BBC, 2.1.62
Starring Brian Blessed, James Ellis, Stratford Johns and Frank Windsor
Ground breaking in its time, the series looked at the harsher side of community policing with the introduction of "fast response" police cars in a troubled area of Lancashire. A mixture of live broadcast was intercut with filmed scenes on location to create an unusual realist aesthetic.The series was so successfuly that it ran well into the seventies with some of the original cast still in place.

Filmography

Production details where available, for films cited in the main body of the text are presented here with a brief synopsis/description of the film content.

Brassed Off

prod Steve Abbott

written and directed by Mark Herman

Miramax Films for Channel Four, 1996

starring Pete Postlethwaite, Tara Fitzgerald, Ewan McGregor

The Grimley colliery is facing closure in the wake of the 1992 pit closures. The only thing keeping the men going is the colliery band and this too is under threat until Gloria (Fitzgerald) arrives. Galvanised by her enthusiasm, the band struggle on to compete in the Brass Band finals at the Albert Hall. This film is both romantic and amusing with a darker critical underside which emerges toward the closure of the film as Danny (Postlethwaite) the band leader rises to accept the winning trophy.

Carry On

starring Sid James, Barbara Windsor, Kenneth Williams, Kenneth Connor, Hatti Jacques and Charles Hawtree

A series of British films which enjoyed popular success from the mid fifties until the late seventies. Notable for its witty scripting and bawdy humour, these films epitomised a particular brand of English comedy which has its roots in music hall, end-of-the-pier popular culture. Titles ranged from early productions such as *Carry On Constable* and *Carry On Cabbie* to later comedy successes such as *Carry On Camping* and *Carry On Matron*. Entirely shot in England, mostly at Pinewood Studios and in and around Denham and Beaconsfield, the films starred home-grown talent with regular performances from the core actors named above.

The Devil's Own

dir Alan Pakula

March 1997

dist Columbia Tristar

starring Harrison Ford and Brad Pitt

Ford plays a New York cop who takes in a young Irish terrorist (Pitt) on the run. His hospitality is rewarded when Pitt is obliged to take action in order to secure his own safety after a terrorist action goes wrong. Ford must battle with his own conscience, now faced

with the choice of protecting the public or saving a friend. The film was a big box office succes in America where sympathies lie in the main with Irish Republicanism. However several delays in distribution in Britain betrayed the nervousness of the film's producers. The film was unpopular with British cinem audiences.

The Full Monty
prod Uberto Pasolini, Kate Ledger
Bodger Films, Redwave Films, 1997
Dir Peter Cattanio
screenplay by Simon Beaufoy
starring Robert Carlyle, Tom Wilkinson, Mark Addy, Lesley Sharp, Hugo Speer, Paul Barber, Steve Huison
Comedy set in Sheffield as six unemployed metal workers decide to regain their self-respect and earn some money by stripping for one night only. Very successful film which helped to put Sheffield on the map.

Patriot Games
Paramount Pictures, 1992
dir Phillip Noyce
starring Harrison Ford, Patrick Bergen, Anne Archer, Sean Bean, Edward Fox, Richard Harris
A breakaway terrorist faction from the IRA plans to kidnap a member of the Royal family (Fox). Thwarted by CIA official Jack Ryan (Ford) on holiday with his family, the cell is temporarily thrown into confusion. The death of the youngest member prompts swift action from his elder brother (Bean) as soon as he escapes custody. Ryan must find the renegade terrorist before he and his family become victims. A very popular film in America; concern about a possible conflict of interest necessitated the invention of an IRA-*like* terrorist group so as not to alienate audiences sympathetic to, or supportive of Noraid.

APPENDIX A

Images from

Minder

and

Only Fools and Horses

Fig 1.1

Fig 1.2

Fig 1.3

Fig 2.1

Fig 2.2

Fig 2.3

Fig 2.4

Fig 2.5

Fig 2.6

Fig 2.7

Fig 2.8

Fig 2.9

Fig 2.10

Fig 2.11

Fig 2.12

Fig 3.1

Fig 3.2

Fig 3.3

Fig 3.4

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Fig 3.5

Fig 3.6

Fig 3.7

Fig 3.8

Fig 4.1

Fig 4.2

Fig 4.3

Fig 5

Fig 6

Fig 7.1

Fig 7.2

Fig 7.3

Fig 7.4

Fig 8.1

Fig 8.2

Fig 8.3

Fig 8.4

Fig 8.5

Fig 8.6

Fig 8.7

Fig 8.8

Fig 8.9

Fig 8.10

Fig 8.11

Fig 8.12

Fig 8.13

Fig 8.14

Fig 8.15

Fig 8.16

Fig 8.17

Fig 8.18

Fig 8.19

Fig 8.20

APPENDIX B

Images from

Boys From The Blackstuff

and

Auf Wiedersehen Pet

Fig 1.1

Fig 1.2

Fig 1.3

Fig 1.4

Fig 1.5

Fig 1.6

Fig 1.7

Fig 1.8

Chrissie
MICHAEL ANGELIS

Fig 1.9

Fig 1.10

Fig 1.11

Fig 1.12

Fig 1.13

Fig 1.4

Fig 1.5

Fig 1.16

Yosser
BERNARD HILL

Fig 1.17

Fig 1.18

Fig 1.19

Fig 1.20

Fig 1.21

George
PETER KERRIGAN

Fig 1.22

Fig 1.23

Fig 1.24

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Fig 1.25

Fig 1.26

Fig 1.27

Fig 1.28

Fig 1.29

Fig 2.1

Fig 2.2

Fig 2.3

Fig 2.4

Fig 2.5

Fig 2.6

Fig 2.7

Fig 2.8

288

Fig 2.9

Fig 2.10

Fig 2.11

Fig 2.12

Fig 2.13

Fig 2.14

Fig 2.15

Fig 3.1

Fig 3.2

Fig 4.1

Fig 4.2

Fig 4.3

291

Fig 5.1

Fig 5.2

Fig 5.3

Fig 1

Fig 2

Fig 3.1

Fig 3.2

293

Fig 3.3

Fig 3.4

Fig 3.5

Fig 3.6

Fig 3.7

Fig 4.1

Fig 4.2

Fig 4.3

295

Fig 4.4

Fig 4.5

Fig 4.6

Fig 4.7

Fig 5

Fig 6

Fig 7

Fig 8

Fig 9.1

Fig 9.2

Fig 9.3

Fig 9.4

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Fig 10.1

Fig 10.2

APPENDIX C

Images from

Inspector Morse

Fig 1.1

Fig 1.2

Fig 1.3

JOHN THAW
AS
CHIEF INSPECTOR MORSE

Fig 1.4

Fig 1.5

Fig 1.6

Fig 1.7

SCREENPLAY BY
ANTHONY MINGHELLA
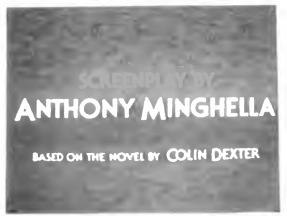BASED ON THE NOVEL BY COLIN DEXTER

Fig 1.8

Fig 1.9

Fig 1.10

Fig 1.11

Fig 1.12

Fig 1.13

Fig 1.14

Fig 1.15

Fig 1.16

Fig 1.17

Fig 1.18

Fig 1.19

Fig 1.20

Fig 1.21

Fig 1.22

Fig 2.1

Fig 2.2

Fig 2.3

Fig 3.1

Fig 3.2

Fig 3.3

Fig 3.4

Fig 3.5

Fig 3.6

Fig 3.7

Fig 4.1

Fig 4.2

Fig 4.3

Fig 4.4

Fig 4.5

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Fig 4.6

Fig 5

Fig 6